

A HISTORICAL NOVEL BASED ON THE TRUE STORY
OF HOW THE THIRD REICH USED ASTROLOGY.

HITLER'S ASTROLOGER

HW

DAVID BRYANT PERKINS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

People usually don't read this part of a book. This is sad, for in the case of many books, screenplays, and movies, the story *behind* the story is just as interesting.

I wish I could tell you all the story of how this story came to me, however this space is for all those I must give my deepest THANKS - for what you are about to read would not be possible without the assistance, encouragement, guidance and love from those I am about to mention.

Family first - to my brother Lucian who since I was little has been, and still is to this day, the perfect role model for good character and success, and who I continue to look to on 'how to do' something. To my sister whose guidance has allowed me to navigate my journeys into the spiritual world and of the heart - a role model to the world for the idea of unconditional love. Of course, to Mom and Dad who raised me to be healthy in mind and body, and are now in the spiritual world. To my daughter Amanda who is my pride and joy that gives life meaning. THANK- YOU -I love you all.

To Peter & Tonye-Marie, who helped me "make it" in other areas so I could finish this story, God bless you both for inspiring me to get to the next level, and to our school librarian, Sheryl Rossi, who has loved books all her life (and even made a special place for me in our library for me to finalize this book during my lunch breaks).

No matter where I've lived or how many years since the time I've seen him last, to my best friend of all time (before 1st grade, actually) Douglas R. Wilkins, who besides being instrumental in finalizing this story for you, is also instrumental in this story transforming into a film version - which Hitler's Astrologer is now an international award winning screenplay.

Above all I must thank GOD, who had me playing chess in a Hamburg park that introduced me to one of the few living in 1984 who could tell the inside story of how the Third Reich used astrology and its roots in the occult.

INTRODUCTION

As president of the Holocaust Survivors Group of Southern Nevada, I first came into contact with David when he called our organization expressing his wish to interview holocaust survivors within our group who felt comfortable doing so, to gain insight for a book he was writing. We later met, where I learned of David's research into this little known story about an intriguing character of history that until now, I have never heard about. However, I was surprised that David was actually more interested in our group's story, and his questions showed he not only desired information about our experience, he truly wanted to understand our experience.

Since that time David has invited myself and my friend to come speak at the high school he taught, which was difficult for me to consider at first as I have never spoken of my experiences in public before. However, now this experience is a yearly occurrence, for he felt my story not only assisted in constructing the historical accuracy for this book, but also is a lesson that needed to be heard by all, especially students of the 21st Century.

I would also like to share with you that it is our story that gave David the idea that an item, such as his book, that reaps the rewards of humanity's fascination with the Third Reich, should also benefit the people who suffered the most under this brutal regime, so with this thought in mind, he offered to contribute a portion of the profits of this book to our Holocaust Survivors, for which our organization is most grateful.

If David approached the rest of the book with the sincerity, detailed research, and consideration to the facts as when interviewing our group, I'm sure you, dear reader, are in for an in-depth historical portrayal of this little known, behind the scenes glimpse into the dark forces

that made up the most evil institution in world history.

- Ray Fiol, President, Holocaust Survivors Group of Southern Nevada

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HITLER'S ASTROLOGER

By David Perkins

Chapter 1 - The Passage

“...their chances of getting caught just increased tenfold.”

Captain Best Payne and his partner lay face down in the half frozen mud hastily covered with loose branches and dead leaves within their reach. Before leaving the Dutch city of Enschede, local intelligence informed them this stretch of the Holland - German border had very few, if any, patrols. This information was either unreliable, or someone was misinformed. Crunching boots and occasional shouts in German now filled the dark, thickly wooded forest like a machine with a mind of its own.

They would change the schedule on the day we go in. Payne thought, recalling the training, memorization, and study dedicated to this mission. *Six months of work and we may get caught within six minutes after crossing the border. Shit.*

Frustration and fear flowed from thought into the rest of his body. The sporadic shouts in German became louder. Both minds calculate deeper realms of possibilities. *Was it a change in schedule, or did they know we were coming?* Payne wonders if he will ever see an English soccer game again. His eyes close. An image of his father drifts into his imagination.

A new sound accelerates their already quickened heartbeats. A sound telling both Welshmen their chances of getting caught just increased tenfold.

"Dogs!" Riley whispered.

As threatening barks and excited shouts grow louder, both Payne and Riley hear a loud crack above them, as if a huge tree branch above them suddenly gave way. For several seconds, dead silence.

"Raus! Raus!"

Riley Stevens and Best Payne remained perfectly still. Heavy boots crunching in the snow multiply and completely surround them. A splash of snow from one of these boots spray on Payne's nose.

Easy, easy. Payne remembered in training how a member on the opposite team looking for him, only inches away, did not see him. *Just because they 're close doesn't mean they see me.*

More shouts. But directed at at *him*, or Stevens? Or *both*? The taste of beer had in Holland before slipping into Germany returned to his mouth. His thoughts strayed from beer to the barmaid who always flirted with him at a pub in Fishguard. He never kissed her.

A heavy thump on his back surged pain throughout his 160-pound athletic body. Caught. Their mission to assassinate the mythical voice whispering prophetic advice into the ears of Nazi leaders was over.

"Raus..... Raus!!!"

Did they get Riley, too?

“...an affair with the nephew of President Hoover.”

Goebbels was happy. Once again his wife Magda showed another sign of pure genius which he would get credit for. Moments like this reassured him this marriage - arranged by Hitler himself - was indeed advantageous to his personal goals.

The most recent tension in his marriage started just after the fall of Poland. Ironically his feelings for her paralleled his feelings on the military issues he had to deal with at any given time. Screaming under the surface of his normally cool, controlled speaking manner was the question he had for both Magda and the Nazi party in 1939:

What next?

Sitting in his spacious office in the Reichstag, he analyzed Magda's current idea with the astuteness learnt while living at a Franciscan boarding school as a young man in the Netherlands. How far he had risen since those horrible, lonely, and deprived days after the First World War. A war he was not allowed to fight in due to a deformed right leg. A war, even when it was over, he pretended to have participated in. A war allowing him to claim the limp caused by untreated osteomyelitis as a child was instead from combat.

Joseph scanned over his huge oak desk; which over the years evolved into a shrine paying tribute to his past. Papers from his studies of literature and philosophy at the universities of Bonn, Wurzburg, and Freiburg were neatly stacked in the upper left hand corner. On the right, his leather bound doctoral thesis written while attending Heidelberg University on a minor 19th century romantic dramatist, Wilhelm von Schutz, his favorite writer.

While taking off his metal brace and special shoe, his eyes moved from the old college papers to the clock. Exactly two o'clock in the morning.

A blonde, voluptuous secretary opened his huge office door looking as fresh as when she arrived at work at nine o'clock yesterday morning. She spoke just as the clock began to chime.

"More vodka, Herr Minister?" Bettina asks noticing his empty glass.

"Ja, danke." His eyes focus on his secretary's cleavage as she leans over to pour one of the many bottles sent by colleagues now looting Poland. Every inch of her behind swaying as she walks away from his desk is focused on as the bottle returns to its proper shelf.

Goebbels' official work had ended well over an hour ago, but it was his custom to review the day's work - and Bettina - before actually leaving.

When the Fuhrer returns to Berlin tomorrow, he too would be pleased. As with many of Magda's previous ideas, this one touched and manipulated the mystical need affecting many of those within the upper echelons of the Nazi party.

Goebbels learned as far back as 1927 that Hitler was easily excited over any metaphysical form of control, be it over an individual or the masses - and especially if those affected were unaware they were being manipulated.

Based in this form of black magic, Magda's idea would assist the German High Command's plan against one of the Fuhrer's most hated enemies: the French. Ironically, her scheme to use a famous Frenchman to work against his own people could be applied for both propaganda and a military advantage. The Frenchman she found was France's famed seer & prophet: Nostradamus.

"Adolf will *love* it!" Joseph remembered his wife laughing.

"I'm sure he will." Goebbels replied, but secretly wondered: *When Magda used the word*

'love' and 'Adolf' in the same sentence, was this expressing a repressed love for Hitler?

Immediately attracted to Hitler when she joined the Nazi party in September of 1930, Magda soon learned Hitler adamantly intended to remain single. Adolf Hitler only revealed to three people of his vow never to become involved with a divorcee, especially one with a child. Magda had both.

While highly cultured at society functions, gossip circulated all over Berlin over her infidelity. Several verified a story while touring America with her first husband, Gunther Quandt, Magda had an affair with the nephew of President Hoover. These rumors strengthened when Van Ness Hoover Leavitt came to Germany to visit and propose marriage after Magda divorced. The relationship with the celebrity American ended when they were involved in an automobile crash together in which Magda was seriously injured. It was never clear how this tragedy caused them to drift apart.



Magda Goebbels, First Lady of the Third Reich

Hitler, despite all the hints of scandal, was deeply impressed with Magda and wanted her to be the wife of a highly visible Nazi official. Her high social connections were of great value

and the upper class air of mannerisms gave the Nazi party validity in these circles. Magda was to be, as the Fuhrer put it, the “First Lady of the Third Reich”.

Goebbels looked at the clock. 2:17 am. Should he go home to his wife tonight?

“...be it sincere or faked”

The interior of the Hotel Esplanade was covered in symbols and colors of the Netherlands for the annual Hollandisher Ball. Business, cultural, diplomatic, and most other types of relationships between Germany and Holland were fairly profitable in 1932, so the food, festivities, and guest list were expanded to reflect the good fortune between two neighbors both of whom were struggling in the mist of a world depression.

“...and where *is* your wonderful cousin?” Ludwig von Wohl asked, looking around the spacious ballroom. “You *did* pack her up and bring her, didn’t you?”

“Of course, of course,” Prince Heinrich answered in a short controlled laugh. Von Wohl knew how to play up to Heinrich’s ego by making it appear the Prince was in charge of the ball and his failed marriage.

Besides having a jovial sense of humor in a desert of stiffness and pomp, Von Wohl’s talent for making the Prince feel important formed much of the basis for their relationship.

“*Ahhhh*, look who has come to brighten up our little party!” Prince Heinrich raises his glass to an approaching well taken care of middle-aged woman, whom Von Wohl feels immediately attracted to. Her figure, make-up and healthy skin have her appear many years younger.

“Ludwig, let me have the pleasure to introduce the Countess Keun von Hoogerwerd ”

“Delighted, Countess.” The kiss on the hand lasts an unusually long time for such a formal function, stirring some notice from some other guests in proximity.

“Likewise.” Cooped the Countess, flattered to participate in such a public display. Despite her beauty, the coldness of royalty and stifling dignitary protocols of such events did not have her encountering such displays often. Complementary words and actions were not common at home either, so the Countess was always happy to be the recipient of attention - be it sincere or faked.

“Are you *Dutch*, Herr von Wohl?”

Ludwig never knew how to answer such questions over his origin. Born in Berlin on the 24th of January in 1903, he was the bastard son of a Jewish Hungarian emigrant who serviced a shopkeeper in Prague in exchange for fake marriage papers, allowing her to move to Germany.

The ‘von’ in his name actually started as a school yard joke while in his first year of high school. His classmates gave the somewhat overweight youngster the title since he tried to act like nobility. Ironically, the always-rotating teachers and staff of School Number 27 became so used to hearing him being called ‘von Wohl’ that out of habit, one of the school secretaries actually put the ‘von’ on his official graduation papers. With this one document, he made sure all future documents showed the same, securing his place in Germany and European nobility.

“I was born in Berlin, Countess.”

“Politician or general?”

Bettina got in the taxi, dropping her black embroidered Ministry briefcase on the back seat carelessly. To any other driver, treating such a highly respected piece of property of the Third Reich with such a casual attitude would have been frowned upon or even looked at with suspicion.

Michael, however, was not any taxi driver nor was it by chance his was the cab she entered whenever Her Goebbels did not take his shapely young secretary home himself. Arriving in Berlin during the 1936 Olympics with perfectly forged papers, one of his many assignments around the Reichstag was to come in contact as much as possible with secretaries and clerks who worked in this important building.

“Home, Frau Meyer?”

“Nein, Maxi, der Schuler strasse, bitte.” There was no need to give the street number, for Maxi, Bettina’s pet name for Michael when she learned he named his taxi after his German Shepherd - knew exactly where to go. Schiilerstrasse 27 was also an important address for his contacts in London, although Bettina was completely unaware of this fact.

“Ja, Frau Meyer”. Even though they were on the kind of friendly terms one would expect for two people who have seen each other several times a week over the course of two and a half years, Maxi remained socially and professionally formal.

Bettina opened her briefcase and occasionally pulled out a document or photo to angle it under the passing streetlights to read.

“Lots of work tonight, Frau Meyer?”

“Too much!”

“Thinking, or typing?” Maxi’s usual opening line fishing for more details.

“Both!” She gasps with real exhaustion while looking at a photo of a seemingly interesting looking dark man.

“Politician or general?” Maxi asks catching a glimpse of her focused attention on the photo in the rear view mirror.

“Nein...nein, an *astrologer*, if you can believe that!”

“An astrologer in the Reichstag? Well, these days, I’ll believe *anything!*” Maxi said while turning a tight corner.

“I’ll start packing.”

SPECIAL DELIVERY - OFFICIAL BUSINESS OF THE THIRD REICH

Ministry of Propaganda

January 22, 1940

Dear Herr Krafft,

The German people request your service in an urgent and sensitive program concerning the area of your talent and abilities. Enclosed in this letter are sample materials that our office would like your expertise and interpretation on, two first class train tickets to Berlin, and confirmation reservation papers for you and your wife at the Kaiser Hoff Hotel on the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin.

A private meeting has been scheduled between you and Herr Minister Goebbels for January 30th, at 14:00 hours in his personal office, room 137 in the Reichstag.

We look forward to working with you for the glory of the Third Reich.

Heil Hitler,

Bettina Meyer - Personal secretary to Herr Minister Goebbels

Even though politely written, it was clear the letter was an order for Karl Ernst and Elaine Krafft to appear in Berlin. Karl Ernst silently handed the letter to his wife who read it quickly, then slowly handed it back.

"I'll start packing." She says to herself while walking up the oak staircase. There would be no husband/wife discussion over this trip since his silence revealed the decision had already been made - in Berlin.

Karl Ernst Krafft looks out the window as Elaine fashions what will be needed upstairs. His heart beats with a new excitement as if announcing the joy of finally obtaining official work with the Third Reich. His mind, already excited at the challenge of new mathematical puzzles thrown at him in the letter, had underneath a cold cloud of hesitation. A sense not connected to a thought or feeling crawled into his consciousness. A subconscious hint, a warning. *Danger!*

"...at least the dog understood he had given up."

The blunt end of a rifle stock smashed against Captain Payne's upper back, making his left arm jump.

“Raus! Raus!”

The spiky teeth of a German Shepherd lock around his ankle and pull him out from the makeshift debris.

“OK, alright.....!” Payne moans, realizing whatever damage done by the rifle butt into his back had affected his voice. Rising on his knees, his arms attempt to come up with the universal sign of surrender, however manages to move his left arm up only halfway. The action does not seem to satisfy his captor.

“Raus!!! Raus!!!”

Looking at the German corporal directly in the eyes, Payne waves his arm in the air with the German Shepherd still attached to his ankle. Luckily, the dog was not biting as hard as done at first; giving Payne the impression at least the dog knew he had given up. Unfortunately it appeared the young soldier pointing the rifle at his forehead did not come to the same conclusion.

“Raus!!!” The eyes under the Waffen SS helmet burned with excitement, and fear.

“Aw, come on mate, let’s not be a broken record.”

“Britsher! Britsher!” An unseen group of voices behind him also begin shouting. Suddenly several pairs of hands grab and pull his arms back. The pain from his left arm could now be felt in his back and over the entire left side of his body.

A thin figure in civilian clothes parts through the detachment, one whose slow, meticulous pace in walking suggests he was the one in command. Captain Payne attempts to give the impression the present situation was not serious.

“Hey, mate, ‘ow about a cigarette?”

“...written over 400years ago?”

The beginning of 1940 went very well for Goebbels, his family, and the Third Reich. The east was secure with Poland totally crushed and the Russians placated with a non-aggression pact. The English and French were either too weak or too timid - or both - to move against them in the west. Intelligence reports revealed that neither of these hated countries could, or even would, move against them for some time....if at all. All this exactly as Hitler had predicted, and all of this exactly what he was counting on.

Power rushed through Goebbels’ body as his secretary’s typing in the next room brought him out of his daydream. “Bettina...?”

No answer.

Goebbels’ thoughts roamed to home. His six children and wife had the house and status he only dreamed of as a youth. The entire Goebbels family was indeed enjoying to the fullest the privilege of his position. Magda, whom he loved and hated dearly, was now starting to take an interest in his work. Her attention to matters of state naturally created problems at first, but now in a very unexpected way began to show real benefits.

As for himself, the small, frail, skinny boy who in school was so often ridiculed, teased, and belittled - was now on top of the Reich. He, as everyone else in Germany knew, that in this year of 1940, being on the top of the Third Reich was equal to being on top of the world.

“Yes, Herr Minister....?” Bettina finally walked in.

“Can you believe,” he questioned while lifting a paper towards her, “Nostradamus wrote this *over 400 years ago?*”

“Nein, Herr Minister.” She remembered hearing about Nostradamus in school and that a few of her classmates seemed excited about his vague and cryptic predictions over the future of mankind penned in the 16th century.

Looking at the medieval text in front of her, she noticed it specified a particular date: September 1, 1939. Goebbels had written ‘Aries = War to start with Germany’.

“Do you think he *really* looked into the future, Herr Minister?”

“...dancing around social niceties...”

“Ahhh....Berlin.” The Countess filled her lungs with cigarette smoke, as if the tobacco helped her remember all the pleasant experiences there. “A wonderful city, I should hope to see more of it.”

Von Wohl interpreted this as a hint of her wish for *him* to be the one showing her more of it. Was she feeling the same attraction as he?

To the Prince, it was obvious the newly introduced couple were getting along fine without him. He nodded to excuse himself then moved on to a group of Austrian businessmen nearby who were waiting for his attention.

“Ta, ta, *Heinrich*” The Countess made it sound as if she was grateful to the Prince for being given a new plaything for the evening.

Von Wohl took two glasses of champagne off a passing waiter's tray and handed one to the Countess.

"Thank-you, Herr Ludwig."

"**My** pleasure Countess."

Both were experienced in flirting by using pronouns, and their mutual attraction had them doing so right away. After dancing around social niceties, innuendos of interest, and hints of how they might spend their time, the Countess finally reached the point where she wanted to know something about the man in front of her.

"....and just what exactly *is it* that you *do*, Herr Von Wohl?"

"He's the expert on Nostradamus"

"I've never met an astrologer before...."

"I never have either, but it appears I may be... very soon." Bettina did not lift her eyes from the photograph in her hand.

"Goebbels is collecting astrologers now?" Maxi looked in the rear view mirror to confirm if she was serious.

"Well, he's not coming here to look at *my* stars, at least I don't think so."

Despite working 14 hours a day for several weeks in one of the most bizarre offices in the Third Reich, Bettina still managed to maintain a sense of humor.

“He’s *the* expert on Nostradamus who will interpret some text that Herr Goebbels is really excited about.” Bettina replied as if the event were nothing unusual. From her nonchalant tone, Maxi wrongly concluded the dark looking man in the photo was merely one more eccentric coming to appease Goebbels’ ever changing list of strange new hobbies - such as tarot card readers, African and Egyptian tools and books on magic, ancient Roman and Greek coins, symbols from ancient Nordic tribes, just to name a few.

“Some passage that Goebbels is *very* excited about.” Bettina repeated. The repetition was still not enough to have it register in Maxi’s trained mind to obtain further information.

Because of Maxi’s deduction that Karl Krafft coming in to work on Nostradamus predictions was just another fad in Goebbels’ office, this information did not appear on Maxi’s next report to London. This omission would later cost the British and French forces thousands of lives, plus prevent the French 5th, 8th, and 12th armies from reinforcing the front lines when the German invasion of France began.

“Uniforms of the World’s Armies: Past & Present”

Karl Ernst Krafft was born on the 10th of May in Basle, Switzerland. Although a Swiss citizen, Karl Ernst was of Germanic origin, with both his mother Anna and father Carl coming from just across the river in Baden-Baden, Germany.

Karl Ernst’s sister, Anneliese, was born into the Krafft family a year after Karl Ernst on September 18, 1901. They were unusually close siblings, to the point that many relatives felt uncomfortable the way the two children seemed to know what each other was thinking - and

what other people were thinking - when the two siblings were together.

Karl Ernst's preoccupation with spiritualism and the occult began long before his university days at the University of Basle, where he officially enrolled on April 23, 1919. Fishing with his grandfather on the banks of the Rhine when he was five years old, is where Karl Ernst experienced his first spiritual vision:

“Grandfather, what kind of uniform is that?”

“What uniform.... where?”

“The strange one that man has on, over there, on the other side.”

Grandfather Krafft looked in the direction where young Karl Ernst was pointing, but saw no one in uniform - only the common clothes of the other fishermen squatting on the opposite bank.

“Hmm.”

Karl Ernst could see his grandfather was becoming cross. The patriarch of the family was a serious man and did not like being made fun of, or to end up on the wrong side of a joke or prank. To change the subject, Karl Ernst sidestepped the conversation back to fishing, the only source of pleasure the old man would admit to.

“Oh, perhaps he took that coat off... what bait should we use *now*, grandfather...?”

The truth was Karl Ernst actually did see a man in an extraordinary uniform, and continued to see him as his grandfather returned to setting his line with new bait. Turning to Anneliese, Karl Ernst noticed her staring at the other side of the bank too. Puzzling Karl Ernst

equally were the fishermen on the other side of the river did not seem to see this huge figure walking amongst them. Not so much as a glance was given towards the tall, completely pale walking statue, whose colorful costume would have turned the heads of hundreds at any parade.

Anneliese glanced at Karl Ernst, then back at the opposite bank. She saw him too.

When the Krafft fishing party returned home that evening, Karl Ernst researched the uniform burned within his memory at his father's library, which contained a large collection of books over military history, equipment, and strategy. In "*Uniforms of the World's Armies: Past & Present*", written by Herr Thomas Titzel in 1899, Karl Ernst learned the uniform he saw was for a Prussian artillery captain, worn in 1879 in the war with France. Anneliese shook her head 'yes' immediately when he turned to the page the image was on.

"Beautiful uniform, isn't it?" His father said in passing to put up his ledger for the Cardinal Brewery, where he was director.

After a few questions about the uniform, brigades, and battles in the Franco-Prussian war, Karl Ernst and Anneliese learned of a battle occurring on the very spot where all three were fishing that afternoon. The battle, taking place in 1879, included a Prussian and French artillery duel lasted for two days, where his great uncle, an artillery captain in the Prussian 3rd Brandenburg Regiment, died.

Chapter 2 - The Man

“Even he never thought of annexing Switzerland”

“But he’s *Swiss* are you *sure* he can be trusted?”

“Every indication shows he *can* be, mein Fuhrer.” The Gestapo captain had learned from the many others before him never to answer Adolph Hitler with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

“And what indications are *those*?” The Fuhrer questioned while turning to look out a recently scrubbed window. His hands were clasped behind his back while waiting for a reply, like a university professor drilling a student for answers he knew long ago.

The Gestapo captain, Hans Zangemeister, took three steps forward and placed a file consisting of several hundred pages on the Fuhrer’s jet black oak desk with gold trim.

“Himmler himself has verified and approved his ancestry. Herr Krafft’s psychological profile shows he prefers Germany - where he has been living the past eighteen years - over his native Switzerland.”

Hitler nodded his head. “So I’ve heard... and what of this warning that he gave, the warning at Bürgerbräukeller?”

“Incredible, mein Fuhrer. Before a meeting of the Berlin Astrological Society on November 2nd, Krafft warned of an attempt on your life between the 7th and 10th of November.” Zangemeister swallowed. He had no idea of Hitler’s reaction by the mention of the 1939 assassination attempt on his Fuhrer’s life. He paused for a moment to see if the Fuhrer’s mood was about to swing. Many times in the past he witnessed how one word could change Hitler’s mood from joyous to absolute rage.

The Fuhrer looked at him with a plain face, as if expecting him to continue. Zangemeister did not however, for it was common knowledge how a bomb exploded in a pillar behind Hitler's speaker platform on November 8th, 1939 on the 16th anniversary of the failed Beer Hall Putsch. With heavy fog preventing Hitler flying back to Berlin, he was forced to go by train, so finished his speech at the Bürgerbraukeller early. The bomb missed killing Adolf Hitler by 13 minutes.

Hitler closed his eyes and took a breath. His hand began to tremble. "Could he have known about the assassination attempt because he was a *part* of the assassination attempt? Why didn't this warning come to *me*?"

"Mein Fuhrer, it was shown he contacted Himmler's offices on November 2nd giving the warning to a Herr Fesel, but somehow this was filed away and forgotten. The Gestapo questioned Herr Krafft extensively and Himmler himself found him innocent."

Hitler had already seen Himmler's report on Krafft's arrest and interrogations. Not known to Zangemeister was that Reichminister Rudolf Hess - also an astrologer - verified to Hitler the planetary positions Krafft found on Hitler's chart - verifying that indeed in the practice of horoscope interpretation - Hitler's personal chart indicated an assassination attempt during this period.

Zangemeister remained at attention, but began to lose his composure. He had never been with the Fuher for this amount of time alone. Does this mean he is in trouble?

After staring out the window for several minutes, Hitler turned around. "Will he fit in the *party*?"

Zangermeister picked up another folder and flipped two pages. "All recorded statements and logs of his activity show he follows the party line. Completely."

"For example..?"

The captain flipped through two more pages.

“For example...” Zangemeister paused while he pulled one page halfway out. “here is a copy of a letter from Herr Krafft dated October 18, 1935 to a Marguerite Panchaud of Stuttgart. He warns her of international freemasonry and Jewry, and that Switzerland would be absorbed by Germany if the Swiss press prints anymore unjustified criticisms of the Party’s actions and policy.”

Hitler laughed to himself. Even *he, Adolf Hitler*, never thought of annexing Switzerland, although in the back of his mind he considered this German speaking country technically already part of the Reich.

Captain Zangemeister could tell by the expression on the Fuhrer’s face the right example was given. Despite the inner joy he had somehow pleased the Fuhrer he remained at attention.

“Tell me Captain,” Hitler now turned facing the captain directly, “what is your impression of this Karl Krafft fellow?”

Zangemeister did not expect such a question. All his previous contact with Adolph Hitler was conducted merely to relay facts, this was the first time the Fuhrer ever wanted *his opinion*. The fear running through every organ did not let him experience the honor of what had just happened. An honor he would tell his wife and certainly his children and grandchildren, should he ever have any.

To answer, the captain’s mind began to rehash all what he had read in the report, and merely reworded the opinions of Himmler, Goebbels, and General Osterkamp.

“I believe he will serve the Reich *well*, mein Fuhrer!”

“Did you see it being delivered?”

A good half an hour before his 11 a.m. meeting with representatives from Hungary and Rumania was supposed to finish, the Count began looking out the huge bay windows. His presence was not actually needed at this particular phase of business being transacted, which was the usual way he conducted business. All factors were already decided before the meeting was even set. In this case his presence was needed to ensure trust on both sides. Count von Hoogerwoerd was the only thing each side had in common, and unknown to both sides, the Count was the only one who was really making profit by their joining together.

The need that brought these representatives to join forces in order to survive was actually engineered by the Count and his son in a business deal seven years earlier in Austria. A business deal creating a problem that only the Count & Prince Hoogerwoerd could solve.

“The execution of the Briest matter will occur on February 12th, and should be concluded by the 15th. Then, gentlemen we will ...”

The Dutch-Hungarian-Rumanian deal was also one that, on the surface at least, would mutually benefit the economies of all three nations - and of course the individuals present. Needed oil from the Rumanian refineries would go to Holland and a major portion of the unreported profits would then go to an obscure operation in Hungary. The Count's Hungarian organization would then assist in the elimination of 14 certain individuals within certain institutions in Budapest who were preventing an even bigger Hoogerwoerd deal in banking from being finalized with factions in Russia.

“Gentlemen,” the Hungarian representative concluded, “I believe we have a satisfactory offer for each of your concerns...if you’ll look on page 11.”

All parties were now nodding their heads with approval. The Count got what he wantedagain.

Looking out the window, Count von Hoogerwoerd noticed an attractive young woman - just ending her teenage years - setting up a flower stand across the street. Even through the window three stories up one could see she was stunningly beautiful, the way many eastern European woman are at that age. She did not look at all the kind of person the Count would do business with.

“Would you gentlemen excuse me for a moment?” The Count bowed to each member before leaving the room.

In a matter of moments the Count was down in the street below looking over the flower stand. “Did you see it being delivered?” The Count asks while appearing to examine the variety of flowers. The question concerned her previous assignment.

“Yes, sir.”

“Did Herr Krafft arrive on time?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good. Kriederman will have your tickets to Warsaw in the usual place. Mail me a post card when you finish.” The Count appears to choose a bunch of flowers. “Then go to Stettin, I will meet you at the Atlantic during the Sea Days Festival.

“Yes, sir.”

“And Milena...”

The young girl reacts in surprise. Never has she heard him utter her name before.

Be neat this time. It's said Moretti's blood was all over the inspector's hallway in Trieste. “Please, use poison, or at least make it look like an accident this time.”

“Yes, sir.”

The girl dipped her head in thanks and gratitude as if this was one of the few sales she had this day, then gave him the mixed bundle of flowers chosen.

“I love you.” She whispered as the Count entered the front door across the street. Like many who worked for the Count, she was completely devoted to her boss, and would kill for him should he request it, which he had done on several occasions.

The Count would never know of her love for him, but he could image her gratitude of being saved from a life of prostitution from one of the most abusive houses in Warsaw where he bought her. It is this type of gratitude that instills devotion, a characteristic the Count demanded, in order to fulfill the types of jobs his ‘employees’ did for him.

As with so many schemes throughout the ages in history devised by the Hoogerwoerd family, this assignment for the dark haired beautiful Polish girl would affect most of the populations within six European countries, yet will never show up in the history books. It would not be until December 22, 1941 at the three week conference named Arcadia in Washington D.C. where Roosevelt, Churchill and their advisors met that the effects of this particular example of the Count's cunning would bear fruit. Yet in only three weeks after young

Milena fulfilled her assignment, the Count would be the only one left alive who had any knowledge or connection with the scheme she was a key player.

Even those who loved the Count were expendable.

"...make sure everything is ready for our guest."

Captain Best Payne was fluent in German, but pretended not to understand a word.

"Has the Luftwaffe been informed of the speed and course of the drop plane?"

"Ja, Herr Schellenberg."

"And the other one...?" Schellenberg asked while looking around. "There were *two* infiltrators seen."

One of the soldiers pointed his rifle at the lifeless body of Sergeant Stephen F. Riley, still lying on his stomach. The dead 22 year old had his eyes still open and a pool of blood was still forming around his head.

"Well," Schellenberg spoke perfect English, "it seems we have some matters to *discuss*, don't we?"

"That we may, general. Now 'ow about that cigarette?"

In good time, *Captain*, in good time." Schellenberg's stressing Payne's rank was disturbing. It suggested he already knew everything about the two British infiltrators and their mission. Payne's mind began racing through every possible person involved his getting here to

determine the traitor or double agent.

"Call Scharz," Schellenberg snapped to a Lieutenant, "tell them we will be there shortly and make sure everything is ready for *our guest*." Again a hint they were expecting Payne.

"Jawohl!"

Schellenberg then looked around the landscape with a beam of satisfaction.

"I believe our work is finished here."

"...the 16th Century text in front of him "

"Coincidence?" Goebbels grabbed the paper back. "Nein, nein! Look at *the year* when you add up the figures he gave....it comes up to 1939!"

"It *is* truly amazing...." Bettina remarked while gliding around the desk, "that anyone who lived so long ago could see the *beginning* of *this* war so clearly." Her stress on the word 'beginning'¹ was put with the hope he would share with her what he must have known if he had the beginning: the prediction for the *end* of this war. But her boss either did not see, or did not want to take the hint and instead changed the subject.

"Do you have a ride home?"

"Yes, thank-you." The question told her several things: one, *he* would not be driving her home tonight, two, he was tired, and three, he was tired of her.

Bettina still wanted to know what the prediction said as to when the war was supposedly

going to end, so she threw out a more direct hint.

"Herr Minister," she whispered while walking to the chair to get her sweater, "if Herr Nostradamus was so precise in seeing the start of the war, do you think the year he gave as the end of the war will also be accurate?" She hoped asking this while slipping back into her sweater in a sexy fashion would make the question at least appear intimate. Secret information not shared with generals sometimes was shared with a secret lover; after all, she already knew many of the things kept from the German High Command as well as lurid details even the highest members of the Nazi Party did not know.

"That might be..." Goebbels eyes were now engulfed in another document before him. The distance in his voice revealed he was not really listening to her and she was finished for the day - and night.

Bettina now had her sweater on and was holding the papers she would have reading for tomorrow's meeting.

"Will there be anything else, Herr Minister?"

She stood and spoke with the same professional manner as she usually did during the day, when the office was filled with a steady stream of Nazi personnel, generals, informants, and other assorted dignitaries and visitors.

"Nein, Fraulein."

"Then goodnight, Herr Minister."

Bettina left the room without realizing some of the very files she was holding had the answer to her questions.

Goebbels did not look up as Bettina went through the huge double doors. His mind was on the 16th Century text in front of him:

Sept fois changer verrez gent Britannique,

Taintz en sang deux, nonnte an,

Franche non point par appuy Germanique,

Aries double son pole Bastarnan.

(Actual Nostradamus verse, translated :)

During the course of 290 years, Britain would change its ruling dynasty seven times. (It did.)

Then, Aries (war) will come between Germany and another Germanic tribe,

The Bastarnan (a tribe living east of the Oder River, present day Poland),

Who will be protected by Britain. (Poland did have a treaty with Britain)

- Nostradamus, Century III, Quatrain 57

Author's note: when 290 years are added to the planetary aspects Nostradamus spoke of in the year 1649, one would arrive at the year 1939 - the actual year war broke out between Germany & Poland.

“Ready?”

His deep, dark set eyes were what most people who met Karl Ernst remembered him by. It is also what attracted his wife to him.

“The train leaves at 15:30.”

Their inner understanding existed at the moment of their first meeting in Prague. From that moment on, what little conversation they had was simply to relay what changes the outside world would have on them, and what they would do to adapt to it. The inner matters were already understood, lifetimes ago.

“Dagmar’s son will watch the house and take care of the plants.”

“Herr Zimmerman will forward the mail to the Kaiserhoff.”

Grandmother Krafft thought there was something about Elaine that reminded her of Krafft’s departed sister, even though the two by appearance were completely different. The spiritual connection was so strong, it nearly destroyed any unpredictable actions necessary in keeping a husband-wife relationship from becoming routine. Sensing his impulse to buy her a flower eliminated any sort of surprise for Elaine, even though such deeds were appreciated.

“Ready?”

“Ready.” The question was more out of politeness than actually wishing to know. In 5 hours after receiving the telegram requesting their presence in the Ministry of Propaganda, the Kraffts were on their way to Berlin.

“...a play that the Fuhrer himself applauded.”

"Have you read today's *Der Zeit!*" Von Wohl answered Countess's question with a question, something he learned from his mother.

"Yes....?" The Countess did read the paper, but apparently did not see or remember the article and photo about Von Wohl and his new play. Noticing his attempt did not work, he quickly tried to cover this failure with an extension of the same method.

"Perhaps you saw the critics review about the play, *Der Knoddel-Brot?*"

"No...*should* have?"

Von Wohl saw the questioning game was over.

"Well, if you *really* wanted to see exactly what I do, then I must find a copy so you may read it. The paper described my work *far* better than I ever could." Von Wohl ended this statement with a muffled laugh. "If the review intrigues you, then perhaps I could personally show you what I do with an invitation to a play that the Fuhrer himself applauded.

"So, you are an *actor?*"

"No, madam.... playwright." Von Wohl bowed deeply, acting as if to apologize for this statement.

"Well, if you are a *writer...*" The Countess notices her husband coming, yet pretended not to see him, "...then you should meet my son, Baron Harais Keun. I think *his* profession will interest you... he's an *astrologer!*"

After saying the word 'astrologer', the Countess turns to look at her husband as if to suddenly notice him. She wanted to see the Count hide his shame - to be reminded, which she

did at every opportunity, that his only son had taken up such a disrespectful career, in his opinion. "Oh...!" She exaggerated her surprise, "I thought you had left with the Rumanian military attaché!"

The Count hid his frown. Succeeding with her emotional stab, the Countess returned to politeness. "Herr von Wohl, let me present my husband, Count von Hoogerwoerd."

The Count could hide his frown no longer, shocked by seeing someone he thought he would never see again. "Ah...urn, actually, we have already met."

Chapter 3- The Work

"Take him!"

Captain Payne wondered why soldiers would take orders from a civilian. The name Schellenberg had a familiar ring, perhaps a name from a history lesson or a past briefing; however his smashed shoulder and sickness of stomach made it difficult for him to remember anything, much less think.

"Take him!" Schellenberg ordered as he began walking to a series of headlights in the distance.

The pain finally overcame the British soldier and he passed out while being escorted to one of the three cars. He did not feel or remember being heaved into the back seat.

"...got a lot closer than anyone in Intelligence had hoped for."

"Schulerstrasse 27, Frau Meyer." Maxi announced while slowing to a stop.

"Danke, Herr Maxi Taxi." Bettina giggled the rhyme giving him the exact fare.

Maxi waited as Bettina rang the doorbell to flat number 14 and was buzzed in. When she disappeared into the spacious hallway, he then headed home only a few blocks away. Taking her to the Schiilerstrasse meant he could get home early, since Bettina - usually his last assignment - actually lived on the far outskirts of Berlin.

Even though driving Bettina to her lover, Otto, instead of her house would be a much smaller fare, it was actually good for his real profession: spying. Her spending the night with

Otto also meant the second half of a selected team would have time to pull as much information out of Frau Meyer as well.

Bettina's introduction to Otto was engineered by Maxi with the intended purpose of Otto and Bettina becoming friends. It turned out Maxi and Bettina got a lot closer than anyone in British Naval Intelligence had hoped for.

The first contact with Otto was successfully done on December 31, 1937 and was made to appear as an accidental meeting. This was relatively easy to arrange since finding a taxi, any taxi, on New Year's Eve in Berlin was next to impossible. Maxi made sure he was available for Bettina when she left a party both men knew she was attending. It was then easy to make Otto appear as the perfect gentleman willing to share the ride on the busiest night of the year.

“Will you introduce me?”

The Count quickly regained his composure. To say they had actually already been introduced would have not been altogether true. But the Count did not want to risk insulting von Wohl by pretending not to know him, in case von Wohl remembered their first meeting and, more importantly, *where* they met.

"Herr von Wohl, pleased to see you *again*." The Count's tone, formal and polite, with a hint that he would like to visit with von Wohl again - but not here and certainly not at this moment.

"Please to *see you* again, Count." Von Wohl replied, as if it were indeed an honor to do so. While engaging in this usual 'formal-dinner-party-conversation', von Wohl desperately tried placing where he had seen the Count before. He could not. Indeed, the Count's face did seem

familiar. *Where* had they met before? Von Wohl could sense the Count's tension beneath the veneer of composure and so moved to change the direction of the conversation.

"I didn't know your son was an astrologer, Countess. Will you introduce me? I would love to interview one who works in such an interesting field. Actually my next play has something to do with the occult, and the truth is, know of no one who practices such mysticism."

The Count's reaction reinforced Von Wohl's perception. This distinguished man was indeed nervous about the current situation. Was it the environment, the subject matter, Von Wohl himself, or the Countess who was the cause? His experience dealing with nobility taught him how to make a graceful exit at the very hint of discomfort, and his intuition told him by asking to meet the son was the way out of this situation.

His intuition was correct.

"Let me take you to introduce him..." The Countess said quickly, finding her way back into the conversation and scanning the ballroom, "...he's over by the punch bowl with that ghastly Italian general."

She nodded and slightly bowed to her husband while simultaneously extending her hand for von Wohl. Her mannerisms making it appear to anyone in the ballroom who noticed that their parting was the Count's idea, or demand.

Normally such a social maneuver to leave him standing alone would have the Count angry with his four-four-year-old wife, who often pulled such stunts to manipulate or belittle him in public. However, in this case the Count felt relieved. Their leaving also eased his immediate nervousness caused by being near the only two people in the world who could easily ruin his life.

"Scientists are two a penny!"

Entering the Humanistic Gymnasium in Basle shortly before his eleventh birthday, Karl Ernst remained there until his graduation in 1919. During this time he showed an unusual talent for mathematics, and had the hope to go to university for a degree in science.

His father was against the idea, arguing a career in banking or insurance offered better long-term prospects financially.

"Scientists are two a penny!" Father Krafft often shouted during a series of many arguments as Karl Ernst neared the end of his secondary school days.

Grandfather Krafft, who built and owned the still standing Hotel Krafft in Obere Rheingasse in Basle, probably would have taken the side of young Karl Ernst in such a family drama. Unfortunately having passed away just three years earlier, the glue and true authority of the Krafft family would not be able to defend and reassure his grandson.

Grandmother Krafft returned to Switzerland after the death of her husband. She was overly loving and too diplomatic to stand up and take sides in any family disputes.

Grandmother Krafft's second child, Albert, became a chemist and left for Germany the day after his graduation. Karl Ernst never met his uncle, who was only spoken of as Dr. Albert. There were no pictures of his uncle on the family table with the other extended family members, and there was never any reason given as to why he departed, why he never visited, where he lived now, or even if he was alive.

Karl Ernst's last year at home was the worst in his life, and was the case for his younger sister Anneliese as well, whose main focus in life had nothing to do with studying the curriculum in school. She was totally captivated by the Sumerian cuneiform writings being brought to the

Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, where she would travel at least once a month to roam the 14 halls covered with displays spanning six millennia. Many of the staff reported she knew more about these ancient writings and could translate them better than Professor Dr. Heinrich Lutz-Martin who curated the museum. Anneliese died of tuberculosis a week after her older brother left for college. Karl Ernst always believed her death was actually her own way of escaping the soul-destroying, oppressive atmosphere of life under Carl and Anna Krafft.

“...he could clearly hear the screams...”

After fourteen hours, Captain Payne regained consciousness and still remained in great pain. A severe chill was now added to his discomfort. In slowly moving his head Payne could see why - he was completely naked. Deposited in a small, windowless concrete room that appeared recently built, the solid grey walls and lack of windows gave no clue of his location.

The sound of distant doors opening and closing brought footsteps to his door, which echoed with the clang of a massive metal keys and a loud click of the lock.

"Ah! Good morning, Captain! I trust you slept well?"

Towering over Payne stood Schellenberg, now in an all-black Gestapo uniform. Struggling to notice the Nazi's rank, Payne's eyes were not yet able to focus on the smaller details of on leather coat. Feeling a strange dryness in his mouth, Payne wondered if he could even speak.

"Come, let us have breakfast together." Schellenberg said while snapping his fingers. Two guards then entered. Both half carried Payne out of the room and down the long dark corridor to the left. He noticed Schellenberg turning in the opposite direction after exiting the cell.

As Payne and his escorts neared a stairwell, the screams of two or three men and women could be heard from the bottom of the steps.

"...what does this passage say about the end of the war?"

Even though he only knew a little French, Goebbels knew the meaning over every word in this particular passage - and especially its significance - thanks to a conversation between himself and Magda had almost two years before.

"...but it works out to be exactly 1939, Joseph....look!"

Herr Goebbels had been in his study working on a speech that was supposed to be delivered to Hermann Goring that evening. However, he learned long ago, to listen to his wife whenever she was excited about something, and Magda was clearly excited now.

"Has this come about by *your* interpretation, *or your interpretation of another* interpretation?" His wife's answer would determine if Goebbels would continue to work on the speech or dive into the idea that appeared to be developing in their bedroom.

Magda sat on their massive medieval bed with a huge red book open and several pages of notes scattered all around her. She ignored Joseph's question as she was all too familiar with his various forms of resistance to her ideas.

"Here...look. These first two lines state during the course of 290 years, Britain would change its ruling dynasty seven times," she referred to another book, "which it did."

"So?"

Irritated she continued, "The ruler of England at the time of this Nostradamus' prediction was Charles the First, who was executed in 1649."

"So?"

"If you add 290 years to 1649 you get 1939 - this passage is talking about a war that is going to happen NEXT year!"

Magda was an honor student in history, so Herr Goebbels did not ask for verification.

"And...?"

"Annnnd the second two lines say that Aries - meaning war - will come between Germany and another German tribe, the Bastarnan, who are a people that will be protected by Britain."

"But what has this got to do with *Poland*^"

"Joseph, in Nostradamus' time, the Germanic group called the Bastarnan, were settled on the eastern side of the Vistula, which today *is* Poland!"

"Jaaa...." Joseph's tone suggested she continue, for although he was beginning to understand, the big picture she obviously saw was still not clear to him...yet. For in his mind was the question Bettina would ask almost exactly two years later.

"So, what does this passage say about the *end* of the war?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" Herr Goebbels began to feel warm. His wife's excitement over some obscure historical fact had taken him away from Goring's speech - which had a deadline. He entered his bedroom with the impression Magda had found a Nostradamus passage predicting the

upcoming war with a Nazi victory.

“But I thought you said we can use this for predicting victory for the Reich!”

“We can....for victory....or *anything* we want!” Magda was the only person in Germany who could cool down her husband when something he expected did not occur exactly as he pictured it. She could was also one of the few people who could do the opposite.

“Dear, we simply release articles with *this* passage, which is authentic and the interpretation can be verified by any expert...*then* we follow this with other Nostradamus passages known to show Germany in a favorable light....also authentic. Done. The headlines can read: *Nostradamus Predicts Nazi Victory.*”

Magda now had her husband’s full attention.

“...one who travels among interesting company.”

The Count kept his eyes focused on von Wohl as he walked off - a look he always gave when sizing up an opponent. *Well*, he thought, *at least that fat little pretender did play along about knowing me.*

As von Wohl and the Countess approached her son, Baron Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd, the Count began to scheme how to meet von Wohl after the ball. The Count had to make sure von Wohl remained non-hostile should the later remember where they had seen each other, if he hadn’t done so already. He headed to a table full of Dutch shipping agents - his employees - to make the arrangements to have von Wohl intercepted before leaving the event.

“Herr von Wohl, I would like you to meet my son,” the Countess said, pulling a young

man away from an Italian general, “Baron Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd.”

Both men gave a respectful bow.

“He will tell you some things about *astrology* I’m *sure* you could use in your next *play*” Her voice seemed to carry throughout the ballroom, acting as an advertisement for her son and von Wohl - as well as herself as one who travels among interesting company. Her performance was also an act to continue her husband’s embarrassment.

Von Wohl’s previous plans for this evening were canceled due to a certain husband not going away on a planned weekend hunting trip - forcing his date to fulfill her marital obligations. His second choice for the evening did not pick up her telephone, so he ended up using a ticket for the yearly Ball given to him by a fan inside the Dutch Embassy. He was now completely satisfied the first two did not materialize.

Three years ago he attended this very same event and was bored stiff. Von Wohl swore he would never attend another, however his attendance to this year’s ball would turn out to be more than an amusing evening, it was an introduction to his lifeline. In a few short months his connection the von Hoogerwoerd family will be the only thread saving his life.

“It was Goebbels’ wife!”

The giant entrance doors to the Kai serhoff Hotel appeared to be in a constant state of opening and closing, spewing in and out a variety of hotel and military uniforms, and various styles of civilian clothes. The mixture of textures and colors gave the impression here is the center of European fashion - and the Second World War.

"Can I help you, sir?"

"No, thank-you, I'm waiting for my colleagues." Dr. Heinrich Fesel had originally been a schoolmaster. He was an accomplished classical scholar and one of the few in the Nazi party who knew Sanskrit. To say he was a colleague of Karl Krafft was stretching the truth, since they had only met once in 1935 at an astrological lecture given by Krafft in Mannheim. Fesel had always been fascinated in the occult since he saw - what he believed to be - his grandmother's ghost when he was 11 years old.

"Very well, sir, perhaps I may get you a chair while you are waiting?"

The hotel porter had noticed the special pin of Fesel's collar, which identified him as being a part of the Foreign Service. The extended offer of superior service was motivated by a fact every worker at the Kaiserhoff knew - that foreigners and those of the Foreign Service gave the best tips.

"No, thank-you, I shouldn't be long."

Recruited into the Foreign Intelligence by Walter Schellenberg, Fesel worked in Section VI of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), and was responsible for Krafft and his wife while they were in Berlin. Fesel, an amateur astrologer very familiar with Krafft's work and family background, were the two factors for his being assigned to watch the famous Swiss astrologer and his wife while they were in Berlin.

Immediately after Fesel had said he wouldn't be long, a taxi coasted up with the expected passengers. He turned and grinned to the porter, who nodded back as if to acknowledge his clairvoyance statement. Fesel walked up the car to greet his guests.

“Welcome Herr Krafft!”

“Thank-you.” Karl Ernst was not expecting a personal welcome, but was also not surprised. He had observed over the years that the Third Reich could be very caring...when they wanted you. “And how are you Herr ?

“Fesel. Dr. Heinrich Fesel. We met once in Mannheim when you lectured our group...but that was a long, long time ago. Please, call me Heinrich.”

“Ah, yes, Heinrich.” Krafft said it as if the name and title jogged his brain into remembering the brief encounter.

“...and this must be Elaine! Madame, you are even more beautiful than the photograph they gave me to recognize you!” Elaine grit her teeth and looked down at the sidewalk. While indeed a compliment, the comment also signaled the party had more than files and photographs of you - and perhaps more information one is not aware of.

“I’m sure you both would like to freshen up, and perhaps have some lunch?”

“Yes, that would be nice.”

“Fine, I’ll make sure the rest of your luggage from the station gets to your room, and then I’ll be back here at two thirty to go over a few things before our meeting on the 17th. Did you get a chance to look at some of the samples we sent you?”

“Yes, *of course*” The answer hinted that even more was done than just looking.

“Good, good! I myself am very anxious to see what you have come up with. You know, Herr Krafft, I am a big admirer of your work!”

“Is that so?”

“Yes, besides having read all your books, I also subscribe to your Economic Bulletin...most intriguing! Your accuracy and insight is truly amazing!”

While it was a tendency for Fesel to flatter his guests - even personal ones in his home - he was playing up to Krafft a bit more than usual for professional reasons. Fesel’s intelligence profile of Krafft had the important bit of information that Krafft tended to be gullible to praise, especially celebrity worship from those interested in his field.

“And I am truly amazed concerning your department...Herr... Heinrich.” All three entered an empty elevator. “Simply a stroke of genius to use Nostradamus as an ally for our cause. Who was it that did that interpretation of Quatrain III, 57 passage?”

Fesel put his hand on Krafft’s arm and leaned in closer. Even though they were alone in the elevator, he whispered the answer as of to stress the secrecy of the matter.

“It was Goebbels’ wife!”

“No !”

“Yes! She was reading the 5th edition of C. Loog’s book just after the outbreak of the war and saw the relationship with the passage!”

“Unbelievable!” Karl Ernst was indeed impressed with Frau Goebbels’ insight, yet at the same time was a bit ashamed he - the renowned expert on Nostradamus - didn’t see the parallel between this passage and the events that occurred on the 1st of September.

“I can understand using the text to place the time, but how did she place Bastarnan as

being Poland?”

“My dear Krafft, one of Frau Goebbels many talents is history. I was told that while reading the passage she was immediately aware of the fact that an ancient Greek writer named Tacitus had described a Germanic tribe called the Bastarnan. They first appeared on the lower Danube around 200 BC, then later settled to the east of the Vistula River, which is present day Poland.

Karl Ernst swallowed his pride as the elevator opened its doors. Walking to his room he then realized the important lesson in this new piece of information: *In order to interpret Nostradamus correctly, understanding the place where an event occurred was just as important as calculating the time of described event.* Timing events was Krafft’s specialty.

When events will happen, were after all, the most often sought after questions people had for astrologers. It was rare indeed anyone ever requested where they would occur. Frau Goebbels had already taught Karl Ernst a valuable lesson.

“Rough day with the Herr Minister?”

Otto already had the door open as Bettina exited the elevator.

“I’m glad you’re still up.” She said, skipping through the huge white door with black trim. The tiny one room flat was in its usual cluttered state, with kilometers of wire and radio parts resting on anything with a flat surface.

“I’m glad you’re off early.” Mimicked Otto in the same tone of voice, as he shut the door behind her. “Are you hungry?”

“Just a little.” Bettina gave her usual reply, meaning she would be happy with whatever was already cooked or convenient, so she could quickly eat and then get to bed.

“I have just the thing!” Otto followed her with a plate of fruit, cream cheese and an assortment of bread slices. Although food was available in Goebbels’ office at any time, she never felt comfortable eating there.

“Rough day with the Herr Minister?”

“No, he’s actually in a good mood...and has been for several days.”

“Hmmm...*That's* rare.”

“No kidding, but enough about work....” Bettina mumbled while finishing a grape, “...kiss me.”

Nothing more was said after they embraced. Usually Otto would go through her briefcase and photograph as much as he could after she fell asleep. But being Bettina demanded his full attention and strength for this evening, he too fell into a deep sleep after they both exhausted each other.

Sex, then, would also be a factor in the lack of British Intelligence’s awareness over what the astrologer Karl Ernst Krafft was working on for the Third Reich.

“...he had seen this part of time before. ”

When Krafft turned six years old, he awoke in the middle of the night with his heart beating faster than he had ever experienced. It was his first nightmare.

The frightening image of being surrounded by dozens of people running by him and Annalise in a panic, rushing away from a fire, remained clearly in his mind long after he awoke and while he had his birthday breakfast.

Exactly ten years later, while he was walking with Annalise to look for his present for his sixteenth birthday, they came upon two SA teenagers in front of Rubin's Department store. The boys were about his age, handing out Nazi flyers and were politely saying, "Remember, this is a *Jewish* business!" to all of the shoppers who were entering and leaving the store. It was a warning.

Karl Ernst Krafft froze. His feelings told him he had seen this part of time before. He glanced at Annalise, since for some unknown reason he knew she would be the next one to speak, using the phrase 'unusual'. She did.

"This is rather *unusual*" She commented.

Inside the store an explosion erupted and suddenly the brass doors of Rubin's flung open with a mob of terrorized clients and salespeople - exactly the scene he had seen in his dream ten years earlier - rushing by him and Annalise.

Both of the SA boys in uniform remained standing out front, smiling.

"What time did she visit you?"

"I saw Oma last night, daddy! Is she still here?"

"Heinrich, you saw *who*?"

"Grandmother! She came into my room to say goodbye, is she still here?"

Dora and Edward Fesel looked at each other. Earlier that morning they had received a telephone call that Dora's mother had passed away last night at 11:50 pm.

“What time did she visit you last night, Heinrich?”

Little Heinrich Fesel thought carefully. He had learned to tell time a few months back, but did not look at the clock when he saw his grandmother, who lived in Bremen, some 200 kilometers away. Then he remembered something.

“She came just after the midnight train came by...”

The “midnight train” was the daily overnight express from Frankfurt am Main to Berlin that usually could be heard off in the distance - if one was awake. Even though it did not stop in their town, it was called the midnight train since it passed their tiny station at precisely 11:45 pm each evening.

“...all this provided courtesy of the Third ReichV”

“So, until 16:00 tomorrow...here?” Fesel said as he clicked his heels to show his intention of leaving them.

“Yes, I'll be waiting here...and, Herr Fesel, thank-you. Thank-you for everything.”

Heinrich Fesel looked directly into Karl Ernst eyes. “Heinrich, please, call me Heinrich...I would be honored.”

“Yes, of course, Heinrich.”

Krafft closed the door, walked over to the window and stared at the breathtaking view the

hotel had of Berlin's center. He reflected what he learned on the elevator over Magda Himmler's assessment of *where* and *who* was involved in the 16th century passage. He made a mental note that despite his expertise of finding out *when* events would happen, he needed to focus also on these two other elements as well.

"Karl, what a beautiful room."

"Yes, and all this provided courtesy of the Third Reich!"

Even though he was considered the foremost astrologer in Europe, his native Swiss compatriots, individuals and institutions, never paid him the respect he felt he deserved. Now he was getting it from Nazi Germany.

Elaine joined him by the window. "Karl, do you think we should tell them...?"

"Ah, I will miss these when I am in France!"

Maxi heard the back door of his taxi open and looking in the rear view mirror saw a rather fat general let a slender, well-dressed woman in first, then plumped in behind her. Cigar smoke began to fill the cab.

"Schulerstrasse 26!" The general barked, as if giving an order to one of his subordinates.

Maxi turned over the engine, heaved a sigh and shifted the car in gear. For the past several nights he had been waiting for Bettina, hoping to pick up one or two more pieces to what Goebbels might be up to. At least this fare would take him near Otto, who might know the whereabouts of Bettina.

"Does schatzie like what she saw?"

“Ja, mein General! When will it be here?”

“You can have it next week, however, my dear, you have to be a good little girl until then.” The cigar went back into his mouth.

“Of course, my general, I *always* obey orders”. The woman said this breaking out into laughter, which caused the general to burst out as well.

Maxi could see both where beyond drunk. Through the rear view mirror he could also see the general’s hands cover her breasts that were pushing up through a low cut gray blouse. The woman looked in the mirror and mocked a flirtatious kiss, as if inviting him to join in as well. Maxi returned the mimicked kiss and shook his head.

“Ah, I will miss these when I am in France!” Muttered the general, as his mouth replaced his hands for contact with the woman’s sizable assets.

Maxi pretended not to hear the comment. He began turning the dial on the radio as if to appear to be occupied with another sound source in case the general suddenly realized his slip. He didn’t, he was too drunk. Or was he acting drunken already aware Maxi was an agent and wishing to plant flash information? Such were the considerations in espionage.

The woman seemed too preoccupied with keeping the wavering cigar from burning her hair and face to give the comment any special attention.

“Schuler strasse 26” Maxi said while turning on the inside cab light, happy to change the topic.

The general tossed up a wad of bills, double the fare. “Keep it.” He said, never taking his eyes off his date. “You are a good driver.”

“Thank-you, Herr General.”

After getting out, the woman turned towards the front passenger window and leaned forward, grabbing the sides of her blouse and bra strap, then began shaking her breasts until they slowly worked their way back into the stretchy material designed to hold them.

“Thank-you, Fräulein...!” Maxie muttered, showing appreciation for the spectacle.

“Schatzie” mocked another kiss blown then caught up with the general.

“The Russians ? The Americans ?”

The Count looked at the paper, then at the young Swede who delivered it.

“You saw *both* of them.... *together?*”

The young man nodded in the affirmative.

The Count set the paper down on the small Louis IX table by the front door. “Good, you can go. Keep your watch then on both of them, let me know immediately the next time you see them both together, whether they actually speak or not.”

The young man nodded, bowed and disappeared.

The Count’s plans for walking on both sides of the fence in this particular scheme appeared to be in jeopardy - especially when two of the eight key players he was playing against each other were speaking. He thought of the possibility these parties were now on speaking terms, and this became his biggest concern. *Where there others playing both sides of this war as well? Where these two supposed pawns working on their own, or for others? If so, who? The*

Russians? The Americans? Neither were in the war.. .yet, but either one could be in the near future.

The Count's influence and power reached and directed just over four hundred associates all over the world, yet each of these individuals was in positions of power and influence as well. At any given time, the Count's influence could be acted upon in any nation on earth. He himself was not a nation, but with his seemingly unlimited wealth, old European banking family contacts influence, astuteness, and political connections - his power was equal, if not more, than any governing body on the planet.

Now it appeared he might have competition.

Chapter 4- The Meeting

"I guess Whitehall knows what they are doing"

"Something hot?"

"General Schmidt-Prange just mentioned he will miss Birgit Witte's tits while he is in France."

"Is he flying or going by car?" Otto asked sarcastically.

"What plane could lift that fat pig off the ground?" returned Maxi. "Get hold of anything recently on your end?"

"Everything and nothing." Otto handed Maxi a sheer thin sheet of paper. "Two of our guys haven't returned to Holland. They left Velno a few days ago to make contact with an RC in Dortmund, who was then supposed to come see us. We're being asked to keep a watch in case they end up here...I have the Oststrasse prison being watched."

“What were these two after?”

“How Hitler is getting information from some kind of special source...or something, that has to do with the occult.”

The thought of Adolph Hitler going to a gypsy with a crystal ball had Maxi release a spontaneous chuckle. “Hitler and a crystal ball....ha....good one!”

“Well, London has a solid lead on it, and I hear even Fleming is puzzled over how Jerry is always one step ahead of us. I guess they are looking at every possibility.”

Maxi finished his beer. “I guess Whitehall knows what they are doing.”

With new and past issues exchanged, his mind returned to his current situation, “Have you seen Bettina? She hasn’t been in or out of the building or at home for several days.”

Although this technically was an intelligence report, Maxi could see there was some emotion behind Otto’s answer of “No, I haven’t....and it’s not like her to not call or leave a note... she at least lets me know when we can see each other next.”

With the current unraveling of events, both Maxi and Otto were becoming more and more concerned about their mission, and their safety. Each had to think before every move and every statement made in public. *Is that a real threat I’m sensing from that person? Does the person looking at me see something that will betray me? Does something in my behavior betray that I am not a citizen of the Third Reich?* No agents have remained in Nazi Germany longer.

Otto walked into the kitchen. Even though their previous thoughts and last discussion was on Bettina, once they were in separate rooms both of their Cambridge educated minds immediately went to Goebbels, Himmler and others of the Nazi state which was their job to

track. Was the Third Reich really using the stars and occult to win the war, or find British agents?

Why was it that London, or anyone else, could never pinpoint why the Nazis were having military success after success... and why Fleming's teams were getting picked up one after another throughout Germany?

“Welcome to project Dark Fire!”

Through the large street level windows in the lobby, Krafft saw Fesel's car pull up. There was another man with him and a driver, both of whom were in uniforms, Kraft walked up as Fesel opened the door.

“Please, come in!”

“Thank-you... Heinrich.” Krafft spoke softly, honoring Fesel's earlier request to be on a first name basis.

Fesel beamed with pride. In Germany, to be on a first name basis suggested the two men shared a history together and it was Krafft's history that Fesel wanted - to steal. He was also proud the others in the car noticed this symbol of familiarity, for he had told his entire Dark Fire department how he had met - with the suggestion that he had worked with - the great Karl Krafft in Mannheim years ago. At least for now, this twisting of the facts appeared to be true. His plan was working.

“Herr Krafft, may I introduce you to Captain Strobel and Sergeant Meyer.”

“Guten tag.” Said both of the uniformed men simultaneously. Krafft lowered his head

giving a quiet greeting and acknowledgement no one in the car could quite make out.

“Sergeant, please, drive to Lucht’s first.”

“Georg Lucht?” Krafft said, surprised. He hadn’t heard the name in years, and had often wondered if his old friend had been arrested, died, or simply disappeared on his own.

“Yes.” said Fesel, unaware Lucht and Krafft had a history despite the huge personal files and profiles he had at his disposal. “You might be surprised who else we have here in Berlin as well.” Fesel however, did not mention any other names.

They headed east for about 20 minutes into a new area of Berlin Krafft had never seen, or heard of. The car stopped in front of the warehouse where a truck was out front unloading what appeared to be printed materials. Georg Lucht came out of the opened loading bay and walked quickly to the car carrying a light brown briefcase. Fesel opened the car door.

“Come in, come in.” Fesel said happily as if eager for a long awaited party to start.

“Georg, may I introduce to you my good friend, Karl Krafft!”

Karl Ernst had mixed feelings. He was overjoyed to see his longtime friend, yet was a bit taken at the face of Georg, who appeared to be hiding a great anger. Krafft was also taken aback at how Fesel had said ‘my good friend’ as if they were childhood friends, college roommates, war buddies, and co-workers all rolled into one.

“Hello, Herr Krafft, nice to finally meet you... I have studied much of *your work* and am very impressed.” Lucht said, as if knowing of Krafft, but never having the chance to meet him personally.

“Guten tag, Herr Lucht, the honor is mine, I have studied much *of your work* as well.”

Krafft's intuition told him to play along with the charade of these two good friends not knowing one another.

Why did Georg Lucht feel the need act in such a way? Krafft's mind raced over the possibilities. Krafft then planned for the next chance he and Lucht could speak to one other without Fesel and the Third Reich around.

The car drove for about twenty minutes back to the center of Berlin and finally stopped in front of a huge grey building that appeared at first glance to be an automobile factory. One garage door then suddenly flung open and the driver slowly eased the black Mercedes inside.

"Gentlemen," Fesel announced, "Welcome to project Dark Fire! My contribution to the war effort of the Third Reich!"

"So I'm Aquarius...and what does that mean?"

Baron Harais Keun Hoogerwoerd did not look up as Ludwig von Wohl entered the room. He appeared completely different than when von Wohl had seen him at the party the week before. Instead of the elegant tux with all the official ribbons and medals of Dutch royalty, here was a man in an extremely worn, grey turtleneck sweater and black casual slacks. The Baron better resembled one of the many poor university students than the few wealthy aristocrats still left in Europe.

Even though Ludwig had an appointment, the Baron continued reading while making notes and still did not look up for over two minutes - but von Wohl knew exactly how to handle royalty when it appeared they were playing the psychological 'you wait for me' game.

“Perhaps I’m a bit early, shall I come back at a later time... .or would it be best to wait outside?”

Baron von Hoogerwoerd looked up. “Oh, forgive me, I was all wrapped up in your horoscope.. .I didn’t notice the bell.. .did Gert let you in?” The Baron looked at the clock on the wall, while lifting himself out of the chair. “My goodness, it *is* five already! Would you like some coffee, tea, or perhaps a bit of *something* to start the evening off with?”

“If you mean a drink, I’d love one.” Said von Wohl, relieved the Baron now acted with the same politeness and openness as he did when they met at the Holland Ball.

“G-e-r-t?” The Baron called out, stretching the name so it took three full seconds to say.

“Y-e-s?” Echoed an answer from down the hall with the same intonation.

D-r-i-n-k-s (pause) P-l-e-a-s-e.” Von Wohl could see that the Baron was imitating his servant’s speech pattern, not in a way that was condescending, but rather in an attempt to simply better communicate.

“Y-e-s (pause) S-i-r.” Gert replied in perfect rhythm.

The Baron looked von Wohl, then at the open door to the hallway, back to von Wohl and smiled.

“A nice man, really - got one in the head during the first war. His family have been taking care of the house and garden for six generations.”

Ludwig shook his head understandably.

“Now,” the Baron said in a voice a voice that meant a change of subject and on to business, “let’s get on with why you are here... .please, have a seat.”

Ludwig sat down in one of the large, comfortable easy chairs facing the Baron's desk, which was cluttered with books and papers. The Baron then leaned over and handed him a large sheet of paper with a circle drawn on it, which was divided into what appeared to be twelve pizza slices.



Ludwig von Wohl alias Louis de Wohl

“Well.....is it *good* or *bad*” Asked von Wohl, as if he did not know his own life.

“Ludwig,” The Baron whispered softly, “remember at the Ball I told you good and bad are not things interpreted in a horoscope. I will merely describe characteristics and tendencies - how you decide to *use* these qualities is what will determine good or bad.”

“Fair enough. OK. Then please tell me about my *tendencies*”. Von Wohl allowed his curiosity on the subject to hide any skeptical feelings he had about the Baron's horoscope.

“Well, first, we say you are an Aquarius since at the moment of your birth, from our perspective on earth, the constellation behind the Sun was the sign of Aquarius. You also have several other planets in Aquarius as well.” The Baron then walked around in front of his desk and pointed at several of the odd looking symbols within the pizza slice that was numbered seven

on von Wohl's chart. "As you can see, you have Mercury, Venus and Jupiter in Aquarius as well".

"So I'm Aquarius....and what does that *mean*?"

"The meaning comes by putting *all the tendencies* together to get a description, which are found in the signs the other planets are in, for example, .. here, for example, the Moon, this describes your emotional tendencies, nature, and what kind of women you are attracted to."

This should be interesting, thought von Wohl, for he knew himself well enough to know he was attracted to nearly any women who had one or two features he desired. As for anything on an emotional level, he needed none of that, he was not one to get involved.

"In your case," the Baron continued, "the Moon was in Sagittarius when you were born, suggesting an emotional attraction with Sagittarius... and your past transits show there perhaps have been at least two or three very serious relationships with this sign."

Ludwig von Wohl was speechless. Suddenly a parallel of realization filled his mind that was never seen before. The only three loves he ever had in his life - as different as all three were - actually *did* have something in common: birthdays in the month of December!

His mother, Eva, was born on December 14th. At the age of 12 his first love was a Magdalena Roth, who was born on December 3rd. But perhaps most amazing, the woman whom he had blocked out of his mind for nearly the past 12 years, Kristina Koch - the first woman ever to break his heart, was born on December 10th.

"Do you mean the Moon describes what I want emotionally?" Asked von Wohl, not letting on the Baron's remark about the women in his life was 100% correct.

Before the Baron could answer, Gert walked in with two short glasses alongside several different types of bottles, all balanced on a silver tray. He placed them on the Baron's desk, turned, and left the room without saying a word.

"Thank-you." The Baron spoke in the elongated speech pattern while taking a glass off the tray and handing it to von Wohl.

"Scotch, Bourbon, Gin, or would you perhaps, prefer to drink something else?" The Baron asked, lifting one of the clear unmarked crystal bottles that appeared to have the most content left in it.

While von Wohl did in fact want a drink, he wanted the answer to his question even more. However, he didn't want to ask the Baron again to describe his emotional nature, for it might allow the Baron to know a nerve had been hit. A bull's eye, as a matter of fact.

"Gin would be fine, just fine." Von Wohl exhaled while answering.

The Baron poured from the bottle that he already held in his hand, as if he already knew which would be von Wohl's choice. He then poured himself a glass and continued talking about the meanings of the various planets and how these related to von Wohl's character and tendencies.

Nearly everything he said concerning von Wohl's life was accurate. The Baron also made a reference that by forces beyond his control, his identity had been changed, the result of which elevated his standing in society - a generalized statement describing perfectly the school's error that created his 'von' title.

Ludwig debated everything the Baron pointed out. *Did the Baron actually see all these things in his horoscope, or did this wealthy individual with a strange hobby have private investigators fan out all over Berlin to find out all they could on von Wohl? But how could they*

find, or even know of the women he had loved? How could they find a clerical error buried at his old school's records that even the school's own headmasters were not aware and even if they did this, how could they do all this in just a week? "Impossible!" Ludwig thought to himself. No one could have possibly known about Magdalena Roth, his first love, which was a secret only he knew.

There must be something to this. Von Wohl realized and stared at the map of the sky drawn up as it appeared at the moment of his birth.

"Baron," Von Wohl whispered, "I have a request."

"Yes...?" The Baron replied, almost as if elongated when talking to Gert.

"Will you teach me how to do this... astrology?"

"I'm sure we can work something out..." The Baron replied while looking over some papers on the other side of his desk. "When would you like to perhaps start?"

"Right now."

"I'll even tell Churchill what you 've just told me... "

"Well, Captain Best Payne, did you sleep well?"

The British captain did not recognize the man who was questioning him. Payne then realized he was bound in a chair, the only piece of furniture in a small musty cell, and a strong, single light hung directly above him. For some unknown reason, his eyes hurt in a way he never felt before.

"Would you like some coffee, perhaps?" The man asked as he nodded to a guard, who

then left the room.

Payne did not answer. He was still naked and angry at being so. Also, the memory of being marched around the building in such a condition compelled him to be totally uncooperative. He was now dealing with the shock this seemingly young and extremely skinny man somehow knowing his first name. The Germans obviously had more on him than he realized when he was captured. How long ago *was* that?

The guard returned with a mug of coffee, and with a nod from the man doing the questioning, went towards Captain Payne and handed it to him.

“Would you like anything with your coffee?”

“Yes, my clothes.” Payne sighed, finding the opportunity to vent his feelings, but knowing this request was probably useless.

“Oh.. .yes. Your clothes.” The man acted as if it took Payne’s comment to notice. “Well, you see, your clothes are being analyzed for foreign material - strictly a military procedure - I assure you. It is not often that we have one who declared war on us crossing our border from a neutral country for a visit. If you wanted to come to Germany so bad, why didn’t you just apply for a visa at the border? As it stands now, you have certainly complicated what would have been a very simple matter.”

Payne didn’t like the man’s sense of humor, or his appearance, now that his sight was returning and could get better look at him. The man had hair that appeared to be artificially colored and curled, and eyebrows that were penciled in. Best Payne also didn’t like the fact he was cold and humiliated, and it appeared this man, who was in civilian clothing, wasn’t going to do anything about it. The British captain decided to make his clothes the only issue of any

further conversation. He let the guard keep his arm extended with the coffee and said:

“You asked if I wanted anything with the coffee - if you don’t have *my* clothes, then I would like *some* clothes.”

The guard pulled his arm back which held the coffee, it seemed that he understood English, or at least the intent of what Payne just said.

“Of course, of course!” The man said loudly and dramatically, as if being on a stage, “We requested some while you were sleeping, and they should have arrived by now. Corporal, would you please go and check if the clothes we requested for Captain Payne have come in. I believe it was gray shirt and brown pants are for him.”

The corporal handed the coffee to the man in civilian clothing, who Payne named the Painted Man.

“Some coffee?” The Painted Man asked while the corporal left.

“I’ll wait until the clothes arrive.”

“Very well. Now let us talk about you visit Germany. You know, you entered a very dangerous area, you could have been shot’.

“Like my colleague?”

“Oh the Sargent- Sargent Riley - was it? Unfortunately he fell into a most undesirable circumstance. It seems he was going for his gun when he should have kept lying down with his face in the mud as you did.”

Now Payne’s dislike for the painted man reached a crescendo, for spiteful arrogance was one of the characteristics Payne despised most in a personality. The Painted Man in front of him

appeared to have this quality in spades and in a very warped way. As the Painted Man bent down to put the coffee on the floor, Payne noticed a Gestapo pin that was hidden by his coat lapel, which flapped down as he leaned forward. He also noticed the man had bum patches all over the left side of his neck and head.

“Such things happen in war,” the Painted Man continued seeing Payne stare, “and so does the occurrence of prisoners, which brings us to you.” Payne remained silent. “The Fuhrer has pointed out in countless speeches that Great Britain is not a natural enemy of the Third Reich.”

Payne tilted his head to the right and looked down at his bare toes wiggling, as if to point out that clothing was still an issue. However the Painted Man continued his political monologue. “There had not been one act of aggression by Germany to the British Empire, not even to one British citizen, and yet you have declared war on us! Why is that so?”

Payne turned his head and looked at his other toes, which he wiggled also. He was relieved the Painted Man apparently was more concerned with Hitler’s policy than what his mission was in Nazi Germany, at least for now. He didn’t know which was worse, being a prisoner, being humiliated, or listening to the Painted Man preaching Nazi propaganda.

“But you have chosen to be against us, and that is sad, very sad indeed.”

Just then the corporal entered with a neatly folded, but very worn, pair of pants and shirt, both of which were handed to Payne.

“Oh, your clothes have arrived! How nice! You will forgive me if they do not fit as well as we would like, unfortunately we do not have a tailor on duty with us as you probably do in England.”

Payne put on his new clothes while both men watched intently. He felt both of them were

thoroughly enjoying his humiliation. Once his clothes were on, the Painted Man tilted over to pick up the mug of the coffee - which was now cold - and handed it to Payne, who now accepted it and took a sip.

“There! Now a true spirit of co-operation is beginning to develop!” The Painted Man almost shouted, looking over to the corporal.

In a pig's eye! Payne thought to himself.

“Corporal, I think that will be all.” The Painted Man motioned to corporal, who clicked his heels and departed.

“Oh, Captain Payne! What a tragedy we had to meet under such conditions! To think if your government would have simply let us solve the Polish problem and leave it at that, our peoples would not be in this unpleasant situation. We might have accidently met in a Paris cafe, exchanged some old war stories from the last war. Instead, I now have to lock you in a cage, like an animal.”

“Well, we still might have that chance to meet in Paris.” Payne shot back.

“Ha!” The Painted Man shouted with a hint of anger that Payne had interrupted his monologue, “The captain has a sense of humor! Good! Very good! I like that, oh, I *really* like that!”

“I’ll even tell Churchill what you’ve just told me, and see if we can call this whole war off.” Payne said with a straight face. He was surprised how weak his voice was and wondered if his lack of food, the cold, or the fact he was a prisoner - or all three - was the cause of it.

“Excellent!” The Painted Man seemed beside himself. “I’m sure we will get along just

fine, Captain! You know, I have been studying your profile - and we have a lot in common, you and I, yes, we do!”

“Such as?”

“Well, you seem to like visiting the Purple Unicorn in Venlo, and you know, that place is one of my favorite taverns too when *I* go to Holland!”

With the mention of this bar in Holland, Payne suddenly realized the Germans somehow must have known of his mission even before he left England.

. just as Hitler had predicted”

A door slamming down the hall of the Reichstag brought Goebbels out of his reminiscent daydream. Genius. The woman was indeed, at times, a real genius.

It was now 2:40 a.m. as Goebbels looked up from the passage that would create a new direction in his propaganda agenda. Nostradamus, thanks to his Frau Goebbels, would now be a tool used by the Nazi war machine to manipulate the minds of enemy population. He loved the idea of using this great Frenchman against his own people and was certain Hitler would too. Since last night’s conversation he began to see other ways to use these allegorical and mystical lines than just demoralize the enemy civilian and military populations into believing their loss was inevitable.

Most of the lights were now out in the Reichstag. Goebbels pushed aside the mountain of papers that needed to be done by tomorrow and picked up the phone.

“Ja?” On the other end, Lt. Schiller’s voice snapped with obedience even asking a

question.

“Get my car ready.”

“Jawol, Herr Minister!”

Goebbels put down the phone and took one last look around his office. He made a metal note of what needed finishing by tomorrow and what could wait.

Except for several sea engagements, there was none of the feared major land or air attacks from Britain or France - just as Hitler had predicted. But how did the Fuhrer know this?

After the fall of Poland, most of the fighting was actually done with propaganda, which meant Joseph Goebbels was in the center of the war in at the start of 1940.

His schedule was completely full; planting misinformation for the allies, painting the designed picture of what Hitler wanted the German people to hear, and most important, presenting the right image to keep the neutral countries out of the way until their neutrality was no longer needed - or until it was their turn to fall. This was the height of the propaganda war - a worldwide propaganda war - and he was principal player.

Tomorrow not only held another full schedule, but promised an important meeting with the Fuhrer as well. As he left his office he began to wonder if it were possible to use Nostradamus in order to have *a tactical military impact* during the upcoming invasion of France. Could such propaganda be used to confuse the allies so they, for example, would move to the wrong place when the attack came?

Perhaps Magda would have an idea on how using the occult could gain an actual military advantage. An idea he could then present to Hitler and get credit for.

Chapter 5-The Plan

“...missing the explosion by some 40 minutes.”

“Yes, yes, I’m sure he would serve the Reich well,” Hitler said patiently, “but his *work*, what is your impression of his *work*?”

Captain Zangermeister now felt the fear return to his throat. Karl Krafft’s work was astrology - what could *he* say about astrology? Personally, Captain Zangermeister did not believe in astrology, however knew many in the higher positions of the Nazi Party did. Hess, for example was known to be quite an amateur astrologer himself. Did Hitler believe? No one knew, and that was the problem - how do you answer Hitler over a question on astrology if you don’t know if he even believes in it or not...? (Hans, like many close to the Fuhrer, always prepared their answers in contemplation of what they *thought* Hitler *would like* to hear.)

Hans mind raced through past known facts and logic. Logic - the force that always saved him during his school years, both in and out of the classroom.

Why would the Third Reich be enlisting the services of this well-known astrologer if there weren’t something relevant about his work? The Captain reasoned in his mind. *Wouldn’t such activity have at least Hitler’s approval?*

The Hans reflected on his personal relationship with the Fuhrer. Would the Fuhrer be insulted or angry if he said what he really thought about those who practice this hocus pocus, as his father once called it?

Again the files in front of him would help the Captain give an answer.

“He did contact Dr. Fesel’s department on the 2nd of November in 1939 with a warning that the Fuhrer’s life would be in danger from the 7th through the 10th of that month....”

Zangemeister began.

Hitler was looking at the painting of Fredrick the Great on his wall, expressionless.

“So, I’ve heard.” The Fuhrer finally said.

The warning turned out to be true, for on November 9th, 1939, an assassination attempt was actually made on Hitler’s life, while he and the other members of the old Nazi guard attended the traditional annual reunion at the Burgerbran Beer Hall in Munch to commemorate the 1923 Putsch attempt. The memory of which, was still fresh in the Fuhrer’s mind.

“He actually used the phrase: *“Possibility of an assassination attempt by use of an explosive material”*. This fact even impressed the skeptical Captain, for it was indeed a bomb hidden in a pillar directly behind the speaker’s rostrum that exploded, killing seven and wounding sixty-three others.

“So I’ve read.” Hitler’s voice gave no indication if he had read the warning before or after the 9th of November. The Fuhrer’s voice suggested the Gestapo captain should continue, however what he should continue *with* - the Captain did not know.

He flipped through some more pages.

“We have copies of all his horoscope analysis work as far back as March 1924...”, again halfway pulling out some papers, . .and his record for accuracy is impressive”.

“So, I’ve been told.” Hitler turned to gaze out the window and took a long, deep breath - as if he was just about to make a very important decision. It appeared to the Captain that by looking out over the twinkling lights of Berlin, his master somehow became rejuvenated.

“Thank you, Herr Captain, that will be all for today.”

Hitler’s eyes followed the pulsing city lights to the horizon, which seemed to merge with the stars beyond-also flickering in the same rhythm. It seemed at this moment he could feel and see the connection between the lights in the heavens and those in his beloved Berlin. “Ah, there *is* a connection.” He said out loud, but no one was there to hear him.

“Goebbels wants Nostradamus material for propaganda...”

“You will be more impressed when you find out what we have in here.” Fesel continued. “You see those two rows? d//Nostradamus materials. All of them originals. The other rows over there? Interpretations and analysis of his works from all over the world! We, of course have all your books, articles, and *thoughts* on the subject as well, Herr Krafft.”

“I am impressed and honored.” Said Krafft, although the way Fesel had stressed the word ‘thoughts’ gave an uneasy chill.

“We of course have all of George Lucht’s works. Don’t *we*, Herr Lucht?”

Lucht smiled politely. “All that I have published.. .and more.” Lucht glanced at Krafft sternly when Fesel was not looking.

Two men in white lab coats appeared and opened the car doors. Captain Strobel and Sergeant Meyer excused themselves and walked over towards a small office with a large window about 30 meters from the car. Three other people were inside all wearing the same white lab coats along with one beautiful redheaded woman, whose figure could be made out despite the lab coat and the distance.

Fesel noticed his guests extended glances toward the office. “We’ll meet the rest of the

staff later,” he said, “but first I have something I want you both to see, and to get started on - right away!”

Fesel led Krafft and Lucht over to a large table near the rows of Nostradamus materials that Fesel had pointed out earlier. On it was an oversized book with a red velvet ribbon marking an open page. A particular passage was circled with a red marker:

Transltera en la Grande Germanic,

Brabant & Flandres, Gand, Bruges, Bonlongne,

La traisue sainte, le grand ducd Armenie

Assaillira Vienne & la Coloigne

Author’s note - Actual Nostradamus text, translated:

He will transfer into great Germany

Brabant and Flanders, Ghent, Bruges, Boulogne,

The truce feigned, the great Duke of Armenia,

Will assail Vienna and Cologne.

- Book of Centuries V, Quatrain 94

“You both are familiar with the passage?” Asked Fesel, looking first at Krafft, then over to Lucht. Both men nodded to the affirmative.

“Goebbels wants Nostradamus material for propaganda,” Fesel proclaimed, ‘Whe has

the feeling such material can *also* be used to create a positive *tactical* situation for the army. Our beloved Minister believes *this* passage, when interpreted correctly, can affect the outcome of a future military operation, and this is where you gentlemen come in.”

“Good evening, mein Fuhrer.”

Besides being a pivotal point in Hitler’s life, the 1923 Putsch attempt was also the subject of the first published astrological warning related to Hitler’s horoscope. In the spring of 1923, Frau Elsbeth Ebertin from the northern city of Hamburg - one of Germany’s most popular astrological journalists - received a letter from one of Hitler’s many enthusiastic supporters with the request she cast the party leader’s horoscope. In Frau Ebertin’s article, published 4 months before the November Putsch in her monthly magazine, she wrote:

“The man of action, born on 20 April 1889, with the sun 29 degrees Aries, can expose himself to personal danger by an excessively incautious to show that he is to be taken very seriously - indeed he is destined to play a ‘Fuhrer-role ’ in the future political battles, of his own, andfor Germany. He is also destined to sacrifice himself for the German nation, even in the matter of life and death, for he has been significantly marked by courage in his past”

(Author’s note: History has shown us that Frau Ebertin had never heard about the National Socialists - or even Hitler himself - at the time of casting his horoscope and writing the above descriptions, which occurred three months before the article was published. For in May of 1923, Hitler’s *volkich* movement in Bavaria was relatively unknown outside of southern Germany.)

Both Goebbels and Goring were especially impressed Frau Ebertin mentioned that Hitler was significantly marked by courage in his past, which also was an accurate description:

Hitler had won the Iron Cross for bravery during the First World War.

While never mentioning whether or not he was impressed with the accuracy of Frau Ebertin's profile, Hitler immediately used the description of him being destined to play the "Fuhrer-role" (Leadership-role/position), in future political battles. From that moment on, he began having his followers address him as their Fuhrer - leader of the party - which continued when he became leader of Germany as well - making yet another of Frau Ebertin's predictions come true.

Hitler walked out of his spacious office and into a side room, which often served as his second home, and retreat - from the problems of the world as well as from his inner circle.

"Good evening, mein Fuhrer." Cooned a voice from the couch that also folded out into a bed. "Are you working late *again?*"

"Yes, Hans Mauss and several of my generals will be here at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow..." Hitler appeared to want to say more - but did not.

"Well, its 3:30 am now.. .you probably could get more sleep if you would just stay here tonight, you know."

Only three other people were even aware that this teenaged girl and Hitler knew each other, and of those three, not one knew of their involvement. It's been the Nazi Party's - and history's - best kept secret.

"Yes, Yes, that is an old Hollandisher trick...'"

If the Painted Man was aware of Captain Payne's mission while he was at the Purple

Unicorn in Venlo, the point of his last briefing, then it was clear the British Captain was found out and expected even before he left England. It may even be the Germans knew about it months before while in training for this mission outside of Salisbury.

“Did you enjoy the food in Venlo?”

“Yea,” Payne’s thoughts returned to the current situation, “Loved the fact they give you free bread with your beer.”

“Yes, yes, that is an old Hollandisher trick by the way, there’s a lot of sea salt in their bread, you see.. .makes you thirsty so you order a third, fourth, and fifth beer.”

Several thoughts were happening in Payne’s mind at once, and by looking away from the Painted Man was the only way he could try to collect and organize them. It seems the Painted Man had indeed been to the Purple Unicorn, automatically making this British safe house ‘not safe’ at all. *Come to think of it*, Payne thought, *the bread was salty*. Further reflection had Payne note he did have three beers while there... or was it four? Was the British contact who briefed him there really working for the Nazis?

“Now, let’s look at all the people you talked to at the Purple Unicorn,” the Painted Man began, “there was Herr Heckler, Herr Hoogerwoerd, Frau Sieman, and of course my favorite lady there, Frauline Stover...”

A shiver went through Payne. If the Nazis knew these people, or if there was the possibility any one of them being a double agent - British operations in Holland were severely compromised.

“I really don’t remember who I talked to...” Payne answered, acting like his physical

misery had affected his mental capability. *Did the Painted Man already know whom I spoke with, or was he asking because he really didn't know?*

“Oh, Captain, please...” The Painted Man said while turning his back to Payne.

“No, really, I was drunk... five beers, remember?”

“I see.” Suddenly the Painted Man’s right arm raised as he turned back towards Payne, and out of the corner of his eye, Payne could see a bludgeon, which came creasing down on the top of his head. The pain was excruciating.

“Do you think we are *stupid!*” The second blow landed to coincide with the word he stressed. “Do you think I have *time* for such talk and... *games?*” The third and fourth blows came on the stressed words as well.

Payne’s entire head felt numb. What sight had slowly come back were now hundreds of tiny white dots seemingly blurring his vision. He closed his eyes as the hits were repeated, each one on a stressed word the Painted Man yelled - his shouts becoming louder and louder - with his voice and strikes becoming more and more out of control.

“I know *when* you arrived in Holland! I know *what time* you got up each morning while you were there. I know everyone you *talked* to there! I know what you talked *about*. I know who you were supposed to *see* here in Germany! I have the *papers* you sent to Belgian!

Suddenly the Painted Man stopped the yelling and beating, then turned towards the door and leaned over to catch his breath. A few moments later he turned towards Payne and appeared to take on a totally different personality.

“Let us start over. I really don’t want to continue with such a procedure. After all, I am

only following orders... .and as a fellow soldier, certainly you understand I must obey. Actually, I prefer not to engage in such barbaric behavior. There's no point. We already know everything about you, your mission, your contacts.. .and even all the pretty little Dutch girls you slept with. But don't worry, I won't tell your wife. I don't want to ruin your life. I only want a few answers.”

Payne could only feel numbness; he could barely hear these words above the ringing that was resonating in his head from the blows.

“The war is over for you. Relax. You've already done your duty, just tell me one or two little untied ends so we can put all this to rest.”

The Painted Man's words began to have a certain kind of logic to Payne, or maybe just these comments were a relief since the hammering had stopped.

“Just tell me on little, tiny thing,” the Painted Man said while slowly starting to raise his right arm to deliver another blow, “and everything will be alright, okay?”

Payne, now half-conscious, nodded his head and the Painted Man's arm slowly went down.

“Good, now, Captain Payne, why did Herr Hoogerwoerd tell you not to enter Germany until the new moon?”

“So Stalin will be the master of Europe?”

“How can this passage be used to assist in a military operation?”

“We can’t go into details now, for both of you still need to complete the final stages of our security checks.” Fesel noticed the discomfort on both men’s faces. “Please,” he quickly added, “nothing personal. You know how it is with a war on and everything. I had to go through it myself, as did everyone else in this department.”

Krafft glanced over at the small office to notice the redheaded woman pass by the window. He wondered what information was found on her security check.

“After all,” Fesel continued, “you both are now working on a very sensitive piece in a much bigger plan that will be key in the outcome of the war.”

“Why was this particular passage chosen?” Asked Lucht, as if finally joining the group’s conversation.

“Goebbels feels the places mentioned are of great significance for our purpose, however no one can put them in the correct context. That is why we are here now.”

Krafft and Lucht both leaned over the book for a second look of all the places mentioned;

He will transfer into great Germany

Brabant and Flanders, Ghent, Bruges, Boulogne,

The truce feigned, the great Duke of Armenia,

Will assail Vienna and Cologne.

Both were familiar with the passage, but now with the purpose of using this Nostradamus passage to help the Nazi war machine put a different meaning into text.

Krafft and Lucht had come from completely different backgrounds and education in

astrology, and almost immediately both had thoughts on how to use it, but in very different ways.

First, both could agree that *Grande Germanie* could only mean Gross-Deutschland (Greater Germany, or all lands with German speaking people), for in January of 1940 she certainly was as Germany had the largest amount of landmass under her control in her entire history.

It was also obvious to both men that *Branbant, Flanders, Ghent, Brugers, and Bologne* (parts of France and Belgian) were probably the areas on where Germany would be attacking next (which as a historical fact the Germans indeed do so, bypassing the Maginot Line).

However, the rest of the passage made no sense at all. Who could be the Grand Duke of Armenia, and why would he attack Vienna and Cologne?

Fesel interrupted the thoughts of both men. "Gentlemen, any thoughts?" After a few moments of silence, he rechanneled his question. "What was your past interpretation of this passage?"

Krafft's first impression of this passage was already common knowledge, since he wrote about this passage in several of his many books on Nostradamus as far back as 1929. In "Teuto-Nostra-Zukunft (Germanic - Nostradamus - Future), he proposed:

"the Grand Duke was Arminius chief of the German tribe of the Cherusci, who defeated three Roman Legions in the Teuroburgian forest in 9 AD. "

Krafft had broken tradition of Nostradamus predictions in this case and made Armenie an actual person rather than a place. By making the "Duke of" the name of a person certainly made this text work, for there was an actual person in history which made this interpretation 'fit'.

However, after the pep talk from Fesel, Krafft began to see a new possibility.

“The Grand Duke is the Fuhrer!” He half whispered to himself. An expression of shock came over Lucht. Fesel himself appeared surprised, but at the same time seemed pleased that someone in this group was beginning to see this passage in a way that applied to current events.

Kraft went on as if unconscious, streaming from a trance-like state. “The Fuhrer, and only Fuhrer, could be thought of as the ruler of Gross-Deutschland, who sent his armed warriors to the Rhineland in March 1936, and thus *Cologne*.” It was as if he had been pulled by the spirit of the Third Reich, and could take any phrase by Nostradamus and march it to the beat of the Nazi propaganda line.

“It was the Fuhrer who also went into Vienna, when he occupied Austria in March of 1938. It can only mean that we are now on the verge of going into France as well, as the mention of Brabant, Flanders, Ghent, Bruges, and Boulogne would indicate! The Fuhrer is right, we soon will be the masters of *all* Europe!”

Fesel wanted to applaud. This is exactly the attitude - and results - he was looking for. He refrained himself however, for the stunned expression of Lucht hung over the group like a dark cloud, raining on a patriotic parade.

“Herr Lucht, what then, is your interpretation of this passage?” Fesel questioned, keeping a calm demeanor.

“I have always felt - and still do - that the Grand Duke was Stalin, who was born in Georgia, and therefore *from* the area of Armenia, where the meeting point of Russian, Persian, and Turkey lay in the Ararat Mountains.”

“So *Stalin* will be the master of Europe?” Fesel asked, as if the current political situation had already proven him wrong.

“I didn’t say that, this passage could be interpreted to suggest Stalin would have strong associations with Cologne and Vienna, not necessarily assimilate them. This reference fits to the Pact now in place with the Soviets.”

Fesel’s frustration with Lucht now appeared to be coming to the surface. It was not what Fesel said, but what he didn’t say that gave this impression to Lucht. Even the way Fesel avoided looking at Lucht appeared as if to say someone was going to miss out of being a part of Germany’s master plan.

“Come, let us have a coffee in the office,” Fesel said, turning towards Krafft to show that he was now directing his energy towards him, “we can introduce you to the rest of the staff!”

Just as Fesel said this the woman with the long flowing red hair could be again seen passing by the tiny window of the all-metal office. Karl Ernst had the strange feeling he had been with the woman before, even though he had never seen anyone like her. Someone like this if you had ever seen before you would most certainly remember.

“With pleasure,” said Krafft while staring at the window. “I’m looking forward to seeing the rest of your staff and their specialties.”

Fesel simply smiled as he and Krafft together walked towards the office, his plan was working perfectly. Lucht followed lagging behind.

“...something about how they were going to use astrology.”

When you are deep within enemy territory and one or two patterns suddenly change or stop, such as getting close to Bettina then suddenly not see her for several days - and having other contacts disappear as well - you begin to worry.

You also begin to see things differently.

Maxi's thoughts rushed back to the last time he drove Bettina, and the image of her holding the photo of a man Goebbels would soon be meeting.

What was his name? Maxi couldn't remember. Even though he had caught a glimpse of the photo that night, his memory at the moment could only broadcast images of Bettina reclining back in the back seat of the taxi.

"Another beer?" Otto asked while getting up.

Maxi's wave of the hand combined with a distant stare told Otto something was coming to the surface that was deep inside of Maxi - something that was important to himself and their mission.

Otto walked into the kitchen to let his partner sort it out. Although Otto had never met Michael Thomas Jenkins - now 'Maxi' Borck - before being assigned together for the Berlin operation, he seemed to instinctively know exactly how to handle the sometimes extremely sensitive Maxi. This could be due to the fact Otto had an older brother, Edward, who had a very similar temperament.

While pouring another beer, an odd fact entered Otto's consciousness, which he spoke out loud, "Wow, hey Maxi, you and my brother Edward share the same birthday!"

The word "birthday" triggered a flash of thought through Maxi's mind, bringing one

buried piece of information to the front of his brain - the memory of what Bettina said about this man who was going to see Goebbels. Something about him working on Nostradamus, something about how they were going to use *astrology*. Birthdays. Astrology.

“Otto..... wait a minute!”

"...I NEED my s-e-c-r-e-t-a-r-y"

“He created it that easily?” Goebbels questioned while admiring Bettina type in the other room. He raised his left shoulder to brace the phone, so his arm was free, then crumpled a previously rejected piece of paper and threw it at Bettina.

The wad of paper missed, but she turned, smiled, and then continued with her typing. Such actions from Goebbels meant that he was in a good mood and wanted to play. Bettina knew what games might follow when the second piece of paper sailed over her head - and that the Minister was in the mood to play real soon. She got up and went to the ladies room to prepare herself.

It was 11:30 in the evening.

“Good work, Dr. Fesel. It seems you have chosen the right man for the job once again!”

Goebbels had been pacing back and forth as if taking part in a military parade, now he skipped like an 8 year-old kid who had just gotten what was wished for.

“Fine, fine, no, no, don’t work him right away - the point is, he has a believable idea for this project and that’s enough for now. We don’t want to let him in too quickly into the entire project. . . take him and his wife to have some fun. Find some friends and a party for them to get

involved with. Let's see if we can find something that way. Good. Good, yes, that should do fine. Excellent! Call me when you have a draft. I would like to see something by Wednesday, is that possible? Good. Good. Auf wiederzehen!"

Goebbels slammed the phone down in a gesture and attitude of victory. "Where is my *personal* secretary?" Goebbels bellowed. A strained and faked giggle came from the adjoining room.

"I *need* my s-e-c-r-e-t-a-r-y. Oh, how I need her *now*! I have a very important plan that must have some action put on it right away!" The Minister of Propaganda was now almost singing. Bettina hurried in the room, rounded Goebbels' desk and stopped just in front of him. She then snapped to attention and remained perfectly silent.

It was a game they had played many times before. Despite her apparent joy in being with the Minister, this was a game she hated. However life's current circumstances forced her to play.

"Aaaaaaaah, what have we here?" said Goebbels, leaning his face forward towards her chest, as if seeing her figure for the first time.

"What a lovely blouse, h-o-w-e-v-e-r, I think we need to remove it."

Bettina saluted, as if being given a military order, and quickly began unbuttoning her pure white blouse. However, before she got to the last button, Goebbels raised his hand in a command to stop.

"Yes, Yes," he murmured while turning his head slowly to admire the view of the party exposed bra from various angles, "the beauty, the form, the *power* of Das Deutsche Volk!" he continued, quoting a part of Hitler's speech given earlier that week - which he wrote.

Bettina's psyche was in turmoil. On one hand there was something exciting about being near one of the most powerful men in Germany and have so much admiration and attention directed towards her. Yet the fact moments like these were forced did not allow her to enjoy any of the excitement of being close to such power.

Goebbels undid the last button himself and draped her blouse back so her bra and stomach were completely revealed. "Oh, my! Look at what I get!"

Goebbels had made it appear he saved Bettina in 1937 just before Kystallnacht, the night when almost the entire German population went on a smashing spree of Jewish shops and institutions. At the time Bettina had been working at the Reichstag for two years, and Goebbels had somehow learned that Bettina's great grandmother was Jewish, which could have ruined much more than just her job. In truth, Bettina, as all other workers within the German government, just had their backgrounds meticulously scrutinized by Himmler's investigators. This of course led them to be ousted from their jobs or undergo other forms of oppression.

It slowly evolved that Bettina Meyer had to play along with whatever the Minister wished, on occasion, as a way of showing her gratitude. She shuttered to think what the outcome would be should Goebbels ever become seriously angry with her. She therefore dared not refuse of any of requests.

Her bra came off.

"Oh, so young, so fresh - and, now their mine!"

Just then several sets of footsteps could be heard marching down the hallway outside.

Without thinking Bettina quickly sprang down in the opening of the desk meant for Goebbels' legs to occupy while he was writing. Goebbels tossed Bettina her blouse and bra, turned his chair so as to cover the hole she was now hiding, and then began pretending to be writing.

The door opened. It was the Fuhrer himself!

Chapter 6- The Note

“Governor General of Poland?”

Krafft and Elaine arrived late for the dinner party, since the train from Berlin to Stettin was delayed, plus had to make an unexpected stop in Prezlau. The trip from Stettin to the house where they were invited was an ordeal also. As the servant took their hats and coats, they could hear a piano being played in the studio, to which they were then guided.

“Look, *this* is the man who accurately predicted the attempt on the Fuhrer’s life!” A voice greeted them as they entered the room.

The small group being entertained in the house of Frau Elli Ney - a metaphysical enthusiast and this evening’s hostess - all rose and gave a twenty-second burst of applause.

Krafft’s face froze, trying to hold back his pride - and joy - joy of finally receiving the public recognition he felt he deserved for so long, but never experienced in his native Switzerland.

“Come in! Come in!” Frau Ney welcomed. “You must be Elaine! I’m so happy you both could come! I have read *all* of your husband’s work! Fantastic! You must be very proud of him.” Ney turned to Krafft, but continued to Elaine. “Does he look into *your* future as well? The tone and mannerism suggested to Elaine that Frau Ney was quite drunk.

“Well... .no, he doesn’t.” Elaine meekly answered.

A loud flood of laughter broke out from the crowd at Elaine’s comment.

“Karl Ernst! Shame on you! Not letting your wife have the best *piece* of you!”

An even louder roar of laughter erupted. Karl was beginning to understand the sexual innuendoes from Frau Ney that everyone else thought so amusing. He and Elaine did not share their sense of humor. However, the great mood he was in from the host stroking his ego and the fact these were new - and apparently important - acquaintances, he did not want to appear too stiff natured.

“Maybe I should change that.” Was the only answer Karl Ernst could think of. The group loved his response, and showed it with applause, which put Karl Ernst even more at ease.

“Yes, change, Karl Ernst, *changed* The crowd chanted.

A major approached Karl and Elaine and handed them both the largest champagne glasses either of them had ever held.

“Please,” said the major while snapping his heels, “ welcome to the Stettin district and the happiest house outside of Berlin!”

“Thank you.” Karl and Elaine chimed in unison.

“Major Wolf, assistant to the Governor General.” He declared, turning and extending his arm out to a man who then approached them as well.

“Pleased to meet you, Major” Karl Ernst reciprocated, then turned to the approaching man, who also extended his arm and introduced himself in atone seemingly requesting Major Wolf to cease conversation. The tone in his communication was successful, for Major Wolf took a step back.

“Pleased to meet you Herr Krafft. Dr. Hans Frank, the Reich’s Governor General of Poland, at your service!”

Krafft heard the name of Dr. Hans Frank somewhere before several years ago, yet did not remember how, or in what way the name might mean something. Karl Ernst also did not realize Poland had a Governor General, or that Poland even still existed. Like many other Germans who listen to the radio or read newspapers, the accepted idea was that Poland ceased to exist as an issue - and as a country - after September 1939.

“Governor General of Poland?” Krafft repeated as a half question. “That must be a quite job keeping the lid down on the frontier with the Russians right on the border and the countryside roaming with Polish and Jewish sympathizers.”

The Governor seemed pleased that Krafft had an idea of the difficulty with his new job. Any discussion over Poland usually was had with Hitler, Göring, and Himmler, all of whom felt things were not moving fast enough in eliminating the undesirable elements remaining there.

Frau Ney approached and took Elaine by the arm. “Come with me, dear, I have something upstairs you will just adore!”

“The exchange was perfect. ”

Von Wohl walked out of the Baron’s house with mixed feelings. He was amazed what was revealed about his life and character and the other things no one but Von Wohl himself could have known. The first astrology lesson went well, with the Baron being impressed as to how quickly Von Wohl grasped the basic concepts. Von Wohl was eager to continue and happy the Baron arranged to meet once a week. Von Wohl was also happy he was able to arrange another form of payment instead of money in exchange for the Baron’s astrology lessons. During their conversations von Wohl learned Baron Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd had a liking

for marijuana and hashish cigarettes, yet found it sometimes difficult to obtain what he considered good quality. It just so happened that von Wohl knew a Hamburg sailor who regularly set port in Mexico and would usually bring back a large supply of some of the best for himself, his friends, and whoever else filtered into his circle.

The exchange was perfect. Von Wohl was now able to learn an important tool to help him shift through his troubled emotions and perhaps use in his manipulation of others - without having to pay for it. This was a great benefit considering von Wohl's current rocky financial situation over the past several years.

However, von Wohl was disappointed the information he wanted most was the very information he did not receive. Something stuck a nerve in him when he heard the Baron describe the Moon held the key concerning his emotional need. In fact, for most of von Wohl's life he thought he had no emotional needs. He now felt his personal philosophy needed adjustment, but he didn't know how - not yet anyway. If astrology showed him there was an empty hole in his life - could this strange art also show him how to fill it?

When the Baron described how von Wohl's mind and heart operated on different vibrations, with his mind vibrating to Aquarius and his heart to Sagittarius, an awakening occurred within him. It was as if these words created a flash of light that burst out of nowhere, enlightening a new way von Wohl looked upon himself.

All the past mistakes, the unanswered actions and feelings, the unknown reasons why things had gone wrong in his life were answered in that one statement: *"Your mind and heart operate on different vibrations."*

"Herr von Wohl?" a voice came from a parked car just as von Wohl had shut the gate in

front of the Baron's well-kept yard.

Ludwig von Wohl was shaken out of his dream state and looked up to the car window. It was Count von Hoogerwoerd, the Baron's father. A chill went over von Wohl as if someone had just rubbed a block of ice down his back.

"Oh, good evening, Count." Von Wohl said politely.

"Do you have some time for coffee, or a beer perhaps?"

"Well, thank-you," Von Wohl said with the same politeness he had shown at the Holland Ball, "but your son was more than a wonderful host and pretty much filled me with everything I could think of and then some."

"Then perhaps I may give you a ride home, or to where ever you are *now* going?"

Von Wohl found it difficult to refuse since it was obvious from the Count's tone revealed he was set on talking with, and this conversation would be to take place now. Without a word Von Wohl walked around to the other side of the car and got in. Even with a light snow falling as he entered the car, an unexplained sweat began to form around his temples. The Count noticed Von Wohl's condition and made a mental note. He had not yet decided on how he was going to use this odd character, or if he was going to let him live.

"Some more reports from Holland and Denmark, Admiral."

The Admiral had been staring out of his window for the past 45 minutes. Normally his office would have a wonderful view of southwest London, but tonight the fog would not even allow him to see the buildings on the other side of the street. In the Admiral's hand was a note harboring more bad news. How was it that the Nazis seemed to know every move he was

making? What was all this talk that seemed to come from every level that somehow the Third Reich was able “see into the future”, as well as into the plans designed by British intelligence? Was there a connection between the loss of his agents, courtiers, and messages and this form of “black magic” Hitler seemed to have at his disposal?

The Admiral’s office had been full of questions for the last several months, and every piece of information that was brought in from Europe only created more questions, and unexplained results. Unfortunately, by late April 1940, most of the results from his department were poor, even bad - and this pattern had to change. Such a score sheet could bring down the proud military tradition & reputation his ancestors had built up for centuries in the British Empire. He had to find out what Hitler’s “secret weapon” was - and destroy it.

A knock on the Admiral’s door then opens revealing a stern young woman in a crisp staff sergeant uniform who marches into the spacious Victorian room with a folder marked “Top Secret”.

“Some more reports from Holland and Denmark, Admiral”.

“On my desk, please. Thank-you.” The Admiral did not break his stare from the mystical haze just outside the window. Focusing outside did not allow him notice the attractive woman leave after putting the papers down and waiting a few moments for other possible instructions. The normally soothing hum of the foghorns in the distant had captured his tired mind and floated him to the European mainland and beyond. The open seas were not just the realms of his greatest worries for now. Besides having the Third Reich pop up in just a few short years and giving Great Britain a war - which until now had been mostly fought at sea - Europe now also poised a grave danger for the Admiral’s family name continuing.

The note in his hand confirmed the danger the grandsons and granddaughters he so desperately wanted may not materialize, for the message relayed information his son had not been heard from for eleven days and was feared captured.

Admiral Payne now wished he said “no” when his son volunteered for the assignment.

“...do you remember going to the “Purple Unicorn?”

The Count nodded to the driver, and the car grumbled to a start, idled for a minute, then pulled out of the parking lot. It was not until they were moving in and out of the busy sounds of the city that the elderly financier spoke.

“I don’t know if you remember me, actually.”

Von Wohl was a bit relieved. He’d ‘played along’ with the Count about knowing him at the Ball was only since his intuition guided him to do such. Now he felt he could - and should - be honest.

“Well, to tell you the truth Count,” von Wohl took a deep breath, “you do look familiar, however I cannot exactly recall where or when it was we actually ran into each other, if indeed we ever did.”

The count also took a deep breath, however, a complete feeling of relief was not there. The Count’s mind began to race. *“He doesn't remember ...or does he? If not now, would von Wohl remember later, in another circumstance, or in other company ? ”*

That possibility of von Wohl remembering while with persons who might want to take advantage of the Count, his situation, or his money was unacceptable. In a city like Berlin, where

the circle of extreme wealth ran in a very small circle and where Count now had possible competitors - any odds of von Wohl falling into the wrong hands were a real risk.

“Von Wohl, do you remember going to the “Purple Unicorn?”

The name sounded familiar, but Ludwig couldn't place it. So many clubs have come and gone in Berlin over the past 10 or 12 years he could honestly not immediately remember any of them. Also there was the fact he was usually completely drunk when he visited any.

“It sounds familiar, but you know how clubs are in Berlin... so many are popular then they disappear. I don't know if anyone can ever remember what one looked like or remember even where it was.” Von Wohl answered truthfully.

“Well, the club is not important. However, the important thing is that you and I are still here, and we must live together as best we can in a city such as Berlin.” The Count decided not to describe the entire situation to von Wohl. It was enough to know that von Wohl could be trusted, or even bought, for now. The next statement settled the matter completely for the Count.

“Look, Count,” it was becoming apparent to Ludwig that he must have seen the Count in a compromising situation - or with a certain someone - in the distant past that could do harm now, “whatever I may or may not have seen concerning you...” von Wohl looked directly at the Count, “. . .is your business. I make my living moving from person to person and could not exist if I tried to exploit and took advantage of everything I saw.”

Now the Count became relaxed. To often he was pitted against people who wanted to do just the opposite. Plus it was rare to come across one who appeared direct and emotional honest.

Von Wohl's hand went out. “There's so much hostility in the world today, the war, the British, the Russians, the French - I don't want such things in my personal life. So, whatever the

case was as to how we crossed paths in the past, let's just start over and become friends now. Who knows? I could be a very valuable friend if you got to know me."

The Count took note of the word 'valuable' and began to process the possibilities. Normally anyone who was, or even close to posing threat to the Count's enterprise would simply be eliminated: von Wohl had no idea that his choice of words at that moment changed the Count's mind concerning this option. Ludwig von Wohl's choice of words and delivery had just saved his life.

Von Wohl continued after straightening his collar. "Now, I don't know you - but I like you. I admire your charming wife and now am currently learning a fascinating hobby from your son! Good heavens! You *all* are practically *family* to me now!"

The Count almost relaxed inside, something that had not happened in years. It felt good. Von Wohl knew how to comfort an aristocrat. He had, after all, been in this position many times before. The Count appeared as if a major worry had just evaporated. His mind raced through several possibilities of using von Wohl instead of killing him. As a chess grandmaster can easily fit a new development into his overall scheme, the Count found the perfect move to handle von Wohl.

"Herr von Wohl, have you ever been to London?"

"Sorry, that is also confidential."

Maxi felt odd walking through the doors of the Reichstag. He had sat outside of the building hundreds of times in his cab waiting for a fare, but had never been inside. However, after nearly a week and a half of not seeing Bettina, Maxi and Otto felt that it was worth the risk

to pass a note to her at Reichstag. After all, her parents had not seen or heard from her either and wanted to include something in the note as well.

“Please, could you give this note to Bettina Meyer?”

The guard behind the window just inside the front door looked at Maxi for a few seconds, then the note in his hands.

“I haven’t seen her for over a week now, and her boyfriend, and of course, her parents, would just like to hear from her.”

The guard took the note from his hand and studied the name on it. Then, keeping his left hand’s index finger on the name written on the envelope, the index finger on his other hand searched a list that was taped on the wall in front of him. When there was a match, his right hand’s index finger then moved to another set of squares to the right of all the employees’ names that were listed.

“Lt. Schiller is who you would need to give this too. I will call him now. Please wait on the benches over there.”

If it weren’t for the word “please”, the guard’s statement would have sounded like a command.

“Uh - Thank you.”

Maxi went to one of the long, wax-polished wooden benches, which were also occupied by a policeman, two middle-aged women, a Sargent, and a young man in his early 20’s in civilian clothes, but a Nazi button pinned on his collar.

After nineteen minutes, Lt. Schiller came down the main staircase and over to the guard’s

window. The guard pointed at Maxi, and upon seeing this, Maxi rose to greet the approaching Lt. Schiller.

“Lt. Schiller?”

“You have a note for me?”

“For Bettina Meyer.” Maxi said while handing Schiller the note. “Her parents, boyfriend, and well, *all* of her friends have not seen her for almost two weeks. We are worried about her.” Maxi was expecting a possible question concerning *his* relationship to Bettina. Such scrutiny was common in Nazi Germany. The question, however, never materialized.

“Frauline Meyer has left Berlin for an important trip on Ministry business.”

“A trip?” Maxi was shocked, and was sure that Otto and Bettina’s parents would be as well. “But, where?”

“Sorry that is confidential. I will make certain that Frauline Meyer receives your note. Thank you for your concern, you may inform all your family and friends not to worry. Some official trips are made at the last minute, and this happens to be one of them.”

“But, may we know when she will return?”

“Sorry, that is *also* confidential.” Lt. Schiller raised the note in his hand, as if to acknowledge that he will deliver the note, and that was all he could do. “Now, if you will excuse me?” Schiller did not even wait for an answer from Maxi, but simply turned and walked off.

“Yes, certainly, thank you.” Said Maxi, half to Lt. Schiller whose back was turned, and half to the guard. Maxi then walked out the huge wooden and brass doors. It was darker outside than he expected, for in the few moments he was inside, a horizon long length of low dark gray

clouds now filled three quarters of the Berlin sky and were threatening rain.

Meanwhile inside, Lt. Schiller returned to his office and sat down at his desk, the sudden darkness outside making him turn on desk lamp so he could read the note Maxi had just given him. After reading it, he folded it in half, quarters, eighths; then tossed it in the army green trash basket next to his desk.

“Polish Bitch!”

Karl Ernst watched as Elaine and Frau Ney ascended up the stairs, he would prefer she stay by his side in such social situations, or at least in the same room. He never felt secure at parties, where the conversation and actions of the group were unpredictable, confusing and often mundane. He much preferred to deal with groups of people at a lecture, either as an audience member or speaker. At least in that environment one knew their role and what was expected.

Elaine however, felt right at home at any social event. She did not have to understand the local etiquette, or even the language of the group she was in, for her charm and beauty always seemed to make anything she did or said be the correct manner for the moment.

“She’s perfect!” Dr. Frank whispered. Krafft was unaware the Governor was standing right behind him. While he understood the statement as a compliment, he felt a shock the tone this high Nazi official expressed was a serious desire for his Elaine.

The Major approached them both - sensed something was wrong and decided to change the mood. “Gentlemen!” He said grabbing Krafft’s arm and leading him to the kitchen, “Since the ladies are upstairs having their fun, let’s go down to the studio where I’m sure there is something for us to enjoy!”

“*Ahhh...yes*” The Governor General murmured, being reminded of the main reason he came to the party in the first place. He followed the Major and Krafft, grabbing a handful of mixed nuts and raisins in stride and stuffing them in his mouth, many of these ending up on the oriental rug below.

“Do you like *art*, Herr Krafft?” The Major asked with a smile while opening the kitchen door.

As they headed into the kitchen, one man - talking with a group by the cutting board - noticed the procession and promptly excused himself. He followed the group around the kitchen and then through another door, which had a small staircase leading down to a large metal door, one you might see in a factory or shipyard. Whimpering and weeping could be heard on the other side.

When the door opened, Krafft could see a huge statue of a man on a raised horse, stamping out what appeared to be two witches beneath the horse’s hoofs. Behind the unfinished sculpture was a man in a white lab coat - with no pants - having intercourse from behind of a sobbing naked woman covered in mud.

Another woman, also covered in muddy clay and tears, was handcuffed to one of the witches in the sculpture.

“Bruno!” The major shouted, as if not seeing him for several years. “What are you making *today?*’ All of the men laughed hysterically, except for Krafft.

Bruno, who appeared not to have shaven in several days - and seemed to have neglected his hair for an even longer period - looked up at the approaching men and keeping his face towards them, pushed the woman away from him with all his might into a small pool of muddy

clay.

“Polish Bitch!” He shouted as he stood up and tied the lab coat around his waist. “I almost had her in the perfect position for this work.. .but she has no sense for art!”

The Major, Governor General, and other man burst out laughing again. “But Arno, these are the onesjazz picked out of the truckload we sent you! Must I call Colonel Schumann in Warsaw *again* and have you sent another truck load?” The Governor General’s tone suggested Arno received a regular delivery of such assistants.

Arno noticed the expressionless face on Krafft.

“Who’s this stiffed up goose? Jens, I told you, no more art critics in my studio, especially if they are *my* critics!”

“*Your* studio?” Jens questioned. The Governor General and Major snickered.

Jens turned to Krafft and pointed back at Bruno. “Herr Krafft, *that* is the one, the only, the master of all sculptures in the Third Reich.. .and..”

“... and the *world*” Arno added.

“... and the world...” Jens finished. “in fact, may I introduce you to the *greatest* sculpture of all times! Bruno Becker!”

The name Karl Krafft knew. Bruno Becker was a premier sculptor in Nazi Germany, for the National Socialists greatly admired his many figures with heroic high cheekbones & other physical attributes corresponding to their romantic conception of Nordic men and women - Unlike his sculptures, Arno did not share many of these pure facial features.

“*And?*” Bruno questioned. “*Must* I ask again? Who is this stiff you brought into my studio when I am attempting some direction and inspiration in this work?”

“This,” Jens said in an introducing manner, “is *the* Karl Ernst Krafft - the astrologer!”

Bruno’s eyes lit up. “Ah, perfect, just the man I want to see to.. .that is, who I *want* to talk to now! Herr Krafft, my Mars in now in my 5th house, and will soon transit my Saturn, and I am worried that...”

Karl Ernst listened to Bruno, who obviously was schooled on the techniques of astrology in regards to technical and interpretative elements. For the first time tonight Karl Ernst Krafft has one before him who spoke sacred geometry.

Krafft’s mind took Bruno’s data in automatically, as a grandmaster chess player would to start the opening moves in his head. Krafft’s subconscious mind took in what he saw around the studio. Both women had stopped sobbing, perhaps in the fear that even uttering another sound would bring more attention to them - and in this case - more men around might mean more pain. Krafft then visualized Bruno’s horoscope chart. Venus. Scorpio. Sex. Something was not correct.

“Now, the last time I had Venus transit my *Sun*, my work went through a severe lack of...” Bruno continued, listing facts and personal experience as if he had not spoken to a soul for decades.

The Major began to walk around the sculpture, eyeing it and the women handcuffed beneath the horse’s hoofs. He pulled up her hair to see the muddy face and squished her cheeks together so her mouth was forced open. “Filthy!” The major said to himself aloud.

Bruno stopped his monologue and turned to the Governor General. “He’s right, you

know, Polish women are by nature very filthy. It's *very* difficult to become inspired with such types. When are you going to bring me some of that cultured French pussy?"

"Soon, Bruno, soon..." The Major traded glances with the statue and young girls.

"Yes, patience, Bruno, the military will do *all* it can so you can have what you need for your *art*." All except Krafft, snickered at the suggestion Germany's conquests were solely for bringing Bruno inspiration.

The Major let go of the handcuffed girl, who then slithered behind the pole she was attached to.

"In fact, we may have some Mademoiselles for you in a month or two..." speculated Major Wolf, turning to Krafft, "...and Herr Krafft here will be contributing to assure we will all have the finest living quarters when we arrive in Paris."

These words gave Krafft the first inkling of his role in the coming invasion of France. This casual conversation before him is what every department of British Intelligence was dying to figure out.

Chapter 7- The Argument

“But this will let the French army know...”

Joseph put the note into his pocket just before his wife walked in.

“Which plan do you think they will use?”

“Hitler and the High Command are leaning with the fifth variant... it’s a master work... pure genius, really.”

“Well, then, let’s look at some of the details...” Frau Goebbels said while rolling out a map on the kitchen table. “After all, you should have some concrete suggestions when you meet the Fuhrer tomorrow.”

Again Magda was correct. Using the works of Nostradamus to cause fear and uncertainty against his own people might contribute to the Nazi victory. However, to have this fear and uncertainty actually manipulate, assist, or even support the overall military objectives would have to be clearly stated to get the Fuhrer’s attention.

Both of the Goebbels studied the map in silence. Both knew *execution* and *timing* of the invasion plan would be of the utmost importance - two factors propaganda more than likely could not play a role in - or could it?

Frau Goebbels focused on the French armies in the southeast of France, which were expected to come north to meet the German invasion in the Ardennes. Since the Germans would not be attacking any of these French objectives based along the Maginot Line, the question in her mind was how to create a situation to hinder these French armies from coming north.

Joseph Goebbels was also looking at the south, but with a totally opposite idea: feeding

misinformation so the French would believe a major German attack would be coming to the southern regions, thereby having the French generals keeping their forces there.

“I have it.” Frau Goebbels finally broke the long spell of silence. “We find a passage which will tell the civilians that the *southeast* will be the safest place for them to go when the war comes to France.”

“But this will let the French army know there will be no attack in the south!” Joseph said heatedly while glaring into Frau Goebbels’ eyes.

“Joseph, do you think the French Military High Command will actually move several divisions based on *rumors* from a four-hundred-year old prediction that happens to be floating around in an *astrology* magazine?”

Herr Goebbels did not answer; he knew Magda had a point.

“In a magazine eighty percent of the French public consider *trash*?”

Joseph’s silence continued: he knew Magda was right.

“Since we do not have the forces there to slow down these southern armies from coming up the real action in the *north*, the only practical way of hindering them is having the roads filled with their own civilians heading *south*.¹¹”

If she were a man, then there is no doubt Frau Goebbels would have become a top general in the German High Command - and would probably become one of the best. The image of a French army general, cursing his own countrymen who were clogging the road ahead of his tanks and soldiers, created a calculated grin on the Reichminister. The widespread chaotic scene of French armor and equipment completely surrounded by fleeing farmers, cattle, tractors

and carts filled with their only belongings had him even break out into a short chuckle.

“Yes, yes, I see it now!” Again, Magda had done it. She was genius, pure genius.

Magda knew the average French farmer was highly superstitious and would more than likely heed the advice of their beloved and respected Nostradamus than any French politician or general. For the first time in European history, Magda Goebbels would use a famous French figure against the French people.

“...everything points to June, 1941. ”

“Pass, please?”

The tall figure bundled in what appeared to be two coats and several scarves wrapped around his neck and lower face was barely recognizable. When the guard saw his identity papers he snapped to attention.

“Reichminister Hess!” Apologies, I didn’t recognize you!”

Rudolf Hess simply gave a nod to the guard and then motioned his hand forward instructing the driver to continue. This was the third time this month the Reichminister had visited the airfield in Augsburg, and the third time he was accompanied by a civilian that no one on the base knew the identity of. Where they flew was also a mystery, since Hess himself piloted his own personal twin engine Messerschmitt and never left the chief of operations a flight plan. No questions were ever asked, or even thought of being asked, since he was a Reichminister; second to the Fuhrer himself after Hermann Goring.

The car drove directly to his plane where the two men got out. The civilian illegally

smoked a cigarette while Hess inspected the plane. After his rounds Hess signaled his driver, who then drove off. Hess spoke a few words to his flight guest, who finished his cigarette.

Both men then made prolonged glances up into the clear night sky towards the crescent Moon just now rising above the horizon. Hess taxied the plane down the tarmac without stopping at the check line and then took off. Once in the air he turned off the radio set in his plane.

“Did you double check my calculations?”

“Yes, Rudolf, what you came up with supports Krafft’s 1933 prediction.”

The astrological skill of Rudolf Hess were known only via rumor - some say he was an amateur, others would say he was much more competent. Only three people in the world knew just exactly how competent he was - which in those days could be described as expert.

Hess was actually motivated to study astrology from his admiration of an American president. The current events recorded in the newspapers while a young Hess was growing up in Egypt were the words of an outspoken, and almost Kaiser-like, Theodore Roosevelt.

While not widely known in America, many in German astrological circles were fully aware that President Roosevelt had his horoscope cast, and was constantly updated on, the present and future aspects transiting his chart. More than a select few Germans has this knowledge since it was an entire team of German astrologers from the Hamburg School that the former Rough Rider hired to calculate and interpret this information when Teddy Roosevelt was Secretary of the Navy.

Hess became fascinated the leader of a world power would use a German tool to supposedly shape his policy. It was this one fact that turned Hess from someone merely

interested in astrology into one who studied and practiced it intensively.

The fact that Hess and Nazi Germany might down the road become an adversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt - the very relative of the man that had changed Hess's life - made the upcoming war more than a conflict of rifles, tanks, howitzers, or Spitfires. It was a battle of spiritual and supernatural superiority as well. For besides military might, the battles Hess considered were on whose civilization could best interpret - and use - the unseen energies of the universe.

The calculations Hess had verified were disturbing. The very numbers, patterns, and descriptions he had worked on now in 1941 matched the interpretations Karl Ernst Krafft published in 1933, when Hitler became Reich Chancellor and President, allowing the Nazi party to hold complete power.

In 1933, based on Hitler's horoscope, Krafft had predicted a war would start in the fall of 1939, and if peace were not made with England by the summer of 1941, the tide would begin to turn against Germany. Krafft also predicted the war would end in the spring of 1945, however did not say who would be victorious. (Author's Note: Actual predictions of Karl Krafft, 1933).

"Are you of the same opinion?" Hess asked after pulling up the landing gear.

The man nodded his head in agreement. "Based on my chart of the Fuhrer, the chart of the party, and even the horoscope of the Republic of 1918, everything points to June 1941. The best time to make peace and prevent the tide turning against Germany would be May 10th 1941."

If Herr Krafft is indeed correct, then we only have a few months. Hess thought to himself imaging May 10th in his mental calendar.

The powerful spirits of nature once again appeared to push through the wall of time in

order to enforce its will on the human race.

Zeitgeist.

Hess believed in this “time spirit” and it seemed this date was indeed a turning point in other points of German history as well. And he was the only one in the Nazi party who knew it.

One of the engines began to sputter violently, which shook the entire plane. It was as if even his Messerschmitt confirmed the date as a focal point in German history.

Instinctively Hess cut the gas and let the engine grind to a stop, the violent vibrations soon died as well.

“I’ll see if we can make it to Würzburg.”

“She’s sure to inspire you...”

“Come, more drinks!” The Governor General said while walking up the stairs and glancing back for one more look of the Polish “models”.

“Good idea!” Said Arno, while putting on a pair of pants. “It’s perhaps a good time for a breath of fresh air.”

“Ah, you’ll get a breath of fresh air, and much more, when you get a look at Herr Krafft’s lovely Elaine. She’s sure to inspire you for some *really* great works!”

Again, Krafft was troubled by the Governor General’s reference to Elaine. His tone made it appear that Dr. Frank felt he could do whatever he wanted with Elaine. *Did the rulers of the Reich feel they could treat German women as they did the Polish ones in the basement?*

“Would you like to go back to London, Captain Payne?”

“I was actually in Whitehall once. I believe it was in early April - no, May, that’s right, early May. As a civilian, of course, and must say it was rather easy to enter...”

Captain Payne had his eyes shut, was praying for sleep, which Schellenberg and his staff were skillfully preventing.

"..and then Fleming told me I ought to worry more about the Russians! Ha! Can you believe that? Of course, I heard he was in Moscow once pretending to be working for Reuters. Did you hear about that? How did he manage to escape? Did he ever tell you?"

Even though nearly every ounce of energy was drained from his body, Payne still managed to hear and understand everything his Gestapo jailer was saying - which was a lot. Schellenberg was beginning to demoralize Best Payne, for it appeared he seemed to know everything about British Intelligence. The Nazi spoke of the staff, the procedures, and an awful lot about the man Payne reported to - Commander Ian Fleming.

“Did I ever tell you the story of how your commander and I almost smashed up an entire group of hooligans *and* the Polish police when we were both... ?”

Payne thought he had received some of the best military training in the British armed services; however, nothing had ever prepared him for sleep deprivation. His concept of time was totally gone. He not only had no idea of what day, month, or year it was - he had no feeling as to how much time had passed since his capture.

“..and then he grabbed the fish bowl from my hands and held it over his head and shouted if they ever did that again he would...!”

Some of what Shellenberg mentioned Payne recognized to be sensitive information. Some of the personal stories, even the ones sounding ridiculous, had the Welsh Captain wonder how found these found their way into Germans hands.

Were the stories true, or lies? If this process was designed to demoralize him, then they were doing a good job... .he was on the brink of despair.

“Would you like to go *back* to London, Captain?”

Payne could not believe his ears. He wanted to answer, but at the same time knew that saying anything - not matter what - would give something to the Gestapo they could use against him. He remained silent.

“Captain? Best?”

Payne’s eyes remained shut. He remained silent.

Shellenberg grabbed Payne’s face in both hand and gave a violent shake. When it was seen that Payne was still conscious, he stopped shaking, but still held Payne’s face, turning it towards the light.

“Captain Payne? Are you still with us?”

Payne could hear snickering of several people behind him.

“Come now Captain, we want to talk about you going back to London. You don’t feel like doing so?”

More snickering could be heard behind his back.

“You mean, you would rather stay here, with us, than go to your London-town?”

The snickering now broke into laughter.

“Well, isn’t that nice?” Shellenberg intensified his tone of sarcasm. “He would rather stay with us... .unfortunately....”

Payne let out a sigh of exhaustion, as if instinctively knowing the worst was yet to come.

“.. .unfortunately, we have no more time to play with you.”

Payne felt a stinging in his arm.

“You will have to be sent to a place where they will not be as friendly and understanding as we are here.”

Captain Best Payne could feel the drug taking effect, seeming to freeze his extremities.

“Good-bye, Captain Payne.”

“...then Hoogerwerd would control most of the money in Germany. ”

Count von Hoogerwerd had never wanted to meet Hitler in person - he considered the German leader insane. However, at this point in time to continue operating in Germany a deal with the Nazis had to be agreed up - and quickly. The nature of meeting required a face to face, since nothing dared be put in writing. Neither had a middleman that could be trusted with so much trust, understanding and money at stake.

The Count first heard of Adolf Hitler after his February 24, 1920 speech in Munich, one of his first audiences numbering in the thousands instead of the hundred or so that would pack into the earlier beer halls. What caught the Count’s eye was Hitler’s presentation of his “25

Points of the German Worker's Party" and point 13 in particular: "*We demand the nationalization of all trusts.*"

If Hitler succeed, and von Hoogerwerd were to 'manage' this nationalization process with the Nazis, then Hoogerwerd could control all of the money in Germany via the Nazi party... .and later use the resources from this to control whatever was conquered. His family had already done so in four other European countries since the turn of the century.

"Herr Hitler "

"Count...."

Hitler knew the Count was a heavy pipe smoker, and required there be no smoking in the room during the meeting. While this tactic would not be successful with the Count at this meeting, it would later prove very effective on the 30th of September in 1936 over Munich Pact when Neville Chamberlin signed away the Sudetenland. Chamberlin, a heavy chain smoker, was locked in a non-smoking room for hours and was not only brow beaten by the stylized rants of Hitler, but also gave up Czechoslovakia so he could finally have a cigarette.

"You must forgive him... after all, he is an artist. "

"Come," said the Governor General, "more drinks! We can play with the Polish models later."

"Good idea!" Bruno said while reaching for his pants. "I need some fresh air."

"Ah, you'll get a breath of fresh air - and much more - when you get a look at Herr Krafft's Elaine. She is sure to inspire you for some *really* great works!"

Krafft was troubled by the Governor General's reference to Elaine. His tone made it appear Dr. Frank could do whatever he wanted with Elaine. Were the Reich rulers the type who would treat German women as they had done the Polish 'models'?

Krafft led the way up the stairs, but was stopped by the Governor General when they had reached the kitchen. Jens and Bruno passed them and continued on into the music room where many of the guests already reached a higher state of intoxication.

"Were you offended by Bruno's form of inspiration?"

Krafft did not answer.

"You must forgive him.. .after all, he is an artist.. .very *eccentric* .. .but still, an artist."

The pause indicated this was a sufficient excuse for Dr. Hans Frank, Jens', and Major Wolfs, to accept Bruno's behavior. *After all, his is an artist.*

Krafft's thoughts gradually shifted from the Polish models to Elaine and arrived at the thought that she was somewhere in this house. The thought made him wince. What was *she* seeing?

"I think I should see how Elaine is doing."

Krafft walked back into the music room, which was now almost completely filled with cigarette, pipe, and cigar smoke. There was no sign of Elaine.

"Herr Kraft?" A soft voice rose up behind him.

Karl Ernst turned and froze inside upon seeing the figure that whispered his name. It was the redheaded woman he noticed at Fesel's Dark Fire building in Berlin.

“Uh...sie...?” Krafft’s shock suddenly turned to excitement, which he immediately subdued causing him to freeze.

The woman, however, returned his unfinished statement. “I’m Ewa Mann. I saw you at our building, but was unable to meet you in the office. They would not allow it.”

This answered Krafft’s wonderment when he entered the office with Fesel and did not see this red headed woman that so caught his attention through the office window. What Karl Ernst Krafft did not know was that her presence here tonight, as well as the two of them not being introduced to the office - was actually part of Fesel’s plan.

“Once he actually flew into Russian airspace...”

While Hess calculated the planetary motion, his passenger seemed to be more concerned with the ground below.

He had been flying with Hess on eight different occasions, in five different airplanes. The Reichminister had access to any plane he wished in the Luftwaffe and it was rumored he had seven different planes reserved for him exclusively - one for each day of the week.

As would any aviation enthusiast, Hess naturally took full advantage of his flying privileges and actually had more flying hours than many of the senior Luftwaffe commanders.

When the airfield lights of Ulm twinkled on the horizon, Hess’s passenger let out an invisible sigh of relief. This was not the first flight with Hess that ended up arriving in an unexpected destination. Oddly, in each one of his eight trips with Hess there occurred an event that could be described as an emergency.

“Ulm tower, this is SM2928, emergency request....”

Hess began his landing preparations on the radio. While nearly every airfield in Germany knew that SM2928 was Hess’s call letters - for they heard them often - only the man sitting next to Hess knew their origin and significance.

“S” was for Saturn, the planet that Hess was supposedly a specialist on, both in interpretation and physical characteristics. “M” was for the Moon, which Hess was constantly trying to get close to every minute while he was in the air - in the same way Icarus flew up towards the sun.

Once he actually flew into Russian airspace when he simply pointed his plane towards the rising Moon and continued towards it for several hours never taking his eyes off the white globe.

The numbers “2928” were numerical associations for the same two heavenly bodies. The orbit of Saturn takes approximately 29 years to circle the Sun, while 28 is the approximate number of days for the Moon to circle the earth.

Hess’s passenger wondered if these call letters and numbers blessed Hess, saving from one minor emergency after another - or if these symbolic references were perhaps the very thing that caused these constant mishaps.

Hess’s passenger opened his notepad and began to study the data, as if to somehow maintain the meeting that - for this day at least, since they had to land in Ulm instead of their intended destination - would now most certainly *not* take place.

“Don’t let anyone know about this...”

“Herr Krafft?” Ewa interrupted, which seemed to be her habit. “Is it true what everyone says about you?”

“I beg your pardon....?”

“I... I just want to know if I could trust you.” Ewa changes character from emancipated woman to frighten schoolgirl in one sentence - one gesture.

“What do you mean?”

Ewa did not answer, but instead looked nervously around at the other guests at the party. Nearly everyone was looking at Krafft and Ewa out of the corner of their eye.

The musty perfume of Ewa was starting to have an effect on him. Despite being married and in full public view, his desire to put his arms around her tiny waist and merge his body into hers was only held back by his mind reminding him such desires were not supposed to exist and most certainly were never to occur.

Ewa then noticed Elaine starting down the stairs with Frau Ney. Before Krafft could see this, she quickly grabbed him and pulled him around the wall of the hallway leading to the front door. Her touch and closeness made it even more difficult for Krafft to hold back the desire to embrace her.

“Don’t let anyone know about this...” She said, handing Karl Ernst a folded piece of stationery, “.... please!”

Ewa then hurriedly walked back into the music room and then vanished into the hall leading to the kitchen, with Krafft watching her every step.

“Karl Ernst!”

Krafft turned around and saw Elaine. He squeezed the note Ewa had just given him.

Chapter 8- The Decision

“Ja...Ja...”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

Bettina, on her knees, looked up at her master, dressed in full formal military honors from the waist up, and completely naked from the waist down. It was a game Goebbels liked to play only when he was away on vacation. He would admire himself in the mirror with all the awards and decorations of Nazi Germany on his chest, while his subjugated servant rewarded his ego below.

Bettina was aching from the lack of sleep and extreme abuse Goebbels recently had starting to show her.

“The towel! Where is my warm towel?”

Bettina sleepily walked into the enormous bathroom and took a hand towel off the rack. The telephone rang as she turned on the hot water faucet.

“Ja ” Goebbels tone was as if he were right in the middle of a mountain of paper work.

Bettina turned off the water and squeezed the saturated towel until it held the right proportion of water and cloth. Then she waited a few moments for the towel to cool to his preferred temperature while she watched the snowfall on the small window just above her.

“Ja... Ja.. ” Bettina could tell that Goebbels was giving approval to whatever he was hearing. She then walked back into the mountain lodge room and toweled off his entire body below the waist.

“I want to see this first...” Goebbels shouted in the phone. “I’ll be down in five

minutes!” He then slammed down the receiver without saying “good-bye”.

“...Pluto entered the sign of Cancer in August of 1914. ”

“If his calculations are correct, then the inclination of Lowell’s planet to the ecliptic is at least 18 degrees!”

Hess said nothing to his passenger’s comment. He merely nodded as if doing the math in his head while also trying to guide the Messerschmitt in on only one engine.

Both men over the last 15 years had worked together in many of the complicated areas of astrology. This new planet discovered in 1930 - while exciting and offering a new perspective of the solar system - was becoming a source of disagreement between them.

For one thing, Hess did not like his partner’s reference to the eccentric new heavenly body as “Lowell’s Planet”. While it is true the planet’s discovery was made possible by Dr. Percival Lowell’s research that was started in 1905, many of those in science felt it not appropriate to name a planet after an individual.

Hess, like many others in astrology and astronomical societies, felt the new planet should bear the name of an Ancient Greek god to keep a rightful tradition as well as to respect the other planets. Many, Hess included, were leaning towards the recently introduced name of “Pluto”, the Greek god of the underworld.

“How far have you calculated the planet’s positions?” Hess asked without looking up from the controls.

He did not mention the planet by his own preferred name, since the colleague next to him

felt the name had a ridiculous sound; like the some found in those ridiculous American cartoons that were now being seen in Germany - “Bluto” in the Popeye series and Mickey Mouse’s pet dog - an animal who first appeared unnamed in the Disney film *The Chain Gang* (1930) and later appearing in *The Moose Hunt* (1931) where the lovable dog actually had the given name of the newly discovered planet: Pluto.

“I’ve only gone as far back as 1922.” The mysterious man said, almost ashamed.
“Greifswald was working from 1910 to 1922.... said he found an event with the planet’s first transit.”

“He found Pluto entered the sign of Cancer in August of 1914.” Hess stated matter of fact while still juggling with the controls of the plane.

“What?” The passenger was shocked for two reasons. First, the fact Hess already knew what Greifswald found. The man now descending in Hess’s crippled plane felt he should have known this first, since for years he and Griefswald were the closest of colleagues. Or so he thought. The second surprise was the seeming coincidence that the planet Pluto, Lowell’s planet, or Planet X (which is what Lowell himself called the newly found planet) happened to transit from one sign into another that signaled the beginning of World War I.

If two things come together at the same time and produce a result, it can be called a coincidence. If these two things come together for a second time and again produce a similar result, it is called a pattern. If it happens a third time, then it can be called a tendency.

“Is this a pattern, Rudolf?”

Rudolf Hess said nothing, however, already knew this was more than a coincidence. If the passage of Pluto from one sign into another signaled a war in 1914 and does so again in

1939, this indeed will be shown and considered a pattern. As both men were hoping to land the sputtering plane in early August of 1939, only Hess knew of Hitler's planned invasion of Poland to be launched next month.

September 1939 - another World War will begin - coinciding with the time Pluto makes a transit out of Cancer and begins the process of entering into the sign of Leo.

Hess and others calculated Pluto took approximately 248.4 years to orbit the Sun. For this planet to enter into a new zodiac sign two different times since its discovery - and at each of these times a world war would start - would be mathematically impossible. But the impossible was about happen; another war was a month away.

“...right across the street from the home of Copernicus. ”

Elaine walked up to Krafft and placed her lips near her husband's ear. “Karl...! We must leave at once...!”

“Quick! Get an aspirin!” A woman's voice screamed at the top of her lungs from the patio. Everyone within earshot looked at the 75-year-old woman in a white Russian coat holding a 38 mm Luger Special. “I've just shot the Baron von Spitz in the spitze!”

The entire group of guests rose to their feet and applauded. Both Kraffts sensed this personality had something to do with the reason of their coming, and this woman was now going to start her show.

The entire newly formed audience moved towards and surrounded the fragile, stick-like woman who was bundled in a white fur of a film star. This new opportunity allowed the Kraffts

to speak in a semi-private setting, yet still being able to appear they were a part of the party.

“Elaine, what happened?”

“Upstairs...” Elaine could only utter one word in a shaken whisper.

Karl Ernst waited for the next set of words to come from Elaine. Instead the next sentence he heard was from Dr. Hans Frank.

“Herr Krafft?”

Krafft kept his gaze on Elaine, but acknowledged the manager of all the conquered lands in Poland.

“My staff and I will soon be in Torun, and the major in charge is a big astrology enthusiast. Would you and Elaine like to be our guests for the weekend there.. perhaps you could give a lecture or lead a discussion? Your mere presence there would be very fitting.. Major Rusk’s office is right across the street from the home of Copernicus.”

Dr. Frank, the current overlord of Poland and also connected to the Black Sun was also informed on how to manipulate Karl Ernst Krafft.

“Don’t leave your room.”

“Ja!”

A few years ago Goebbels would have openly shared with Bettina what news had made him so happy. A few months ago Bettina could have even been able to ask what caused a change of mood or sudden reaction. But now Bettina remained silent. Their relationship, as all master and slave relationships, had changed.

As the Minister of Propaganda pulled up his pants, Bettina retrieved his shoes, then entered alone into the adjoining room with her books, pens and paper - her work as a sex-slave and house servant being finished. For now.

“Don’t leave your room.” He said as he slammed the door behind him. Goebbels liked to slam doors and telephones - good mood or not - it didn’t matter. It was another way he revealed his power around those near him.

Bettina entered the bathroom, much smaller than the one in her master’s adjoining room, rinsed her mouth, and then began silently brushing her hair. Stroking the way her mother taught when she was four years old, memories came to life of how she used to do things as a child - and the way things were when she was a child. But thinking of childhood also reminded her of the sliver of Jewish roots she had, which Goebbels was using to full advantage. It was too late for one with even partly Jewish blood to simply get up and leave Germany. She had to remain hidden for now, under his control.

Picking up one of her many books had her forget her own thoughts for now, the books also being her only company on this trip. She resumed reading *The Greatest Quotes of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* when a knock came on the door.

“...this war was to start when Pluto entered the sign of Leo. ”

The runway at Ulm loomed larger in front of Hess and his colleague.

Hess wondered if Hitler knew that Pluto was moving into Leo in September of 1939, this being the reason he decided to attack Poland. *Would Hitler start a war using a planetary event or a political one?* Might he even be looking at *both* elements to decide? Or was this next war going to start because of an unexplainable truth that only the stars know, and not individual or events on earth?

The Kaiser certainly was not aware that Pluto moved into the sign of Cancer in August of 1914, Pluto was not even discovered or known of until Lowell found it in 1930. Alexander I of Russia consulted the stars believing Napoleon was the anti-Christ as described by Nostradamus.

Hess began to think deeper into the possible interpretations. If Cancer represented the Home, or Homeland, and Germany lost WWI, was this to mean that the idea of the Home was dead? Was Hitler right? With the Nazi party replacing the ideas and security of the home, would this make the German people more dominant, strong willed, and self-confident?

These characteristics were, after all, the traits that represented the zodiac sign of Leo, and this war was to start when Pluto entered the sign of Leo. Hess knew that Hitler himself didn't really believe in astrology:

"If the world thinks I use astrology and it worries them, then all the better!"

Hitler once said. But even so, was Hitler *aware* that WWI started when this new planet entered Cancer and he was about to start the next war when it entered the next zodiac sign?

Would the war started in Leo avenge the war started in Cancer?

The plane made a smooth landing despite the vibrations being sent out to every nut and bolt from the only engine operating. Hess taxied to an open area near the control tower and

turned to the elderly man sitting next to him.

“He will frighten the Italians, the Spanish, and the English...”

“Nostradamus. Quatrain fifty-four in Centuries four... was this not referenced as pertaining to Napoleon... ?”

“Indeed.” Hess replied. “My point is, even though Napoleon may not have *believed* in astrology, was he not still *aware* of the prophecy?”

“I’m sure Napoleon was aware, his opponent Alexander I most certainly was.

The unknown colleague referred to the fact that Alexander I of Russia consulted the stars believing Napoleon to be the first anti-Christ, according to Nostradamus. The Russian Czar thought the beginning of the 1800’s announced the biggest spiritual war in history - not only the largest one militarily. Divine intervention was needed, so the greatest spiritual minds from St. Petersburg to Moscow were sought to contribute to the battle plans to save Mother Russia. Astrology played a heavy role in the mystic Czar’s spiritual arsenal.

“Did these quatrains *about* Napoleon influence *any* of his decisions?”

“Will any of the quatrains you’re working on influence Herr Hitler?”

The plane’s engine sputtered to a stop as the ground crews raced around the burnt out engine to suppress the smoke and prevent any further chance of a fire. Hess casually takes off his flying gear and gloves as if this was a normal landing.

“Ready for a drink?”

“I’ll have whatever you’re having.” The unknown colleague replied.

“Where have you been hiding?”

Krafft was emotionally and physically exhausted. The train trip from Berlin to Stettin had taken 2 hours longer than it should have, since troop cars that were hastily collected in Berlin Lichtenstein blocked everything else that was heading out of Berlin to the east.

In the train car they had to deal with a lady opposite them with a horrible little dog named Amadeus, who barked constantly. The name “Amadeus” was called out at least 300 times during the trip for all the infractions the small pesky mutt committed upon the other passengers. Amadeus had a constant urge to run up and down the length of the aisle, barking at everyone. The owner would then repeatedly call out Amadeus’ name - as if that would somehow bring the dog back to her seat and behave - which it didn’t.

Upon arriving in Stettin, the trip towards the coast in search of Frau Ney’s place was itself an ordeal, being completely dark and only a few of the roads being marked. By accident they ran into a guest who was also invited and knew the way.

After a rebounding high of receiving the onslaught of praise and recognition missed in his life for so long, he was then put in shock by the display of Bruno’s method for creating his sculptures. Elaine, stressed out next to him, experienced something upstairs upsetting which he had yet to learn, and now he was invited to go to the house of Copernicus - his second hero next to Nostradamus.

“Yes, of course.”

“Excellent!” The Governor General of Poland beamed, turned into Elaine extremely close. “I’m sure you’ll enjoy the Major’s wife, Andrea, she is a wonderful host.”

Again Karl Ernst was miffed by the continuous special attention and flirting Dr. Frank

placed on his wife - both away from and in her presence.

Elaine squeezed her husband's hand.

"Would you please gentlemen excuse us?" Elaine looked around, as if politely looking for a bathroom.

While Karl Ernst took a breath wondering how to react, Dr. Frank responded immediately.

"Olga!"

A 27 year-old blonde immediately responded to the Governor's voice and approached the trio.

"Would you kindly show Frau Krafft where the ladies room is?"

Elaine hesitated; she had painted herself into a corner. Her intention was to find an excuse to leave with her husband, but her actions had the opposite effect. Then, looking to her husband as if to say, "I'll be back", headed to the sensitive place with Olga where unfortunately her husband could not follow.

Elaine maintained her grace, which was one of her great strengths. "Thank-you, Olga." This was expressed with honest gratitude.

Krafft watched as both women walked off. She saw Olga whisper something into Elaine's ear that made his wife smile. He was relieved to at least see her appearance change from distressed to enjoyment.

"Krafft, let me get you another drink! Your glass has been empty for over an hour..."

Dr. Frank started towards the table with all the glasses and drinks across the room being approached by, then distracted by, two slender women in Bavarian Beer Hall outfits.

“Hans Frank! Where have you been hiding?” One said while the other ran her hands across his jaw.

Krafft took a long sigh of relief. At long last - to be alone! The state he felt the most comfortable. Without thinking he put his hand in his coat pocket and felt a piece of paper that should not be there. The note! The note that Ewa Mann had gave him earlier.

Krafft looked up. At first he glanced around to see if Ewa was to be seen. Then he took a second look around to see if anyone was watching him as he pulled the note out and unfolded it.

The note read: “I must see you alone!”

Krafft slowly refolded the note and put it back into his pocket. Then he looked around again to see if Ewa was still amongst the other guests. She wasn't. He then looked around for Elaine. She wasn't either.

“Propaganda. Goebbels-style. ”

Goebbels was in his element - surrounded by subordinates, all waiting their turn to give him their reports, all watching his every move, all agreeing with his every word. The other factor contributing to his feeling of joy was the fact that this meeting - and the entire trip - was *Top Secret*.

“Herr Faust, I believe you have the report on foreign publications.”

The 'secret trip' was in fact Goebbels idea, but several other high members of the Nazi party liked the idea and took part as well. It made them appear exclusive to other departments in the party and the Minister of Propaganda was a master at creating appearances.

The general anticipation of the war finally spilling out of the seas and onto the countryside of Poland had created a buzz of excitement in both the civilian and military circles. Expected by the German public at least, this kind of 'secret meeting' must take place for all the real important leaders to make the final plans for the next phase of the war.

. .and do we have any of our people who could influence radio broadcasters there?"

The invasion of Denmark and Norway were already finalized, and the ideas of how to knock out France quickly were also nearly done. While the German High Command, under Hitler's watchful eye and approval of course, were actually the ones responsible for planning these invasions; Goebbels had a brilliant idea that he and several other cronies could 'appear' to be taking part in some form of planning..

This 'secret' week-long vacation certainly gave the impression to their fellow Nazi associates - and the general public - that they were indeed planning something. Something big. Word quickly spread all over Berlin Goebbels had not been seen after two days. A Teak' from this mountain retreat only spread fuel to the rumors - as planned. The hope was when the action of the next invasion started, appearances would indicate they were "the ones" that planned it.

Propaganda. Goebbels-style.

This was also a chance for Goebbels and his colleagues to have a real vacation - that is, one without their wives - not seen by many in his staff since 1937.

"Ahh.. .good, good." Goebbels finally had in his hand what he'd been waiting weeks for.

Helmut Haase, who had given him the report, was pleased to make his master happy and clicked his heels as he smartly returned to his seat.

“We have agents in contact with each one of these magazine?”

“Jawol, Herr Minister!”

“Ha!” Goebbels could not contain his delight. “If these numbers are accurate, then we can manipulate almost half of the American public!”

“Jawol, Herr Minister!” Helmut Hasse swelled with pride. Goebbels had an uncanny way of showing his approval when one of his aides turned in a report. Just by his manner, he conveyed to his followers he was giving them the credit for the good news. Naturally those under Goebbels loved this trait, but would feel differently if they knew that when in front of Hitler himself, Goebbels would not mention even one of their names.

“Gentlemen, are there any other areas of the American media we have missed?”

All in the room looked at their notes, then at each other around the table.

“Yes, I believe we have a good segment collected to start with. However, gentlemen, let us keep our minds open in the development of other ways to have the Nazi message heard in America. It is, after all, a rather *large* country, isn't it?”

All in the room knew Goebbels wanted laughter by his inflection on the word large. All obliged with chuckles and snickers for the Third Reich's possible future foe. Although large, it was a common belief the United States would still fall to the march of unstoppable German boots. The *Ami's* (as Americans were called detrimentally) after all, were a stupid people.

“Which of these do you think would be most useful?” Goebbels followed up.

Herr Haase took only a few seconds to consider the question. “The astrology and occult magazines, Herr Minister.”

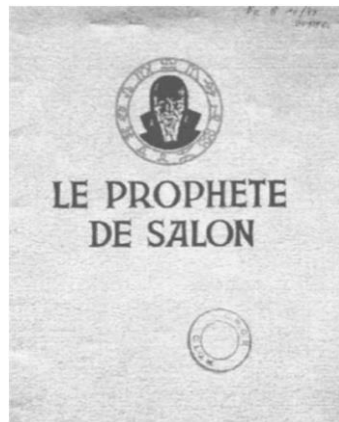
Huge smiles flashed around the table, not in reaction to a good idea, but as a joke.

Goebbels however, was not smiling. His first reaction was to look out the window at the snow covered mountains they were nestled in. Then a very slight smile occurred at the left end of his mouth. The smiles and half snickers from the others subsided immediately.

“Describe how you think such magazines would be useful?”

“Herr Minister, the American metaphysical society is underdeveloped, unscientific, and superficial. They often look to European astrologers, particularly those of us from Germany, for any technical articles...” Herr Haase looked around the room for support, “. . .mainly since most authors in America only deal in gossip.” Many around the table gave nods of approval. “Also, thanks to the Hamburg School, many American publications consider Germany, to have far more experts in the field of astrology, even more so than England.

“As they *should*, since it is the truth!” An elderly grey-haired man in civilian clothing stated with much bitterness - for the USA or the United Kingdom - no one knew.



Global Propaganda. Goebbels-style.

Goebbels however, would turn these facts for use in another idea: German agents in America would submit articles to the American publications as *American* writers. All of these works would 'predict' a pre-arranged date for the Nazi victory over France and later over Great Britain. If a large amount of Americans actually believed that Germany would win the war, this might influence the U.S. Congress not to declare war on Germany when the attack on France and eventually England finally came.

Choosing a date for the fall of France was easy since the plans, timetables and predicted outcomes were already in Goebbels possession. The 'predicted' fall of Great Britain would have to wait until several other factors were established.

"Gentlemen!" All of those in the *Auslandgedenkenabteilung* (Foreign Thought Department) whose job it was to manipulate public opinion in foreign lands could tell by his tone of voice the meeting was coming to an end.

"Gentlemen, I believe we could do with some lunch!" Goebbels almost shouted as if an order.

A moan of approval traveled across the table, as if the very mention by their boss had triggered their minds into realizing they were even hungry. All of the men rose after Goebbels had done so and followed him out of the wooden planked conference room, usually reserved to dancers and entertainment for the many skiers who would come here during the high season.

History would never record this starting point of Nazi manipulation over the naïve American media and public. Also lost in history was the general sentiment of public opinion found American cities before the attack on Pearl Harbor - Ask any American who would probably win a conflict in Europe and 80% would answer Germany. Interesting also was sixty-

eight percent of all Americans actually felt the Third Reich had a right to start the war due to the injustices the Treaty of Versailles. These percentages were similar in number whether taken in a poll with Democrats, Republicans or any other political parties, of which the Nazis had one. All these opinions were in part thanks to actions taken from this meeting that just took place.

“Enjoying yourself...finally?”

Baroness Fredricke waved her huge champagne glass high over her head.

“My God!” She cried, delivering the punch line to her joke, ‘if everything is *that* easy to get in Warsaw, then I’ll take the entire building!”

Frau Ney’s houseguests shouted with glee. Jokes about the crushed Polish army and the current conditions in Warsaw were very popular in Germany, and Baroness Fredricke seemed to know them all. Even Krafft was beginning to chuckle a little - despite his emotional exhaustion. His mind then returned to the note Ewa Mann had given him.

Krafft’s imagination was now trying to focus on what her few words meant. Was she in trouble? Is there something about Dark Fire she wanted him to know... or *warn* of? Was she attracted to him as he was to her?

The thought of a warning briefly returned his mind again to Lutch, whose behavior gave the first clue something was wrong. Then his mind returned to the image of the shapely redhead when she was in front of him.

Where could she meet her alone?

The Governor General returned with another glass of champagne for Karl Ernst, the trip

taking longer since he was again stopped by two women in their 40's who insisted on hugging and hanging on him.

“Enjoying yourself.. .finally?” The Governor General asked, noticing Krafft has a fraction of a smile on his face.

“Who *is* that woman?” Krafft asked, coming under the aged matron's spell as everyone else at the party.

“The Baroness? Baroness Fredricke is a national treasure! She has been the queen of the stage in Berlin since the turn of the century. Do you not attend the *theater*?”

Kraft had only a mild interest in the theater, however was familiar with nearly all of the famous German actors and actresses....at least in his lifetime. The way the Governor General said ‘theater’ however, suggested the stages of her productions were not found in the main theaters of Berlin. “I’ve never seen her before.”

It was apparent to the Governor General by Krafft's answer reveal not much awareness of the many other types of entertainment houses now existing in Berlin. He was just about to inform Karl Ernst what exactly the Baroness used to perform when out of the corner of his eye he saw Elaine and Olga approaching.

Krafft saw them both at the same time and walked towards Elaine.

“Is everything alright?”

Elaine smiled, shook her head “yes”, and then turned to Olga.

“Thank-you, Olga, I feel much better now”. Elaine said this with the subtle hint that Olga could go back to whatever she was doing before being called over. Olga, however

remained in the group.

“Come, let’s meet the Baroness!” The Governor General proposed.

The group without any objection or counter proposal walked closer to the crowd that surrounded the frail looking woman. Krafft would have to wait even longer to find out what Elaine experienced upstairs with Frau Ney.

Chapter 9- The Family

“Can you stay a minute?”

“But I’ve never seen you downstairs for breakfast, lunch *or* dinner. You mean you’ve been locked up here all week?” The young girl joked.

Bettina could not answer, only shook her head in the affirmative. It was not joke. She now wondered if it was a mistake to let the cleaning lady in. Goebbels instructed her never to leave, but said nothing about letting anyone *in*, yet she knew this probably would bring trouble.

“Yes, I’ve been in here.. .the entire time.”

“Well, let me take a look and I’ll be on my way.”

Goebbels had instructed the owner of the ski lodge - his good friend Herr Kaufman - that he had his own ‘servant’ to take care of the room, and the only thing needed was to supply the room with a week of toiletries, dried snacks, schnapps, and linen.

Herr Kaufman of course knew full well the situation, for more than half of his ‘special guests’ had some kind of similar arrangement with a female - either one they bought to the hotel or what was procured in the rustic village of Hoffberg nearby.

With this taken care of, Goebbels had never considered an accident might bring one of the Hotel’s staff in contact with Bettina.

At first Bettina did not want to let the housekeeper in, since Goebbels had told her there would be no housekeeping service and any cleaning would be her responsibility. However, there was something about the young lady in the doorway Bettina found magnetic, even oddly familiar in a way there were no words for.

It wasn't until the housekeeper went into the bathroom and looked under the washbasin the mistake was found out.

"This valve is not leaking!"

"That's what I told you at the door." Bettina had now lost her fear of speaking to someone else in defiance of Goebbels' instruction.

"Yes, but..." The housekeeper pulled out the slips of paper that were in her oversized pockets. "See? Room 27 - basin valve leaking."

Bettina looked at the noted and noticed the "7". While appearing to be a seven, could also be a "1", which later was learned to be the actual room number having water dripping all over the bathroom floor. However, Bettina said nothing since she simply wanted this moment to last. After so many days of being alone, or hating herself when Goebbels was her only company, she was now remembering there was another world with other people.

"Can you stay a minute?"

"Well, uh..."

"I just would like to talk with someone."

The young housekeeper saw the desperation in Bettina's eyes, and body.

"Sure, I'm on lunch in few minutes anyway..

Over the next hour, Bettina shared selected parts of her life, and what had transpired over the past year. The housekeeper listened intently and somehow by instinct pulled out her handkerchief a full 3 seconds before Bettina burst into tears.

While Bettina was drying her eyes, the housekeeper looked at a few of Bettina's possessions that were neatly placed on her desk. A sense of familiarity hit her.

"What's your family name, Bettina?"

"Meyer... and yours?"

"Meyer.. .Elke Meyer."

Both girls reacted having the same last name, even though "Meyer" was one of the most common family names in German speaking countries. However, it always gave a thrill to either Bettina or Elke alike to meet someone who shared their family name - especially if it was someone they liked.

"Where are you from, Bettina?"

"I lived in Berlin, but we are originally from Liegnitz."

"As in Liegnitz on the way to Breslau?"

"You've been there?"

"Been there? No, but that's where my father's side of the family are from."

Both Elke's and Bettina's minds began to race at the possibilities.

"Is your father Rudolph Meyer with the meat stores in Berlin?"

Bettina nodded.

"Cousin! Shrieked Elke, as she began hugging one of the many cousins she had heard of but never met.

"...there was not instructions or assistance from London..."

Otto jumped off the tram before it came to a full stop. He walked briskly down the Wilhelm Alle, partly in haste, partly against the cold. He walked briskly a few blocks and finally entered a small brown door to the "Stand-Up Coffee Shop".

Many felt the shop's name unusual, since there were in fact many places once could sit down and have a coffee, bread or pastry. The young British spy, however, did not sit down.

After picking up a cup of coffee from Brazil and a Berliner pastry, he walked over to one of the huge pane windows and leaned against the small elbow high counter and studied the street front of him. He only appeared to drink his coffee nor nibble on his pastry since he was not in the mood for either.

His entry into the coffee house, as he commonly did, was for one reason and one reason only. Otto scanned both sides of the street, studying slowly every person and car that moved or was stationary. He knew all of the license plate codes for the secret police and Department of Security Ministry, and noted if any were on the street or driving by. None of the cars he studied had these.

He then observed all of the people, those walking on the street and those in the windows of the surrounding buildings. Everyone out on the street seemed to be people who belonged in the neighborhood. Otto then walked out of the coffee shop back entry with his coffee and pastry, casually strolling down five blocks then made a right into a small alley. On the second stairway to the left he made his way down a few steps to a basement door whose decorations suggested a Tailor Shop. It was here that Otto had contact with London.

“Guten Tag.” He said to a woman behind the counter as he walked into the shop.

“Guten Tag.” She returned.

Otto did not stop once he entered the shop, but continued to the right hand side of the customer waiting space and lifted the part of the counter that opened like a drawbridge to allow employees to enter and exit the work area in the rear.

The shop had no back door, however there was a back ‘escape’ route should the worse happen - a well-hidden opening in the employee rest room that led to a laundry chute in the building next to theirs.

“Guten Tag.” Otto said as he entered a tiny office with a frail old man with huge spectacles at the end of his nose.

The rest of the employees were gone, allowed to leave early one day a month as a ‘bonus’ if they produced well. However, as a security Otto and the gentleman continued to speak German.

“What have you for me today?” As additional security, the two would always talk in a ‘clothing code’ in case someone was listening from somewhere. While this may appear highly unlikely, neither deviated from British Intelligence procedure.

“Some buttons?” Otto placed seven buttons down on an odd patterned table, which also doubled as a map of Germany and the parts of Europe surrounding her. Each button represented a German division, and a ‘scratch’ that Otto make on each button would later ID for Herr Johanstall the name of each of these units.

After Otto placed the buttons on the table, he began to move the buttons from where the

divisions were to where they would be going. “Can you have these sewn on my coat by the 28th of March?” The question let Stephan know the date these movements would occur.

“Surely.”

Stephan Johnstall was from an old German family, indirectly. His mother, Mariola, half Prussian - half Pole, was the product of an affair between her mother, Magdelana, and one Zigmunt von Effenburg.

Magdelana was an unusual occurrence in a small coastal town 200 kilometers west of Danzig. Her ancestors, a mixture of Swedish, Prussian, and Polish decent, somehow saved their best genetic combinations for her birth. For in a village of stocky, coarse and crude farmers, a stunning princess was born among them.

Her hair was a shiny blonde that actually formed a halo around her head when touched by the sun. Magdelana’s tattered peasant clothes could not hide her Venus figure, and was recruited when she became older for the best job in the area, serving beer at a guesthouse by the seaside for wealthy vacationers. She attracted many customers - and suitors.

It was just a matter of time that Zigmunt von Effenburg would meet Magdelana, for he owned much of the land around the region and had a hand in nearly business on this strip of coast, including the guesthouse. Fate finally allowed this deeply unhappy man to see the greatest treasure his estates had ever produced.

The von Effenburgs were a proud family with a long history, however they did not adjust well when industrialization seemed to be changing all of Europe. Zigmunt was forced to marry into another family’s money via a rather ugly bride in order to keep the family name financially

stable. This situation made Magdelana appear all the more attractive, for she represented the only thing missing in his life - and the thing he wanted most - a stunningly beautiful woman.

“Would you like something to drink?”

“Yes, something *hot*, perhaps.” Again, code. “Hot” meant something that was supposed to happen in fact *did not*.

“Coffee or tea... ?” The acceptance of tea meant the thing or event or person that did not happen was on the British side.

The fact that Otto did not say “Thank-you” when accepting it meant that there was not instructions or assistance from London on this matter.

“Uhhh...” This was not the first bit of bad news the old man heard today.

Stephan’s mother never told him the story of his grandmother. Zigmunt died in a riding accident only after one night alone with the angle he had waited his entire life for. Later Magdelana had Mariola and married the guesthouse keeper, who also mysteriously died. Some say it was because he drank too much, some say he was poisoned by Magdelana, who simply wanted to get away. With the money from selling the guesthouse, Magdelana and Mariola moved to Berlin to start a new life.

“I hope the tea I strong enough for you.”

This statement was actually a question if Otto had all of the supplies he needed.

After finishing his sip, Otto replied: “It tastes fine...” and then added, “. . . just a bit more sugar, perhaps.”

Stephan didn't get up to put more sugar in the tea. Both men secretly laughed, for the meaning of 'more sugar' was that Otto was requesting more money... something agents in the field always requested.

Stephan got up and walked towards the front of the office, his limp more obvious on the longer trip than the short steps from his desk. The limp was a result of an accident on the opening night of *Travel to Absurdity Land*, a play that opened in 1908 and in which Stephan had the lead role. He was supposed to climb up three long wooden bars that were part of the set to get his true love at the end of the play. While standing on the last bar and picking up his partner in the final scene, the third wooden bar snapped under the weight of both actors. Stephan, the actress, the wooden bar, plus half the set came tumbling down.

Unfortunately, Stephan landed first and everything else followed, landing squarely on top of his left leg and hip. The crowd roared with approval since they thought it was supposed to be a part of the show. It would be Stephan's last acting job on stage.

"Someone you know?" Otto pointed to the basement window as a scruffy faced man walked by. Stephan silently shook his head "no".

"Maybe I should leave," Otto motioned with his head to the secret exit.

"No, no, let's wait a moment." Actually Stephan had reasons for not wanting to use the back escape route at this time. If they were indeed being watched, then whoever was watching, more than likely the Gestapo, would already know that Otto was inside. If they came in and Otto was not there, then they would draw the logical conclusion there was indeed a secret door somewhere - and then proceed to tear the entire shop apart to find it.

“Done any costumes lately?” Otto asked to pass the time, looking at some of the magnificent creations that adorned the walls.

After the accident, Stephan remained in the theater, but not as an actor. Since his mother had taught him to sew, and he was pretty good at it, he remained in the profession as a costume maker. His many actor friends and contacts with other companies over the years had his talent evolve into a permanent, respected tailor shop.

“No, I haven’t done costumes in years.”

There was a reason for this. In the past, most of his business came from the Jewish population of Berlin in the pre-Nazi theater era. Now however, this significant part of Berlin’s culture had been decimated. One of those destroyed, a Barbara Nitsche, who lost her life during Krystallnacht - and who Stephan Johanstall was in love with deeply - was the reason the old German tailor was working for the British.

“What have you done to this woman?”

“Do you know why Jews....?”

The group could hear the Baroness begin another round of approved Nazi humor. She paused just long enough to let the question settle in her audience’s mind. Then when the group was completely silent blurted out the punch line.

Once again the audience burst out in a roar and applause.

“Baroness! Baroness! The Governor General called as his group approached the rim of

the crowd. There is someone here we brought all the way from Switzerland to meet you!”

Baroness Fredricke slowly turned towards Dr. Frank, then glanced over at Krafft and Elaine. In the blink of an eye her mood flashed from being the jovial life of the part into one whose anger could kill. She looked back to the Governor General with her pale blue eyes.

“What have *you* done to this woman?”

“And our subject, Herr Krafft?”

Fesel was watching the snowflakes silently collide against his huge window. His office, his entire project, was situated in what was once the Buchfabrik, a Jewish publishing house specializing in school textbooks and medical publications.

The previous owners, Jan and Anke Wiessenberg, were persuaded to flee for their lives in 1936 from this building that had been in their family for generations, with what possessions they could carry on their backs. This happened to many Jewish firms throughout the country as part of the Nazi ‘cultural purification’ program. The Wiessenbergs were one of the lucky families; they managed to make their way to America. They reached Ellis Island without one Reichmark from their family business that had been created and maintained since 1879. But they were alive.

“You wanted to see me?”

“Yes, Frau Mann, please have a seat. Would you like a coffee?”

Ewa Mann nodded ‘yes’ and the doctor turned to look through the glass divide, which caused his secretary to stop typing and return the look. Fesel held up two fingers on one hand

and made a drinking gesture to his mouth with the other.

The secretary knew how much cream and sugar was the preference for each and every employee in the Dark Fire project. She got up and headed for the kitchen.

“So, how was the party at Frau Ney’s...?”

“Well, the food was first rate, as usual.” Ewa wanted to say something positive to start the conversation, for she was usually disgusted with the crowd that often came to one of Frau Ney’s gatherings.

“And our subject, Herr Krafft? Is he still there⁹”

“Yes, the Governor General will see they remain the entire weekend.”

“Did he see you leave?”

“No.”

“Good, good.”

Long before Krafft was ‘requested’ to come to Berlin, Fesel had him watched and studied. What kind of women would he glance at while walking down the street? What were the appearances of his past sweethearts? What kind of women did he seem to take a liking to at the shops he visited, or would speak longer to after one of his lectures?

Once a composite was made, Fesel ordered a search to find the perfect girl Karl Ernst Krafft would have a weakness for; possessing every quality he was attracted to. He found that in the girl now sitting in front of him: Ewa Mann.

“What did you think of our Herr Krafft...?”

"Can we trust them?"

Maxi had been waiting in his taxi in front of the German High Command for about forty minutes. What appeared strange to Maxi on this particular day was the amount of civilians who were coming and going through the huge metal doors of the building. On any other day there would be a regulated flow of Luftwaffe, SS, Army, and Navy uniforms.

Why all the civilians? Maxi wondered. He hoped that one of them - a talkative one - would require a taxi. Perhaps some friendly conversation could help piece some of the puzzle together. Oddly, most of these men and women were either picked up or delivered by cars driven by lower ranking men in uniform, or they were all using the Hansaplatz U-Bahn station nearby.

“Ah! Ha ha ha..!” Maxi recognized the laugh of the fat General Schmidt-Prange even at a distance. Turning in the direction to where the laugh originated, Maxi saw the General with Birgit and two other men, both in civilian clothes.

“I’m sure when the signal comes, you will do your job well.” The General said to the men, while looking at the sky above him. At the bottom of the steps, the two men each shook the general’s hand, bowed to Birgit, then departed towards the U-Bahn station.

Birgit and Schmidt-Prange watched the men walked off, traded comments that Maxi could not hear, then walked by Maxi’s taxi.

“Can we trust them?” Birgit questioned.

“No matter.” The general answered. “If they do their job, then all will go as planned. If they don’t, which has already been taken under consideration, things will just take a few hours or days longer. Either way they will not be alive by the time we arrive.”

Both Birgit and the general walked right in front of Maxi’s taxi in order to take a short cut to cross the street. Realizing they would not use his cab today, Maxi leaned out of the window so he could hear every word.

“Have you seen the message from Schellenburg reporting the situations on Holland?”

“His report arrived just as I was leaving, so Violetta will have it decoded when we return.”

Maxi was surprised how business-like Birgit seemed as she walked off. Usually she was laughing and joking whenever he had seen or drove her in the past. Now she was just as serious as all the other Germans in uniform who made this building their home. Her sexy figure however, did not change with her new cold and calculating attitude.

Suddenly the back door to taxi opened, and a heavy-set, red headed man with a black full-length leather coat twisted himself in the back seat. He had a thin military-style briefcase in one hand and a large white box in the other. Both items were thrown to the space next to him in exhaustion.

“Schulerstrasse, Bitte.” The man said without looking at Maxi.

“Everyone in the room could feel the electrical bond...”

“Uh, ummm, uh...” Stuttered the Governor General of Poland. Because of his position, he was not used to being spoken to in such a shocking tone, especially by a woman. The experience came as an even greater shock to him, and to the audience, since the Baroness and Dr. Frank were known to have a deep friendship that had endured many years.

“What have you done to upset this woman?” The Baroness repeated.

“Uh, do you *know* Karl and Elaine Krafft?” Was all the Governor General could think of to say at this awkward moment.

“No, not their names, I don’t care about names.” The Baroness stopped after looking into Karl Ernst’s eyes. “Yes, yes...” She said, as if going into a trance. “These are the eyes of one who looks into the future, one who can feel.. .the stars...”

The entire audience began to feel a twinge of panic that had already enveloped the Governor General. No one had ever seen the Baroness act like this - be it when she was drunk, drugged, or in her deepest depths of depression. Something significant was happening to her - something mystical - and everyone in the room could see and feel it.

“And can’t you see the shock and horror in the eyes of this lovely woman?” The Baroness continued while looking at Elaine. The Baroness now lifted her frail finger and pointed at everyone in the room, including Karl Ernst and the Governor General, as if she were a teacher trying to find out which student threw the pencil while her back was turned.

“What have you done that could put such a pure soul into...this?”

The Baroness obviously favored Elaine in an uncanny way, and everyone seemed to sense that in talking about Elaine so intensely, the Baroness was somehow ‘connecting’ with her.

All in the room could feel the electrical bond forming between Elaine and the Baroness, as if two powerful magnets were trying to pull each of them together, but somehow and even stronger force was holding them apart.

Elaine, however, could not handle the energy or the center of attention coming about in this form. She closed her eyes as if to break the bond and ran out of the room. Karl Ernst followed quickly behind her.

Running down the hallway Elaine opened the last door on the right thinking it would lead out of the house. She then froze in horror before she could put her leading foot down.

Karl Ernst then reached the door and out of the corner of his eye also saw what had made Elaine contract nearly every muscle in her body. The sight made him sick to his stomach and his heart starting beating twice as fast.

“You don’t see any chance?”

“Aw, Come in Frau Peterson!”

Von Wohl’s excited greeting suddenly erased the middle-aged woman’s distressed face. His special talent for making the unloved rekindle the spark missing in life was one of the reasons she stood before von Wohl’s bright green door, which she entered. The host took her coat and neatly hung it on the antique coat rack, then led his guest into the study, which had a two-month layer of dust and the typical disorder of a bachelor.

“Drink?”

The woman spoke softly, "Yes, please." She slowly sat in the large easy chair that von Wohl had led her to. Von Wohl knew exactly what to bring since this was her ninth visit.

"So, what shall we look at today, Frau Peterson?" Von Wohl called from the kitchen.

"Coco" Peterson was the daughter of a German diplomat and Brazilian dancer. She had the bone structure of a Teutonic princess from her father, and was covered with the rich brown skin and straight black hair of her South American mother. Since coming to Germany in 1928, she had lived in relative wealth since one of her grandfathers owned a coffee plantation and the other was highly placed in the German Foreign Service.

"I would like to know if my son's new girlfriend is right for him.. .this relationship looks serious."

Von Wohl smiled to himself as he measured the proportions of the drink he was creating. He always wondered why relationships were the main concern of most people when it came to astrology, when there were so many other areas of life this tool could be used.

"Hmm...." Von Wohl made it sound as if he was already beginning to work on the project in his mind. Astrology had been very good to Ludwig von Wohl since learning it from the Baron. Even before he had mastered the art fully there was a swarm of his acquaintances that wanted to see what their horoscope said. Nearly all were either dissatisfied with their lives, insecure over some matter, lonely, and female. All of these the very qualities von Wohl thrived on and had a keen sense to manipulate.

He brought Coco's drink and set it on the small oriental side table next to her, seated himself on the matching chair opposite her.

“Well, let’s take a look at her birthday, which is..

“Novembers, 1921.”

Von Wohl looked in his Furstberg’s ephemeris to the date and began to take notes on where all the planets were on that day. While he in fact learned how to make a complete horoscope with the ascendant, he rarely ever went through the trouble to do this.

There were several reasons for this; the first being that it took approximately six hours going through eight different books and doing the math to cast just one chart. Most clients wanted an answer as soon as they walked in. If he requested they return the next day while he worked on constructing their horoscope, the possibility was high they would change their mind and not come back - or that the issue or decision would already be made without him.

“Hmm...” Again, von Wohl made the sounds as if he were calculating her data.

Coco was not only here for her son’s welfare, but for her own piece of mind. For years she had been dissatisfied with her marriage. Interested in the occult since a teenager seeing the sacrifices and priests undergoing possession of the candomblé rituals outside of San Paulo, she had a need for the occult - no matter what the culture.

“And when did the couple meet?”

“Uh, I don’t know exactly..

“Hmm...” Von Wohl made it sound as if her lack of information would make his job a lot more difficult.

Coco and von Wohl met at one of many of the Foreign Service parties that von Wohl

made a habit of attending. It was an excellent place to meet women like Coco, for parties such as these were the only entertainment many Foreign Service wives had. All too often they were left alone at home in some strange land while their husbands were away on some diplomatic mission.

“I think this will probably be just another fling.” Von Wohl said after careful study. Actually he was guessing more from the information Coco had told him earlier about her son Olaf's history than what he ‘calculated’ by noting the girl's birthday.

Coco let out a moan of frustration. She had so much wanted her son to finally find a girl that he would be motivated to marry and settle down.

“You don't see any chance?”

“Frau Peterson, there is always a chance... Von Wohl covered himself. “It's just that those chances appear to be very small.”

Coco let out a long sigh and shook her head as if von Wohl had simply reconfirmed what she knew all along.

“I know, I know...” Von Wohl reassured while getting up, still looking at his notes. “...I know you want the best for Olaf, but sometimes a boy has to go through several affairs to get experience in order to learn what he really wants. Von Wohl said this as if it were written in the stars of a horoscope, when in fact this was the very phrase his mother had used to describe him.

Coco always felt reassured by von Wohl. Discussing the topic of marriage with Olaf only caused resentment and strife. The discussions between mother and son were now down to two matters, how much money he was spending for his adventures, and what went wrong with

his last relationship. Their relationship had changed drastically since Olaf's father took an assignment in Rome, where it was rumored he had an Italian lover.

“Frau Peterson?”

“Yes?”

“Is there something *else* on your mind you want to discuss with me?”

“Well, I...”

Von Wohl could see that he had hit a nerve, but waited to see if she could explain her feelings by herself. If she could, then he would be the attentive listener and this would strengthen the bond that was developing between them. If she didn't know, or seemed confused by what she could express, then he would gently move in with what he wanted her to believe were her feelings. Either way he would win. Either way would bring Frau Peterson closer to him - mentally and emotionally - which he wanted just as much as her money.

“Relax, Frau Peterson...it will come to you...”

Von Wohl's calming reassurance was expressed as if he was making love to her. This came easy for him to express since this was the actual desire ballooning inside of him. Coco's dark exotic skin attracted von Wohl, as did most of the other German men who wanted to experience something 'forbidden'. Nazi propaganda over the last seven years had made having sexual relations with non-Aryan, non-Nordic women almost outlawed, which in turn made Frau Peterson practically contraband. Some thought this was the reason her husband had shunned her.

“Herr von Wohl.....”

Coco was important to von Wohl for a psychologically deeper reason as well. Her face and build were almost identical to a Magdalena Roth, the very first girl a twelve-year-old Ludwig Wohl was ever sexually attracted to. Having Coco meant, in a way, having Magdalena as well, which was an opportunity missed due to his youth. What surprised von Wohl after learning about astrology was that Coco and Magdalena were both born on December 3rd.

“... there *is* something I must tell you, but you must promise not to tell anyone.”

“...naturally wanting to know when the Germans would be rolling through. ”

The streets of Amsterdam were still lively despite it being just after 3 am in the middle of February. At number 39 Straatsdam in an elegant back room, a meeting that had started at 5 pm the previous day was still in progress.

“Gentlemen, I believe we ought to prepare for maintaining our arrangements when the Germans come.”

“What? Through Holland?” Nils was shocked by the Count’s matter-of-fact statement, but knew if the Count said it, it was true. He was acutely aware that the Count said ‘when’ and not ‘if.’

“How much time we have to prepare for this intrusion?” Reut Gleeson followed up, naturally wanting to know when a Nazi invasion would be rolling through. He had seen this very thing before in the First World War.

Most attending the meeting did not speak up, or yet have a question when hearing the shocking news, for they were at the moment busy controlling their anger. They felt betrayed by

the many highly placed German officials who assured them that Germany would respect Holland's neutrality in any confrontation with France. Now they had to deal with the thought of protecting their homes as well as plan how they could still conduct their current businesses under a German occupation.

The Count, of course, had already begun this when he learned the news several months ago while in Berlin. Nearly all of his assets were already out of the Netherlands and Belgian. He had also created ideas with his German 'friends' over how to capitalize on the new opportunities such an occupation would bring the Germans and the group he was now sitting with.

The Count's Holland "group" had no formal name, or identity, other than the fact that Count von Hoogerwoerd was the head of it. While the Count had groups such as these on payroll all over the world, this particular group only consisted of individuals from Holland. These were the men who set up and maintained the Count's control of over his 'golden goose' - oil. The other difference between the Holland group and his groups in such countries as Rumania, Hungry, and England were that the later had members that were constantly changing, many of who were never heard from again.

Chapter 10 - The Empress

“What happened upstairs?”

Grabbing Elaine, Krafft pulled her out of the doorway and dragged her down to the end of the hall where a window showed them they were in the back of the house. Beyond the window they saw a door that allowed them to go outside. The cold refreshing winter air of the Baltic took the shock out of their systems.

“Karl Ernst, we have to get away...I am *not* going back inside this house!”

“But...what...how?”

They were perhaps twenty or thirty kilometers from the nearest town. Despite all the luxuries that Frau Ney seemed to have in her home, one item lacking was a telephone - therefore no taxi.

At present, all that seemed appropriate was to wait outside - to think of what to do next - and give the appearance to any guests, should they be discovered, they were simply getting some fresh air. Hopefully later one of the guests would eventually be seen leaving they could get a ride back to Stettin.

The night sky was completely clear and the crescent Moon, unusually bright for just the thin sliver it was, illuminated the forest that surrounded the house. After a few moments of soaking in this beauty, Karl Ernst wrapped his arms around Elaine anticipating she would be getting chilly, which she was.

“Elaine?”

His wife looked up.

“What happened upstairs?” The thought of what upset Elaine originally had finally returned to him.

“In the bedroom there were...”

While Elaine was trying to find words for the debauchery witnessed, the door they had just went through slowly motioned outward, a creak had Karl Ernst and Elaine freeze.

From the darkness within the house a figure was made visible by the moonlight.

It was Baroness Fredricke.

“...he didn't say anything like that. ”

“Good, Good.” Fesel whispered.

Finding a girl, in this case Ewa, to come between Karl Ernst and Elaine was easy, and the search began months before Karl Ernst was ‘requested’ to come to Berlin. The process was actually started in November of 1939, when Krafft was arrested by the Gestapo, after the 8th of November assassination attempt of Hitler in a Munich beer hall.

On November 2nd, Krafft predicted the Fuhrer’s life would be in danger between the 7th and 10th of November and this warning found its way to Hess, then Himmler. After the attempt, Krafft was questioned, but it was clearly shown to the Gestapo and its chief that Krafft was not a part of the plot, but actually used the chart of Adolf Hitler to see when his life was in danger. Himmler began to consult Krafft on his own personal matters from this time forward.

Once know what kind of girl Karl Ernst had a weakness for, Fesel, by order from Himmler, searched for the one girl who embodied each and every trait - all of which were found

in Ewa Mann.

“Will he be back..The secretary interrupted Fesel by entering with their coffee.

“Danke Frauline Voss.” Fesel said as receiving his coffee first. The 21-year-old secretary merely bowed, silently mimicked a “Bitte Sehr”, then turned, handed Ewa her cup and quickly left. Although young, Bertha Voss had enough experience to get out of the office quickly when Fesel was talking to someone alone.

“What did you think of him?”

“He was nice...and polite.”

This of course was not the kind of information Fesel was looking for. While he was a master at manipulating people and using others to ruin the lives of selected targets - he ironically had very little skill in communicating with another one on one. He actually wanted to know Ewa’s feelings for Krafft, but he didn’t know how to ask such a question. Having hardly any feelings left in him was one result of following Nazi doctrine for so many years.

“Were you uncomfortable when you where near him?”

The question seemed odd to Ewa, but she assumed this was part of Fesel’s job to check on her in this unusual assignment.

“Not at all.”

Fesel got up and looked out across the Zeppelinstrasse to the city block sized park that was opposite the Dark Fire building. Snow had covered all the walkways so the entire park looked like one solid white square. Only a dog’s and his master’s footsteps forming a diagonal across the eastern side in the tiny oasis of nature disturbed the perfection of newly fallen snow.

“Did you get the impression he wants to see you again?” Fesel still did not know how to ask Ewa if she felt anything for Krafft. Perhaps if he asked enough questions he could eventually touch on the subject so it would come out right, or collect enough related answers to make his own conclusions.

“I don’t know, he didn’t say anything like that.”

Before being hired by Fesel, Ewa Mann was a waitress at an Italian restaurant on the Mecklenburgstrasse. She was previously in the Hitler Youth, and as all the other children who participated in this organization, swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler first, then to the Third Reich, and finally to the German people.

“Did he look at you...?”

Ewa’s head turned towards Fesel with an uncertain and confused expression. It was only then that Fesel realized he had not completely expressed with words what was going on in his mind - the disconnect creating a statement that appeared almost stupid.

“I meant, my dear Ewa, did he look at you with any desire?” The shock of appearing feeble-minded to a subordinate kicked him to express what subject was really consuming him: sex.

“Oh, *that*”

Fesel was relieved, seeing he not only covered his mistake well, but also did it in a way that made him appear polite and refined.

“Well, I don’t know, maybe a little..! think.”

Ewa’s thoughts began to race back to her experience the night before. She could only

remember the mesmerizing jet black eyes of her assignment. There was something about them that was so distant - like the planets he worked with. Yet those eyes were still so intense, as if the power of those planets were so close. Fesel could see Ewa's mind was elsewhere.

“Did you see him read the note?”

“No.”

“Hungry will remain neutral as long as it can...”

The Count's father, Manfred, was the one who actually saw that oil would replace coal as the main energy source as far back as 1889, when only a handful of men saw the experiments in ship engines that revealed a diesel type engine would far outperform a coal driven one.

Knowing that the major navies in the world would soon be forced to restock their fleets with diesel driven battleships, Manfred began sending his agents out to infiltrate the Geological Societies of every country to find - and later control - the countries that produced oil. He would then be the key supplier of fuel for the modern navies of the 20th Century, to friend and foe alike. Just as his father and father before him did with weapons.

Although Manfred was beaten out of the gate by one Sidney Reilly, who not only discovered that the Russians were surveying around Baku for oil, but the daring secret agent also stole the Czar's findings and delivered it to the British Secret Service. However, Manfred won in the end. Nearly half the Russian population of Baku was dependent on the von Hoogerwoerd family a full 2 years before the Russian Czar even knew how much oil they were sitting on.

When the Russians finally did come in and develop the area for oil production at great

expense to the Russian people, Manfred von Hoogerwoerd merely sat back and took his cut. He did the same in what is now Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, and other parts of Russia.

“We have six weeks at the most.”

For some, there was a feeling of relief they would not have to rush home that night. For others, less than two months may still not be enough time for them to accomplish what they needed.

“And what about Budapest?” Questioned Pavel, one of the Hungarians present.

“Hungry will remain neutral as long as it can, until Russian becomes involved, which will probably be much later, the summer of '41 at least.”

The Hungarian looked relieved. Pavel's father was a photographer during the Great War, so he saw firsthand the horrors that could be brought to his beloved country, home, wife and children.

Von Hoogerwoerd then looked at the four Rumanians who were seated together at the far side of the table. When all four returned his look, he spoke.

“Rumania will remain neutral, but later this year will ally itself with Germany. The arrangements have already been made in secret.”

Two of the Rumanians seemed surprised, while the other two - of German descent - looked at each other with approval.

“Gentlemen, I would like for us to call it an evening here. On your way out please take the folder with your name on it and read through your next assignment tomorrow after a good night's sleep. I will be contacting you individually to cover a few more specific details before

your trains leave on Thursday. Good night.”

As each man walked through the hallway, they stopped briefly by a gray marble table and found their folders. In each were assignments that suited each man’s profession, and gave the Count more unseen control over Europe and beyond by; a high-jacking in Hungary, a business takeover by force in Rumania, covert pressure on one of the Soviet generals, a murder in Germany, theft of a code book in Italy, a dead drop in Sweden, to name a few.

“Some looked like movie stars, some were ugly.”

A double knock came on the door. Then a single one followed a few seconds later.

This was the signal to Bettina that it was Elke at the door. The two had met nearly every day after their first accidental meeting. Bettina quickly opened the door.

“I saw him drive off with several others. My friend at the front desk said they left a forwarding number in Hilsham, which is about 40 kilometers from here.

Bettina calculated in her mind how much time it would take a car to travel 40 kilometers on a snowy mountainous road, plus the time for a short meeting, a few beers and the drive back.

“We have about 3 hours.”

Elka had brought some bananas and some other fruit Bettina liked, since for the past few days she could only eat what Goebbels decided to bring up to her.. .when he remembered.

“How are you feeling?”

“A lot better, since meeting you. Were you able to telephone out?”

“Not yet. There’s only one operator who would let me use the phone here, and she didn’t show up for work yesterday. I’ll stay here later on tonight and see if comes in. If she does I’ll call your friend.”

Bettina wondered what Otto would do if he learned where she was. She also wondered what he would do if he learned of her situation.

“So tell me about your Otto...is he cute?”

“He’s a dream...tall, athletic, green eyes and dimples.”

Elka, a somewhat plump virgin who only had a schoolgirl relationship as a 10 year old, heaved a dreamily sigh. “Is he good in bed?”

Bettina was a bit taken back by this question. She had certainly spoken of sexual experiences with her close friends, and Elka, after all *was* family. But she had never had a question over sexually asked so direct, so openly - so casual.

“Uh, yea, sure!” The thought of their last experience came to mind. “We did it in the bathtub the last time I saw him.”

Elka could only imagine the two in a bathroom filled with bubbles and foam, which caused her to laugh. Bettina smiled as an afterthought, then her face slumped when she began to realize how much she missed him.

“Hey, hey, come on.” Elka could see what was happening. “Let me help you. Tell me the most exciting time you had when you were 10 years old.”

“Ten? Why?”

“Because if you were to tell me about something recently, then you would probably think of something with *him*, am I right?”

“Yes, you are.” Bettina admitted, then continued with a story of how she went to Hamburg with her aunt and ended up on the Reeperbahn.

“The Reeperbahn?” Elka was surprised that a grown woman would take a ten-year-old to the famous red light district of Germany’s main port city.

“Did you see any prostitutes?”

“Of course!”

“What was it like?”

“It was fun.”

“No, I mean what were the prostitutes like? Were they pretty?”

“Some. Some looked like movie stars, some were ugly.”

Bettina did not realize how serious this information was for Elka. Ever thinking of ways to obtain her first sexual experience, which was a constant urge every day, she recently began scheming of visiting the Jagermeister Hall to see if they would accept her. At least while having some sexual experiences she could make a few extra hundred Reichmarks in doing so.

“Did they have big breasts.”

“Well no, not *all* of them.”

Hearing this fact, Elka for some unexplained reason, felt superior to some of the prostitutes on the famous Reeperbahn. If *her* breasts were larger than some of the professional ladies of Hamburg, then she might even have a chance to work there instead of in her Landstat.

The conversation evolved over a multitude of girl topics until it came to the probable ‘danger time’ of Goebbels and his group returning. Elka left and then when down in the employee break room and saw her friend Patricia.

“Can you do me a favor?”

“What kind of favor?” Patricia asked, not wanting to say ‘yes’ until she knew full well what the favor was. Patricia was the one most often asked to lend money, since she always seem to have some.

“I need to make a call to Berlin.”

Patricia was relieve money was not the issue, but still interested in this seemingly odd request coming from Elka.

“Who do you know in Berlin?”

“It’s not for me, just for my cousin who is in trouble nearby.” Elka handed Patricia the message Bettina wanted to leave for Otto. It briefly and in very general terms let Otto know where she was and that she didn’t know exactly when she would be back.

“Can you get this out without us getting in trouble?”

. let the impact of the written word create the suspense... ”

The note has several special purposes. Fesel, as all other department heads under Goebbels' Ministry, were well aware the written word had a more profound effect than the spoken word. This fact was then used to their advantage whenever possible.

He found a woman Karl Ernst Krafft would be attracted to, and now Fesel could dangle her in front of the famous astrologer, limit their speaking and the desired nearness, and then let the impact of the written word create the suspense, intrigue, and mystery that one in such a field would be eaten up by.

Fesel finished his coffee.

“Come to me this evening at 18:00 and we will go over what I want you to do with him when he returns tomorrow.”

“Yes, Herr Doctor.”

“They are nothing but vampires...”

Karl Ernst and Elaine did not know how to react. They both were amazed, yet afraid of this magnetic personality now standing before them. Standing out just beyond the backdoor with the forest and stars as a background, she did not appear as frightful as when she was in the center of the room surround by her entourage.

“Baroness!” Was all Elaine could utter, as if meeting her by coincidence while walking in a city park. Karl Ernst remained silent.

“They are nothing but vampires,” began Baroness Fredricke, as if explaining why she

was no longer with her crowd of admirers, “. . .they sit, they suck, they drink, they suck, they eat, they suck, they come to me....and suck. I can only give so much, and now when I need my peace the most, they want even more.”

Karl Ernst remained silent. Elaine, however, relaxed her posture, as if an outpouring of sympathy had just been released.

“You poor dear.” Elaine breathed, as if she had just heard Fredricke’s entire life story.

“Poor only in my choices for husbands, my dear!”

The humor finally made Karl Ernst relax... a little. The memory of her fierce temper was still embedded in his mind.

“I appreciate you caring for me,” Elaine began, “I...”

“I know you do, my dear, I can see you are one of the few people in this world who has a heart - AND who knows what a heart is for.”

“Well, my parents are...”

“Yes, they are to be thanked for teaching you well, but remember my dear, a wine is only as good as its grapes, there is only so much the winery can do.”

“You are most kind.”

“And you, are special, my dear.”

Karl Ernst began to feel as if they were discussing a book he had not read. He understood each word they were saying, but lost the meaning by the way these two women were

arranging the words. It was also obvious there was a strong, unseen connection between Elaine and the Baroness, a bond that was growing in strength with each passing word.

“...funny, me too...”

“...that time will come, again...”

“...that’s your soul trying to...”

Karl Ernst was happy to stay out of the conversation, for now. It was seldom that Elaine ever communicated with someone outside of him or her own family, and he could see this conversation was giving her the same type of pleasure. Finally Fredricke turned to Karl Ernst.

“And you sir, why is it that you must associate with *these* people?” Contempt for her adoring fans could be easily picked up.

“I have been requested to do important work for the war effort.” Was all that Karl Ernst could come up with. He too, did not want to be associated with anyone inside the house socially, except of course for the Delphic Ewa Mann, who had disappeared into thin air.

“Important work.” The Baroness said mockingly. “These people do not know the meaning of *work*, let alone *important* work.”

Elaine sensed the bitterness ran deep, and that it was directed to several of who were in the house. Karl Ernst felt it was directed at the Nazi Party in general. Both were correct.

The Baroness then looked into both Karl Ernst and Elaine’s eyes, then closed her own eyes. When she opened them a few seconds later, she began walking past both Kraffts and into the darkness.

“Come.” She ordered. “Let’s go to Stettin.”

Chapter 11 - The Show

“This was Count von Hoogerwoerd’s Europe...”

After all the men had left, von Hoogerwoerd walked over to the window and looked out over the canal. Three of the houses on the other side still had their reddish lights on, and he could clearly see the owners sitting in their windows revealing their wares to potential clients. *Business will be very good when this place is full of lonely German soldiers.* The Count thought with memories of past wars he provided young girls to - some as young as ten years old.

After staring at one of the women for a while, a woman with who he had more than several entertaining evenings with, von Hoogerwoerd turned to look at the huge map of Europe that had been hand painted on the wall.

The map had no boundaries or borders drawn, nor were any of the countries listed. Only a few major cities, main roads, the mountains and major rivers were shown. On the upper left corner was the von Hoogerwoerd name and family crest. This was Count von Hoogerwoerd’s Europe - and Europe will soon change drastically - but it will still be the Count’s...or so he thought.

Actually in the times of turmoil, broken diplomatic agreements, and even war, his family firm would become even more powerful than the squabbling, disorganized, and indecisive governments that controlled their populations. How could the Nazi wave challenge him or be any different than the countless other regimes that have risen and fell while the Hoogerwoerd name remained the real rulers of Europe?

The Count closed his eyes, as if to prepare for sleep. The Nazis would be quite a

different monster, but he had faith in himself and the family empire. After all, he *had* successfully handled the Nazis... so far.

“...barely noticed the double click after each click of the number she dialed...”

Elka and Patricia waited until the hallway to the telephone operator room was clear, then Patricia dialed the number. Patricia barely noticed the double click sound after each click of the number she dialed, but paid it no thought. What she was not aware of is the seemingly ‘echo’ occurred not because she was dialing a long distance number, but that an extra wire had been attached to the phone line to the lodge. An extra wire the Gestapo had set up since this building was being used by the higher ups in the Nazi party. Himmler kept his eyes and ears on everyone, even those high up in the Nazi party - even the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels.

While such a tap was normally used for places or people under suspicion, it was indeed standard practice for any gathering of high officials - be it a private or official function.

The phone rang several times.

“I don’t think anyone is home now.” Patricia said, with one ear still in her headset. After the eleventh ring she disconnected the plug. “I’ll try again later.”

“Thanks.” Elka said as she started to leave. “TH check with you tomorrow.”

“Goodnight.”

When Elka returned the next day, she found that Bettina, Goebbels, and his entire group were gone. The secret vacation Goebbels and his group had was finished. Later when seeing Patricia, Elka asked if the message got through.

“No, I tried all night but there was never any answer. I’ll try again as soon as I go on.”

“No, never mind. My cousin is on her way back to Berlin now, in fact, she probably is in her boyfriend’s arms right now.”

“Where did you learn to drive?”

“I know the manager at the Hotel Victoria in the middle of Stettin,” the Baroness began, “...he’ll put us up even if he’s full.”

Karl Ernst and Elaine looked at each other puzzled. Then they turned and followed the Baroness into the darkness of the forest. They both thought of her eccentric behavior they observed in the house...and wondered if this was simply another example.

“Baroness Fredricke!” Elaine mouthed in a hushed shout. “Baroness! You can’t walk out alone that far in this weather!”

“Who said anything about walking?” The old woman’s voice echoed from the darkness.

Karl Ernst and Elaine took the hint and began walking towards her and then saw an opening in the woods the Baroness had disappeared through. As they were further away from the house and deeper in the woods, the Moon suddenly disappeared behind a lone cloud. For a few moments, neither of the Kraffts could see anything around them. Karl Ernst pulled Elaine next to him.

In the distance they heard a motor starting and saw two faint beams of light radiate about 20 meters in front of them. Karl Ernst and Elaine slowly walked towards it.

“Is this your car?” Elaine said as they approached the loudly idling vehicle.

“In one sense it is,” laughed the Baroness, “hurry up and get in! It’s getting cold out here!”

As soon as both the Kraffts were inside, the Baroness raced the engine far more than needed to shift into first gear. When she finally did shift, the result was three huge jerky lurches forward rocking everyone in the car, except the Baroness. The spinning wheels caused gravel, dirt, and grass to shoot away from the 1931 Volkswagen - the “People’s Car” - the one Hitler promised early in his political career that every German would soon own.

Karl Ernst had never been in an automobile driven by a woman, and for that matter, neither had Elaine. However, at the moment neither saw it as an issue since they were heading away from the house.

“Where did you learn to drive?” Asked Karl Ernst, noticing that outside of the shaky start, she was now handling the car as an experienced race driver. While she was certainly going much faster than anyone would expect for a lady of her age, it was clear she was in complete control of the car in a graceful way.

“In Mannheim, from Herr Porsche!”

It was also obvious she knew the roads very well, for Karl Ernst noticed she would prepare for a turn before the headlights revealed any bend in the road. Elaine noticed that she never looked at any of the road signs, or in her rear view mirror.

“Porche, Ferdinand Porsche?” Questioned a shocked Karl Ernst.

Elaine, hearing the conversation from the back, leaned forward to take part, when appropriate.

“The one and only!” The Baroness stated by downshifting to make her next sharp turn. “We were lovers, once, when - you might say - I was a much younger woman and he was a much younger man.”

Even Elaine could not begin to guess the Baroness’s age. Depending on the light, she looked anywhere between seventy and one hundred, yet could seem to be one who lived over many lifetimes by her uncanny ability to look deep into one’s soul. Yet at this moment, she was acting - in the way that she drove this little VW - like an enthusiastic, youthful teenager.

“It was Ferdinand who *gave* me this car!” The Baroness continued, while twirling her finger at the glove compartment as if instructing Karl Ernst in the front passenger seat to open it - which he did.

There was only one item in the small compartment, which from the heavy stock, felt like a birthday card. Upon pulling it out, Krafft saw indeed it was a greeting card, with a picture of Ferdinand Porsche standing in front of the Volkswagen factory entrance in Wolfsburg. Upon opening the card he smiled, and held it up for Elaine to see. The card read:

“To My Lovely Fredricks, All that comes through these gates are products of your divine inspiration. Love, Ferdinand”

After Elaine read and nodded, Karl Ernst carefully put the card back into the glove compartment. Ferdinand Porsche was one of the few people he truly admired, the engineer represented innovation and excellence, was an outstanding racecar driver himself, and a man whose heart was truly for the people. Krafft once read an interview on Porsche and was deeply impressed that of all his accomplishments, Ferdinand’s greatest joy was that he was able to design exactly what Fredricke was driving: a car that the average person could afford and enjoy,

and one designed to move four people and a suitcase using the least amount of fuel.

“Ah, we’re almost there!” The Baroness shouted happily as the glow of Stettin’s lights created a uniform glow over the horizon. Just as they crossed the sign marking the city’s boundary, the Baroness turned to Karl Ernst.

“Don’t let those people into your life. They will take everything you have.”

Karl Ernst returned her statement with a blank face.

“Mark my words, they will take your work you so value, your wife, and your life if you are not careful. Work for them if you must, but *never* give them anything else.” She said while glancing back at Elaine. “Never!”

“...more interesting than delivering and picking up plates of spaghetti and lasagna...”

Ewa left Fesel’s office and went to her tiny office that was 70 percent shelves, 20 percent table, and the rest of the space was to move around in. While her official job under Fesel was listed as research, she and Fesel knew her real job was to manipulate Krafft.

Fesel had told her during their interview he was looking for the right girl to do a psychological profile on a very important person who will be involved in their project.

“I need a woman who has some training in psychology.” Fesel said to Ewa when she entered the room for the interview. She had studied psychology in high school and her first two years of college - but had to quit when her father died, which cut her financial support.

“I have experience in this field, Herr Doctor.”

Fesel could sense the eagerness in her voice was sincere.

“But this is a very unusual assignment and I will need a very unusual girl.”

Not knowing how to response to this comment, Ewa remained silent; but the eagerness remained in her eyes.

“You see, I will have a very famous person working here, one who is brilliant...”

Ewa began to breath in very slowly at the thought.

“...but one who is unstable, and to make matters worse, is having trouble with his wife.”

Fesel lied.

Ewa remained silent, but attentive.

“I need someone who can observe him, and keep me informed of his psychological state. I also need to have him feel loved... and I need plenty of warning in case it looks like he is going to snap. Can you handle such an assignment?”

Ewa nodded and gave a powerful, “Yes!” This certainly sounded more interesting than delivering and picking up plates of spaghetti and lasagna - plus it paid three times more.

“You must swear not one word will ever be said on anything we speak of, or that you will do from this time on.”

“Yes, Herr Doctor.”

“I want it clear, by accepting this job you must be willing to do things I tell you immediately...things that might seem strange, or may not make sense to you.”

“Yes, Herr Doctor.”

Ewa wanted this job for many reasons. She could return to finish school. She could better support her mother and three sisters, all who were also hurt by the death of her father.

“Congratulations, Ewa, I think you are the woman I am looking for. Now here is the file on your subject, Karl Ernst Krafft.

“...we only have to control a few key decisions within those governments. ”

Manfred von Hoogerwoerd had taught his son well in the way and use of power, and how to maneuver around governments and bureaucracy. He also taught his son the main advantage their ‘empire’ had over the ones that came and went:

Governments are constantly concerned with controlling their populations to maintain power - the Hoogerwoerd family only has to control a few key decisions within those governments to maintain our control over them. It is far more economical to control decisions of decision makers than what it takes to control people.

“Something serious?”

The Count turned around and saw his wife standing in the doorway.

“We will have to go away before all of this starts.”

“The Nazis?”

“Yes, Hitler had set the plans for their push west into France, which will be soon and from what I’ve seen, should be successful.”

“Oh god...” The Countess looked down. “...and our home in Paris?”

“I don’t know.”

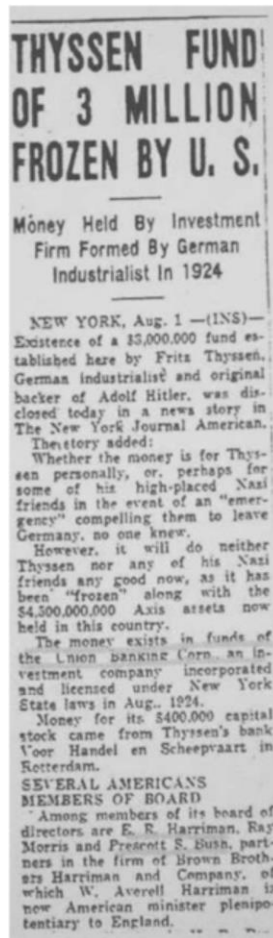
The Countess thought about the other places in France they owned and enjoyed; the Normandy farm homes, the wine estates in Bordeaux, and the villa on the Riviera. The Count could see his wife was becoming distressed.

“Were would *you* like to go, my dear?”

Ellena von Hoogerwoerd had already thought about this question many times and had come up with two possibilities.

“America...” She answered, “...or....”

The Count smiled as he poured a glass of scotch. He had many friends in America, the Rockefellers and Vanderbilt families of course, but her mentioning the land of opportunity reminded him of two new business partners there he had unfinished oil & banking business with one Prescott Bush and a Mr. Herbert Walker. Both Americans would be instrumental in getting Germany’s steel magnate Fritz Thyssen’s billions in gold out of Germany. It was his American shell game. Bush and Walker lent millions of *paper* dollars to assist the Nazis take power. The Nazis take over Germany. Both Americans get paid back in *real* gold from the Third Reich’s newly plundered national treasury via Thyssen’s steel interests. The gold appears as steel and oil exports in the UBC Bank books that Prescott Bush and Herbert Walker launder through their Brown Brothers Harriman Company. (This would continue even after America enters the war.)



Even before the war began the Count already had plans on how to move his wealth around when it was over - and it didn't matter which side won - his money would be in the right time and the right place since he financed both sides.

"...or the Islands." The "islands" being the Dutch East Indies, where the von Hoogerwoerds held substantial holdings and had their second honeymoon."

"I'm afraid the islands may not be a safe place in the near future either, my dear."

Ellena's mouth dropped in disbelief as she took the glass her husband handed her. Even though she was not interested in her husband's political intrigue or military matters, it was common knowledge the Germany Navy could not even closely match the English fleet in home waters, let alone in the Pacific.

“*What*, the war will reach Asia...?”

“The Japanese have been sending agents to every oil production plant in the Dutch East Indies, it will be only a matter of time before their armies follow.” The Count correctly predicted. “Where in America would you like to go?” He said after taking a long sip of his drink.

“Where would *you* like..?” She returned, while putting her empty glass down on the marble table.

Despite all their troubles, past and present, despite all the things they have spitefully done to one another, there was a spark of true care each one had for the other. Whether this was love, neither of them knew for neither of them believed in love. There had been many other outside affairs between both of them, and each understood there would be more in the future. The fact had been accepted long ago and was not even an issue in their relationship - as long as such flings were done discretely.

Sometimes tragedy forms a bond just as strong as love, and another tragedy was looming in theirs, and the rest of the world's, future. Adding to some of the tragedies they have already escaped: a food riot in Rumania, personal depression, a world wide economic depression, an airplane crash in France, the first World War, and the communist take-over in Russia (which lost all their holdings in Moscow). In what is now the Soviet Union, they almost lost their lives having such strong connections to the murdered Czar when the Bolsheviks took over.

“How about Chicago...?”

“...all of the Nostradamus texts we could find that mention these areas in question.”

Krafft arrived twenty minutes early to the Dark Fire project building, partly out of his

eagerness to go through the material as he was only able to glance at it during his first visit, and partly in the hopes of seeing Ewa Mann without others around. Her note requesting they talk alone and the desire burning inside of him to do so had already changed his behavior. He still had her note with him. He dared not leave it in the hotel room should Elaine find it, yet he could not find it within himself to throw it away. Fesel would be pleased, his plan was indeed working.

“Good morning, Karl Ernst!”

Krafft turned and saw a smiling Dr. Fesel approaching him.

“Good morning, Heinrich.” Krafft remembered to use Fesel’s first name, as requested.

“Would you like some coffee before we start?”

“No, thank-you, I’d rather get started right away. I’m eager to see what other manuscripts you have...I was impressed with the pieces I saw last time.”

“Excellent...excellent!” Fesel was pleased with Krafft’s attitude.

As they walked down the huge rolls of shelves filled with ancient books and scrolls, Fesel asked without turning around: “How was your week-end retreat at Frau Ney’s?”

“Rather...interesting, really.” Actually Krafft had no idea how to describe what he and Elaine had been through.

Halfway down the building Fesel turned into a break in the shelving leading to a small office, which appeared to be a workstation for two people. Krafft followed him in.

“Karl Ernst, here is your office.”

Krafft looked around and seemed pleased. He immediately decided which desk and chair

he would use, yet stared at the other one.

“And who will be working with me?”

“Well different people at different times. Lucht will be here today around 11:00 this morning for one or two things, and I believe Frau Mann will have a few things to finish up here later in the afternoon. Fesel noticed Krafft’s reaction at the mention of Ewa Mann - a widening of the eyes and a deeper breath. *Good*, Fesel thought to himself, *Ewa Mann is already producing the desired affect.*

On the wall was a large map of western Germany, eastern France and the Low Countries Holland and Belgian. The map was covered with military symbols. Fesel slid a book on the table towards Krafft.

“This will describe the symbols on the map.” Fesel said while pointing on the map. “On the table over there you will find all of the Nostradamus texts we could find that mention these areas in question.”

Fesel was now under the map pointing at a circled area in southeastern France that had seven large red triangles.

“These are French divisions that will be our area of responsibility.”

“Our responsibility?” Krafft questioned, the Swiss astrologer thought he was there to manipulate minds, not actual military units.

“Correct. Your job is to go through all of the texts set aside and find or alter any that will suggest these areas will be the safest place for civilians, farmers and their property when hostilities break out.”

Krafft had a question racing in his mind, but he did not ask it. A gut feeling told him now was not the time to ask anything. He understood what he had to do, but he didn't understand why - this bothered him. Knowing *why* had always been an important key in how he would do any of his astrological work.

"Any questions?" Fesel appeared to have read Krafft's mind.

Karl Ernst Krafft went against his own intuition. "Actually, several questions."

Fesel's face turned red and his mood suddenly became hostile.

"You understand *we* have already found all the passages that fit *our* needs relating to this area?"

"Yes."

"You understand *your* job is to create interpretations showing these areas as being the safest place for the French peasants according to your Nostradamus texts?"

Krafft became angry at the questions being repeated to him in a belittling tone.

"Yes."

Fesel could see he had pressed Krafft enough. His tone returned more cordial.

"I am in the difficult position. Organizing top-secret information and distributing it to various people and *keep* it secret is difficult. If you see what my responsibilities are in this project, you would understand."

There was a silence between both men.

"If you will excuse me then..." Fesel bowed slightly as if to show respect and then

walked off.

Krafft began reading the nearest set of text, which he was already familiar with, and then placed it on what two hours later would be a pile that represented the Nostradamus writings already read. Finally he came across one he was not familiar and took out of the French brochure "Rossier". As he began reading, Georg Lucht walked in.

"Georg!"

Georg said nothing, only bowed his head.

Karl Ernst recalled the tension with Fesel at their last meeting. He checked the hall outside the doorway. "What is going on here?"

"Our work for the Third Reich," Lucht said sarcastically, pointing at the brochure Krafft had in his hands, "is not what it seems."

Chapter 12 - The Number

“Have you heard this one before?”

The coffee shop was filled with laughter and smoke. Von Wohl was sitting with his back against the wall so he could see everyone in the room. His ego swelled when nearly everyone who entered did a double take at him with a table full of beautiful seated around him. Of all his clients, these four were the most beautiful - and all were recently divorced.

“Another joke, Ludwig, please!” The blonde who looked similar to Marlene Dietrich from a profile view shouted, even though she was seated closest to him.

“Yes, another!” Echoed Coco, who had been with von Wohl on many nights.

“Well.. .how could I, or *any* man for that matter, refuse the request of such beautiful company?” Von Wohl said proudly. His mind raced for a while, he had not yet told the group.

“Hmmm...ah yes, here’s one!”

All of the women shifted in their seats, as if to prepare for listening and to better brace themselves for the next round of laughter.

“This one is called Adam and Eve. Have you heard this one before?”

All four heads shook ‘no’. Several people in the tables surrounding von Wohl’s table shook their heads as well, signaling von Wohl others wanted to hear this as well.

“Very well...” Von Wohl cleared his throat. “A Brit, a Frenchman, and a Russian are in a museum viewing a painting of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. ‘Look at their reserve, their calm...’ muses the Brit. ‘They must be British.’”

“‘Nonsense...’ the Frenchman disagrees, ‘They’re naked, and so beautiful, clearly they are French!’”

“‘No clothes, no shelter,’ begins the Russian, ‘nothing to eat but an apple *and* they’re being told their in paradise? No, they are Russian.’”

The joke won the applause and approval of his table and the ones surrounding him who were listening in.

“And now ladies if you will excuse me, I must be going. There is a desperate family waiting for me, and I must look into the stars to save their family business.” Von Wohl lied.

It was custom of von Wohl to make his exit before any of the ladies decided to go for two reasons: (1.) He did not want to be the one making the decision as to which one he would escort home since all four - being his lovers *and* clients - would expect to be the one, and (2.) Saying he had to ‘work’ made it appear he was successful, and the mention in this setting also worked as a business “calling” card for his business.

If it were socially acceptable to society and each woman there, he would love to take all four home, which was the constant fantasy he held in his mind.

“No, no!” Shouted Coco.

“Must you, really?” Sighed the blonde.

“Oh, can’t they wait...?”

“Ladies, would you respect *me* if I should treat you this way with *your* appointments?”

The ladies saw his point and refrained from trying to keep him.

“One more...” A female voice from several tables back stated.

Von Wohl looked at the table where the voice originated. “All right ladies, all right, again I will bow to your wishes... .but only while I am putting on my coat.”

The ladies again prepared themselves while von Wohl got up and fumbled with his coat and scarf.

“This is called the Minister & Taxi Driver...have you...?”

The ladies immediately showed they had not heard this one either.

“A minister dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a man who is dressed in sunglasses, and ugly shirt, a horrible leather jacket, and tom pants. Saint Peter addressed the man, ‘Who are you, so that I may know to admit you into the Kingdom of Heaven?’ The man replies, ‘I’m Johann Berg, taxi driver from the great city of Berlin.’

Saint Peter consults his list. He smiles and says to the taxi driver, ‘Take this robe make of silk and this staff make of gold and welcome, you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’ The minister is next and he stands erect and booms out before Saint Peter can speak: ‘ I am Joseph Schnieder, pastor of Saint Mary’s church in Berlin for the last forty-three years!’ Saint Peter consults his list and then says to the minister, ‘Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and welcome, you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’

“The minster thought for a moment, then said, ‘Excuse me, that man was only a taxi driver and probably lived a life full of sin, while I have devoted my entire life to the church and the teachings of our Savior. How can this be that he should receive a robe of silk and staff of gold while my robe is of cotton and the staff of wood?’

‘Herr Schnieder,’ Saint Peter began, ‘up here we judge purely by *results*...while you *preached* the people *slept*, however, while he *drove*, the people *prayed*”

The entire restaurant burst into applause. The joke was a double-edged sword expressing the politically correct Nazi line concerning ridiculing the church at any opportunity, as well as accurately describing the experience most anyone had being driven by a taxi in Berlin.

Having said the punch line, von Wohl turned and left, waving his hand to all in the room like an actor that was thanking his audience for their love and appreciation. This evening was one of the best public performances in his life, and was enjoying every moment of it.

Ironically, this high watermark moment of being entertaining would be von Wohl’s last, for in a few weeks he would be forced to leave Berlin - and Germany - for good.

* * * *

“Our company in Switzerland will produce everything...”

“May I see the other ones?”

The lieutenant handed over the other cheaply bound books.

“Yes, these look good as well...looks exactly like the ones published in France.”

“Can it be traced to being produced here in Germany?” Asked the captain who was standing by the window of the ballroom-sized printing facility.

The man seated at his desk with the books in his hand looked at the addresses on the back of both books, then up at the lieutenant. The lieutenant took a deep breath.

“No, sir! Our company in Switzerland will produce everything, the paper has already

been sent.”

The captain was satisfied. “Thank-you, Lieutenant.” He motioned that would be all.

“Heil Hitler!”

The captain said nothing, but causally raised his right hand in a Nazi salute. Then he went back to writing all the addresses in France the books would be shipped to.

* * * *

“That’s his job to expect trouble.”

Best Payne sat alone in his new cell. He could hear the traffic and other sounds of the city through three tiny openings on top of the wall opposite the door. They were too high to reach, and even if he were able get up to that height, the slots were barely large enough for him to slide his hand through - up to his wrist at most.

A door slammed down the hall.

He listened for footsteps, but when none came he returned to his thoughts. He had no idea what day or month this was since he lost all sense of time - and several other senses as well - while under the care of Schellenberg and the Painted Man, whose name he never heard mentioned.

Since being transferred to this new location - which he correctly guessed as being Berlin - he did manage to keep track of how long he had been there: One week and two days.

During these nine days he recalled every conversation and experience he had since being captured, which he knew was on April 14, 1940. So for certain it must be May of 1940, or was he in the other places long enough for it to be June or July?

Shouldn't think about the future. He thought to himself.

Just after the war started a German submarine had somehow slipped into the main British naval base at Scapa Flow and sank several ships before making a successful escape. A deep embarrassment not only for Captain Best Payne of the Royal Navy, but for his father the admiral as well. The German navy had also beat the Royal fleet to occupying Denmark and Norway, and there was even feelings as to whether or not a British ship could stand up to the rumored German super-battle ship the *Bismarck*.

Things were not looking good for the British - or the British navy - when he was captured. At the moment things were not looking very good for him, either. His thoughts went back to he and his partner while they were in Venlo before crossing the German border.

“Have you met this Baron Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd guy before?” The Sargent did not know where to put the pauses in the extremely long Dutch title and name.

“No, I’ve only seen his photograph, but I’ll guess we’ll see him soon enough.”

“He must be somebody if he can get this kind of information across the border.”

“Let’s hope he can get us across the *other way* just as easy.”

“Well, Holland and Germany are still neutral.”

“Yea, but Fleming told me they’re seeing signs things are getting strained.”



Captain Best Payne being taken to Berlin.

Payne took a look at the report in the Sargent's hand. He had already read the complete document twice, but took a third look as would a poker player who already knows his hand.

“Do you think Holland will enter the war?”

“No.”

“But this Dutch general, Hoeranervort, says he expects trouble if the Nazis move west.”

“That's his job to expect trouble.”

“And you don't?”

“From Herr Hitler, yes. From Holland, no - they will do everything to keep out of this.”

A door slammed at the end of the hall again. This time footsteps, several sets of footsteps, could be heard echoing down the hallway and stopped right in front of his door.

Payne rose and took a deep breath as he heard the keys jangling and snapping the door's lock. The door swung open and the two guards remained outside.

“Raus!” One of them shouted.

Payne walked out and was immediately pushed to the left, which was his instruction to walk in this direction. The guards marched with him, but remained behind. This arrangement became difficult, since Captain Best had no idea where they were taking him. When they came upon another corridor junction, Payne's choice was never the correct one. Even if he stopped before an intersection in order to see which way the guards were going to turn, he was still grabbed, jostled, and then pushed in the directions the guards wanted to go. Realizing he was in a lose-lose situation, he simply made a joke of the situation and would prompt the guards with his hands before each hallway intersection.

“Links, oder Rechts, meine Herren?” Payne said, in his heavily British accented German. He was still manhandled.

“When can we begin distribution?”

“Will they do, Herr Minister?”

“Well, they do look like the kind of trash one would see at the French kiosks. Is this the name of an actual magazine, or did your people make this up?”

“We were in luck, Herr Minister! This magazine existed from 1923 to 1935. It was published in several Switzerland printing houses in French, and was distributed throughout five regions of France.” The captain walked over to the 3 x 4 meter sized map of Europe on the wall and pointed out the regions of France in question.

“Excellent!” Goebbels said. Besides having a large distribution area, the magazine should also have the name recognition the Minister thought necessary. What the captain had found was perfect.

“To the French public, this edition should merely appear as if “Unknown Worlds” was simply making a revival back into business.” The captain said while returning to the desk.

Couldn't have planned such a perfect situation myself. Goebbels proudly thought.

“We also found that Krafft had contributed over fifty articles to this magazine in the past, *so your* predictions will not appear odd or out of place, either.”

Goebbels smile grew greater.

The captain knew how to word details to Goebbels. Even though Krafft would actually be writing the “predictions”, the fact all this was Goebbels’ idea had these writings now become Goebbels’ predictions.

“When can we begin distribution?”

“In Switzerland, as soon as we have Krafft’s work. In France, only a few days after that, all that is needed will be to ship them to the proper distribution centers.”

This was satisfactory. However, Goebbels was beginning to worry since the window for this project was closing. The invasion was still several months away, but Fesel had not yet given a delivery date of Krafft’s work.

Both Fesel and Goebbels knew the problems - the Nostradamus passages had to be believable. If Krafft could find an actual passage that closely described Goebbels’ intended purpose, then all the better. If he had to stretch it, then it was understandable.

“When will *we* have Krafft’s work?” The captain asked, as if Goebbels’ thoughts had somehow transferred to his own.

“This I don’t know. Our good friend Herr Fesel said it will be soon, but there are many obstacles in this matter, perhaps a day or two.”

“Obstacles, Herr Minister?” Captain Ranner was one of the few people in the Third Reich who could press Goebbels for an answer in a normal conversation. With anyone else such a meeting would be merely following orders or answering questions from the five foot five inch tall master manipulator of facts.

“The job must be able to do more than just present our propaganda, Herr Captain. There are many Nostradamus hobbyists, amateurs, and experts in France. One rebut, or counter article, especially by a Frenchman, could take the desired sting out of our point.”

“Should this plan work, Herr Goebbels, then you will go down in history as the first ever to co-ordinate propaganda as a tactical aspect of a military operation.”

“I never thought about it in that that way, Herr Captain, but perhaps you are right....I just may very well be the first in history.”

“...all their property.”

“A lot has happened since the good old days in Mannheim, Karl Ernst.”

“Then, let’s hear about them.”

“Not here...” Lucht said while looking out the door of the office. “... unfortunately I must rewrite a booklet that Fesel said I should have finished three days ago.”

Krafft saw the statement as a hint to the stress his friend Georg was undergoing.

“Let us have a beer this evening... we can catch up then.” Both men nodded.

“What are you working on?”

“I’m really not sure, it has something to do with the all these positions of the French army. Are you working on this map too?”

“I’m the one who sorted out all of the texts that relation to this area.”

“I should have guessed! What do you know about this, Georg?”

“Fesel wants text that interprets this area to be the safest place for civilians, farmers, and...”

“all their property.” Both men said together, citing the passage of Nostradamus that stated such.

“For what reason? Why would Fesel, Goebbels or Hitler want to tell the French that this area would be safe for them?”

Georg Lucht shook his head revealing he had no idea.

“Now that I don’t have the Poles to fight... ”

The line of tuxedos and formal dresses slowly moved forward.

“I’ve heard there are over two hundred costumes in this performance!” Katherine said to Fesel, trying to get conversation going. She felt awkward standing next to someone and around so many people, yet not saying anything.

Fesel did not assist in helping her insecurity. He merely grunted something inaudible and then looked at the posters of the play beside them.

While Katherine was actually the Baron's date for this evening, she did not say anything to von Hoogerwoerd while they stood in line. She learned long ago he hated speaking in crowds. It was this and several other oppositions in character that Katherine and Baron Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd shared that had them usually inviting another couple along with them to such social events.

Katherine then decided to make conversation with Fesel's date, Ava, who stood a full half-meter about Fesel's short frame.

"Lovely dress, my dear, where did you get it?"

"My mother made it." Ava did not say 'thank-you' for the compliment, since she did not know if Katherine was being sincere. In Ava's opinion, the dress that Katherine had on was far more elegant, modern, and more expensive looking. *Why would one wearing such a treasure compliment the plain thing she had on?*

"Good evening, Herr Doctor."

Fesel turned and saw Major Felix Strauss and his wife merging into their group to enter the main brass and windowed doors.

"Major!" Fesel gave an energetic handshake then clicked his heels and kissed the hand of Frau Strauss. "I didn't know you enjoyed comedy!"

"Of course! Now that I don't have the Poles to fight, I don't have anything to make me laugh anymore!"

The group and some nearby chuckled to show their approval and perceived agreement.

“Let us get together...” Major Strauss continued, “...where will you be going after the show?”

Fesel looked at the Baron, who shrugged his shoulders. The truth was, either no plans had been made, or the ones that were did not include the Major. The Major saw this point immediately in their reaction and quickly offered a graceful exit.

“We are meeting up with the von Hoffmans at the Stern & Riechters on the Plumgarten Strasse afterwards, please, all of you are more than welcome to join us.” The Major looked at each member of the Baron’s group while saying ‘all of you’ to emphasize the invitation was indeed sincere. Each one who looked into the Major’s eyes while he did so felt they were truly invited and wanted to go. Except the Baron, who nodded his head in appreciation while Katherine and Ave returned smiles.

Fesel smiled also, but through his teeth. “Thank-you, Herr Major!” Fesel replied, without any hint as to whether or not he wanted to show up.

Most of the patrons were now inside the huge foyer, watching each other, greeting and waving to those they knew, quizzically looking at those they did not. Katherine and Ava were forced to look at each other due their position and density within the crowd, so Katherine made another attempt to communicate with her.

“So, how did you and Dr. Fesel meet?”

“Through friends.” Ava did not want to tell her it was the Baron who set Fesel up with her, not knowing the relationship between Katherine and the Baron.

“Are you from Berlin?”

“No, Rudersdorf, just to the ...”

“Yes! I know Rudersdorf, I once went to the festival they have every May... does it still go on?”

“Yes, every year.” Ava began to let down the wall she had constructed against Katherine. Despite her beauty, formal manners, and wealthy appearance, Katherine was surprisingly down-to-earth. Ava had never met anyone from the ‘upper-class’ who was friendly - especially friendly to her - someone from Rudersdorf. Then came the painful question.

“And what do you do, Ava?”

Ava didn’t know a polite way of saying she was a paid escort, and was actually on the job now with Fesel. Before when this question was asked, she used to say she was a dancer, which is a half-truth. But then the follow-up questions of “what kind of dance, etc.” would put her in the arms of another lie.

“I look after my mother.” Ava said truthfully, and could see real empathy in Katherine’s eyes.

Katherine, either by instinct or analysis, seemed to understand that Ava had a difficult life despite usually running in circles of the well-to-do of Berlin, who were usually bored with life.

Suddenly the Baron broke his silence with an unexpected bark.

“Come.” He ordered the group.

The four walked up to a landing where a lone man was standing with both hands on the railing.

“Baron!” He shouted, lifting both hands as if he were Jesus about to give a sermon.

“Von Wohl!” Said the Baron, as if he had not seen him in years.

Katherine had met von Wohl several times and could barely tolerate him. She was polite, but kept her distance, physically and conversation-wise.

“Dr. Fesel, Ava, I would like you to meet the *author* of this play, Ludwig von Wohl!”

“Pleased.” Said Ava.

“Honored.” Said Fesel, who then turned to the Baron. “Keun von Hoogerwoerd, I didn’t know you keep yourself in the company of artists, I thought you were a businessman!”

The Baron smiled, but hated anyone making presumptions of him, especially in public. He also decided this would be the last time he would ever be seen, or have anything to do with Fesel - in public, at least. Baron Keun von Hoogerwoerd was forced by the Nazis to co-operate in Dark Fire not only because he was proficient in the workings of astrology, but because of a box full of letters and suitcase full of materials belonging to the Baron that was safely stored in the Nazi Party Headquarters.

The letters revealed the role the Baron played in the secret meetings between the Nazis and Lord Londonderry representing England to form an alliance of Germany and Great Britain against communism. The suitcase contained evidence of the entire operation on how the von Hoogerwoerd family was laundering assets out of Europe to America via Prescott Bush and Herbert Walker. All parties could face treason in their own countries should this suitcase ever be opened and made public. The Nazis had learned a thing or two from the von Hoogerwoerd family - and their operations - which were soon to be turned against the wealthy family.

The secret meetings with Lord Londonderry were not an issue - for these were by order of Adolf Hitler himself. The money laundering was a purely Dutch affair, so was not a concern of the Nazis either, at least not until they invaded. These two items being held over the Baron as blackmail were due to the fact that the Baron's entire operation were unknown to his father the Count. It was known to all parties that should the Count ever find out the Baron attempted to hijack the Hoogerwoerd family wishes and plans - the Baron would be dead.

"It appears to be in the style of Nostradamus, but I think it is a fake."

"Georg, what's amiss with this project?"

"Ask Herr Doctor Fesel." Lucht said with contempt, taking a glance out the door.

"But, aren't you the least bit pleased that the Third Reich is using *all* these resources, even people in our line of work, to win the war?"

"The idea of using the occult in war is, no question, innovative. I appreciate the salary as well, for as you know Karl Ernst, I was going through hard times before the war started." Lucht again looked out the door. "But, be careful, very careful. The Herr Doctor is a crafty man. He has given me more than a job, but an equal amount of problems as well."

"Problems?"

"Let us discuss this over a beer later, I'll be at the Chess Cafe nearby on the Brahms Strasse...anytime after 8:00 this evening." Lucht said while getting up to leave. "I'll wait for you there, we shouldn't talk here."

"I'll be there as soon as I can." Krafft said while watching him leave and thinking of the last time they had a serious talk, which was eleven years ago.

Krafft began reading more text, and made notes as he found what he thought might be relevant. Around 2:30 pm Fesel popped his head in the door.

“How are you doing, Karl Ernst?”

“I’m not sure.”

“What do you mean, *not sure?*”

Krafft held up a single piece of paper that appeared to be very old. “This for example. This has no listing as to what passage, or even what book it is from. It appears to be in the style of Nostradamus, but I think it is a fake. If it is a fake, then I don’t know how we can use it.”

Krafft was correct; it was in fact a fake. Fesel said nothing since he was the author of the text. A specialist in chemicals had made the paper appear and feel old. He didn’t know if Krafft could spot a fake or not - but now he had his answer.

If Krafft could spot a fake, would he still be willing to “interpret” one? Lucht didn’t at first, and had to be persuaded - Nazi style. Would Krafft be different? Hopefully Krafft understood what Hitler meant when speaking of ‘total war’, that one must do anything - even break your own personal beliefs - for victory.

“Let me see that.” Fesel said as he took the document in his hands to carefully study it. “Hmm... let me check on this with my lab people.” Fesel said while walking out of the tiny office. *Time for Ewa to visit him.* He thought to himself.

In a matter of minutes Krafft was lost in his work. Again, there were several texts he had never seen before, each one appearing to be exactly what Fesel was looking for. *Odd.* He thought. While re-reading these Krafft felt an itching on the back of his neck. He unconsciously

scratched it and then his hand told his mind of a strange warmth in the air just behind him.

When Krafft turned to look, he saw Ewa Mann standing silently in the doorway.

Chapter 13 - The Other Side

“...to escape the routine and boredom of their village life.”

The captain turned and looked at the map. He now clearly pictured what Frau Goebbels had envisioned a few months ago. The Wehrmacht racing across the Low Countries in the north, French civilians and all their belongings fleeing south, while thousands of French soldiers would be sitting idly all along the Maginot line, and the thousands more being sent north to outflank the German invasion would be unable to move because of their own civilians flooding the roads going in the opposite direction.

“Should this work, we will be in Paris by the middle of June!” the captain said, actually believing his words even though he knew it would be quite a feat.

“All of the planners are counting on it.”

Captain Ranner then turned his thoughts to the uncertain part of this plan. “Is Krafft co-operating?”

“From what I heard, yes. Of course Fesel is trained in these matters, plus he *does* have a natural talent of getting his way with people.”

The captain laughed. Fesel’s emotional, financial, and sexual manipulations were known even outside the Ministry of Propaganda. “Then I’m sure Herr Krafft is in *good hands*”

Both men laughed. They knew most of Fesel’s manipulations started with a woman’s hands, and much time and effort went into finding the right kind of woman for the job.

“Herr Captain, would you like a *Berline*?”

Ranner smiled. The term had a private meaning between them, when they, and many others in the Nazi party were younger. Once in power in 1933, many Nazi party members learned quickly, as previous German governments in Berlin had, on how to use their position to obtain money, sexual favors, and other things lacking in their lives previously. A “Berliner” referred to a young woman from a small town that came to Berlin to seek her fortune, or just to escape the routine and boredom of their village life. They soon became at the mercy of those now in control of the German government.

“Come, I have one in here you might like.”

Goebbels walked over to the door that opened to his private room, and led Ranner into where Bettina was lying on the couch, drugged into being in a state of half asleep, half awake.

“She’s all yours, Captain.” Goebbels said, as he returned into his office and closed the door. Goebbels then walked around and lifted a painting that was hanging on the wall and placed it on the floor. Through a small hole he watched the Captain pull down his pants and shift Bettina into another position.

Goebbels watched as nature took its course. The previous excursion to the mountains had changed his relationship with his secretary. Bettina was no longer satisfying as an affair for his ego - he wanted something more. Something more than pleasure is what he was after now, but the only thing he could think of beyond pleasure was pain - but, pain for *her* to experience.

"I will be your lawyer for your trial."

On the seventh floor Captain Best Payne was pushed into a small white room with bars on the outside of the window. There were two chairs in the middle of the room and a mirror on

the wall to the left. The guards did not come inside, but instead slammed the door behind him as he walked in.

Payne walked over to the window and peered through the bars. It was a clear and sunny day except for a few puffy cumulus clouds hovering over the horizon. The sun was still above the building, and Payne hoped that he might remain in the room long enough to feel it. He longed to experience the rays of the sun warm the pores of his skin, for he had been chilly and cold ever since being captured.

Suddenly the door swung opened, causing Payne to jump. He had not heard any footsteps approaching, so the swish of air and creak of metal came as a complete surprise.

“Captain Payne?”

“Yes?”

“Captain Best Payne?”

Payne could not see the man who was speaking, yet did not want to move from the window that was his first source of pleasure since entering Germany. A tall, thin man in uniform walked in. He stopped by one of the chairs, looked at it, then at Payne.

“Please, Captain, have a seat.”

“I’ll stand....I’ve been sitting all day.” This in fact was the truth, but Captain Payne also wanted to remain near the window since in a strange way it was giving him a source of strength. A certain energy was returning into his mind and body that an undetermined amount of time in basement cells had drained him of. Plus it gave him a great amount of pleasure to finally be able to resist a suggestion or order from his captors.

“Captain Payne, I am Colonel Koch, I will be your lawyer for your trial.”

“Trial?”

“In order to serve our interests best, I must ask now that you give me your complete co-operation.”

“Co-operation? Sure? How can I help?” Payne said sarcastically.

The Colonel was a bit taken aback by this answer since his profile from Schellenberg indicated Captain Best Payne would more than likely be most uncooperative. “Good. This will make it easier for all of us. Would you care for a cigarette?”

The mention of the word was like a dagger in Payne’s heart. Sure he wanted a cigarette, he was dying for one since his capture. However, he felt accepting one would give Koch some kind of power over him, and that needed to be avoided if possible. Such discussions of power were matters of many discussions in his training with Commander Fleming back in London. Payne looked at the cigarette sliding out of the pack that Koch pulled out of his coat pocket.

“Yeah, I’ll have a cigarette.”

“...into the magical world of accented eyes, more colorful lips...”

Elke was in a wonderful mood. In many ways she felt like a new person. She returned to work at the lodge on this day with a certain amount of confidence that was lacking in her previous nineteen years of life.

Becoming inspired after her conversation with cousin Bettina, plus saving a part of her

pay check over a period of several weeks afterwards, she went to Hamburg on her own.

Her boss had contacts in the port city and contributed to the trip as well, getting Elka a room at the German League of Lodges discount - a rate normally reserved for managers and directors of lodges, inns and hotels. This act of kindness allowed her extra spending money, all of which she would spend on herself.

“Thank-you, Herr Kaufman!” Elke said when he gave her the papers for the discount.

“Just pick up a bottle of Southern Comfort for me from this address.” Herr Kaufman said while handing her a second piece of paper, pleased a bottle of his favorite drink from America would soon be in his hands.

“Yes, Herr Kaufman, that will be the first thing I do.”

“And Elke?”

“Yes, Herr Kaufman?”

“Have a nice weekend.” He said while handing her a folded 50 Reichmarks note.

“*Thank-you*, Herr Kaufman!” Elke could not contain her joy. She had an adventure ahead of her and more money in her purse now than she ever had in her life at once.

Besides seeing the Fischmart - Hamburg harbor’s famous Sunday morning market party - Elka also walked along the Reeperbahn, comparing her body with the prostitutes in the windows. Elka felt she was just as attractive, if not more so, than most of the women offering their bodies on the street. However, there was one apparent skill these ladies had in abundance that she was totally lacking: make-up.

“May I help you?” An elegantly painted woman said, as Elka entered her shop.

“Yes, I am looking for make-up that would be right for me, but I want to do it like *you*, not those ladies on the street.”

The shop owner, educated in France in the art of make-up, smiled and began to show Elka the latest products and how to apply them. Thus began Elka’s trip into the magical world of accented eyes, more colorful lips, and even creating the illusion that made her face appear thinner.

As Elka walked into the entrance of her lodge after returning, Marlene at the front desk and Peter the bellhop dropped their mouths in unison.

“Elka...?”

“Guten tag, Marlene, Guten tag, Peter.” Elka greeted them as she always had, as if nothing in her life had changed over the weekend. She continued walking to the employee room and saw Herr Kaufman in the hall.

“Herr Kaufman, here is the bottle you requested.”

Herr Kaufman turned and looked at Elka. He indeed recognized her voice, but his mind went blank in seeing the new lovely face that was producing it.

“Elka...?”

Herr Kaufman was a nice looking man for being in his mid-40’s and for this reason was often the desire of many females in the sparsely populated Hof mountain area. He also was one of the few available men fairly well off financially - increasing their desire even more.

“Herr Kaufman.”

Elka’s tone of voice even surprised herself. For the first time in her life she answered Herr Kaufman in the calm businesslike tone he normally spoke to her. A very proper, very civilized, leadership tone within the voice that expressed self-confidence. The silence between them also put another new thought in Elka’s head: *She was equal with Herr Kaufman. She could be the one to have him.*

* * * *

“The party has official astrologers?”

Von Wohl saw the tension in the Baron’s forehead. He knew he must take Fesel’s attention away from his friend and teacher.

“Actually, Dr. Fesel, it was the *business* of astrology that brought us together a long time ago. In fact, it was the Baron who taught me everything I know about astrology!” Von Wohl said raising his voice.

“The Baron has many talents, *doesn't* he? Businessman, horticulture, automobiles, architecture, airplanes, teacher.....*astrologer*” The sarcasm in Fesel’s voice negated any compliment such a combination of words normally would infer.

Von Wohl again tried to deflect attention away from his friend the Baron.

“And what is it that you do, Herr Doctor?”

“I dabble a little in astrology too, among other things.. .of course to serve the Reich.” Fesel said this proudly, coming to attention so his Nazi party-pin on his lapel became exposed

and flashed its gold rimmed outline of the red, white and black design.

“The party has *official* astrologers?” Von Wohl sensed an opportunity.

“Well, *some* things, shall we say, cannot be official since they must be kept a *secret*.”

Fesel sidestepped in a way to make him more important than he was.

Von Wohl was torn. He wanted to pursue the possibility with Fesel of working as an astrologer for the Nazis, but also wanted to comfort his friend who brought him into this field.

“Baron, where are your seats?”

The Baron held up the four tickets he paid for without even looking at them.

“Please my good friend,” Von Wohl said while pointing at one of the large red velvet curtains at the top of the stairs, “escort these beautiful ladies to my booth and get started on the champagne that’s on ice up there. I’d like to speak with the Doctor here for a moment more.”

The Baron’s face changed completely at the mention of champagne. He politely took a lady in each arm and proceeded up the rest of the stairs. Once they entered von Wohl’s booth, von Wohl continued.

“Your work sounds very interesting, Herr Doctor.”

“Some think so.”

Von Wohl now began his attempt to create a new job. “And how might my work in astrology be of service to the Third Reich?”

“I don’t know, how might it?”

“Would fifteen years of experience be significant enough to be considered?” The actual number of years being closer to three.

“That would depend on the job.”

Von Wohl saw that much work would be needed to deal with Fesel. Perhaps if they met under other conditions, then this peculiar, out-of-place man might react to von Wohl differently.

Von Wohl also began to sense why the Baron found this cocky little man so irritating, but he still wanted to keep the opportunity open.

“We certainly don’t want to miss the show, or the champagne, Herr Doctor Fesel. Shall we join the Baron and ladies?” Von Wohl said, smiling.

“Certainly.”

As the two men walked up the stairs, Fesel turned to von Wohl.

“I’ve never seen any of your plays.”

“Well, I only hope this one will exceed your expectations.”

“It may be that...” Fesel began, then stopped in mid-sentence as well as paused his movement as well on the lush red carpet. Von Wohl stopped as well.

“Tell me von Wohl, do you have any other talents in the occult, shall we say, outside of astrology?”

Von Wohl has several witty responses to such a question, but dare not play with humor when a job possibility was at stake.

“I’ve had a lot of study in Egyptian magic, some experience with Tarot card readings, and some practice with séances - but astrology is my forte.”

“Have you any experience with Nostradamus quatrains?”

Von Wohl has a difficult time in refraining himself from saying ‘yes’. It was one thing to pretend you were an expert at something with lonely middle-aged women, but it was something else to try and bluff the Third Reich.

“To date I’ve only read a few translated passages of Centuries, I’m afraid.”

Surprisingly to von Wohl, Fesel did not look disappointed.

“Herr von Wohl, may I have your card?”

“Most certainly, Herr Doctor.”

* * * *

“...were unusual on a woman of such slender build and proportions.”

The lights went out suddenly which delighted the crowd. The whistling and shouting indicated that more than half the audience was already drunk. The room remained completely dark and Elaine Krafft felt a hand seizing her leg and stroking it back and forth.

“This will be good, you’ll like this, I know.” The Governor General said. Then he took his hand off her leg. He didn’t want to shock Elaine, but the snapps and beer had loosened his control of restraining from touching her. The desire for Elaine had been growing after meeting her at Frau Ney’s several weeks ago.

He managed to put his hands on her a lot this evening already. In the taxi, guiding her through the crowded cabaret entrance, assisting with her coat. The longest experience was his hands on hers as he carefully handed her the huge mug of white beer requiring two hands to hold - an item the establishment was famous for.

While Hans Frank was directing all of his attention on Elaine, the Governor General's date, Sabina, was keeping Karl Ernst occupied. Both Sabina and Hans were a component of Fesel's plan to drive a wedge between the Kraffts - and were executing the plan with Teutonic precision and efficiency. This location was planned and chosen for a specific reason as well.

"Yeah!" The crowd roared as a small, but very bright, beam of a spotlight lit a single chair on the stage."

"Meine Damen und Herren," a voice came from the back of the room, "it is time, once again, for....The Lady Lion Tamer!"

With this introduction, an obese woman whose clothes and crown were an obvious jab at the British Royal family, bounced out and began her routine. With the assistance of the other actors who came on and off presenting different scenarios reflecting world current events. In these interactions the mock Queen of England was shown to be egotistical, ruthless, vain, and an uncaring woman in even the most personal matters.

About an hour and a half later, Sabina saw that Karl Ernst had finished his second beer and was laughing opening - a point not reached before. She then began to test what she could do with him. Frau Krafft had already passed out, half-leaning on the edge of Hans Frank's chair, which had his huge leather & fur coat folded over twice acting as an over-sized pillow.

Sabina put her hand under the table and began stroking Karl Ernst's leg, which caused him to automatically look at Elaine. Karl Ernst then slowly turned to look at Sabina, who then smiled and blew a kiss with her hand that was free. She then moved her hand further up his leg.

Somehow the beer, laughter, darkness, and show allowed Karl Ernst not to object. He slowly turned and returned to enjoying the show on the stage and under the table. Both shows - on the stage and under the table soon became more risqué.

The fourth act was "Big Bertha", whose watermelon-sized breasts were unusual on a woman of such slender build and proportions. Between the gyrations on stage and the squeezing of Sabina's hand, Krafft became aroused in a way he had never been in his life. He also was dying to use the toilet.

"Uh, please," he asked Sabina, as if to finally acknowledge her, "where is the men's room?"

Sabina took her hand off his genitals and stood up. "Come, I'll show you."

She grasped Krafft's hand and pulled him up, then led him around the other crowded tables towards the back of the showroom. The lobby, as the rest of the club, was almost completely dark. A dim light was emitted from a room off the to the left in which Krafft noticed a man making love to the woman they had purchased the tickets from.

Krafft turned his head as they walked by the open door to get a better look. The woman's white blouse was fully unbuttoned and she had no bra. The man has is back to Krafft, but the expression on the woman's face was clearly seen. Her eyes were bulging as if in extreme pain, however the rest of her face radiated full pleasure. He wondered if Elaine had such an

expression when they were making love.

As he turned his head to face Sabrina, it suddenly dawned on him he had never seen the face of a woman he had ever made love to - his eyes were always shut. At this moment, and in this environment, his awareness of this fact had him feel shamefully inexperienced.

“Come on!” Sabina whispered loudly, “We’re almost there!”

* * * *

“Where did you learn English?”

“Yea, I’ll take a cigarette...”

The Colonel remained seated and held up the cigarette up in his hand. Payne walked forward four steps and took it; the Colonel raised the other hand with a lit lighter that Payne leaned into. After inhaling in a long, slow manner, Payne then turned and walked back to the window.

“Thank-you.”

“You are quite welcome, Captain.”

The cigarette melted all of Payne’s anger that had raged inside him since his capture. He was still upset, embarrassed, and burdened by being a prisoner-of-war. He felt by being a POW he had let his country, and his family, down. The introduction of nicotine into his body had him feel as if all of this was happening far away. After a few more puffs Payne began to be a little more relaxed and didn’t see Colonel Koch as a German soldier, or even as an enemy.

“Where did you learn English?”

“At school, in Lübek.”

“You speak very well, for just learning it in school.”

“We pride ourselves in our schools, Captain. Of course, we listened to the BBC as part of our learning... and I still do... occasionally.”

The BBC! One of the many things of home completely forgotten. What he would give to have a radio now. Just to hear the reassuring voice of a fellow Englishman.

“Do you think you could get me a radio?”

“I’m sorry, Captain, that would be against regulations.”

Payne took a long drag from his cigarette. “Yeah, regulations.”

“I will, however, see what I can do.” Koch said while looking at the door. “However, now, Captain, I believe we need to look into your predicament.”

Payne was not listening. His mind went into the memories of listening to the radio while looking out the window.

Koch pulled out a photo from his briefcase, and held it towards Payne.

“Captain, for me to help YOU, I need you to help *me* ...”

“Gestapo. We have questions for you.”

Having one of his favorite liquors being delivered was a joy. Having one of his employees return looing more beautiful than he could ever imagine was even more so. Every

sense told him this was Elka Meyer standing in front of him, however his eyes could still not believe it.

Edwin Kaufman moved to Hof - which lies where the German states of Bayern and Sachsen converged on the Czechoslovakian border - when he was 17. His German mother and Finnish engineer father were immediately popular, both socially and financially.

Gilda from the front desk stepped into the hallway breaking the electro-biological impulses that were developing from the strong attraction between Elka and Edwin.

“Elka?”

Elka turned around.

“Will you come to the phone room?”

Elka walked through the main desk area where it seemed almost the entire staff had collected and despite this number of employees, was oddly quiet. Earlier in the day it seemed every girl was smiling and overjoyed that Elka was going to show each of them every step she did in applying her make-up so her transformation could spread though the entire staff. Now there was only a look of gloom and fear in each of their eyes.

Elka walked into the phone room.

“Elka Meyer?”

Elka turned to the operator’s desk and saw two dark figures standing just beyond where the door angled open.

“Yes?”

“Elka Julia Meyer, of Grundwald strasse Five?”

Elka knew enough about German culture that when your middle name was used to identify you officially - you were in trouble.

“Yes?”

“Gestapo. We have some questions for you.”

Good Germans even feared hearing these words. Also, this was the first time Elka was introduced to a man, or group of men, with their individual names being given. Elka began to feel faint.

“May I sit down?”

“Certainly, Frauline Meyer.”

The shorter of the two agents looked at Patricia standing in the doorway.

“You may go now, but stay in the hotel in case we need to call you again.”

“Jawohl ” None of the agent’s names were spoken - or offered up to this point - even though both men had already questioned Patricia for over 40 minutes.

“Frauline Meyer, whose telephone number is this?” The taller one held a paper in front of her eyes. On it was the number she had tried to dial for Bettina, plus all the different dates and times this number was attempted.

“This is the number to my cousin’s boyfriend...in Berlin.”

“*Why* did you want *this* number called?”

Elka thought she had already gave this information in her first answer.

“My cousin was here in the lodge one those days and wanted her boyfriend to know where she was...”

“Your cousin’s name?”

“Bettina Meyer.”

“Her boyfriend’s name?”

“Otto...”

“Otto *whaf!*”

“I don’t know.”

Both men looked at each other, which immediately made Elka feel they thought she was being dishonest.

“She never told me his last name...” Elka added.

Again both men looked at each other, but remained silent.

“Frauline Meyer.” The tall one spoke again, while holding up photograph of a pleasant-looking grandmother type. “Who is this woman?”

“That is my grandmother.”

“Did your grandmother ever tell her of her Jewish roots?”

“Why... no.”

Both men looked at each other, as if they were bored over what they were to do next.

“Frauline Meyer, come with us.”

* * * *

“Her slender hands unzipped him...”

“Uh...” Krafft wanted to say something but was too drunk to speak or even think clearly.

Both Sabina and Krafft nearly fell down the 5 steps to a basement and another hallway.

“Uh.. .toilet.” Was all Krafft could mutter.

Sabina helped him into a room twice the size of a regular rest room. On one wall was a toilet and washbasin, on the other a large couch, which Sabina folded out creating a bed.

Krafft stood in front of the toilet, and out of habit waited for Sabina to leave while fighting the backlog of urine crying to be released. Sabina turned and walked to the door, but only to lock it and return. Her slender hands unzipped him, then slipped through the opening in his trousers and maneuvered his penis out, which burst a flow into the toilet.

When he was finished her hands went from holding to squeezing.

“You, you, you...” She cooed to the rhythm of her pulsations.

When he felt her lips and tongue surround him, his entire body vibrated.

For the rest of the evening, Sabina was in complete control of Karl Ernst Krafft.

“Had the Kaiser used astrologers in the First World War, we might have won!”

Von Wohl had been waiting for 20 minutes avoiding the mixture of rain and snow with his umbrella. Fighting wind was difficult since two of the buttons were missing, which he never had an opportunity to fix. His eyes were busy watching the people that passed through the two huge doors to the High Command.

His lunch ‘date’, the lovely Frau Natalia Hildebraudt, wanted two horoscopes cast, one for her and her new lover. Von Wohl thought back to when all three met at an acquaintance’s dinner party. It was an awkward situation since the husband was also seated at the table.

“Herr von Wohl, may I introduce you to Frau Hildebraudt. She would like your analysis of a Gemini woman in relationship with a Scorpio man.”

“Madame, what is the nature of the problem in the relationship so far?”

Natalia didn’t know what to say, there were no problems, she just wanted to know if this was to be just another of her numerous affairs, or something that might be serious enough to create scandal and divorce from her husband.

Von Wohl sensed a complication by her lack of answer, and immediately began to speak in generalities.

“Madame, the tendency of hidden secrets and guarded emotions in a Scorpio make it difficult for other star signs to grasp and understanding of their nature and moods. This can compound the difficulties with the wishes of a Gemini woman, whose very nature is open communication and the desire to...”

Von Wohl wondered if he would be able to recognize her again as she walked out of the

High Command building covered in heavy fur and leather against this freakish mid-April snow. At the dinner party she wore an elegant pure white silk gown that clung close to her hourglass figure. At this moment he seemed to remember her body more than the face that went with it.

Ahh, to have that body.

“Yes, that would be possible.”

Von Wohl jumped. The strange voice behind him he had heard before. Turning slightly, out of the corner of his eye were two men walking a few paces away from him.

“Good, Karl Ernst. If that is possible, then we could alter the entire fifty-third passage as well, so that we could say those who made an alliance with England would be betrayed.”

Von Wohl watched both men as they crossed the street.

Fesel and Krafft! Von Wohl thought to himself. *So, the Herr Doctor was not blowing hot air.* Von Wohl thought back to his first conversation with Fesel, then began to piece together all the clues, conversations, and rumors over how the Nazis were using astrology for propaganda and military purpose.

“Herr von Wohl?”

Ludwig turned and saw a stunning Frau Hildebraudt smartly outfitted in a coat of fox skins. She was just a beautiful dressed for winter as in a slinky evening gown.

“I’m sorry I’m late, General Pritze tied me up...”

“Please, madam, *any* wait is certainly worth the joy of your presence. Come, let us duck into Der Tagbuch before we catch cold.”

Ludwig's 'date' with Frau Hildebraudt went as many of his business luncheons had; describing the basic tendencies of each zodiac sign, the descriptions and meanings of the Sun, Moon, and ascendant in each sign. However, this particular conversation was running on automatic. Seeing Krafft and Fesel talking had Von Wohl's conscious mind racing elsewhere.

How he could have his astrological 'expertise' working on the war effort? *Had the Kaiser used astrologers in the First World War, we might have won!* were his thoughts as Frau Hildebraudt was finishing part of her life story.

After finding a table in Der Tagbuch, the rich coffee began to jog von Wohl's memory of his first, and only, meeting with Karl Ernst Krafft in 1928.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, the Astrological Society of Berlin is proud to have as the guest speaker to end our Summer Solstice Convention, the master of trajectory motion, the father of Saturn cycle statistics, the discoverer of applied Harmonics in planetary motion, maker of the first 40 year ephemeris of the planet Pluto... .Karl Ernst Krafft!"

Those in attendance at the convention would go on to have a noticeable impact on astrology and the Third Reich: a much younger Baron von Hoogerwerd, Ernst Schulte-Strathaus, Rudolph Hess, and Henning Von Tresckow, later general, who was behind a little known assassination attempt of Hitler on March 13, 1943 by disguising explosives as two gift wrapped bottles of Cointreau liquor. (Upon hearing of Hitler's safe arrival, he sent his accomplice Favian von Schlabrendorg to retrieve the package and replace it with two genuine bottles. It was found later the detonator became defective in the high altitude cold air.)

Krafft's speaking engagement was widely anticipated. The Swiss astrologer had the best-documented prediction record in Europe, and single handedly applied statistics to every sign of

the zodiac to illness, talent, longevity, and life changing events. However, he was at the convention to talk about something entirely new.

“Herr von Wohl, do you think my husband will see how deeply this relationship really is?” Ludwig managed to hear Frau Hildebraudt’s direct questions, and gave a superficial answer he predicted she wanted to hear instead of putting any reason or thought on her conflicts.

Von Wohl was sitting next to the Baron during Krafft’s lecture.

“Amazing.”

“Isn’t it? How is it, Baron, that Krafft is able to see all of these associations?”

The Baron did not answer.

After the lecture, von Hoogerwoerd asked Krafft this very question in another variation during the question and answer session.

“I came on the idea of harmonics, good sir, after reading Kepler’s theory on Pythagoras’s work, *Music of the Spheres*”

Standing next to the Baron, von Wohl tried to get more out of the answer.

“Music of the Spheres?”

“Pythagoras believed the intervals in each planet’s orbit corresponded to the frequencies of the tones found in the musical scale.”

“I see....” Von Wohl visualizing the possibilities in term of physics.

“Kepler advanced this idea, theorizing that each planet then, must have its own musical

frequency based on its orbital characteristics, as well as a general cosmic rhythm that exists when you look at all the planets together, creating an ever changing 'song', or music as it were."

"And seeing Pythagoras and Kepler's work is what gave you the idea of harmonics?"

The Baron asked, wishing to see more in depth as to how Krafft's mind works.

"Yes, that is correct. Both men were looking at relationship of planets to musical frequencies and I merely thought of doing so the other way around - applying our own scientific division of frequencies on *to* the planets, and their aspects."

"Incredible." The Baron muttered to himself. More in the fact this was something so simple he could have thought of it than of what Krafft actually accomplished.

"Thank-you, Herr von Hoogerwoerd, but I'm sure this relationship would have been eventually discovered as more astrologers apply statistics and other areas of math to their work."

Both von Wohl and the Baron sensed that while he was a very proud man, Karl Ernst Krafft was also very modest.

"Herr von Wohl?"

Ludwig jumped out of his daydream for a moment. "Yes, Frau Hildebraudt?"

"If my husband's secrets were operating in the 10th house, the house of career, wouldn't that mean that he could very well be a spy?"

"Excuse me...?" Von Wohl realized while daydreaming he had missed something important and needed to rewind the conversation without revealing he had not been listening.

"His *secrets*, Herr von Wohl, you said secrets are operating in the 10th House, the house

of careers, and since his work - or career - is in the military, wouldn't secrets in this house make him a spy?"

Von Wohl had a lot to do. Now that he understood the question, he had to construct how the conversation went from the common "I'm unhappy with my husband" to "My husband is a spy"-

"Yes, Frau Hildebraudt, that is certainly a *possibility*. But tell me, what other things have you seen that might justify this theory of yours?"

Von Wohl thought by keeping her suspicions to a just possibility, she would be satisfied that someone took her seriously while giving him time to research this further to see if there were some way he could take advantage of this information.

Unknown to him, the word 'possibility' was enough of a green light for Frau Natalia Hildebraudt to press further beyond her instincts, eventually uncovering one of the largest spy and counter-spy operations between the Allies and Nazis.

"...the historical and natural enemy of Germany."

In the living room of a lavish Parisian home, the large King Arthur-styled round table was covered with Cabernet Sauvignon, bread, seafood, and exotic fruit. All of its twenty-four seats were occupied with four men and 20 women.

"Well, Ah'm taking my girls out of the country, even with your assurances, if you don't mind." The American began, then pulled a shrimp out of its shell with his teeth and sucked it down. "It doesn't matter where the front lines are today, people in major cities are even more at

risk now-a-days, with bombers and all.”

“Your vision has evidence to support it,” added the Count, “look at what Franco did to Barcelona.”

“Do you mean to say, sir, that you think Adolf Hitler would do the same as Franco?” Herr Stover asked, somewhat in a state of disbelief.

“Well, uh...” Colonel Walls could not contain his Texas accent, “..*you all* certainly gave Warsaw a pound’ den, and I believe *that* is a major city.. .or was one.

“Of course, but those were Poles ... Slavs. Slavs comes from the word ‘slave’, they are all ‘untermentchen’ or what I believe the correct American translation would be ‘sub-human’.

The dark haired girl next to Walls, apparently of Slavic descent and who happened to understand English, stopped chewing at the mention of Slavs by the pretentious Nazi.

“And the French, Herr Stover, are they ‘*untermencheri....?*’” Asked Walls, accenting the word with a Bavarian style of German mixed with the Texan accent.

“No, they simply are the historical and natural enemy of Germany.”

“And *you* will not bomb Paris when the real fighting begins?”

The German internationalist thought for a moment, then realized the answer to the Texan’s question was not found in his opinion, but the whims of Adolf Hitler, who even at this point of the war did not follow his own party’s doctrines and slogans.

“In *my* opinion - no - Germany would not bomb Paris.”

“Well, uh, then it simply looks like we have a difference of opinion here....and since *opinion* does not dictate policy in *our* group, here, as I said before, I’m taking my girls out now.”

Stover looked at the Count, who returned the glance with an expressionless face.

“Count, can he leave *now*.... independently?” Stover asked based on his interpretation on how this group was supposed to operate.”

“Herr Stover, we make our agreements by consensus here. If you cannot satisfy Mr. Walls’ concerns in your sphere of influence, then he is not obligated to participate with what he has to offer.” The Count’s tone was diplomatic, but his words revealed finality to this topic - it was he had already cast his vote in favor of the American.

Walls thought it unusual the Count did not refer to him by his military rank, which he had always done. All knew the Count paid particular attention to addressing one with their proper title. Even though the Count was siding with him on this issue, Colonel Walls couldn’t help but think that somehow their relationship had changed - a change that would either bring them closer together or drive them father apart.

“See how desperate the English are?”

Elaine woke up as the Governor General’s car bumped over some debris of road construction twelve blocks from their hotel. She was sandwiched between Karl Ernst and the gruesome Frank, who was smiling and staring at her. He patted her lap to acknowledge her return to consciousness. Her intuition sensed his hands had been elsewhere while she was out.

Governor General Frank and her husband’s discussion covered how the Luftwaffe had

found several Spitfires that had been shot down in France especially fitted so they could accommodate legless and handicapped pilots.

“See how desperate the English are?” The Governor General gloated. “They are pressing to even find cripples to fly their planes!”

Karl Ernst now noticed Elaine was awake, and Frank retreated his hand from her bottom.

“Frau Krafft, perfect timing, you’re almost at home!”

Elaine turned to look at her husband, who turned to look out the car window after their eyes met.

“You missed the second half of the show!” Hans Frank continued.

“I.. I enjoyed what I saw...really, thank-you.” Elaine remained lady despite her tipsy, almost drugged state.

Karl Ernst started to put his arm around Elaine, but the Governor General beat him to it.

“Get your *own* girl, Karl Ernst.” Frank half-joked. “I carried her to the car and I will finish the job. She’s mine now, but don’t worry.. you can have her back....later.”

Karl Ernst was haunted by the way Frank said, “Get your *own* girl”. It was as if Frank knew about Sabina and Karl Ernst actions in the “bathroom”. *Did Sabina tell Hans Frank?*

“Too bad Sabina couldn’t come home with us.” Frank said mockingly while looking at Karl Ernst as if he knew about every one of Sabina’s actions.

Krafft felt a shiver throughout his entire body. *The Governor General knew.*

The Governor General maintained an artificial smile, looking at Elaine, then at Karl Ernst, then back to Elaine again. "I had a Captain take her home since she felt a bit ill..." Frank turned to Karl Ernst, "... something in her stomach."

The car stopped in front of the Krafft's hotel. Hans Frank tightened his grip on Elaine, who struggled to sit up.

"No, I won't let you go unless both promise me you will accompany me to my kingdom next weekend."

"Your kingdom..?" Elaine asked sleepily.

"Poland! My dear Elaine, Poland!"

"The enemy is everywhere, Herr Kriederman, everywhere."

"Lt. Kriederman, Welcome to Berlin!"

The old man didn't get out of his chair, but put both of his hands on the desk to help him lean forward to shake the lieutenant's hand.

"Please, have a seat! A drink? Coffee...or some schnapps, perhaps?"

"No thank-you, Herr General."

Lt. Kriederman was a perfect specimen of the Aryan race; short-cropped blonde hair, clear blue eyes, and powerful muscles proportioned as if copied directly from one of Bruno's statue modeled in an ancient Greek pose.

“Kriederman, I’ve heard very good things about your work. They tell me you are one of the best at setting traps to catch the kind of *rats* I am looking for.”

“Do we have rats in *Berlin*, Herr General?” Kriederman asked somewhat surprised. Although only in the German capital a few times, to Kriederman as like most Germans, Berlin was a sacred city. To imagine an enemy spy could exist in the center of the Third Reich was unbearable. To imagine a German would be against Hitler to help a spy was unthinkable.

“The enemy is everywhere, Herr Kriederman, everywhere. Our good friend Mr. Fleming in London is not only using pretty German-Polish girls working within the Reich, but has very bright Dutch girls who pass for being German in nearly every divisional headquarter *in* Germany. In fact, I think it is safe to say that there are just as many English spies in Berlin as there are in all of Portugal... if not more.”

Lt. Kriederman was shocked to hear this, but was unaware the general’s assessment was not based on fact, but fear and exaggerated beliefs of those surrounding him.

“Then I will find them *all*, Herr General!”

“Good, good, I know you will.. .but for now I only want you to find one.”

“That’s not Churchill.”

A Polish girl with a German last name began singing with the Italians. The other girls joined in while the Count simply smiled.

Herr Stover, Colonel Walls, and Rafelo Guyonanti all had one thing in common despite

their extremely different cultural, political, and educational backgrounds: each had a major stake in prostitution for exclusive hotels all over Europe.

“I believe if you translate what Herr Stover said into American English.. .(the Count would always distinguish between American and British English whenever the chance arose).. .it would basically come out that he feels you have *your own* ‘untermenchen’ problem in America.”

“What do y’all mean?” The American answered glaring at Stover.

“With your American Negroes, or nigga’s as you so eloquently put it.” Walls sat erect as the Count continued. “It seems you look down upon Herr Stover for his people’s approach to the Slavs, yet you seem to take the same approach to the Negroes in your own country”.

Herr Stover glared back at Walls as if having pulled a trump card in logic, and winning.

“Yeah, we have problems with our nigga’s.” Colonel Walls said, lifting his napkin to his mouth. “But we don’t go around killin’em just *cause they are* negroes.”

Deep down, the Count’s impression of Walls was the Dutch word for ‘hillbilly’ - however, there was something about the man from Texas he genuinely liked. Such comments were a reflection of that quality.

“Point noted.” The Count said while looking at Stover as if waiting for a rebuttal. Stover however could see further discussion was useless, as the Count had already taken sides.

Several of the girls began to sense the men’s conversation was becoming serious in a personal way, not just matters of business and the war, which peaked their interest.

“My point is this,” Walls continued, “...we always have someone below us, you and your

Jews, me and my nigga's - the Count over there and all the rest of us." Everyone listening laughed, even Stover. "So if we have some on top and some on the bottom, why get fanatic about it? Why kill off all the low life just to prove you're better? All that needs to be done is set up things so that whoever is *below* you *knows* their place.

"And where *is* their place, Mr. Walls?" Stover asked, hoping to get the last trump.

"Whose place?"

"Your negroes."

"Why, anywhere they want to be, except near me when I'm eating, sleeping, or fucking."

"I see..."

Away from the table, two of the girls from France were listening to the BBC shifted their position as it to be able to hear the radio better. "It's him!" One of them whispered loudly.

All heads turned to the radio, except for Rafelo, who turned to the Count.

"After the Dunkirk evacuation, everyone is wondering how Churchill would respond to this disaster. The Prime Minister is commenting today."

The radio crackled on occasion which interfered with some of his words: "...we will fight them on the beaches we shall *never* surrender...."

"Wow." Walls confessed, sensing more destruction was on the way for England, which might lead to America coming in should England appear to topple. "Didn't see that coming."

Stover appeared pleased the American colonel had just conceded to German superiority.

“That’s not Churchill.” The Count said matter of fact.

“What?” Stover expressed surprised. Several of the girls reacted with almost disbelief.

“Is he dead?”

“No.” The Count said calmly. “He gave that speech earlier today in the House of Commons and everyone wanted him to give it on the radio as well. Since, in his own words, he was too busy today, they got a BBC repertory staff member, a young actor named Norman Shelly, to impersonated Churchill’s voice, for this broadcast. I’ve seen Norman on stage, he is quite good at impersonations.”

“That is not Churchill?” Stover queried, still in disbelief.

“Norman Shelly is the voice you are listening to right now. Churchill I’m sure is working on far more important things at the moment.”

Damn. Walls thought. How does the Count seem to be privy to so such information, and even more so, how does he obtain it so quickly?

The group of men and ladies then buzz into conversation amongst within their own naturally placed group while a servant enters, then stands at attention by the door until recognized by the Count.

“Yes?” The Count finally acknowledges his presence after speaking with one of the girls.

“Telephone call from London, sir.”

Chapter 14 - The Witch

“... the First Lady of the Third Reich...”

A cork exploded out of the champagne bottle and was followed by the cheers and scattering of applaud from those in the room. This was not a celebration of total victory, but that everything was going as planned - better than planned - at the halfway mark.

Goebbels' phone jingled almost every two minutes. Bettina answered the phone and wrote down the messages. Goebbels was to be notified only if a call came from the Fuhrer himself.

A young sergeant leaned through the opening of a partly open door and then knocked.

“General Knoepp is pleased to inform you that the Fifth Army is in Metz!”

“Two days ahead of schedule!” Zangemeister cheered as he raised his glass.

The rest of the room raised their glasses in a resemblance of the Nazi salute.

“Sieg Heil!”

Goebbels was standing under his huge wall map, which was now covered with markers showing German, French, and British positions. He handed a glass to his wife, who was for the very first time in his office. While she had closely inspected all of the contents of his working environment - the paintings, the furniture and every item of display - she also shot an infrequent glance to Bettina as if she knew this was the young lady Joseph Goebbels spent most of his time with - even though they were never introduced.

“This moment I dedicate to you, my dear.”

“Thank-you.” Magda said modestly, while looking at the red triangles representing the French divisions in the southeast of France. These triangles have not moved since the operation begun. Magda looked at her husband. “We make a good team, do we not?”

“Yes, and *you* are the captain of the team.” Goebbels said, putting his ego aside to compliment his wife. On this day in May, 1940 at 13:20, however, would be the last time he would ever show her such humility.

“Frau Goebbels? Another?” A staff Lieutenant raised a tray with five glasses of champagne. She put her empty on the tray and took the glass with the least amount.

Joseph Goebbels used the opportunity to shoot a quick glance over at Bettina to make sure she was following orders; to answer the phone and speak to no one. Even with Magda next to him - his wife of 9 years - he could not control the urge to look at the woman, who, in his opinion, had a perfect body.

Joseph and Magda had a good working relationship when they met, but her first real attraction was to Adolf Hitler when she joined the Nazi party on September 1, 1930. Hitler was impressed by her as well, but since he wished to remain unmarried, it was suggested that she become the wife of a highly visible Nazi official so she could be seen as the “First Lady of the Third Reich” to copy the symbol that Eleanor Roosevelt had become in America.

“We will be in Paris by the middle of June!” The Lieutenant shouted, while moving the German Fifth Army marker past the city of Metz to the west.

“Maybe even before then.” Magda predicted.

The Lieutenant stepped back and viewed the map as a whole. Another staff member was moving the retreating French and English markers in the north closer to the channel.

“Perhaps you are right, Frau Goebbels! You should have been a general!”

The Lieutenant did not realize how close to the truth he was. He and many in the German High Command would never know the German armies rolling through the French country side did not have to worry about its southern flank thanks to Frau Goebbels and her manipulation of Nostradamus prophecy.

“...he listens to the BBC, and Radio Moscow, too!”

Natalia seemed pleased she had found someone who would seriously consider her suspicions concerning her respected husband.

“Other things, Herr von Wohl?”

“Yes, what other things has he done that would suggest he was a spy? Does he listen to the BBC? Does he make excessive copies of his documents?” Being a writer of an occasional spy novel, von Wohl knew at least superficially what kind of questions to ask.

Frau Hildebraudt began thinking deeply, her memory racing back over seventeen years of marriage with General Karl Joseph Hildebraudt and the activities von Wohl had described.

“Yes, he listens to the BBC, and Radio Moscow, too!”

Von Wohl realized that listening to these broadcasts does not make someone a spy, but the fact his suggestion allowed her to explore her own theory pleased him. It would at least

appear to her that von Wohl was taking her suspicions seriously and could turn into more astrological work - and therefore more money from her - later. She was, after all, his best paying client.

“And, he *does* copy many of his documents, and...” Frau Hildebraudt stopped for a moment, but von Wohl could see that her mind was still racing. . .he has meetings with the Americans, which he tries to keep secret from everyone.”

“*Tries* to keep secret?”

“He doesn’t know I hired a detective to follow him.. .I wanted to see who he is having an affair with.. .but the other things I found...”

“*Interesting*^ Frau Hildebraudt.” Von Wohl said, encouraging her to go on.

“He meets with people who the detective found to have connections to Henry Ford, the DuPont family, and one is even a representation of the Goodyear company here in Berlin. I myself over heard a conversation he had with an American banker while we were in Holland.”

“An *American* banker. Who? When?”

“Several years before the war, it was a man from Connecticut.. .Bush, Prescott Bush. Something about finances and gold.. .and there was someone there from the Thyssen family.”

Gold, money, steel, automobiles, tires, and chemicals with the Americans seemed to be beyond what a German general should be involved with. *Maybe she is on to something.* Von Wohl thought. *Maybe this could be useful.*

“For now, in the interest of security for us, *and* the Reich, let us keep this strictly between

us. Understand?”

“Of course.”

“We have to collect everything we can and be one hundred per cent sure before we say or do anything. Promise?”

“Promise.”

There was excitement Natalia’s life again. In the same way her husband brought excitement to her life by elevating her in German society, now he was bringing more with his apparent secret life.

“What should I do?”

“Write down everything you can think of that has happened in the past. We both will meet weekly to compare notes with what I can come up with.”

Natalia finished her drink and immediately began writing. This conversation motivated her desire to ruin her husband and become a hero in the eyes of Adolf Hitler and Germany.

Von Wohl’s motivation was to later use this information as “something he had seen in the stars” to become an official astrologer for the Third Reich.

“...bailing out a broke Winston Churchill in 1938...”

Local officials by those higher up in the British, German, Italian, French, and the United States government protected the pimps - thanks to the Count. Stover, Walls, and Rafelo saw the

value of the Count's offer of a federation nearly ten years ago in Paris. This win-win idea for an international white slave trade was good business for all, and an information bonanza as well as another vehicle of influence for the Count.

Besides training the girls in the highest etiquette and make up, the Count's associates also trained the girls in obtaining "black" information from their important clients, be it by discreet forms of questioning, blackmail, or just out right stealing. Nearly every important client from this syndicate later found that someone had somehow uncovered a dark secret that they were presently involved in or from their distant past. None of these prominent businessmen, politicians, priests and presidents ever knew it was done by the Count's "girls" who just as skilled in espionage as any German, English or Soviet agents.

While Walls was not interested in the information business - "Just the pussy" - as he was often known to say, the Count would share some information with Rafelo, since his territory put him at odds with the Italian mafia. The Count's information on the movement of money, future government pardons, blackmail, and murders kept Rafelo one step ahead in Italy. Rafelo, Walls and Stover and the girls helped keep the Count one step ahead of every nation on earth.

"Happy Birthday, Count!" Maria brought out a white box and placed it in front of the Count. "Happy Birthday, Count!" All the others began to say, as they picked up their boxes possessing what the Count specifically requested from each one of them for this occasion.

"Thank-you, Thank-you." The Count dipped his head while stating his gratitude to show his sincerity. The Count's own personal girls - Maria the Italian, Fa the Norwegian, and Monika from his own Holland - were all by his side.

The three young ladies were the Count's core group. Assistants who were responsible for

carrying out all of the Count's international intrigues: funding the Nazi party as early as 1921, financing the Czechoslovakia effort to topple Neville Chamberlain and his government after Munich, bailing out a broke Winston Churchill in 1938 through their South African gold mining millionaire friend, Sir Henry Skrakosch.

The Count's core group was trained by his first assistant, Matilda Wallerton, a long time live-in lover to the famous English spy: Sidney Reilly. Reilly and the Count met in the spring of 1918 and were the key players in the plot to assassinate Lenin later that year on August 30th.

When Reilly was captured and executed by the Soviets in in 1925, Matilda and the Count continued the work of spying through the diplomatic receptions with a new type of cold-blooded ruthlessness Matilda had learned from her previous lover. She passed this knowledge on to her three beautiful, talented and deadly successors.

The Count's girls were his eyes and ears, as well as his messengers, enforcers, manipulators, and when necessary, his assassins.

“Happy Birthday, Count.”

Inside Herr Stover's box were documents that would be the first thing the Count would read when the party was over. Of all the “presents” the Count requested as gifts, these documents from Stover were the only item that had to do with his personal life and what would later become Vichy France. The other boxes had important information as well - matters that had to do with dealings in fourteen other countries.

He did not open any of the boxes in front of the guest, as was his custom. This would be done with his three girls after the party.

“Shouldn't we be going?”

“Well? What do you think?”

“Why, it's beautiful. I've never seen one with such colors, and feel how light it is...”

“Then, please, keep it.” Hans said, putting it back into the box. “To see such happiness on your face gives me great joy, and should an object such as this *keep* that look of happiness on our face, then it is well worth the price.”

“Dr. Frank, really!” Elaine countered, flattered yet embarrassed.

Dr. Frank and Elaine Krafft were forty kilometers northeast of Warsaw. Major Rusk and Karl Ernst Krafft were with them earlier in the morning in Thom, but went ahead since they were running late for an emergency meeting in Warsaw. Rummaging through many of the vaults of the now defunct Polish government, some of Rusk's men had come across many Polish astrological papers Krafft and the Dark Fire project could use.

An arriving train could be heard tooting its horn in the distance.

“Shouldn't we be going?”

“Yes, as you wish.” Frank said, secretly hoping she had forgotten when their train would leave so they could be stranded in this little town for the rest of the day. “Frau Krafft, have you ever been to Warsaw?”

“No, I have never been east of Berlin until we went to Frau Ney's.” Elaine said while feeling a cold shiver run up her spine. Something was about to happen, she felt. He's going to

do something now.

“Frau Krafft... Elaine...” Hans Frank said while taking hold of her left arm and blocking her passage out of the door.

Elaine looked around. The shopkeeper and his two helpers were no longer in the store.

“... those bastards just wanted a free trip to Berlin... at our expense.”

Despite several bomb hits, most of the old castle’s structure was still intact to support the main building. Major Rusk and Krafft passed two guards in front of the cellar door to the grand old stone cellar that housed the ancient relics of Polish, Russian, and Lithuanian kings.

Down a long inclined corridor they walked until they came to the room with the vaults that contained, among other things, hand-written manuscripts by Copernicus himself. The items for Krafft to review were already laid out on a large, partly decayed, wooden table.

“Simply choose whatever you want to bring back to Berlin,” Rusk quietly said while looking around the musty brick walls, . . .the sergeant will sign out all the items and deliver whatever you do not wish to carry.”

Rusk put his hand on the table.

“What a stinking low culture that would keep such prized notes and important documents of history in a hole like this.”

“We are lucky these are not saturated with mildew.” Krafft said as if to support Rusk’s statement, but not totally commit in agreeing to all of it.

“Herr Krafft, I will leave you for a moment while you are looking through these. There is another assistant from your department here searching through some files down the corridor. She can assist you while I’m gone. The office upstairs has a phone, call me if you need anything or wish to leave early.”

“Thank-you, Major. Until then.”

Krafft went immediately to work. For many years he had wanted to research the Polish archives. The building was a highly regarded and sacred place in astrological societies throughout Europe, since it held the original works of Kepler, Regiomontanus, and of course, Copernicus.

Karl Ernst and many others, however, were never able to break through the Polish barrier of bureaucracy or suspicious to obtain the permission to visit and learn what works were stored here.

Once in 1926, an exchange program was set up between the astrological societies in Berlin and Warsaw in which Krafft participated. On July 15th, a group of Polish astrologers came to Berlin to give lectures, view the German libraries, and brought a few original letters of Copernicus which Krafft and several others savored over every word.

However, a month later when it came time for Krafft, Lucht and the other German astrologers to travel to Warsaw and give their lectures and view the Polish archives, the arrangement fell apart. The Polish astrological society could not be reached to confirm their arrival, nor had they provided the train tickets, hotel vouchers or border passes sent as promised by the Warsaw group. Of course these were all the courtesies provided by the German group.

“Filthy Poles.” Krafft remembered Lucht saying. “They’re frauds.. .going on and on about their silly philosophy and characterizations. Do you realize there was not one technical aspect of astrology they covered?”

“Why would they do this?” Was all Krafft could question to contribute to the disappointed group conversation amongst Germany’s most distinguished astrologers.

“Why those bastards just wanted a free trip to Berlin... at *our* expense.” Herr Groesler vented. “Don’t you see? We paid their way over here, put them in fine hotels, fed them, even paid them an honorarium... and now they sit in Warsaw laughing for not paying one pfenning.”

“But they won’t hear *our* lectures,” Krafft began, “... or know our work...” Krafft found it unbelievable that the Poles would consciously forfeit the most valuable part of the program: *to hear German astrological knowledge. . .our work, known to be the best in the world.*”

“They’re not interested in knowledge, Herr Krafft.” Groesler said pointing at the astrological society’s charter, “they just wanted to prance around Berlin with us as if they were important.. .while we picked up the bill.”

“A fourth of our annual budget spent on servicing those pigs. They’ll pay for this. They’ll pay for sure. We’ll kill every one of those Polish pigs if it’s the last thing done!”

While looking at the papers on the old table in front of him in the Polish castle, Karl Ernst wondered if any of those Polish astrologers were now still alive.

When entering the city he could see that every part of the city had severe damage inflicted upon it. If these Polish astrologers were alive, are they still laughing over how they ‘got one’ over the Germans?

“Karl Ernst.”

Krafft turned around and his heart stopped. Before him stood Ewa Mann, holding a box of rolled manuscripts. Below her left ear was a freshly made scar.

“...378 million Swiss francs in gold the Belgium government is transferring to France...”

The Count’s wife, in Belgian with her parents, was not able to make his birthday. She was not aware of the fact that her presence at her family home was part of a sequence of movements that was part of his plans. The last time she was there her presence was part of plan that allowed General Wladyslaw Sikorski to escape out of Europe to London to set up Poland’s provisional government - a series of events she was totally unaware of.

With the party now over and most guests going for their coats, little did they know this would be the last time they would all see each other. It would not be of the Count’s doing, it would be because of the inevitable German invasion of France.

The Count’s core group laid out the contents of the boxes from the guests on the circular table. Where once were dishes of their last meal together, now was filled with certificates, priceless historical artifacts, and documents from France, Germany, Russia, England that each of the country’s governments thought were top secret.

“Count, what would you like to see first?” Fa asked, knowing the Count would want to get straight to work once the last guest had left.

In the 1870’s, the Count’s father had collected a vast amount of information that was

fundamental in building his family empire that rivaled any country at the time. In order to maintain this empire in the fast changing world of the 1920's and 30's, how *quickly* one obtained information turned out to be just as important as the information itself. In this manner the Count adapted to the new technology for this requirement in excellent form.

“I would like to see the papers Herr Stover kindly brought us.”

Maria snorted at the mention of his name. Both she and Fa hated the thin German, mostly because of his arrogance.

“Ladies,” the Count said in a fatherly voice understanding their feelings, “we are all aware of the Herr Stover’s manners and attitude, however today we need to thank him for a very important development”.

“What did he tell you?”

“Actually Herr Stover was not aware of the information he as giving me, but the time table and other details he gave will allow us to be in on 378 million Swiss francs in gold the Belgium government is transferring to France for safe keeping.”

“But, isn’t Belgium neutral in all this?”

“The Belgian government, my dear, seem to now know that neutrality won’t matter when the Germans move west to France.”

“From *you*...?”

The Count ignored the question and continued. “We will need to intercept the train first while it is in Belgium since the Germans have the schedule and timetables as well...which of

course is how I learned of it. Maria, here are the details, will you make the arrangements?"

Marie nodded and bowed a 'yes'.

The Count looked at the next set of papers.

"Monika, will you move all of our accounts out of Belgian and the Netherlands into my account in Switzerland?"

After a few moments of reading the documents from Colonel Walls, the Count turned to Fa. "Will you please have Herr Borcht fly our plane out of Stettin and meet us in Rome?"

After several papers and several sets of orders for his core group, the Count gave his final order. "Ladies, we have done all we can to secure what we could in Europe, please meet in Naples on the fifteenth of May and we will sail out."

The Count didn't say where they were going to be sailing, and the girls didn't ask - they knew not to.

"...have him forget his childhood, education, and profession."

Karl Ernst rose and put his arms around Ewa. Their embrace quickly turned into passionate kissing.

"How did you get here?" Krafft finally spoke.

"I heard you would be here and had to see you."

"Does Fesel suspect anything about us?"

“No...no.” Ewa lied.

Krafft said nothing. He returned to their embrace.

“I just wanted to be with you... is that alright?” Ewa asked in between fabricated deep breaths.

“Yes, of course... .this is a pleasant surprise, a very pleasant surprise.”

“Is your wife with you here in Warsaw now?” Ewa asked, but already knew the answer.

“No, she will be coming later.”

“Then... we only have this moment.”

Krafft lowered his hands very slowly over the shapely body in front of him. He had only a few loves in his life, but Ewa excited him more so than any of them. She was the only one who ever made his mind turn completely off. She also had an uncanny power have him forget his childhood, education, and profession.

* * * *

“...a Zellenlieter - whose sole duty was to report any and all anti-government or suspicious activities of families living on that street.”

The general motioned for Kriederman to come forward and handed him a small red box filled with hundreds of typed pages, identity forms, photos and keys.

“The folder on top.”

Lt. Kriederman saw the name of the intended prey: Otto Manfred Huber.

“What has he done?” Kriederman asked while skimming the first pages of Otto’s descriptions and habits. Experience told him just because there was a file and charge didn’t necessarily mean the ‘suspect’ was actually guilty.

“Nothing yet. The Gestapo in Hof heard a few calls going out to a Zellenlieter* in Berlin while Goebbels was on a restricted lodge vacation a few weeks ago.”

**Zellenlieter: Hitler created a “Big Brother” system ahead of its time. He divided Germany into 42 districts called ‘Gau’, supervised by a District Leader (Gauleiter). The Gauleiter for Berlin, for example, was Dr. Joseph Goebbels. Each Gau was subdivided into circuits (Kreise) led by a Kreisleiter, subdivided by groups (Ortsgruppe) and these divided further still down to street cells (Zellen) supervised by a Zellenleiter - whose sole duty was to report any and all anti-government or suspicious activities of families living on that street. Many Zellenleiters were under 18 years old, and some were as young as 12 - who would report on their own parents and other family members. Germans living abroad were regarded as the 43rd Gau and were treated with the utmost suspicion.*

“Who called him?”

“The lodge operator was requested to call the number by a Elka Meyer, one of the maids at the lodge.”

“And *her* story?”

“Frau Meyer claims her cousin, Bettina Meyer, simply wanted to call her boyfriend in Berlin - to let him know she was alright, where she was, and so forth.”

“Her boyfriend?”

“An Otto Huber - *our* Otto Huber.”

“And Bettina Meyer?”

“A secretary for one of our Reich Ministers...an *undocumented* secretary.”

“*Undocumented* secretary?” Undocumented meant one’s Nordic purity was not confirmed by the standards set forth by the state. “Which Reich Minister?”

“Joseph Goebbels.”

Chapter 15 - The Hunt

“You never asked me about my family.”

The Count turned to the Baron and took a step back from the polished oak wheel, and motioned to the wooden pegs he was just controlling.

“Son, would you steer for a while?”

Perhaps it was the sense of danger than had the Count referring to the younger von Hoogerwoerd as his son. The Baron had not heard the word ‘son’ from his father’s lips in more than thirty years.

“Certainly, father.” The younger von Hoogerwoerd spoke, still holding memory of his father as someone to be feared, a taskmaster who was never satisfied, a master of an empire who he could never live up to.

“I’ll going below deck to see how your mother is doing, shall I send up something?”

“Some coffee, please.”

The old man turned and started to the hatch mid-ships.

“Father?”

The Count turned his head and looked up at the son he was ashamed of for most of his life.

“Thank-you, Father. Thank-you for bringing me.”

The Count smile while nodding his head; then disappeared below.

Both father and son were unsafe in the Third Reich for entirely different reasons. They were two thousand kilometers apart when the Count received the warning from Herr Stover. The Count managed to have both his son and wife meet him in La Spezia, Italy to escape by sea. His core group was already out of Germany on other business. Von Wohl just happened to be with the Baron when news ran through the von Hoogerwoerd family that Gestapo Berlin received orders to arrest all of them, their network and connected businesses.

The moonless May night covered their escape and offered protection from any search planes. Von Wohl approach from the front of the yacht Lord Nelson would be envious of.

“I heard you needed some coffee.”

“Yes, thank-you, Ludwig. How are mother and the others below?”

“Fine. Your mother and her relatives are all sleeping, the crew are still up playing that confounded card game.”

The Baron took a short sip of the hot beverage while maintaining the ship’s course.

“Baron, you never told me you has such a large family.”

“You never asked me about my family.”

Von Wohl thought for a moment and realized this was indeed true. Nearly all of their discussions over the past years had been over astrology, society or human behavior.

There was a long silence after the Baron’s last statement. The kind of silence that occurs even between good friends when an awkward moment arrives that neither have anything to say to one another after a truth had been revealed. Yet at the same time, both men wanted to, and in fact needed to, talk.

Within a matter of days their comfortable lives in Germany had been turned upside down. They were now being hunted by the very same country they grew up in, were educated in, and loved. Everyone on the boat only a few days before thought they were a part of Germany - but were no longer years before after Hitler declared the War Powers Decree. An immediate result after the Reichstag fire, nearly two thirds of German citizens would be eligible for punishment under this document. The other third the Nazis could come after whenever they decided.

The decision to come after the von Hoogerwoerd family was approved just before the coming invasion.

“Ludwig, you never told me whether it was General Hildebraudt, or his wife, that was the spy.” The Baron asked with his eyes still out to sea.

“I never did find out.”

“It wouldn’t surprise me if both of them were.”

Both men laughed.

“The Gestapo must have been listening to your phone conversations, how else could they have heard such a story?”

“Why would they listen to my phone? I’ve done nothing against the Reich or the old Republic.”

“There are many reasons they will listen to you; for fun, if you are getting to *popular*, if they are *considering* you for something, if they *want* something from you...

“Fesel...!” Von Wohl blurted out. The word ‘considering’ was exactly what the director of Dark Fire was doing concerning von Wohl.

“Heinrich Fesel?” The Baron then thought for a moment, recalling von Wohl’s excitement after the premier of his play. “Yes, he was becoming interested in your services, wasn’t he? That little worm!”

“So, the Gestapo is listening and Frau Hildebraudt calls with evidence that her husband is a spy, and you get in trouble for not reporting it.”

Both men laugh again, which could be heard far across the quiet waters of the Mediterranean, but was not disturb those sleeping below in the luxurious cabins of the Count’s Norwegian built yacht.

“When did you learn they were after you? You weren’t involved, or...”

The Baron stopped mid-sentence and cocked his right ear to the sky. Silence. Von Wohl then heard the puttering of a plane’s propeller and looked in the direction of the sound. The airplane’s motor sounded as if it were on the northern horizon - coming towards them.

* * * *

“...she felt confusion, then anger, then hate.”

“Yes,” Goebbels said while looking at his wife, “she is *my* general.”

The Lieutenant clicked his heels. “Of course Herr Reich Minister, and thank-you again for inviting here today.”

“Well, you deserve to be here, to see this moment *you* helped create as well.” Goebbels said turning to the giant wall map. “All the generals say if today’s objectives are reached, Frenchie and the Brits won’t have a chance to break out of our trap.”

Bettina looked out of the corner of her eye at both Goebbels and saw how happy they

were together. At first she felt confusion, then anger, then hate.

Her phone rang.

“Herr Reich Minister Goebbels’ office.”

“Bettina?”

Bettina recognized the soft voice on the other end immediately, yet ironically never met, or ever laid eyes on, the woman she had come to like over the phone.

“Ursula!”

“Is Herr Goebbels in?”

“Yes, let me —”

“No, No, that is not necessary. *He* is coming up. I just wanted to make sure the Minister is in, don’t let him leave.”

“I won’t.”

Click. Ursula hung up without saying good-bye, which was common. She was perhaps the only person in Germany who could hang up in such a way and not have one feel offended - she was that sweet over the phone. She was the head secretary for the entire Ministry building, and everyone knew she was busier than the Fuhrer himself. If she was short, that meant that “*He*”, the Fuhrer himself, was nearby, and all understood one could not spend time on politeness or courtesy when Adolf Hitler was near you.

Bettina looked around the room. Goebbels was standing much closer to his wife, holding her hand and swinging it back and forth between them.

“Where can I take you to dinner, my dear?”

“Didn’t that member of the Japanese consulate invite us for something at their embassy?”

“So you are in the mood for their raw fish?”

The buzz and chatter of several conversations all across the room suddenly died in an instant.

With one hand in his coat pocket, and the other holding several oversized photographs, Adolf Hitler was standing in the doorway,

“Surely the Governor General of Poland cannot get lost in Poland”

“You mean she and the Governor General never arrived in Warsaw?”

“No, sir. We were all to meet at his office, but his aide said they never arrived.”

Krafft’s eyes already had a cloudy dullness from lack of sleep and worry. Now this.

“Major Rusk said there were reports of the Polish underground cutting phone lines and destroying train tracks north of Warsaw.. .it might be...”

“Oh my, no!” Fesel said, acting as if he were worried. “I hope nothing has happened to Elaine and Hans Frank. Polish pigs...” The truth was, Fesel knew exactly where Elaine Krafft was, and what ‘excuse’ Governor General Frank would have when they finally arrived. Fesel also knew of the secret romantic encounter with Krafft and Ewa in the basement of the Polish castle.

Krafft said nothing. Since there was a war on, he naturally feared the worst.

Fesel correctly assessed Krafft’s emotional state and began twisting his manipulative screws.

“You don’t think Elaine and he...?”

“Elaine and he *what*?”

“I mean, if perhaps something happened to the train, they still might have managed to get off... somewhere.”

“They would have called us in Warsaw, they know we are waiting for them.”

Fesel left the room without a further comment.

Krafft’s mind wandered to all of the Governor General’s suggestive comments about Elaine from Frau Ney’s to their departing on the train station. His thoughts then shifted to guilt when recalling his encounters with Ewa Mann. Fesel’s plan to destroy Krafft emotionally began to take root. After leaving the Swiss astrologer alone in thought, Fesel returned with more news.

“We have called Thorn and they saw them get on the train after a delay. They should be here soon. Surely the Governor General of Poland cannot get lost in Poland.”



Dr. Hans Frank, Governor-General of Occupied Poland

Krafft was no more reassured, but said nothing further. His heart and mind were a mess.

“Come, the best medicine for worry is work and that we have plenty of it. Shall we get started?”

For the first time in quite a while, what Fesel said made perfect sense. Krafft also shared the theory that the best way to put worry or painful emotions out of your mind is with the needed

work at hand.

“How is your English, Karl Ernst?”

“Proficient. Do you have English text as well to go through?”

“Not exactly, we are going to make some. When France falls, the British will be next. Since the British and Americans are so close, we will also have to make a special effort to psych out the Americans so they do not enter the war until we are ready for them.”

Fesel pulled out a stack of magazines that were resting on a shelf labeled ‘U.S.A.’ and placed them on the table before Karl Ernst.

“We found something you might be interested in seeing, it’s what the Americans are doing to you...”

* * * *

“Hands, dear Eddy, are like open books.”

Have you Americans really made *that* much progress on this underwater radar?” Admiral Payne said quite surprised, but pleased. Catching a U-Boat above the water was greatly enhanced by radar, and to now be able to do the same while these German raiders were underwater would change the war.

“Yes sir, Admiral.” Answered Captain Larry Boyle, the U.S. Navy’s attaché to British Naval Command. “We’ll have it for you as soon as the prototype is refined for production.”

The Admiral breathed a sigh of relief.

Boyle's arrival to British Naval Command lifted the mood of the entire department, offering hope for England's precarious situation, and a spark of light for Admiral Payne's personal uncertainty.

A loud gasp caught the attention of everyone on the patio of the exclusive country club.

"Ella!" General Edward Owens blurted out in complete surprise. "Can you really see all that? Just by looking in my hands?"

"Hands, dear Eddy, are like open books." The elder woman answered, as if to a little boy instead of to one of the highest-ranking officers of British High command. Lady Ella Hightower was a favorite personality among the higher echelon of military and diplomatic circles.

"Just like your grandfather!" Laughed General Owens.

Her grandfather, Lord Charles "The Grand Magician" Thomas Gordon Hightower, fell at the Battle of Calunga in India. Some say his planning and secret deals with the Gurkha leadership was pivotal in saving the Empire's interests in India during the tense uprisings in the early 1800's.

"Never some mumbo jumbo philosophies like the others, always a direct answer." Owens mused. "Honestly, Ella, how could you see this decision I must make? It's top secret!"

"See it? Good heavens, Eddy, you have been talking about nothing else all week! How could I *not* know about it?"

The entire room roared with laughter. "She's got you on that one, Sir Edward." A voice echoed from a distant table.

General Owens looked around the room with a shocked look on his face.

“What the...?” Were the only words his lips could manage to push out. “I....uh...Oh, my word!” Owens stammered, then laughed. “Was I really that obvious?” At the next table Sir Edward raised his glass. “Jolly good show, Ella, jolly good....very witty indeed!”

“To Ella, the sorceress! Cheers!” The others in the room chimed in and raised their glasses as well.

The roots of the Hightower family could be traced back to the Celts, and every generation was claimed to have at least one member who passed down a special ‘power’.

Lord Charles “The Grand Magician” Thomas Gordon Hightower’s son, Zigmund, could also create illusions and ‘magically’ manipulate situations that, of course, were also very useful in his own military campaigns and operations while in India.

His regiment was once trapped and surrounded within an Afghan village near Kabul in 1883 when he was just a captain. The Afghan prince had several cannon looking down from the ridges and outnumbered the diminished British force 4 to 1.

The ‘Little Magician’ managed to pull off a daring escape by covering himself with the intestines of a dead horse, and then, looking like a monster, approached a detachment of Afghans guarding one of the paths out of the mountains.

Thinking they were seeing a personification of death, the terrified Afghans fled and the Captain and his men were able to escape certain death.

“Who is that woman?” The American asked Admiral Payne.

“Lady Hightower?” She is the daughter in a long line of heroes and master tacticians.”

“Will you introduce me?” Boyle said with great interest.

“What? Isn’t she a bit old for you, my boy?” The Admiral joked. “Besides I hardly know her, why is it you wish to meet her?”

“Well,” Boyle said while raising his hand palms up and spreading his fingers. “I’ve always wanted to have my palm read. Let’s see if she can say something about me, after all, she does not know a thing about me.”

“Except that you are an American.”

Captain Boyle and Admiral Payne worked their way over to Lady Hightower’s table.

“Life is too short to drink cheap beer.” A short bearded man seated next to Lady Hightower declared as he lifted his glass to Payne and Boyle, then scrutinized the foam. Lady Hightower noticed the two officers standing in front of their table waiting to be introduced.

“Am I late for the boat?” She asked looking at them, then pointed to the warships docked at the distant piers.

It took Admiral Payne a few seconds to realize he was being put on. He smiled. “Lady Hightower, please excuse me. I am Admiral Payne, and my colleague here, Captain Boyle from the United States, was fascinated by your ability in the occult and wanted to make your acquaintance.”

“The *United States*?” Ella looked at the young Captain with interest. “I see, well, dear Captain, what part of the colonies are you from?”

“Boston, Lady Hightower.”

“Oh, please, Captain, all young, handsome, dashing men may call me Ella.”

Ella motioned both men to be seated.

“Admiral, Captain, my I introduce you to my husband, Lord Everton, and to my dear, dear friends, Dana, Lisa, and Marcy.” The naval officers returned pleasantries while seating themselves.

“Now, what is it about the occult would you be interested in, Captain?”

“Well, I couldn’t help but observe you reading the hand of the General there....my grandmother read palms.”

“Grandmother, mmmm...” Ella said while taking the Captain’s hand into hers and slipping her glasses down to almost the bottom of her nose. She studied his left hand intensively and after a few moments, raised her eyebrows.

“May I see your other hand, please, Captain?” Ella’s voice had changed dramatically. Throughout afternoon tea she had spoken with a high, almost shrill-like tone that was easily distinguishable from the dull monotones of the room’s normal chatter of conversations. She now spoke in a very low, deep voice - lower than her husband’s - as if possessed by another personality. “Ah, yes...” She said after further study. “I see.”

Captain Boyle looked up to Payne and was about to flash a smile, but refrained when he saw the seriousness of the Admiral’s face.

“You are the youngest in a rather large family, a family with a lot of responsibility.”

The Captain bit his lip.

“You are married with one, hmmm, soon to be two children.”

“I have a two year old and a second one on the way...my wife is pregnant.”

“The second child will be a girl, Captain.” Ella said matter-of-factly. “Captain, you are a musician, a wonderful musician, why are you not playing?”

The Captain’s mouth hung open. After a moment he finally managed to arrange words with it. “The Navy is a family tradition.” He did not add in that statement the many fights occurring with his father in his trying to break that tradition, in order to play his saxophone professionally for which he had many offers.

“You have a good mind for planning and strategy.. .you should play chess with my husband.” Ella returned the Captain’s hand to him.

“Man!” The Captain could not hold back his amazement. Known only to him and Ella, she was dead correct on every fact she mentioned. “I do play chess.”

Ella looked over at the Admiral, then to her husband.

Lord Everton then eyed the Admiral, as if making a scientific study of him, then turned to Ella but kept his eyes directly on the Admiral. “Not all chemicals are bad.” Lord Everton said returning his eyes to Ella. “Without chemicals, we wouldn’t have the vital ingredients for beer.”

Payne and Boyle looked at each other not knowing what to reply.

“There is something troubling you, deeply, Admiral,” Ella broke the silence, “are you missing a family member?”

“I have, my son disappeared a while back on in the Netherlands. There is no word on whether he is alive or not.” Current events allowed the Admiral to reveal this information in public. It still was not to be revealed he was on a secret mission across the German border.

“Mark?” Ella looked over to her husband.

“The problem with this world is that everyone is a few drinks behind.”

Captain Boyle was beginning to feel uncomfortable with the seemingly absurdity of Lord’s Everton’s comments. “I’m sorry, what do you mean, a few drinks behind?”

Boyle, puzzled, looked to Payne. “I mean, is this British slang, or something?”

Lord Everton continued to look at the Captain with the oversized smile of a lunatic.

“Admiral Payne.” This was the first time Ella used the Admiral’s name. “My husband senses that there is something more behind your son’s disappearance.”

Payne looked at Lord Everton, who returned the look and began nodding.

“Reality is an illusion that occurs due to the lack of alcohol.”

“My husband is saying that it is the lack of information, or the fact that information was *hidden on purpose*, is the reason your son disappeared.”

Payne sat back.

“Was your son involved in *a secret* of sorts, or his mission *relied* on a secret?”

“I would like to give you more information concerning this matter, Lady Hightower, but I am afraid I am not permitted to.”

“I see. I perhaps have a solution to your problem of information, Admiral Payne....” Ella turned to a servant cleaning a distant. “Martin.” She said sweetly in a loud whisper.

Immediately the waiter was at attention before the table.

“Yes, Lady Hightower?”

“Will you please bring me a pot of tea, some of my *special* blend, if you will be so kind.”

“At once, m’Lady.”

* * * *

“So when does Otto Huber begin to exist officially?”

“Is it not an odd coincidence they make contact, just before our move into France? I think the girls found out something at Goebbels’ secret retreat meeting, and set something in motion.” It was the General’s job to look at all possibilities in finding and predicting espionage.

“Yes, quite possible. How is Herr Huber connected to these girls?”

“He is Bettina’s lover, but facts suggest he is more than his profession claims. We are not finished with his background investigation, since there are some problems with his records.”

“Problems?” Lt. Kriederman was not used to hearing this word from the General.

“Apparently his, among others in his birth district, had all their birth and school records destroyed by a fire at their Meldung building in Danzig.”

“Interesting.” Kriederman was assuming this happened at the start of the war in 1939, with the German battle ship *Westerplatte*’s bombardment of the Polish city of Danzig. “When?”

“In 1935. Actually it was the SA who started the fire. Seems they firebombed a Jewish synagogue and the fire spread to the Post Office and the Meldung buildings next door.”

“So when does Otto Huber begin to exist officially?”

“In 1935, with his graduation from Hamburg University in radio technics. “I’ve had him followed since the Gestapo in Hof gave me his number, and there are people now in Danzig trying to see about him before 1935.”

Kriederman thought for a moment.

“Anything at all from Danzig?”

Both men paused, reflecting the stories they heard of the German occupation of this historic city, where Germans and Poles used to live together in harmony side by side.

“No, nothing. The city, as you know, is still a mess - half the town is gone and the other half is dead.”

“And his activities in Berlin?”

“We do have him associated with that old Jew lover, Stephan Johanstall.”

“The tailor?” Lt. Kriederman had heard and seen the reports concerning Johanstall, who was at one time vehemently anti-Nazi, until the Nazis convinced him to be otherwise. His past views had kept him on the files as a possible danger to the Third Reich, but his old age and meager lifestyle had always put him on the bottom of the priority lists for any future dangers to be investigated.

“Yes, that old fool is still around, and his every move is being noted now.” The General

finished his cigarette. "Lieutenant, what do you see in all this with Huber?"

"I see Bettina Meyer, *undocumented*, who being close to Goebbels could learn anything on the Ministry level." Kriederman accepted a cigarette being offered by the General. "I see a radio specialist, Herr Huber, close to Bettina, who we know nothing about before 1935, who has the knowledge to send such information any of our enemies in the world."

Both men lit their cigarettes themselves. Kriederman exhaled last.

"This cousin, what was her name again, Elka? Anything unusual from her since these calls were made?"

"Very unusual. In fact, her trip to Hamburg immediately afterwards is what set off many of the red flags on this matter."

"What did she do there?"

"Spent a *lot* of time with prostitutes, learned how to do make-up, and from what the photos show, became a very beautiful."

"Prostitutes. Sounds like a very strong possibility of following the pattern Commander Fleming has set with *his* girls," Kriederman looked out the window, "who he seems to have everywhere."

"We think alike, Lieutenant. I want you on this right away."

"Jawohl, Her General!"

"You will have Sargent Martens at your disposal, and here are your papers for your car and living quarters in Berlin. You will have Captain Redder in Hamburg. Any problem that?"

It could be a big problem indeed, but Kriederman did not allow his and Redder's dreaded history come up at the beginning of an assignment.

"No, Herr General, not at all."

"Good, fine. Now, find any rats in any this."

"Jawohl, Herr General."

Chapter 16 - The Dispersion

“It’s started! It’s on the radio!”

“You were saying?” The Baron said when only the slaps of the waves on the bow could be heard.

“I, uh, well, when a Gestapo Captain and one of his friends came by to ask me if I knew Natalia Hildebraudt, of course I had to say ‘yes’. Then they asked if I knew about any evidence she had that her husband was a spy.”

“What a shock it must have been!”

Von Wohl’s tone turned to humor. “I told them she was one of my astrology clients, and according to her horoscope she was a bit crazy, so I didn’t take anything she said seriously.”

The Baron burst laughing. *“You didn’t!”*

“I *did*” Von Wohl took out his pipe and pouch and began the ritual of preparing for a smoke. “They still wanted me to come to their office the next day, so that’s when I called you.”

“Actually, it’s a good thing you did, thirty minutes later and I would have been on my plane to Munich. You would have never reached me after that.” The Baron took a deep breath of the salt air. “What made you aware their office would mean trouble?”

“For one, the General would there, *and* Natalia.”

“Ohh...” The Baron’s mind pictured the scene. “Were you sleeping with her?”

“Baron\” Von Wohl’s tone in his protest was meant to convey a ‘yes’.

“So if the Gestapo didn’t get you for something...”

“Then the General would have...”

“If the Gestapo didn’t kill him first. Well, von Wohl, it’s not the first husband that wanted to do that.”

Both men laughed. When von Wohl found his breath, he lit his pipe. After throwing the smoldering match over the side, he listened, as if waiting to hear the sizzle of the hot ember hitting the water.

“Where to after we arrive in Portugal?”

“We have not made plans yet, father’s main concern was simply to get us out of Germany first. We will see there, he said things will change drastically by the time we get there.”

Von Wohl noticed this was the first time the Baron had referred to the Count as his father. He wondered what could have caused the thaw, but did not ask. He would wait for the Baron to bring it up, should he wish to.

From below deck there was a lot of commotion and excited voices. The hatch opened and out of the dim light appeared Fa, who climbed up to the Baron and von Wohl.

“It’s started! It’s on the radio! Germany is bombing French and British positions and have already has tanks and troops in Holland and Belgian!”

“Would you like to steer for a while, von Wohl?” The Baron asked while stepping back away from the wheel and reaching for some cigarettes in his coat pocket.

“Certainly. Baron?” Von Wohl asked, knowing the Baron was about to go below.

The Baron turned towards von Wohl and waited for the question.

“I thought your family was well connected in Germany....did you *really* have to leave?”

“We were connected, but Hitler’s people are creating a different kind of regime, one that does not respect power, law, or even money.”

“What *do* they respect?”

The Baron thought for a moment, then answered in a tone with no inflection: “Death.”

“Can you believe it?”

“Heil Hitler!” A chorus of arms raised and voices cheered in unison, as if rehearsed, but of course was not the case, since no one was expecting their leader.

Hitler gave a casual Nazi salute with his free hand and then walked over to Goebbels and his wife.

“Herr Minister, I was given these reconnaissance photographs by the Luftwaffe and thought you and Frau Goebbels might be interested in seeing them.”

“Thank-you, mein Fuhrer!”

As quickly as he appeared, the master of the Third Reich turned and left. At the door, the turned and looked to Goebbels.

“Good work, Herr Minister.”

Before Goebbels could open his mouth to answer the compliment, the Fuhrer

disappeared.

“Heil Hitler!” A chorus of voices filled the room.

The buzz of conversation immediately returned within the room, but with a more fervent excitement. Everyone was looking at Goebbels out of the corner of their eyes, wondering what was on the large photographs.

“Bettina, will you bring me the magnifying glass out of the desk?” Goebbels sounded as ordinary as when speaking to his other employees. Frau Goebbels did not know the young girl bringing the requested item heard all the other tones from her husband’s voice. The same tones of voice she herself heard of giving and receiving pain and pleasure over years of marriage.

“What is it?” Frau Goebbels asked her husband after he had studied one of the photographs for about 40 seconds.

“Our Fuhrer is showing us your plan worked, my dear.” Goebbels said quietly. He handed the magnifying glass and photograph to Magda.

On the bottom right of the photograph, written in white ink, was a date, location and other details. The photograph was a segment of the Strasbourg to Nancy road that was taken at 8,000 meters at 10:42 in the morning.

As Frau Goebbels looked at this segment of highway she began to smile, and turned to her husband.

“Who else would have believed it?” Joseph Goebbels said happily. “Just the vision I had in mind when you suggested this. Look at this, an entire column of tanks blocked by a jammed highway of fleeing carts, trucks, and peasants!”

Also on the photograph were thin white lines with arrows to circles around certain objects and notes describing the items inside: tank off road stuck in mud, cart tipped over blocking road, soldiers moving stalled truck off road.

“Glorious! Glorious!” Goebbels now had a proven case that propaganda could influence a tactical military operation. Perfect also having the right person in Krafft, the authority on Nostradamus, to feed information to the population that would most likely believe and react on these prediction: those superstitious in the French population.

The group in the room was finding it harder and harder to hide their curiosity, something both of the Goebbels could sense.

“Meine Damen und Herren,” Goebbels began, in a tone of his many public speeches, “I have in my hand photographs...photographs given to me by the Fuhrer himself, to show the justification of our work here. You, Ladies and Gentlemen, have made history. Without using guns, without using tanks or bombs, you have slowed the enemy down in his tracks, you have stopped an entire French army! We have used a weapon of the mind to strike fear and confusion into the hearts of the enemy, so that our panzers can blast through what was once thought an unbreakable wall. Staff! *My* staff! I salute you all! Heil Hitler!”

Goebbels’s staff applauded wildly even though they did not yet exactly know what was on the photographs.

“Here! Take a look for yourselves what our good friend Nostradamus has done, with the guidance of my wife and your assistance. We have completely bogged down the French 8th and 11th armies trying to get to Nancy to support their retreat from Metz!”

Goebbels handed the photographs to Lieutenant Faulk, who then was surrounded by

everyone else in the room except for Bettina Meyer, who remained at her post by the phone writing down information from previous calls.

Goebbels moved closer to his wife while taking her hand.

“So, shall we have the raw fish of the Japanese, or your favorite from the Italians?”

“What will we do, then, in America?”

Fesel handed Krafft the top magazine and opened it to a page that was book marked by a long strip of heavy black paper.

“Does this article look familiar?” Fesel asked already knowing the answer and what Krafft’s reaction would be.

Krafft’s face turned red with anger. The article was called “Astrological Statistics in Career”, and the author’s name underneath was listed as William J. Morrison.

“This is *my* work!” Krafft roared. The title, article, and even the pictures used in this March 1938 issue of *Popular Astrology*’ was indeed an exact copy of Krafft’s own article which first appeared in the German astrological journal *The Meteor* in 1931.

“Karl Ernst, I thought you should see this before we begin dealing with the Americans.”

“William J. Morrison...indeed!” Krafft wondered if there was in fact such a man. If there was, then Krafft’s envisioned ways of having him found and beaten - so that this Mr. Morrison would feel the violation, pain, and anger Krafft was feeling now. If it was the matter of the magazine simply translating his article, then putting an Americanized name as the author,

then Krafft visualized the firm's building being set on fire, a fitting punishment for the greatest crime in the publishing business: plagiarism.

"Our project here will not only assist the Third Reich, but will allow you to get revenge on this magazine." Fesel offered.

"I knew the Americans were superficial in astrology, but I hardly expected them to be thieves. Something must be done against such treachery."

"There will be, Karl Ernst, there will be."

Fesel never mentioned the success Krafft's Nostradamus altered 'predictions' had on the French civilian population's halting the French army trying to head north during the invasion. After Krafft had made his 'interpretations', he was simply given another assignment. When the invasion of France finally did occur, all the participants; Krafft, Lucht, the spies, the informers, the saboteurs, and even the soldiers on the front lines were merely given a general "thanks" for a job well done. Joseph Goebbels took full credit for this occult operation.

In Nazi Germany, it was always the Fesels, Goebbels, and the Schmidt-Pranges in party that received the rewards and credits, for they were party members, and the Nazi party had a tendency to only reward and credit their own.

"What will be done, then, in America?"

"We have agents who will submit our articles to their astrology and metaphysical magazines." Fesel pulled out a list of magazine names and addresses from a nearby file cabinet.

"We will need Nostradamus predictions of a German victory for the Americans, as well as astrological occurrences, planet positions, and any transits that can be interpreted as being

very unfavorable for the Americans to enter the war against Germany.”

“That should be easy enough. But would this not look suspicious if the predictions of a German victory comes from Germany?”

“Ah...that is why we are not going to use your name in these articles. The agent in America will submit your articles under another name, so it appears to be from an *American* astrologer.

Ironically, Krafft did not object to this procedure, or to the fact that someone else would get credit for his work, since the necessities of war changed the conditions.

“Strange how life operates, Karl Ernst, is it not?” Just a few moments ago we are appalled by someone else’s name being on your article, and now such actions are simply a matter of our work.”

“Perhaps. Funny how life is so.” Krafft echoed, however, helping the Third Reich win the war did not take the sting out of his work being stolen by William J. Morrison. *Sleazy Americans*. It would be a while before his bitterness would subside.

“We need these right away.” Fesel placed a bundle on the table. “Look through some of these magazines, get an idea of what kind of style each of these American magazines have, then prepare your predictions and descriptions in a manner that is fitting for each one.” Fesel’s tone made this sound like an order.

Fesel handed Krafft a notebook, then continued, “I’ll be back later this afternoon to see your progress. Are you ready to get started?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Good. Until then.”

Krafft sat down and began reading the *Popular Astrology* magazines and saw nearly all of the articles by William J. Morrison were in fact his older works. Once again his anger grew.

Should Krafft ever have access to the author files of *Popular Astrology* magazine in Chicago, he would learn that William J. Morrison was actually the pen name for Dr. Heinrich Fesel. For the past ten years Fesel had been translating Krafft’s articles to English so these could be published in America - however not for the reasons that he just explained to Krafft.

“Who is this Krafft fellow?”

The waiter returned with a teapot, its decorations appearing to be from India.

“Lord Everton prefers the *stars*, and I prefer *tea*. Will you hold the cup please, Admiral Payne?” The Admiral extended his hand and grasped the cup she held out to him. Then she poured the tea, filling half the cup.

“Just a moment, please.” Ella said, while standing up. She then moved behind him and leaned over his left side and stared into the cup.

“The woman drove me to drink, and I didn’t get a chance to thank her.” Lord Everton mumbled unconsciously while looking out the large bay windows.

Lady Hightower mesmerized Captain Boyle, who stared now at her every move. For a moment he thought he could see a shimmer of light that came out of nowhere and surrounded part of her shoulders and head. Was this a halo, her spirit, or just reflections of light bouncing off something shiny somewhere in the room?

“Your son is like the young American across from us,” Ella began, “he is young, he is a captain, and he is also... alive.” The Admiral swallowed hard. Lord Everton put his finger over his lips as if asking the Admiral to be quiet.

“Your son is in the main city of his enemy. He is suffering humiliation at the hands of one with a very dark, very, very old soul. This ancient one has, for most of his own life has been humiliated, but he has learned the secrets of the dark occult to ease his pain. Your son is under great duress, but he can now at least see sunlight...for months he was not. He is looking at sunlight now... and can see it as we see it.”

As she spoke, a thin stream of sunlight moved across the bay windows as the overcast sky parted for a brief moment allowing the Sun to touch down on eight square blocks of London.

Ella seemed to snap out of her trance. She slowly slipped back into her seat, somewhat shaken. “Admiral Payne,” She said slowly. “I believe my husband can help you more than I can. This dark one is has great power, and we must fight him.” She turned towards Lord Everton. ‘I’m the seer, my husband is the fighter.’”

“Help? What do you mean, help me?” Confusion modulated in the Admiral’s voice.

“To help you get your son, to get your son out of Germany.” Ella said, still looking over at her husband, smiling.

He’s alive? Payne asked himself, and then looked around the table to get confirmation from the others as well.

“Yes, of course, man, drink....*drink!*” Lord Everton shouted as if suddenly very cross. “She saw it for you, she *always* sees it... *drink!*” Captain Boyle wondered why every statement from Lord Everton had something to do with drinking. *What does he really mean by this?*

Payne turned to Everton.

“How can you help me? Do you know where he is?”

“Ella, this sipping with the Admiral’s son has something to do with our good friend Herr Krafft.” Lord Everton said, as if completely ignoring the Admiral. “But neither this Admiral or his son knew the brew master.”

“Yes, Mark, darling, it could be very dangerous to be looking for someone and then not knowing who that someone is.” Ella said looking into her cup of tea.

“Who is this Krafft fellow?” Captain Boyle asked, wanting to re-enter the conversation.

“Men, throughout the ages, have been trying to describe love.”

The large raindrops bombarded the hotel window, drowning out the street noise below. Only just after 3 p.m. - the low dark clouds gave the look and feel of being after sundown. A flashing neon light on a hotel across the street was the only light that entered the room, casting changing shadows on Ewa and Karl Ernst as they looked at one another.

“I feel wonderful now. I hope you feel the same.”

Karl Ernst Krafft gave no answer.

Physically satisfied, Krafft had never felt better. At last he could share Ewa in bed without time hanging over their heads dictating when they could begin and finish. Satisfaction also came with the first time experiencing a female body he thought was perfect.

“Yes, I feel...wonderful...” He finally replied. He stroked her entire side and continued, “What... a beautiful body...”

“So, it is *only* my body that attracts you?” Fesel had told Ewa never to act totally satisfied with any compliment given by Krafft. Counter him, challenge him, and keep him off guard emotionally. “*Make him commit more and more to prove his love to you when you have him.*” Fesel often repeated. However, Ewa did not need to learn this from Fesel. Her long time neighbor and unhappy aunt already taught her many of the secrets for controlling men.

Krafft in response could only think of describing other parts he was attracted to. “Your body, your hair, your eyes....and your voice. Your voice is like the music of Venus.”

Ewa would have loved to ask about what kind of music is found on Venus, but refrained from this question so as to finish her job of keeping him off guard.

“How can a *voice* be attractive?” She asked, trying to sound indifferent.

“Ewa, a man can never explain every reason he is attracted to a woman. Part of the attraction to a woman is her giving him a feeling he is *not able* to explain.

Ewa had never heard this reply before, which delayed her attempt to counter it. All she could come up with was:

“Perhaps, but can a man explain the reason he loves...?”

“So you want to be loved, and have this love described?”

“Yes, of course.” Ewa sounded business-like to hide the feeling she had that Krafft could see through her now.

“Ewa, beautiful, lovely, Ewa. Men, throughout the ages, have been trying to describe love. Poets, painters, writers, philosophers.. .and all of them I am willing to guess would admit they failed completely. How can you expect me to do what no man in the history of mankind

has been able to?”

Now Ewa took a turn at silence. All her life she had heard the fancy and flowery words on her dates, which were mostly said to maneuver her panties down her legs. This kind of discussion she had never encountered before.

“Perhaps that would be rather difficult, I imagine.” She finally agreed.

“Of course, this doesn’t mean one shouldn’t at least *try* to describe love.” Krafft added.

“But put yourself in my shoes, what is it that attracts *you* to me?”

Taken aback for a moment, Ewa’s breath stopped. The instructions Fesel gave her to control Karl Ernst now became a distant memory. There was a certain kind of dark character underneath his scholarly veneer she found attractive.

“Why, your mind, of course!”

“And not *my* body?” Krafft said with a smile.

Ewa laughed. Although her past comments were an act, she now saw what these expressions of dissatisfaction sounded like on the receiving end. She would no longer make them to Karl Ernst - for she decided at this moment she was not working to get what Fesel wanted- she was going after what *she* wanted.

“What mistakes are we making?”

Not conscious of the heavy rain heavy, Otto, like nearly everyone else on the street, was changing directions and tilting his umbrella to avoid scraping against the other umbrellas coming

in the opposite direction. Otto dipped, raised, tilted left, tilted right, as if internal radar kept track of the oncoming traffic sending signals to his hand so his mind could remain free to think.

His mind constantly clung on Bettina. Not a word or sign from her since hearing she returned from the “vacation” in Hof with Goebbels. Intuition, news and warnings from London kept him from dropping by to see her. She had to contact him.

A major decision, stood in front of him, and Otto knew he had little time to make it.

His last message from London indicated Captain Payne was in Berlin. The Gestapo had picked up several underground cell groups - some who were only one or two people away from Otto. This indicated the Gestapo was perhaps close to him as well. He would have to get out of Germany soon. *Would Bettina come with him?*

How were the Germans able to pin point each agent in Berlin, without Whitehall not having a clue as to how this was being done?

“What mistakes are we making? ” Otto remembered Maxi once saying when the last group was picked up. “Could it be Captain’s Payne’s search for this occult secret weapon was the very thing that had worked against him?”

Rumors of German counter-intelligence using the occult were getting louder and not being laughed at any more - by those out in the field or those in London.

“Gold. We must be carrying gold ”

The plane took off, swirling the falling snow into a beautiful geometric pattern for the three men and one woman watching below as it headed west to the horizon.

“It’s safe now. Herr Bush will take care of it America.”

“I hope you’re right Herr Thyssen,” said the woman, “personally I don’t trust him, that’s nearly all of our emergency funds.”

Fritz Thyssen, the industrialist and original financial backer of Adolf Hitler, was now silently moving his assets *out* of Germany *because* of Adolf Hitler - all because of one word of truth the leader of the Nazis didn’t want to hear. Fritz Thyssen was the only one in the inner Nazi circle brave enough to speak it, and because he did, was now ever increasingly falling out of favor with Adolf Hitler. Fritz knew it was only a matter of time before he ended up like the other members of those who helped Hitler rise to power in the early days - like Ernst Julius Gunther Rohm, Chief of the SA or *Sturmabteilung* (Storm Detachment) in 1919.

“We have to trust him.” Fritz said as the plane disappeared over the horizon. “We have no choice now.” The woman shook her head in disbelief. “Besides,” The once most powerful steel magnate in Germany continued, “Herr Bush and Harriman were our biggest investors.”

On the plane the pilot and co-pilot were putting together the pieces of the puzzle of this job to determine what exactly the job was, whom it affected, and what their cargo was. They already knew this was part of a black operation between countries - or higher - that’s why they were hired.

“From Fritz Thyssen to Prescott Bush of United Banking Corporation, well, well .”

The two had flown other assignments for UBC bank before, delivering crates from America to the Voor Handel en Scheepvaart Bank in Rotterdam, as well as to banks in Argentina and the Middle East. Each flight was from and to private airfields thus avoiding customs.

The copilot did a quick calculation in his head based on the number of boxes and the

weight of what they were transporting.

“Gold. We must be carrying gold.”

Chapter 17 - The Darkness

"...she knew what was in every drawer in every desk."

Eva-Marie carefully inspected the newspaper a previous client left in the shop. She was not reading what the editors of the *Berliner Kurier* wrote, but rather deciphered a series of marks made in several advertisement boxes on page 27. This code was from an anti-Nazi couple, Dagmar and Aare Lampe, who sent their messages to Herr Stephan Johanstall. The Lampe newspaper code was then translated on to the 'button code' that Stephan had created.

"How late is Jens?" Stephan asked, poking his head through the black velvet curtains.

"Over two hours." Eva-Marie answered in a worried tone.

"I have a bad feeling about this. Maybe we should close early and see if he sent an alternative message to the house."

"You can go, Stephan, I'll wait here in case he or his son shows up."

Stephan didn't like walking in the streets of Berlin alone since November 9th, 1938 - Kristallnacht. Although now Jewish, his store windows were smashed simply because of his association with Jewish artists. He slipped back behind the curtains and muttered; "If you're going to stay then I will as well."

"That's sweet of you to stay, just to be here with me." Eva-Marie joked. She knew of Stephan's fear, which after living with him all these years became obvious. However, she not once let on she knew. She was with him on "The Night of Broken Glass", and knew the possibilities of hate on the streets of Berlin - back then and for them to this day.

While boiling some water for tea, Stephan heard the jingle of the bell triggered by the shop door opening.

“Marie!”

Eva-Marie answered the voice with a laugh. There was only one person in the world that called his wife just ‘Marie’. “Come in, come in, my taxi driving friend.” She said with glee.

“Would you like some tea?” Stephan asked without even looking up while straining a brew in his small porcelain pot.

“I just heard Uncle Manfred is here in Berlin.” Maxi said, concerned.

Stephan put down the strainer and took a deep breath. ‘Uncle Manfred’ was the code name for Captain Best Payne, who had a priority gold label - which meant all must be done to get him back to Britain should he be found. Now that Payne was located in Berlin, Stephan had to plan what would become the most daring escape out of Nazi Germany.

Maxi sat down. He had been controlling alternating waves of excitement and nervousness for several hours and was exhausted doing so.

“Milena saw his name on the hotel register and saw him going to one of his appointments.” Milena was actually Lena Mienke, a cleaning woman at the Gestapo ‘hotel’, where they keep their special detainees - or guests - as the Gestapo referred to them.

“If she confirmed it was he, then we have to go in.”

While not permitted to clean rooms with prisoners - these were cleaned only after being emptied - she was allowed into all but two administrative offices on the 5th floor, which was her floor. While the other cleaning ladies may look at her floor as simply their job, Lena Mienke

looked at the 5th floor as her domain. She knew what was in every drawer in every desk. She also had skimmed through every file in the locked filing cabinets - the key having been copied a day when Colonel Hassler left it on his desk two years prior. Several of these files she memorized, then after transcribing them passed these on to Maxi, who then passed on to Otto, who then radioed them to London.

Stephan held up a small mug of tea to Maxi, who waved it off as Eva-Marie entered the room.

“We did indeed find Uncle Manfred.” Stephan said as Eva-Marie took the cup out of his hands that he was offering to Maxi.

Eva-Marie took a sip of the hijacked tea, draped one of the curtains open so she could see the door, then watched the legs of the pedestrians passing by in the front window.

“Did Milena have any other news?”

“Seems there is a awful lot of infighting between the Gestapo and SS over materials going to someplace over in Antarctica, called New Swabia.”

“What? New Swabia...?” Eva queried, perplexed she had never heard the name, being the top student at her university in geography.

“I’m not sure, all we could figure from what Milena could get her hands on is a base somewhere southeast of Argentina. They named the region after the ship that carried their third expedition there in 1938, and that a lot of money, scientists, technicians and materials are going there.” Stephan took a sip of tea and exhaled slowly, then repeated, “A *lot* of money.”

“No wonder they’re fighting.” Maxi tried to inject some humor.

“No, they are fighting over the wonder weapons. Something very secret being built. So secret, they don’t even want it in Germany. From what I can put together, they are building some machine that defies gravity. The reports describe incredible speeds...and look...” Stephan began to draw with his white tailor chalk, “ the planes don’t even have wings!”

“Germany’s now a dangerous place...even for Germans.”

“Stop him! Stop him! ”

Otto froze. The voice came from across the street and had a tone of authority that projected even at that distance. Everyone else on the street stopped as well, looking at the source of the command. It was a tall man wearing a black leather coat and party pin on his hat - running surprisingly fast for one in street clothes.

“Stop him! He’s a Jew lover....collaborator!”

A well-dressed man in spectacles - also running - the apparent victim. Two policemen quickly appeared and cornered the fleeing man, his glasses flying on the street from the collision between his three pursuers.

Otto could only watch as the Nazi party man began kicking the newly captured citizen, with the policemen joining in with their fists. *Germany’s now a dangerous place... even for Germans.* Otto thought as he slowly began to take a step to move on. He slowed to a stop when noticing he was the only one walking away. *Don't want to stick out too much.* Remembering what Commander Fleming drilled into them. Apparently it was an unwritten rule now that one must watch enemies of the state being beaten.

As the man was then dragged off, the rest of the crowd dispersed. Otto then followed suit yet was unaware of another man who started at the same time. Otto was also unaware this man had followed him since leaving his apartment.

Damn Nazis. Otto muttered in his mind as he glanced down the street where the three were still beating the man while dragging him away.

Son of an English journalist who met his wife while on assignment in Danzig, Otto spoke perfect German and had followed the political situation in Germany ever since he could understand his parents discussing it. He just turned 24 and was finishing Dorchester University when the Nazis took power. Recruited by British Intelligence for his proficiency in German, he later learned he was recommended by one of their best agents in Germany - his mother. Thanks to his mother's side of the family, it was easy to make him appear he was a German citizen since he was indeed born in Danzig.

Lt. Kriederman signaled a taxi to take over following Otto while he entered another cab. He did not want to follow Otto completely on foot, but rather trade off with others so his victim would not sense he was being tailed so closely.

"To Muellerstrasse near the Kloepp House." The driver nodded to Kriederman and cranked the car in gear. They passed the other taxi whose driver, a subordinate of Kriederman, acknowledged the switch with a wave of his hand.

"Otto!" Bettina called out as Otto entered the crowded grill house that specialized in any part of a pig. "Otto, here!"

They embraced warmly as if they had not seen each other in years. Otto decided if he was going to ask her, he would get to the point right away. After all, this was the reason he

wanted to meet her now. “Bettina, my love. I have a very important job to do, and when I’m finished, I will have to leave Berlin. Bettina, I want to take you with me.”

Bettina wanted to answer “yes” immediately since the way he asked sounded like a marriage proposal. But two things bothered her. “Leave? Where?”

“I can’t tell you now, but I’m going out of Germany and may be gone a long time and.. .I don’t want to be away from you now.” Otto reached out both of his hands and clasped hers. “I want you to be with me.”

“I would love to, Otto. But I don’t think I can....not now.” Bettina was thinking about her ill mother and Goebbels’ knowledge of her family secret. A secret that, when revealed by Goebbels himself, would prevent her from crossing any border. Ironically, Otto’s secret preventing him from telling her his reasons and where he would end up.

“Why do you think you can’t leave?” Otto asked, hurt. He somehow envisioned she would answer ‘yes’ immediately.

“I - My mother. With her illness, I can’t leave her alone.”

“I’ve friends on the Baltic who said they would be happy to take care of her until this is all over.”

“Yes, but....”

“But. . .what?”

Bettina’s heart began to triumph over the boundaries set by her mind. Her desire to leave with Otto, to escape Goebbels stranglehold and abuse of her suddenly became a reality. “Otto,

Goebbels knows something about my family that could destroy me....and you. If I leave, even if I could leave Germany, he will have my mother taken away.”

Otto’s heart would simply have Bettina’s mother simply leave with them, but he knew this would be impossible. “We’ll work something out, we’ll get her in hiding on the Baltic...tomorrow. Goebbels wouldn’t think to look for her there - she doesn’t have connection to anyone or to the place.”

A face in the window near their table disappeared and gave a cold chill throughout Otto. It was as if he had caught a glimpse of death himself. While his conscious mind did not notice the man glancing in the grill house from the sidewalk at first, his subconscious immediately did.

“I think we better get out of here, Bettina.”

“What does a Libra Moon need?”

“Well, you *are* a bit on the short side, but you have a nice form and great stomach, I just hate beer bellies.” Ewa stroked Krafft’s stomach and pressed down several times just below his navel. “I *hate* beer bellies.” She said, as if even seeing a man’s flabby stomach reactivated a horrible memory from her early childhood.

“Then I shall watch my intact of beer.”

Ewa exhaled quickly. Although beginning to understand Krafft’s humor, a question in the back of her mind prevented humor to enter her thoughts. “Karl Ernst?” She snuggled up to him, not waiting for an answer, “Why are we attracted to each other?”

Krafft took a deep breath, but did not answer.

“Is it because I am Libra, and you have a Libra moon?” Ewa, still stroking Krafft’s body,

could feel a slight jump of shock jolt throughout his entire body.

“You, have looked at *my* horoscope?” Krafft’s tone sounded as if he had been deeply betrayed or violated. His mind raced through the possibilities, which came to only one logical conclusion. “Did *Fesel* allow you to look at my chart?”

Shocked for a moment, Ewa was confused that the man who had created, analyzed and interpreted thousands of horoscopes would be so sensitive over his. “Why, no.” She answered honestly. “Last month when we celebrated your birthday at work, I found out you were now 40, so looked in that ephemeris book for all planet positions for May 10th, 1900. Of course I don’t know the math to cast a horoscope, but I was able to see where the Moon *was* that day.”

Krafft’s normally steady emotions, disrupted over the past months, now alternated even more between a feeling of horror and being thoroughly impressed. Horror overcame him at first since someone looked at an aspect of his chart without his permission. Being that it was Ewa who did so however, the action touched him. *She thought that deeply to look into his stars?* Had her interest for him reached such a level? Even after years of marriage, Elaine never asked Karl Ernst Krafft anything about his horoscope.

Krafft eyed the shadows created by the window’s diffused light over Ewa’s face. She looked more beautiful than any woman he had ever seen - in person, film, or painting. His mind returned to her, and what she wanted.

“And what would you like to know about a Libra Moon?”

“What does a Libra Moon *need*”

Krafft became overwhelmed and embraced her, then began kissing her neck She not only wanted to know where his Moon *was*, but what his moon *needed*.

“What all signs of the zodiac need...” He said softly gazing into her eyes, “...love.”

Simultaneously both realized they reached a point in their relationship where words did not matter. Yet both instinctively knew this next step would only bring trouble - and danger.

“Oh! Ha! You are the clever one!”

Even though the ship was designed for cargo, the passenger’s cabins were just as opulent as any cabin found in the first class section of any luxury liner. The Baron took the same cabin he had when he was a boy on his first trip to America. Ludwig von Wohl, who now had a paper to show he was a Hungarian by the name of Louis DeWohl, was next door.

There were eighteen other passengers on the ship, originally christened *Der Stdhlerne Adler* (The Iron Eagle) but changed to *The Madame Joulliard* when the Count switched the German registry to Swedish. The ship was due to depart Lisbon at 19:30, but was delayed waiting for her most important passenger - and owner - Count von Hoogerwoerd. Both the Count and Countess were taking longer at the Argentinean Embassy than the Counselor General there had anticipated. They finally arrived on board at 20:45 and two minutes later their ship was underway.

Captain Ned Swanson could not help but notice the Countess upset. The Count went straight to his cabin while she remained on deck. *Was something wrong?* Ned waited a moment before approaching her. She had been his passenger on seven other trips, three of which produced intense sexual liaisons. Her mood towards the Count on each of these trips usually decided whether or not she paid any attention to the freewheeling American captain. Since the game appeared to be in his favor on this voyage, he wanted to play his cards right.

“Shall I get you something hot to drink?” The Captain said as he slowly approached her.
“It will be getting a lot more chilly as soon as we hit the open sea.”

“No thank-you, Ned, I just want to enjoy the view now. I’ll be going down soon.”

“Certainly, ma’am.” From her tone, Ned was able to read between the lines. She could have just as easily said, “I want to be alone.” Ned turned around and headed towards the Captain’s quarters. Before entering he took a longing glance at the Countess, then at the first mate as he stepped through the door.

“Anything on radio?”

“No, Captain, just a British patrol plane about 300 kilometers to the northwest.”

“Good, if we can see him, so can the Germans. Maybe they will stay out of our way so we won’t be bothered.” Captain Swanson had run into German U-Boats twice, both times before the war broke out. The first simply signaled a message for the neutral yacht to identify itself. The second actually boarded with a request of trading supplies. Meat, fruit, barley and hash were exchanged since the Germans had their destination change mid-voyage from Mar del Plata to somewhere in Antarctica. Ned sensed the German captain was extremely upset - and afraid.

Now that the war had started, Ned knew there was a good chance they might not be contacted before they were boarded - or sunk. Word spread fast among merchant ship captains some German subs were not only sinking British merchant ships without any warning, but ones flying neutral flags as well.

“Even if they do see us, Captain, they should be able to see we are empty.”

“Aye, let’s hope they won’t want to waste a torpedo on a ship carrying nothing.”

“Where is the safe zone?” The first mate questioned, hoping to have a goal to shoot for.

“I don’t think there is one anymore, but I’ll feel a lot better once we get fifty degrees north.” Ned took the cup of coffee out of the wheelman’s hand and took a sip, then returned it.

“Gents, I’ll be below deck if you need me.”

“Aye, Aye, Captain.” The first mate and wheelman chimed together with respect. The Count’s private international crew loved their American captain, unlike the German and English ones they sailed under previously. Somehow this American captain was able to relay his orders and authority without appearing to be ‘above’ anyone else.

Below decks, Louis DeWohl woke up to the hum of engines. After a few moments of collecting his thoughts in the comfortable bed, he finally climbed out. Throwing on a heavy wool coat and wheeling out of his cabin door, he made his way to the open deck. Noticing the Countess on the aft deck, he waited until she looked up so his presence wouldn’t surprise her. She finally looked up, and he waited still until she acknowledged him.

“Good morning, my lady. Or is it afternoon?”

“We are well into the afternoon, Mr. *Day* Wohl.”

“Please,” DeWohl said laughing at her mispronouncing his new name, “...in Hungarian, the De is pronounced as ‘duh’. Duh-Wohl.” The expression on the Countess did not change. DeWohl could see her wall of heavy concern was acting like a metal shield against humor - and him. “Aw, my dear Countess, we are all sad to leave all our houses and friends on the continent. It seems the Europe we know for so long does not exist anymore.”

“Yes, and it appears the Ludwig von Wohl I knew for so long doesn’t exist, either.”

For a moment DeWohl was taken aback. He then realized that in spite of her not changing the near frowned expression on her face, this statement was fact a joke. The realization had DeWohl break out into a laugh. “Oh! Ha. You are the clever one!” Enjoying the laugh, DeWohl realized the Countess had not made him laugh in a long, long, time. Had it been years?

“Anything else?”

Goebbels had been acting nice, almost too nice, over the past few days. Bettina felt relieved and suspicious - wondering what caused the changes, but welcomed it. Did he finally realize he actually needed her expertise, such as now?

Today, helping her boss translate among his Italian counterparts, General Edwardo Tonetteli, Goebbels relied on *her*. Bettina’s Italian was known throughout the Ministry to be excellent, and this was not the first time she played an important part in the Hitler-Mussolini alliance. Yet, while she loved the Italian language - and the food - she abhorred Italian men. The man she was now translating, a somewhat pudgy Tonetteli, represented all she disliked about the Latin “macho” attitude - one who acted as if he were an international sex symbol with all women adoring him. He even ordered around every woman near him, even the female German staff not under him, much to the dissatisfaction of the German men in the room.

Such an ego. Bettina thought while listening to him speak to Goebbels. *To think he only got this position by trading a few mistresses and being Mussolini’s nephew.*

Bettina turned to Goebbels and translated the General’s statements.

“General Tonetteli said he would love to follow your advice, but such a technique would

not work on the Italian public - since Italians are more temperamental than us Germans.”

“Oh, does he?” Goebbels answered tersely. “Then why did he want to come here for advice, and then not accept *anything* I have to offer?”

Bettina began to open her mouth to speak, but Goebbels quickly interrupted.

“No! *Don't* tell him that! I was just saying that for... *us*” Goebbels said quickly. Then after collecting himself, continued, “Ask the General just exactly what does he do to appease this Italian temperament.” There was a condescending tone when Goebbels said the word ‘Italian’.

Bettina translated the question, which set the general off into a rather long oratory, where Goebbels heard Mussolini mentioned 7 times. When he finally finished, Bettina turned to Goebbels, but it was Goebbels who spoke first.

“Let me guess. Mussolini approves of everything he does, and Mussolini thinks he understands propaganda better than anyone in the world.”

Bettina joked. “I thought you didn't speak Italian, Herr Goebbels.”

“Of course I don't. But he's not the first lackey I've run across in an Italian uniform who only knows how to praise that snot Mussolini. I've heard this all before, and to think all these little Latin playboys think Mussolini is as good as our Fuhrer.” Goebbels turned to the Italian general and smiled. “So what did our Italian friend say about his wonderful, beloved, know-it-all boss?”

Bettina was in the middle of sipping a glass of juice, and quickly put it down to answer Goebbels.

“The General said that only Mussolini truly understands how to move the Italian public,

so any other method would be a letdown. He said all leaders around the world could learn how to move the emotions of their own public by watching and learning from Mussolini's gestures and speaking on newsreels. He also said he would be happy to supply you with any such newsreels should you not have any."

Goebbels sighed. "Thank-you, we have enough, and I believe I have the idea." Goebbels turned and looked out the window. "Stupid pig. How in the world did we get allied with these idiots?" Goebbels looked at Bettina upon realizing what he had just whispered under his breath. Such a comment would have greatly insulted one man - Adolf Hitler - who was in fact the only one responsible for Germany's alliance with... these 'idiots'.

Bettina began to tidy things on the table and wisely changed the subject.

"Would you like some more coffee, Herr Minister?"

When Goebbels refused, she queried the same question in Italian to the General, who also refused.

"I think I've had enough of him, kindly let him know I have an appointment in fifteen minutes and we can speak further at the conference this evening."

Goebbels returned to his desk when the Italian left and began reading through a stack of documents. Bettina immediately began the task of clearing the table.

"Sharing, ha! That little meatball just wanted my time to hear *himself* talk! *I* could learn from *him*. *I* could learn from Mussolini. The nerve of those people!"

Even though Bettina knew Goebbels was talking to himself - he did often - she did know him well enough to sense when he wanted a response from an audience - which she did.

“Yes, the nerve!” She echoed.

A brief knock came and a thin face appeared through the slightly opened door.

“Ah, Lt. Schiller! Come in! I was just going through your reports. Have a seat!”

Goebbels gave a glance to Bettina that meant ‘go-do-something-else-in-the-adjoining-room’, which she promptly did. When Bettina closed the door, Goebbels continued, “Now, what do you have for me?”

“My brother told me there is an investigation about some calls made from the lodge in Hoff to Berlin.”

“Calls? Goebbels’ mood suddenly changed.

“It seems a one Elka Meyer...” the Lieutenant then pointed at the door Bettina went through and silently mouthed the word ‘cousin’ - “. . .had tried several times to contact a certain radio technician here in Berlin.”

“And?”

“Nothing yet, it’s just that it is being investigated, and I thought you should know.”

“Bettina!” Goebbels put his elbows on the table and rested his chin within his joined hands as she quickly entered the room. “Are you connected to these telephone calls made by an Elka Meyer in Hof?”

“Yes, Herr Minister.”

“And what is this about?”

“She is my cousin, Herr Minister. She wanted to call my boyfriend to let him know I was

OK.” Bettina said truthfully. She wondered if such a small act could get her in trouble.

“*She* wanted to call your boyfriend?”

“Well, Herr Minister, I wanted to let him know I was okay also.”

Had Goebbels known this information during the trip to Hof, or even a few weeks after, he might have beaten her in rage. However, now he simply smiled understandingly - like a father just learning his daughter had her first innocent kiss by the door at the end of a date. Bettina saw a complete change in Goebbels after the fall of France, as well as in many others who worked in these halls. Did this military victory affect their personal relationships as well?

“Alright Bettina, you may return to your work.” Goebbels spoke matter-of-factly.

A relieved Bettina turned and began towards her door.

“Oh, Bettina.”

“Yes, Herr Minister?”

“While this is, of course, a minor matter, I should inform you that because of this you are being investigated by the Gestapo.” After a long pause, Goebbels continued. “Do you have anything to *hide*, Bettina?”

“Oh no, Herr Minister!” Bettina looked at the file cabinet where she knew the folders on her were kept. “*You* have my entire life!”

“Indeed I do.” Goebbels said, not needing to remind her he actually did have her entire life in the palm of his hand. “And what about your boyfriend. What’s his name?”

“Otto”

“Otto. Hmmm. Is Otto a *good* boy, Bettina?” Goebbels said with a cocky smile.

“Yes, of course, Herr Minister!”

“And what does he do?”

“Something with radios, a specialist of sorts.”

“A specialist. How interesting.” The tone of voice by Goebbels revealed jealousy over the fact she had a boyfriend, a subject never having come up before. *Would this be an issue later?* Goebbels knew in dealing with Heinrich Himmler, anything and everything could be.

“Fine, Bettina, you may go.”

Once Bettina disappeared, Goebbels turned to Schiller. “So Lieutenant, what *else* does your brother say is going on over at Himmler’s Gestapo?”

“Several things, Herr Minister, not only top secret, but developments the Fuhrer *himself* does not know...yet.” Indeed, it was a mark of honor to know something before Adolf Hitler, and Lt. Schiller wanted to milk the moment for all it was worth. “Some papers were discovered in the offices of Reichminister Hess, created by Karl Ernst Krafft several years ago, from 1933 in fact. Krafft predicted that in Germany’s war that will start in 1939, if peace is not made with England by the summer of 1941, the tide will begin to turn *against* Germany.”

Goebbels thought for a moment. “Krafft wrote this in 1933?”

“Yes, Herr Minister.” Schiller was aware of Krafft’s work with Goebbels, as well as Kraft’s other correct predictions, such as the November 8th, 1939 attempt on the Fuhrer’s life. All the more reason he wanted Goebbels to receive this date Krafft marked as to when the war needed to be won.

“Hmmm ” Goebbels began to wonder other ways Krafft might be useful than altering Nostradamus predictions. “Unbelievable, 1933.. .for him to see *that* far in advance...” Goebbels took a deep breath, then appeared to come out of his trance. “Anything else?”

“Die Glocke.”

Goebbels sat up. He had only heard rumors of such Wunderwaffe, this one, the Bell, was being developed somewhere in the mountains of Lower Silesia. Even Himmler had difficulty getting any information on this project, and of course would never share what he had. Luckily Goebbels had a spy in the Gestapo through Schiller’s younger sibling.

“Large shipments of Mercury are being requested for the project, but instead of saying it is Mercury, something is being added to call it Xerium 525. *And he* has a name.”



Die Glocke (Nazi Bell) mysteriously disappeared at the end of WWII & bears a striking resemblance to the UFO reported to crash in Kecksburg, Pennsylvania in 1965

Goebbels stood up excitedly. “A name? *Who?*” This was the information Goebbels had been waiting for - if he had a name of a person involved in the project, he could get into the project. It was the only way in compartmentalized Nazi Germany to find out what was going on in sensitive projects outside of your own. *You had to know someone in it.* No information was

ever released through official channels for everything first went through Adolf Hitler, allowing him to micro-manage every aspect of the German military, scientists, rocket development - life.

This however, was one project the Fuhrer had no idea on. Hitler was unaware due to the skill of those who worked on and the man who developed the project

“Jakob Sporrenberg ”

Chapter 18 - The Flight

“She now realized she was being set up as well.”

Ewa was now the one touched that such an effort would be made to find something about *her*. One of Karl Ernst Krafft’s stature and reputation going the hospital she was born to find her birth time so he could make her horoscope chart overwhelmed her. She wondered if even her family members would make the effort - or think of it - as no one knew her exact birth time.

“Karie Ernst... do you...?”

The loud ring of the room’s telephone suddenly interrupted her question if Karl Ernst really loved her. This would have to be brought up another time.

“Hello?”

“Herr Krafft?”

“Yes.”

“This is the front desk. You asked to be notified should we receive word from your wife.”

“Did they find her?” Krafft crashed down to his real life on earth. “Did she call?”

“She did not call. She is here in the lobby now. She asked if you were in and is on her way up right now.”

Krafft felt a twinge of horror in his stomach and throat. He managed to shout out, “Thank-you!” into the receiver and slammed it down, missing the phone hook cradle.

“It’s Elaine! She’s back! She’s *here*!! Now!!!” Karl Ernst jumped up to get into his clothes. The fear of Elaine seeing Ewa in bed swept over him, completely covering any joy of finding out she was safe and had returned. He never before had an affair before and did not know how to handle his present situation - or his feelings.

Ewa was still sitting on the bed.

“Getup! *Getup*\ We have to hide you...or get you out of here!”

Ewa got up and went for her clothes. Actually this is exactly what Fesel had planned for, arranging for Ewa and Krafft to be together this afternoon. Elaine would return to the hotel room to see Karl Ernst and Ewa in bed. Ewa had even pulled the drapes halfway open and crack the window, a signal to Fesel they were in fact in bed. This was the moment when the Governor General would deliver Elaine, who was being kept in a car until Ewa gave her signal.

Fesel, however, did not take into account that Krafft would ignore his repeated advice of ‘We will take care of everything’. Krafft had informed the hotel desk as well as the Berlin police to be on the lookout for Elaine and contact him should she turn up.

“Quick! In here!” Ewa was partly dressed, but Krafft figured she could finish dressing in the closet. His worst nightmare now was Elaine opening the door at this moment and see Ewa as she was. “Quickly! Quickly!”

This was also Ewa’s first experience in having the third party of a triangle return unexpectedly. Fesel did not inform Ewa that Elaine was to walk in. She thought she was there to comfort Krafft since Elaine was missing. *She now realized she was being set up as well.*

“What should I do?”

“Stay in here.” Krafft was pushing her into the closet. “When we leave, of if I can get her into the bathroom, then sneak out!”

“Yes, but what if...?” Ewa whispered as she was trying to maintain her balance while being shoved in the luxurious space.

The rattling of the hotel room door handle turning froze the throats of both Ewa and Karl Ernst in fear. As the closet door clicked shut, Karl Ernst turned to see the hotel door open.

Standing in the doorway was Elaine. Upset, dirty, hair frayed and wearing the same clothes he last saw her in as he and Fesel drove off to Warsaw. The bags under her terror ridden eyes suggested more than a lack of sleep - she appeared to have been drugged.

“Karl Ernst!” Elaine screamed.

“...they could hear these neighbors talking, shouting and fighting...”

Maxi wrote down *Gunter - July 2 at 14:00* on a small scrap of paper while speaking about food and showed it to Stephan, then to Eva-Marie. ‘Gunter’ was the codename for the German High Command building.

“Seems logical our friend would want to take an out-of-town hardware salesman to the biggest hardware warehouse in Berlin.” Stephan said, then taking a short sip of tea. He was speaking in code as the best place to attempt a rescue of Captain Payne. “I think it would be a better opportunity in trying to see him when he leaves the *hotel*. How many *neighbors* can we round up to get uncle Manfred out of Berlin?”

“Four.” Maxi answered, meaning four cars, four drivers, and four gunmen.

Stephan had long ago created plans for escape from the Gestapo hotel, the main municipal and the three district jails of Berlin, however never thought he'd see the day any of these designs would be executed. He also sized up 8 holding areas in Berlin that have, at one time or another, held hundreds of friends he knew who dared speak out against the Third Reich, or who happened to be born with the wrong last name. His dream was to one day send out a signal to all of his friends and colleagues who worked in these places as repairmen, cleaning ladies, and even night watchmen - to set everyone free.

Now he would have to pull all his people together for the rescue of a stranger - a foreigner at that - and this won't be a dream, but for real. "We may need one more car, in case we need a reserve." Stephan was not speaking code. He was beginning to tire and turned to Eva-Marie. "I think we ought to close now. It's pretty slow here, and we have a *lot* to do."

Eva-Marie nodded and began the ritual of closing shop.

The three walked out together and Eva-Marie locked the door behind them. Once in Maxi's Taxi, Stephan continued the checklist for the plan, but did not speak in code since there was no one else on the street. Code was necessary in Stephan's shop. Even though the store was in the basement, there were four apartments surrounding it as well as those who lived above. Since they could hear these neighbors talking, shouting and fighting from time to time, it was clear the neighbors could hear them as well - especially if their ears were up against the wall.

"I need a car that can be abandoned and that can't be traced, for this will be the one we will put Payne in, which will more than likely be the one seen by witnesses."

Stephan did not know Payne's last name or his rank of Captain. Only that he was the most important person the British had sent into Germany who had been caught.

Stephan held up a photo. “Can you get such a car before the second of July?”

“Sure, no problem.”

“It must be fast and most important, extra sturdy. There may be gunfire to deal with if something comes up we’re not aware of.”

“Or if any regular police just happen to stroll into the picture.” Eva-Marie added, who had a good idea how many municipal policemen there were for every block.

“I’ll soup up the engine myself and get Lars to reinforce the sidings with some extra steel we have lying around.” Maxi said while taking notes.

With everything for the escape listed and accounted for in the plan, a silence over came all three in the car. Stephan and Eva-Marie took a hard long look at each other, which Maxi couldn’t help but notice in the rear view mirror. No words were needed. By the look on their faces he instinctively knew there were plenty of misgivings over Stephan’s plan. Finally, Maxi voice what everyone was wondering. “Is there any other way we can do this?”

“All the British have now are just planes...”

Several knocks sounded on the Count’s cabin door. After a half a minute later the Count’s voice muffled a response. “Enter!”

Captain Swanson slowly opened the metal door. “You wished to see me, sir?”

“Yes, I want you to begin setting up the next voyage after we arrive Liverpool.”

“Certainly, sir.” The American countered.

“We will be in Liverpool for 3 days to load all my stock and equipment for America. Naturally I will have some people to move out as well.”

Ned knew something serious was at hand if ‘all his stock and equipment’ was to be removed from England. “Do you think England will not be safe?”

“The Germans are moving landing barges by rail to the coast even as we speak, so it’s just a matter of weeks or maybe a month the Germans will cross over. All the British have now are just planes... and the Germans outnumber them four to one.”

Captain Ned began to see the picture - and worry. *Were the Germans really the ‘super race’ their propaganda claimed?* In June of 1940 it certainly seemed so. They rolled through France in forty-six days. *Would England be next?* Probably, most of England’s war equipment was left on the shores of Dunkirk.

“*That bad, Count?*”

“In theory the British planes are useless in attacking Germany, since they have to fly well over 600 kilometers to attack any target on German soil, while the Germans only have to fly across the channel. It’s a matter of economics as well. The British will have to use 4 times as much fuel and material to bring the war to Germany, which they may not have soon since the U - boats seem to sink nearly everything trying to get to England. It may be just a matter of time, really.”

Ned was stunned to hear someone talk about war as just a ‘matter of economics’. Too young to see any action in the First World War, Captain Swanson could only take it in by the newspapers, magazines and movies. He could only image war as the honor, glory, and courageous acts portrayed by these. “Sir, I never thought about it in that way, but you have just

showed me that the material of war is just as important as the men with the guns.”

The Count smiled. Naturally he could see the economics in war since he saw the economics within everything in life. He also loved the way Ned would always say things like “you taught me”, or “you made me realize”. Because of this, Ned had over the years become the Count’s surrogate son. Someone the Count could pass on his knowledge to and know it was appreciated - rather than being in a constant state of disagreement as with other family members.

“Mr. Oosterhek, our new Mr. DeWohl, Eckler, and Schytte will be staying in England. The Countess and a few others will be coming with me to America. We will begin loading as soon as we arrive.”

“If we arrive.” Ned said, while eyeing a map of St. George’s Channel the Count had spread over the table with dozens of large red “X’s” marking where ships had be reported sunk.

The Count looked at the map as well and snorted a laugh. “We’ll make it just fine.”

Ned was amazed at the confidence in the Count’s tone. Of course, knowing the Count, Ned wouldn’t be surprised to hear the entire German navy had been bribed just to let the Count’s ship through. “Yes, sir, we’ll make it just fine.”

“I don’t know if I can take this anymore.”

“Then why did you bring me here?”

“Because you are my wife.”

“Is that all? Is that the *only* reason? You make is sound like I am just an obligation,

something you have to bring along.” For a full week after barely hiding Ewa Mann in the closet successfully, Elaine had been nagging his actions and picking apart each word in his sentences. It was as if she *did* catch Karl Ernst and Ewa together that night, Krafft often thought. By why was she acting like this? Was it the effect of being around this devilish group he now had to call his colleagues? Was she informed of his involvement with Ewa, or did she just sense it?

After the stress of working all day with Fesel - and Ewa - Karl Ernst would come back to a room of fear, guilt, and confusion. Never had he seen Elaine like this. There were some stress and heated disagreements in the past, but never anything like this - never lasting *this* long.

“But I want you here... with me...”

“*Oh*, really? Then what about *this*?” Elaine held up several extremely long strands of hair. Even at an arm’s length away Karl Ernst could make out the tint of red, the same color as Ewa’s. Karl Ernst froze.

“How did these little things get into our bathroom and closet?”

A shock came over Karl Ernst, freezing his tongue and chilling every part of his skin that was exposed to air. He now knew her anger had been brewing over these past several days. His mind raced for an explanation. “Maybe... one of the cleaning ladies? From one of the earlier guests...” Surprised how easily these words came out of his mouth, Karl Ernst was pleased to see how these words had doused perhaps some of the fire burning in Elaine.

The sudden cloud of doubt now wisped over Elaine and pushed her towards the window. She looked out and began to sob. “I don’t know if I can take this anymore.”

Sensing an opening to calm things, Karl Ernst seized the opportunity. “Elaine, what can be done to make this situation better?”

Elaine continued to stare out the window sobbing.

“Elaine. My Elaine. This is what we have waited for all our lives. An important job, the best paying job Eve ever had. A job, *our job*, that truly makes a difference for the Reich. We don’t have to scrape by wondering if I’ll sell enough books, or if I’ll get enough readings. Look at what we have now. We have not eaten this good in years! Everything is paid for and I still get my salary! Look how much we have saved now!” Karl Ernst lifted their Bank of Berlin account booklet. “Look at what we can now do...”

Elaine remained facing the window looking out over the spirals of Berlin. “But our life, sitting here day after day, never doing anything, except with those horrible people.”

Karl Ernst could see Elaine wanted meaning for *her* life and she hated Fesel’s crowd. He could at least go to work and have Ewa Mann near him, which was enough of a social life for him. Now something had to be created for his wife so she could enjoy her life in Berlin. How could this be difficult? Berlin was the center of Europe now - surely something here could make her happy. His mind pulled from memory a map of Berlin.

“Then let us do something! Where would you like to go? We’ll go right now. Anywhere! Where would you like to go?” Not realizing his own lack of ideas revealed how little he knew Elaine, he also did not realize that it was Elaine that wanted him to come up with an idea.

Karl Ernst kept the conversation up going on in this direction, anything to keep the subject of the several strands of red hair from coming up again.

“How about the Swordsmen Club?” Karl Ernst finally thought of a place. We could

have a wonderful candlelit dinner and then go dancing. We had some real fun the last time we went there, didn't we?"

"Well, yes, but that's where that maladjusted Bruno practically lives. Seeing him will only remind me of that horrible time at Frau Ney's."

While Elaine was becoming more open, still hidden under her tone and demeanor was anger and negativity Karl Ernst had never seen. He wondered if their relationship had changed for the worse - and whether this change was permanent.

"...he began his ramble as if in a trance."

The butler slowly opened the door, the width of which could allow three people pass through with ease. "Yes, m'Lord, please do come in."

The Admiral marched through the doorway in much the same way as the many other British Lords and Earls had done so throughout the centuries. The inside of the castle appeared clean, yet had a musty smell to it - not of age - but of the mixing of chemicals.

Lady Hightower was making her way down the stone staircase to meet her appointment, arranged rather hastily even by her own standards. The Admiral had only called an hour ago and said he urgently needed to see her.

When a war is on and a military man, an important military man, needs to see you urgently - then one does their duty. The Lady had a meeting with friends at two in the afternoon, but cancelled it in order to contribute to war effort.

“Ah, Admiral!” It is so nice to see you again. Please come into the library, that is the best place in the entire home for our conversation.” She grabbed the Admiral’s arm and began to lead him through one of the huge openings leading to a grand hallway, then suddenly stopped sniffing the air.

“Wilkins?”

“Yes, m’Lady?”

“What is that *ghastly* smell?”

“His chemistry set, m’Lady. Lord Everton has it out again, I’m afraid.” Wilkins rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Shall I tell him to stop since we have a guest, m’Lady?”

“What *is* he making?” Lady Hightower asked, without turning around to look at Wilkins, who was still standing in the doorway. The question was more for herself.

“A new type of fuel...for one of his rockets I believe, m’Lady. He insists the Germans are building one.. .and he needs to finish his first.”

“Well, Wilkins, if he is making something to save our London, then let him be.” She finally looked at her butler matter-of-factly. “Have him come to the library when he is finished, or if he so wishes, have him break and join us for tea.”

“Yes, m’Lady.”

Wilkins slowly made his way through the opposite opening. The Admiral could faintly hear the echoes of Lord Everton singing an old Scottish love song.

The library consisted of four walls - each five by twenty meters - and was completely

covered with books. There were no windows, just three large leather cushioned easy chairs and a twelve-foot bear rug in the center of the room. Lady Hightower sat in one chair and motioned the Admiral to sit in the other.

“How may I serve my country, Admiral?”

“Lady Hightower, I have just received a report that my son is indeed alive, just as you said.” Lady Hightower closed her eyes and bowed her head, as if receiving a compliment or a thank-you. Admiral bowed back. “I would like, if possible, for you to use your skills again so that we may have further information, which may assist in his rescue.”

While the Admiral was completely sincere in his request, part of his mind was still under the conditioning of the military - and his own father - which would consider him a fool for seeing a psychic. However, the part of his mind that held the love between a father and son - *his* son - had the Admiral open his mind to any possible avenue for assistance.

Lady Hightower’s eyes remained shut, then after a few moments began to rock back and forth. As if in a trance, began to speak. “Your son, sent into Germany to find a secret... a secret with one who works with the stars...to use the stars in war.”

“Yes.” Astonishment swept over the Admiral. *How could she know this?* Indeed, the designing of the top-secret plan for the British to assassinate the astrologer Karl Ernst Krafft was partly his own. However, he had no part in the choosing who would execute the plan, plus had no idea his son would volunteer. *What other military secrets does she know?*

“How did you know this, Lady Hightower?”

Lady Hightower answered, but not his question specifically. “My husband will be of

great service in this matter, since he can connect with the subjects in question.”

“Connect? The subjects in question?” Admiral Payne questioned still wishing an answer.

“Yes, Krafft’s work are the stars, the war is the dark one. My husband met him once, and can still sense his presence now.” Lady Hightower opened her eyes. “But there are others involved with the dark one...forces my husband can sense as well.”

The Admiral accepted the abstract answer. Since their first meeting, Ella and her husband’s ability in relating to ‘the other world’ had them appear a bit off at times. The Admiral’s mind then returned to his main concern.

“Lady Hightower, can you tell me where my son is now?”

“I feel your son is in the same place and condition when we met last. He is however undergoing a deeper torture.” The Admiral flinched. “A deeper, mental torture.” She added.

“Mental torture?” The Admiral immediately thought of the Geneva Convention.

“Torture... of the mind. Playing tricks on him to uncover his secrets.” Ella closed her eyes again. “Just a moment, please.”

From her tone, Admiral Payne thought she was excusing herself in order to get up to leave, however by appearance she was going into another trance. A few seconds later, a rumbling sound came from the hallway outside which ended with a loud thump on the door. The doorknob twisted back and forth violently. Lord Everton finally opened door.

“We need your thoughts on the stars and war, dear.” Lady Hightower said while her husband treaded over to the remaining chair available. “The Admiral says the outcome of the

war may depend on it.” Ella looked over to the Admiral, smiled and winked.

“Of course it will, yes, of course, all must be brewed correctly.” Lord Everton shouted while settling in his seat and looking directly at the Admiral. “Yes, your son. I remember his glass. Your son was looking for *him*.”” Everton took out a brown leather pouch that held all of his tools for smoking his pipe. “We must find him too! He is dying of thirst.” He then began to prepare himself a bowl, carefully primping and shaping the shredded dry leaves in his oversized Sherlock Holmes styled pipe.

The pipe ritual took twelve minutes to compete and almost another minute to get the object properly light. The Admiral looked over to Lady Hightower who simply shrugged her shoulders. After a long puff, Everton began to stare at the set of red books on the top shelf of the wall he was facing. Then he began his ramble, as if in a trance.

“Your son was on the right trail, but he was betrayed during the toast. There is another liquid at play here, one we.. .or the Germans know not. The cocktail in between, one who profits from both sides and will win, no matter who wins.” Lord Everton stopped and his face contorted in pain. “His distilled wealth betrayed your son! The barfly’s immense wealth got in the way... inadvertently....the wino.. .betrayed your son! And none of us could stomach it!”

“Who?” Admiral Payne pleaded. “Who?”

Lord Everton was silent still staring at the set of red books. Lady Hightower slowly lifted herself out of her chair and silently stepped over to her husband. Rubbing her hand over his grey matted hair, she whispered into his ear. “Who, dearest? Who betrayed the Admiral’s son?”

“That devil, the brew master himself... *the dark Dutchman!*”

“...code named Xerum 525...”

Jacob Sporrenberg watched as the slave laborers carried the two counter rotating cylinders into the concrete reinforced entrance of the cave. Roads all around the Wenceslaus mine were muddy from the days of rain and seemed to be on everything, except the bell shaped device already inside the massive inner fortress.

Next came the cases of red mercury - code named Xerum 525 - stored in tall, thin thermos flasks a meter high and encased in lead.

“Now we can begin.” A captain handed Sporrenberg a final list of two hundred and forty-eight scientists and others who were assigned to this project. Werner von Braun’s name was on the top of the list; Karl Ernst Krafft was the fifty-third from the bottom.

“So von Braun does not even want to *visit*?” Sporrenberg blurted out angrily. All the individuals on the list were those Sporrenberg had requested. Those marked in red were those who declined his invitation.

“He stated they are almost completed with his V-2 and didn’t want to start a project that was only in the theoretical stage of development.”

“*Theoretical?*” Sporrenberg had a right to be insulted. Von Braun had already received the evidence of the project’s physical and electro-magnetic test results and application. “What we will have here will make his rockets look like the horse and buggy.” Sporrenberg sneered.

Chapter 19 - The Room

“And that is why we watch them.”

“Anything unusual?”

“No. He’s from a good home in Danzig. Good grades in school. Excellent in electronics, has a good job with NDR.. .works hard and has good evaluations from his superiors.

“Is he a member of the Party?”

“No”

“Hitler Youth?”

“No records available from that period in Danzig.”

“Have you noticed his tailor?” Kriederman threw a folder on Lt. Schiller’s desk. Over the front printed with thick black lettering was the name Stephan Johanstall. “Why would one visit this old tailor outside of an occasional mending or special cleaning?” Kriederman acted bored while waiting for an answer.

“Maybe they’re friends...” Schiller returned the attitude as if it were obvious.

There had always been a rivalry between Lt. Schiller and Lt. Kriederman since the beginning of their career in the Gestapo. Both fanatical Nazis, they came from completely different backgrounds, one the son of a wealthy beer brewer in Flensburg in the north, the other from a family of poor dairy farmers near Freiburg in the south. Both hated each other on first sight on their first day at the Gestapo Academy. Their hatred never subsided since then.

“Friends? What could an old has-been from the old theater days have in common with a

young, bright, up and coming young man with great possibilities in electronics?" Kriederman already had the connection between Otto and Stephan obtained in an intelligence report from Colonel Venter, but did not share it with Schiller....yet. Kriederman wanted to give the impression he figured the connection out all by himself - to 'up one' on his hated colleague - by being proven correct later on in the conversation. He would toy with Schiller to reveal the weaknesses found in Schiller's input, then lower the boom to show his superiority.

"What *should* friends have in common, Herr Kriederman?" Schiller said mockingly.

"*Herr* Schiller," Kriederman resented being addressed as a civilian, "one thing that makes the German people superior is our thoroughness. In *this* job, thoroughness is even more of an essential professional trait, don't you agree?"

"Is this a cooperative effort that we were assigned to, or a lecture?"

Kriederman ignored Schiller's question. "Friends of friends, Herr Schiller. Friends of friends. Known is that Herr Johanstall was, and perhaps still is, a Jew-lover. He practically *married* one! Of did you not *know* that?"

"This was known to me, and as you can see from the report in your hand, he has been obedient since his last visit here with us. Some people just need a little *talking* to and..."

"... and some people just *pretend* to listen."

"And that is why we watch them. Is this why you came into my office today, Herr Kriederman? I thought you were here to discuss something *important*."

The stress on the word 'important' sent Kriederman into a rage, however his professionalism promptly controlled his feelings. Schiller made it appear to question whether

Kriederman *himself* was important - which was exactly Schiller's intent.

Either man could probably not explain why they hated each other. Part of it can be found in the vast cultural difference between Germans from the north and south - much like the northern and southern culture differences that existed in the United States before the civil war. This customary dislike is one of the reasons why Germany was one of the last ethnic groups in Europe to unite as a nation. While England, France and Russia became countries just after the fall of the Roman Empire, Germany had to wait until 1871 for the Iron Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to create a war with France to unite the German people.

Then there were also the differences between rich vs. poor, city boy vs. country boy and strong opposing religious beliefs between Kriederman and Schiller.

"Indeed I *have* something important to the case. Here is what I have put together over the past several weeks." Kriederman lied, handing the reports just given to him a few hours earlier.

Schiller skimmed through the papers, with various photographs, observations, and informant's reports drawing links between Otto, Bettina, Stephan, and the Lampe family. All were under a cloud of suspicion with their connections to one another, but nothing in the reports were proof. The Lampe's file had a yellow band around it, indicated proven sympathy for Jews in the past. This was not enough to actually have one arrested, but was enough for the Gestapo to strictly monitor their activities, and of course to arrest if convenient or fit a narrative.

This was, however the first time Schiller saw the file on Bettina Meyer. "How can a girl with Jewish blood work for a Minister of the Third Reich? Does Goebbels know this?"

"He has to, these copies are from his own files, right out of his office."

Hatred of Jews was the only force stronger than their disdain of each other.

Unknown to either, their contempt for each other began long before they started their careers as Gestapo officers. Their first encounter began while standing in line for ice cream as pre-teens on the Bodensee during the summer holidays. Flaring up even then, hate flowed without any knowledge of each other's background, religion, or wealth. Hate so deep, simply standing next to each other incited cutting remarks, evolving into insults, pushing, then the first blow, then a full blown fight. Neither of them at age 12 could have imagined 14 years later Hitler would unite their hate so these two rivals - and many others - could actively co-operate.

“And what about her files in Liegnitz? Didn't the district commander there see this? How could she even come to Berlin, being part Jew?”

“She *must* be protected. The only official knowledge of this was in Goebbels' office, and by some odd coincidence, *that's* where she is working.”

“That's strange.”

“Indeed.”

“If we could prove Goebbels was aware of this, that could open many doors. What is it about this girl that is so special, I wonder?”

“Let's find out.”

The two began going over files of the abstract connections between all of the known parties. A minister's secretary - Bettina - now became the second element that united them.

“...I think my interest in British military matters just increased.”

Lt. Pennington made a prolonged smirk to the Captain as he entered the windowless basement office room in front of an odd looking man. “Captain, this is the gentleman who came by to see you this morning.” Once the civilian entered the Captain’s office, Lt. Pennington wiped the funny expression off his face and resumed the proper air of one who served in Her Majesty’s Royal Navy.

“Ah, yes, I did hear about you dropping by earlier, sorry I wasn’t here then, mister...?”

“DeWohl. Count Louis DeWohl.”

“Yes. Pleased to meet you, Mr. DeWohl, Captain Edward Jameson, at your service.”

Surprised, DeWohl wondered why the Captain did not address him as ‘Count’, but was not offended since the title was phony anyway - aided by his friend the Count when making his false papers transforming him from an average German citizen into Hungarian nobility.

“Please have a seat.” The Captain motioned to a comfortable looking chair, then turned to his subordinate, “Lieutenant, I believe that will be all.”

Lt. Pennington gave a snappy British salute, wheeled 180° and then took three large steps to leave the room. Despite the high-powered exit, Lt. Pennington closed the door very delicately behind him. Captain Jameson could see the Lieutenant’s huge smirk as his face disappeared.

“Now, how may I help you?”

“I believe rather, the issue is, how I may help *you*, Captain Jameson.”

Captain Jameson did not respond, but instead waited for DeWohl to continue.

“Didn’t the Lieutenant inform you of the reason for my visit?”

“Lt. Pennington mentioned you were aware of a secret weapon the Germans are using, and you have the knowledge to neutralize its affects.” The Captain came right to the point.

“Now, Mr. DeWohl, pray tell what *is* the secret weapon and *how* can you stop it?”

“Well,” DeWohl cleared his throat, “secret weapon is *not* exactly the word I used in talking with the good Lieutenant, but no matter.” DeWohl only now realized Captain Jameson’s piercing eyes made him nervous and hoped the captain could not hear this in his voice.

“As a Hungarian diplomat living in Berlin for fourteen years, I have seen many, many things I’m sure you could find useful.” The Captain’s expression and manner did not change.

“Three weeks ago when Hungary renounced its neutrality and became allied with Germany and Italy - against my advice, I might add - I was forced to flee my diplomatic post.”

“Because of your advice?”

“Because I am part Jewish.”

“Oh, I see.” Not aware in late-1940 of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany or in any of the lands they controlled, Captain Jameson simply reasoned that everyone seemed to have something against Jewish people, so it was common to them leave some place whenever any upheaval occurred.

One of the most interesting things I saw in Berlin occurred just a few months before the invasion of France, right in front of the German High Command building.

“And what were you doing in front of the German High Command building?”

“Waiting for a beautiful woman.” DeWohl responded immediately.

Captain Jameson tried to control a disbelieving smile.

“Her name is Andrea Holt, secretary to General von Eschl, who works in the German High Command building.” DeWohl lied.

Jameson’s eyebrows rose in recognition of the name von Eschl. It was only two days ago the Captain and several other British Intelligence officers were wondering what this little known general in charge of German Counter Intelligence was up to.

“You *were seeing* von Eschl’s secretary?”

“Well, you could even say we did *more* than that.” DeWohl teased, feeling bold now that he had the Captain’s attention.

“Did she every tell you anything about her work, or what von Eschl had....?”

DeWohl interrupted, “In good time, Captain, in good time. I’m sure the snippets I have to share will certainly assist in you being promoted to admiral, but let me tell you something that will *really* have your bosses jumping up and down. Let me tell you who I also saw on this lovely day walking out of the German High Command building with a certain Dr. Fesel.”

“Fesel? Dr. *Heinrich* Fesel?”

“The same.” DeWohl could see the Captain holding back his excitement.

“Excuse me for a moment, won’t you?” Jameson leaned into a black box that housed his speakerphone. “Rachel? Could you bring me that K6 file on Dr. Heinrich Fesel? Yes. The photographs.. .the entire group. Yes. Yes. And right away, please.”

While Jameson engaged on the speakerphone, DeWohl noticed and studied all the

elements in the young captain's room. An Eton graduate diploma, the Queen's Royal Guard emblem and certificate, photos and models of several ships he apparently had served on.

"Nice boats." DeWohl commented when the speakerphone switched off.

"My first command." Jameson pointed to the photograph of the HMS Bradley. While DeWohl inched up towards the photo for a closer look at the sleek little destroyer, Jameson began his test. If DeWohl passed it, then no doubt British Intelligence would swing the door wide open for this almost comical, yet odd character. The Captain's test would begin with some opening statements to see what exactly could produce on his own.

"You, know, not even many Germans know about Heinrich Fesel."

"Most certainly. He deals with more than just military or political secrets, he is in fact in charge of the Nazi party's *dark* operations.. .and secrets."

"Did you ever *meet* Dr. Fesel?"

"Afee/him? He tried to recruit me!" DeWohl exaggerated.

Good. Jameson thought. *He committed to actually seeing and talking to Fesel. If he points him out in a photograph, then De Wohl here might actually be for real.* Jameson stood up while pulling out a cigarette and offered one to DeWohl, who declined.

"Recruit you? For what?"

"Astrology. Horoscopes, you know.. .predictions, descriptions and all. Fesel has an entire department just for that, I'm told." DeWohl could see it in Jameson's eyes the interest was growing. "While I was there in fact, I ran across one of the best astrologers in Europe working

for Fesel, Goebbels, Himmler, Hess, and the Fuhrer hiyself!”

“And who is that?”

DeWohl was amused the captain didn’t know. “Why, Karl Ernst Krafft, of course.”

Jameson had never heard of Krafft, and at the moment, had no interest in him. He wanted more on Fesel as this relatively unknown name appeared to be showing up more and more in reports - yet so little was known about him.

Suddenly the door opened and a beautiful blonde sergeant rushed in and put a folder on the captain’s desk, then exited in the same military precision as Lt. Pennington. DeWohl eyed her every move. “Well, I think my interest in British military matters just increased.”

“Thank-you, Rachel.” The Jameson said, ignoring DeWohl’s comment.

Jameson pulled a group photographs from the delivered file and handed one to DeWohl.

“Will you please point out Dr. Fesel?”

DeWohl took the photograph and spotted him immediately. “There, that’s Fesel.” DeWohl pointed. A much *younger* Fesel I must say.” Jameson nodded in the affirmative. DeWohl was in fact, how he claimed to be. His papers were also in perfect order thanks to Count von Hoogerwoerd’s connections - and bribes - at the Hungarian Embassy in Portugal.

DeWohl sensed he was accepted. “When was that photograph taken, by the way? Ten, fifteen years ago?”

“Fourteen. This is the only photograph we have of him, and we weve damn lucky to get hold of it. Actually, a refugee..Jameson pointed at one of the men in the photograph, “... was

the one who brought this to us and pointed him out.” Jameson then handed the photo back to DeVohl. “Do you know any of the other men in this photo?”

DeWohl studied the photograph carefully. It showed nine men posing in what appeared to be an excavataon site in Egypt or Iraq." By odd coincidence, he recognized one of the men as the husband of one of his astrology clients in Berlin. “Yes, this man is Herr Joseph Strumpenfeld. A ghastly character, simply'ghastly.” DeWohl now tried to sound like his soon-to-be British colleagues, for he correctly sensed that his next paycheck would be coming from this office. If he played his cards correctly, DeWohl would get what he wanted - something he had dreamed about since he was a little boy - a uniform.

“Mr. DeWohl, can you tell me something about him?”

DeWohl actually never met Strumpenfeld, but had seen his photograph on the parlor table when he visited Frau Strumpenfeld to discuss her horoscope. Luckily, Lily Strumpenfeld’s conversations over her horoscope chart manifested as hostilities and blame directed towards her husband. DeWohl had hours of intimate insight to relay to Captain Jameson.

DeWohl was also lucky Lily went through all of his papers and belongings to see if her husband was having an affair. Instead of a secret lover, she discovered a secret project. She described all this to DeWohl the diplomat from Hungary when he was von Wohl the Berlin astrologer. Although back then DeWohl thought what she was describing was total nonsense and fantasy, he described in detail to Captain Jameson all he could remember Lily revealed.

“What? Flying aircraft with no wings?”

“I saw the photographs myself.”

“Four *thousand* kilometers in an hour?”

“That’s what the reports stated, and they were *official* papers. I held them in my hands.”

Jameson got on the phone to the Naval Office.

Later that day Admiral Payne was reading the details of this new *Wunderweapon* collected by Jameson. DeWohl’s statements also revealed how the Nazis were roaming the entire world to merge their technology and the spiritual forces found in ancient religious artifacts. In the report also was how in 1935 the Dalai Lama’s regent in Tibet shared a ‘dark sun’ force with the leader of an SS expedition - led by Ernst Schafer - when the name Karl Ernst Krafft caught his eye on the same page.

This was the third time today the Swiss astrologer’s name crisscrossed Admiral Payne’s life - and each time sent from different source: Stephan Johanstall in Berlin, Lord & Lady Hightower in Scotland, and now Louis DeWohl, newly arrived in London.

“Who *is* this Krafft?” Admiral Payne thought. The papers on his desk confirmed that Karl Ernst Krafft had connections to Himmler, Hess, Goring, Goebbels, other top Nazi leaders, generals, and even apparently to Hitler himself.

Was Krafft the magician behind the dark forces the Nazis were using?

“You held the answer all this time and you really don’t know?”

“Their power is great my dear.” Lady Hightower answered solemnly. “They found a way to draw the dark forces from their own people, without the population even being aware of it.”

“And right under our noses...” Lord Everton added, “. . .we are of another vintage . . .they use the dark force in a *new* way.”

“They’ve mastered the art by going beyond the senses.”

Both husband and wife spoke as if their guest the Admiral was not present.

“Hard liquor of the mind...”

“...his third eye...”

“... drunk on the rainbow bridge...”

The Admiral bit his tongue. He wanted answers but at the same time became hypnotized when the two eccentrics talked of things from a different world, in a different language. Then suddenly both looked at Admiral Payne. An eerie silence fell over the room.

Lady Hightower shook her head as one does when no answers are present. The Admiral felt a warmth rush over his body as if he felt what their thoughts and words were creating.

“I think the Admiral has felt something that can help us!” Ella said calmly.

“What, me?” The Admiral was stunned at first, but then a memory appeared in his mind. A picture from when he was in Munich with Prime Minister Chamberlain in their meeting with Hitler over Czechoslovakia. A feeling from that meeting followed.

The image and feeling soon overwhelmed him, just as it did when all of the Germans jumped to their feet to give the Nazi salute when Hitler entered the room. There was a certain power when they snapped their heels and simultaneously raised their stiffened arm over their head. A power even he could feel watching from a distance.

The elderly couple seemed to sense what Admiral Payne now remembered - and felt.

“My word...! *That’s* how they mix their drinks! Did you see *that* my dear?”

“Yes. Yes. Can you imagine the power he receives? From an *entire* nation, *that* being done every day? My word! *Every day?*”

“Every day? Every hour. Every sip. Every time *anyone* greets another, my dear.” The old man was in agony over the idea. “How could we have not seen this?”

“Please, what are you talking about?” Admiral Payne interrupted, he could see the more they talked the more they became upset. “What power? *Who* is receiving this every minute?”

“Were you inebriated? You held the answer all this time and you really don’t know?” Lord Everton seem almost angry.

“Dear,” Lady Hightower gently said, “the Admiral is our guest. He came here and helped us, let us in return be thankful and help him.”

Lord Everton gave a ‘hrmmp’. He was still extremely upset.

“You were there. You saw it. You *felt* it, didn’t you?” Lady Hightower looked in the Admiral’s eyes. He could feel her sympathy.

“Feel what?” Payne said, still confused.

“What they were doing. When they do their strange salute, snapping their heels, raising their arms and shouting *Heil Hitler*. You felt *that*, didn’t you?”

“Well, I guess I did. It kind of gave me the willies.”

“Exactly. It gave you the willies since you *felt* the power created when they do that.”

Admiral Payne again entered an area of life he had no knowledge. “What power?”

“They were downing the Kundalini force, confound it!” Lord Everton shouted out of control. “Can you believe that, my dear? They gulped deep to find that one.. .haven’t seen that in all my years!”

“Kundalini? Isn’t that some religious thing in India?” The Admiral wasn’t totally lost in this subject.

“Yes and no, my dear Admiral. I imagine the Nazis ran across the practice and philosophy behind Kundalini when they were in India or Iraq researching the roots to their Aryan race.” Lady Hightower said while standing up and walking over to her husband.

“Yes! Yes! And they probably swallowed all the descriptions of those ancient flying vehicle things the Sumerian gods used when they were over there.” Lord Everton said while sucking his pipe at a quickened pace. The solution to the previous riddle excited Everton to the point of his hands constantly shaking. “Ancient Sumer, of course! No wonder we didn’t know what they were doing, we were gargling in modern times - they went *really far* back!”

Lady Hightower nodded her head in agreement while looking lovingly at the Admiral.

“You see Admiral, the ancients describe Kundalini as the life force sleeping within all of us. It may emerge by accident, but ancient mystics and yoga masters have found a way to harness this energy by meditating and drawing it slowly up the different Chakra centers.”

“Yes, when I was stationed in India, I heard about all this. But what do you mean the Nazis are *using* this power, and *sending* it to Hitler? How?”

Lord Everton shot to his feet and gave the Nazi salute and remained standing.

Lady Hightower sat down and moved her chair closer to their guest. “Admiral, this Nazi salute is a modification of an ancient religious practice.”

Lord Everton stiffened his raised arm as if to accent what activated the force.

“When they click their heels,” Lady Hightower continued, “they are closing their connection with the earth so they may push the Kundalini force immediately through their seven chakra centers.”

Everton took his left hand and mimicked energy flowing up the spine and out of his right arm.

“They channel this energy directly to Hitler when they shout *Heil Hitler* ”

“Or they must say, Heil *mein* Fuhrer, when they are partaking the presence of Hitler.”
Everton added.

Admiral Payne thought for a moment. “You mean, when the Germans give this Nazi salute, they’re conjuring up some form of voodoo or something?”

“*More* than voodoo, Admiral!” Lord Everton shouted. “Voodoo is a trick, a band aid to cover, this uses the entire tavern! Kundalini is a life force, the beer garden within us all. Don’t ignore the canteen or call it hocus pocus just because it has a name from India - it is God, Allah, Jehovah, Ying & Yang, whatever you want to call it. It’s God’s life force and they are using it. Using it for evil!” Everton suddenly stopped shaking.

“And they are harvesting this force every minute of every day.” Lady Hightower

reminded.

From his few visits to Germany before the war, the Admiral saw the Nazi salute occurring thousands, if not millions, of times every day. Even he was surprised to learn this gesture is mandatory for all civilians. Suddenly his mind jumped to a naval exercise when he was just a junior executive officer.

“Lady Hightower, you said yoga masters bring up this Kundalini energy *slowly* through their chakra centers by mediation.”

“Yes?” The wise woman knew the Admiral had more thoughts, the kind with important information.

“Then shouldn’t there be a difference between bringing this energy slowly up by meditation and shooting it up in less than a second with a *Heil Hitler*^”

Lady Hightower and Lord Everton looked at each other simultaneously.

“My dear, how do you think he handles *that*?”

“Maybe he doesn’t.” Everton said, while putting down his arm. “Maybe this can also be *their* fire water...”

Chapter 20 - The Link

“Fantastic news!”

Elaine sucked in her cheeks. Certainly after their experience with him at Frau Ney’s and later with Fesel at a restaurant, it would be unthinkable to be in the same room with Bruno in public again. Although embarrassing, Bruno could also be entertaining, like the time he jumped on the floor when a potato fell off Elaine’s plate, and ate it like an animal. He often would run around the establishment chasing girls with a horn and hat that resembled Harpo Marx.

“Can we just go somewhere else? Do we have to go somewhere just because Fesel suggested it?” This was not like Elaine at all. She normally went along with whatever was planned. Berlin was changing her.

“Elaine, at least have some...” Karl Ernst was interrupted by a knock on the hotel room door. He walked over and opened it slowly. A voice boomed from the other side.

“Karl Ernst! We just had to share with you the wonderful news!”

The ‘we’ turned out to be Fesel and Ewa Mann.

“Come in, we were just getting ready to leave.” Karl Ernst nervously said, without realizing the contradictory sound of his statement.

“Oh, I see.” Fesel seemed to understand completely. “Then maybe you could come with us.” Fesel looked directly at Elaine while speaking, knowing she would be the one making the decision on this matter.

Elaine froze. Her dislike of Fesel and shock of seeing the impressionable Ewa Mann left her speechless.

“Oh, I don’t believe you two have met. Elaine, this is Ewa Mann, one of our lovely assistants at the project building. Ewa, may I have the pleasure to introduce you the woman behind the greatest astrologer in the world today, the lovely Elaine Krafft!”

Both women mimicked a ‘hello’ while at the same time taking notice of everything they saw in each other, like two fighters sizing each other up.

Fesel smiled and studied Karl Ernst. *He should be more nervous. He’s either an extremely good actor or I’ve misjudged him.* Fesel thought.

Karl Ernst’s relief came from seeing Ewa’s hair tightly pulled back into a bun. The bright red silk hat she wore made the very little amount of red hair unnoticeable. The stunning makeup of bright red lips and light gray eye shadow gave her the appearance of a face on the glamour magazines.

“And what is the wonderful news you have for us?” Karl Ernst asked, hoping for a way to get out of this situation. He could not help but glance at Ewa, who was constantly eyeing him. Both Fesel and Elaine noticed the eye movements of everyone in the room.

“History, my dear Karl Ernst, history!” Fesel shouted with glee. “France has just officially surrendered, and the Fuhrer made sure it was done in the same place, and in the very same railroad car, the crime of 1919 was perpetrated.” Fesel clinched his fists. “Sieg Heil!” He shouted while giving the Nazi salute. “Finally, France is finished... and *we* are the masters of Europe, just as the Fuhrer predicted!”

Karl Ernst opened his mouth to speak, but Fesel beat him to it. “And as *you* predicted, Karl Ernst.”

Pride swelled through Karl Ernst, especially since his work contributed to the victory and played a part in the military part of the plan to defeat of France. Elaine felt a sense of joy as well. For with the fighting over, victory would also mean the Kraffts could return home, something neither of have of since arriving in Berlin. It was now their deepest desire.

“Fantastic news!” Karl Ernst finally said while putting his arms around Elaine.

“Wonderful.” Elaine said with a constructed smile.

Karl Ernst could see Elaine’s happiness; yet felt her tenseness brewing as well. *Probably Fesel.* He thought. Yet Karl Ernst noticed except for the greeting, Ewa Mann had not said a word. *Why was she here with Fesel? What was going on in her mind?*

What did she think of Elaine?

“And that’s not all the good news, my dear Karl Ernst. I have here your new *personal* assistant for your next project, which we will not bore Elaine with right now. I can say with certainty you will be going into areas you are sure to enjoy with your next project and with our lovely Ewa.” Fesel said almost pushing Ewa in front of Karl Ernst.

Fesel went on with more descriptions of Karl Ernst’s new assignment filled with sexual innuendoes, even those of an unsophisticated sort anyone could perceive. Not only did he almost describe the new assignment as if it were a sex act, but included numerous references to how Ewa Mann would be working ‘very close’ to Karl Ernst. All in the room could see how this was affecting Elaine, who was biting her lip to keep her emotions under control.

“Thank-you, Heinrich.” Karl Ernst interrupted Fesel. “Thank-you for informing us of the wonderful news of the Reich’s victory and my new work, but we have to be going.”

“But, let us go out and celebrate!” Fesel countered, hoping to have more time to drive the wedge deeper between Karl Ernst and Elaine.

“Thank-you, but we already have invitation we need to keep.” The tone of finality in Karl Ernst’s voice told everyone in the room the visit was ending. Even Fesel took the cue and prepared to leave, but wanted to get one more stab in.

“Elaine, lovely Elaine! Always a pleasure to see you!”

“Thank-you, Herr Doctor.” Elaine responded respectfully.

“And you must come visit all of us...” Fesel eyed Ewa, “...at our house of mysteries to see all that your husband is doing for the glory of the Reich.”

“That I may, thank-you. Good night.”

Fesel made a grab at getting a definite date. “Then how about this Tuesday? We all will be having a special lunch for everyone at 12:30. Please join us. You can meet the entire staff awe/have a tour afterwards. I will conduct it personally.”

Even though Elaine did not want to have anything to do with Fesel, the allure of being about to see the inside of the famous and secretive Dark Fire Project overruled her feelings toward him.

“Certainly, Herr Doctor, I’d be *happy* to come.” Elaine said smiling and focusing the word ‘happy’ while glancing at Ewa.

“People are always available for work in the past tense.”

Lord Everton put three fingers from his left hand to his temples and began to rub while raising his right hand as if to call for silence.

“We have forgotten to toast his son!”

A look of horror overcame Lady Hightower. “Oh my! Please do forgive us, Admiral.”

The Admiral, who was already standing to prepare to leave, sat back down.

“Well, once again, I think my husband has a better grasp on that situation, don’t you dear?”

“I think the Admiral should know that when putting cheese in the mousetrap, you should always leave room for the mouse.” Lord Everton said while preparing another bowl for his pipe.

“My husband seems to believe that a deception...” Lady Hightower paused to wait for Lord Everton to give an approving bow that her translation was correct, . . .may exist in your son’s rescue attempt.”

The Admiral gripped his hat. *How could they know of these plans?* He thought.

“Were you not planning one?”

The Admiral remained silent, wondering how Lord Everton could see such things, and how his wife could translate her husband’s odd, cryptic ramblings.

“Well, apparently *someone* is, and there may be some trouble.” Lady Hightower closed her eyes. “Dear, can you tell the Admiral *who* appears to be helping his son, and *where* the trouble lies?”

Lord Everton lit his pipe. “People are always available for work in the past tense, but they

drink for the future.”

Lady Hightower opened her eyes slowly. Warmth filled the Admiral’s mind when their eyes met, and he spoke without thinking. “Is he suggesting that a department or person I worked with in the past has something to do with this?”

Lady Hightower nodded in the affirmative.

The Admiral’s question as to how Lady Hightower understood her husband’s odd statements were answered by this experience. “And this department or person is the source of the trouble with my son?”

Lady Hightower nodded in the affirmative again.

“...so their cigarettes did the talking”

“Could they be related somehow?”

“Have you seen her⁹”

“Just her photo.”

“Well, I can tell you first hand her photo does not do her justice.”

“Better than this?” Schiller lifted the photo of Bettina out of the files.

“Far better. She is a lot thinner and her tits are bigger, far bigger.”

Both men were beginning to find something else in common besides hate. Schiller took out a cigarette from his drawer and offered one to Kriederman, who took it. While this was a common form of politeness found in any other office around the world, this offer had a greater

significance at the moment. It was a peace offering, after an entire career of open - and at times - dirty competition. As both men lit their cigarettes, the shared moment and experience seemed to say: "We have something in common now." However, neither could say such a sentence since neither of them experienced such a philosophy of forgiveness, so their cigarettes did the talking and thus acted as the symbol for their unity.

"Since this Otto fellow and Bettina are a couple, I suggest we get them when they are both together."

"Agreed, we could use this link to the Lampe couple as our justification for bringing them both in. We could hold her a while and let Goebbels sweat, or let her go once he is contacted. Either way he may get some idea if she speaks against him. What do you think?"

Kriederman thought for a moment. "Let's play it by ear. Perhaps we might wish to make our play based on how Goebbels reacts."

"That's wise thinking, Lieutenant." Schiller and Kriederman were now seeing another element they had in common - their hatred of Reichminister Joseph Goebbels. Unknown at the moment to either of them, both had a run in with Goebbels early in their careers that caused setbacks in promotions, their assignments, and in their love lives. Now it was payback time.

"This was attraction to the opposite sex in its purest form."

Lucht angrily pushed the huge book in front of him towards the end of his desk. "Acch! This is ridiculous. I'm an astrologer, not a theologian." Lucht already told Fesel months ago all astrological references in the Bible have already been recorded and analyzed centuries ago.

“How can we find *more*?”

Karl Ernst’s frustration grew as well, but he did not show it. Both men had been given the German, English, and Latin versions of the Bible and told to construct, find, or interpret a segment to could predict a Nazi victory. “Well, I thought the interpretation you created on the piece within Revelation on the divided twelve toes of the old Roman boot coming together again was quite genius. Really, I for one, never imagined that passage could represent the re-unification of the Roman Empire to represent a united Nazi Europe, or that a German Empire would cover all the lands of ancient Rome.” Krafft looked at the wall map above them. “With the successes of our Afrika Korps, your description could very well be!”

“It will be, but of course it will not be used since it might offend our glorious little El Duce in Italy.” Out of habit, Lucht pulled out a cigarette, but did not light it for he knew tobacco smoke irritated Karl Ernst. “I’m going outside for a moment.”

“Are you coming back?” Krafft noticed it was fifteen minutes after seven in the evening.

“Accch. I might as well call it a day. Are you leaving?”

“No go on. I’m about to finish this and want to see some of the ancient Egyptian magic rituals Ewa has been researching. I’ll fill you in on that tomorrow.”

“That would be greatly appreciated, good night, Karl Ernst.”

“Goodnight, Georg.”

Karl Ernst hurried out of his office and up a flight of steps to a tiny corridor that led him to Ewa Mann.

“Darling.”

“Ewa!” Their arms entwined as their lips met. Normally Ewa would be the one to let go first, but their passionate kiss pressed the limits of Karl Ernst’s ability. “Ewa, my little Ewa, all day I have waited for this moment to be with you.”

“Darling.” Again they embraced, this time with even more passion - as lovers do when they realize the love they feel are the same feelings from the other side.

Ewa laughed. It was not of ridicule, but of joy - pure unadulterated joy. “Karl Ernst, you are....” Ewa’s telephone interrupted her would be romantic compliment. “Ewa Mann here.” Her voice returned to being businesslike.

Karl Ernst could hear Fesel’s voice on the other end, a voice that did not seem to be aware technology long ago made it no longer necessary to shout into a telephone. Fesel’s habit reminded Karl Ernst of his mother, whose voice could be heard throughout the house whenever she spoke on the phone. Which was quite often.

“Yes, Herr Doctor, I’ll bring it right down.”

Ewa put down the receiver and grabbed a stack of 3 ringed binders from her tiny desk. “I’ll be back. You stay here and *don’t* leave! I have something I want to tell you Herr Krafft!”

As she bolted out of the room Karl Ernst thought of the many things he wanted to tell her. For one, he wished he could tell Ewa - and Elaine - his true feelings. He wanted to have them both. However, he doubted either of them - or society - would accept or even understand his feelings. Yet there his feelings were. Fully realized and the truth. For the first time in his life he looked at what his feelings and wants actually were, instead of what was projected on to him.

He was torn between these two women in the most fundamental way by which he desired a

woman and a relationship. There was Elaine, who through the years of sharing he had learned to love, learned to appreciate, and selflessly care for. She was familiar. She knew him. She understood him. Then there was Ewa, who even the thought of brought forth an excitement within him, a total excitement that rushed through him as the feelings that rushed through him with his first love as a teenager. Except this was larger, this did not fade as the changing moods and desires of youth. This was attraction to the opposite sex in its purest form.

Yet, while one connected through his mind and the other with her body, both possessed an unexplainable force within the spiritual world attracting him - and they did this equally. This attraction and his understanding of the spiritual world told him his being attracted to both of these women was natural. Society told him to choose one. His subconscious told him otherwise.

As Ewa returned up the stairs she decided not to tell Karl Ernst she was carrying his child.

Not now.

She knew Elaine was unable to have children and didn't know how he might react to being a father. One moment she felt she knew him better than any man she had ever known, which gave her a security long ago lost when her own father died. The next moment a mystery, appearing to be just as cryptic as the odd glyphs and symbols he worked with.

Assigned by Dr. Fesel to 'act' like she was in love with him, somehow playing the role created feelings slowly filling the vacuum of the love she actually craved.

Ewa Mann slowly evolved into becoming the character she was ordered to play.

When Ewa reached the top of the stairs she decided she would tell Karl Ernst she was truly in love with him, and inform him of how Fesel had hired her to 'play' up to him. She would tell

the truth. Although she didn't realize it before, Ewa now saw the purpose Fesel had in mind, to ruin the relationship between Karl Ernst and Elaine. *But why?*

Karl Ernst walked out of his office and held up some papers to Ewa. "Are these Egyptian texts for us? These have more to do with conjuring up spirits than astrology."

"I don't know." Ewa answered. Her mind however was not on the Egyptian text, she was actually answering the question in front of her own mind: "Do I tell him about our baby now?"

"Was this American banker working WITH the Germans?"

"Check."

Count von Hoogerwoerd looked at her black bishop on his f2 square. He had never played chess with a woman who could make such a bold move. "A pawn for a bishop?" He asked as his King took the bishop.

"Two pawns." Mrs. Wilkins corrected as she moved her knight to capture the pawn left unprotected on e4. "Again, check." The Count moved his King to safety choosing the first row of the g squares.

"Mrs. Wilkins," the Count said politely, "certainly you are aware trading a major piece for pawns can be dangerous so early in the game, it might be later on you will badly need that bishop in the end game."

"Count Hoogerwoerd, I'm glad you enjoy talking about the game while it is being played. Commentary can be so refreshing, most men I play with are complete bores."

“I’m glad you approve.” The Count said, studying the onyx board and pieces.

This stunning woman he had just met fascinated the Count. The meeting with her husband and other American businessmen upstairs did not go as he had anticipated, which put him in a foul mood. He was a banker wanting to expand into American oil. They were oil industrialists wanting to get into European finance. It should have been a perfect fit. He wanted to strengthen his reach in America - they wanted to develop ties to Europe. However they appeared not to be interested in the avenues he had control over, they seemed only interested in developing a relationship with the Third Reich.

These influential power brokers of America's banks and industry were like little Nazi children ...inexperienced juvenile fascists seeking their Nazi father.

“I’m sorry your meeting didn’t go well.” She said sympathetically.

“I beg your pardon?” Although stunned, the Count maintained his impeccable manners. Striking up this conversation with Mrs. Jean Wilkins sitting alone at the table studying the chessboard occurred just as he walked downstairs *from* the meeting. *How could she know the outcome of the meeting?*

“Your meeting, upstairs. I’m sorry it didn’t go well for you.”

“Madam. Forgive me, but how on earth did you know even the nature of that meeting when you were down here the entire time?” The Count asked politely.

“Your disappointment. I can see disappointment all over you. It’s rather obvious, you know.” She said, keeping her eyes on the board. “It’s in the way you play as well.”

“Stunning perception.” The Count half-laughed, embarrassed someone could see through

his controlled emotions. “And stunning pieces,” he continued, trying to change the subject, “there is something very elegant about these chess figures, even though at first glance they appear rough and crude.” The Count also started to notice while being up a by major piece, his position was becoming rather treacherous. “*And you*, my dear lady, also seem to be able to handle these pieces rather well!”

Mrs. Wilkins would not tell him that she was the great granddaughter of the American Champion Paul Morphy, or that she started reading books on and playing chess seriously since she was 5 years old.

The lady chess master made her next move and began to make her own commentary. “Your knight on a4 was a nice attack on my bishop, however since my bishop has dived down for the sacrifice against two pawns, your knight is now sitting there on the rim, and will probably be out of play for quite some time, thus equalizing my sacrificed bishop.”

The Count looked at this knight, which he in fact did move to a4 to attack her bishop she had just sacrificed. Indeed, with all the trouble in the middle, his knight was now rather useless, away from where he needed it most. Even though this knight was his ‘extra’ piece in the material fight, it was as if the piece were off the board since it was so far away from the real action of the game now - near his king. She indeed had the advantage.

“With the skill you display on the board, Mrs. Wilkins...”

“Jean, please, you may call me Jean.”

“Jean. If the talent you display the board is apparent in other areas of your life, I could have perhaps *used you* in that meeting upstairs.”

“Let me guess, was it that bastard Prescott who changed the original agreement?” Jean said while taking out a cigarette, which the Count promptly lit. She took a few puffs. “Pulled the old bait-and-switch?”

“Are you a psychic too?” The Count said while waving out the match.

“I read Tarot cards.” Jean said exhaling her first drag. “But no, I didn’t need to be in the meeting or be a psychic to see he and his friends are bastards. I *know* that prick. I know them all. Patriots! Their American Liberty League.. .ha! Those scumbags are here to simply protect their investment with that madmen, Adolf.” Mrs. Wilkins made another move.

The Count now ignored the chess game. “It appears you have a dislike for your husband and his group’s politics.”

“I dislike *anyone* that is against America.”

“But Prescott, and your husband, they are *Americans*”

Jean glanced through the three doorways that led from the study to other areas of the house to make sure they were alone. “My husband and those other pigs upstairs are fascists.”

“I see.” The Count replied without actually understanding.

“Count, were you reading the newspapers in the summer 1933?”

Stunned, the Count could not answer.

“Then you probably didn’t hear about the Business Plot?”

The Count, normally informed in all political matters around the world, had to shake his head ‘no’.

“The Business Plot, or as I call it, the Wall Street Putsch almost occurred back in 1933 when many of those men meeting upstairs plotted a coup to overthrow Roosevelt.”

“No...!” Even to the Count, this sound absurd.

“Yes! Every one of those men upstairs wanted to install a fascist dictatorship. It all fell apart when the Marine they approached to take over Washington DC, an arrow straight Major General Smedley Butler, exposed it to Roosevelt.”

“A coup? In America? Unbelievable!” The Count was astounded, but did start to believe. His mind raced back to the early 1930’s when he heard a parallel story when his wife arranged a horoscope reading for his birthday. The reading, done with the renowned Swiss astrologer Karl Ernst Krafft, was given as a gift in the spirit of fun and entertainment. For this reason the Count did not take the young seer seriously when warnings were given of a plot against FDR, whom the Count had invested heavily.

“Since the plot failed, they doubled down on Hitler over in Germany.” Jean finished her cigarette. “That was a weak move, my good sir.” Jean said, studying the Count’s last move, and noticing Bush walking down the stairs.

The Count returned to the board and saw what he did not see one move ago - he was beaten. “Mrs. Wilkins, you are indeed quite a remarkable woman. Before this, I thought myself a rather competent chess player, have studied many of the games by Max Euwe and Alexander Alekhine in our newspapers...”

“Oh, yes! Max was from Holland, just like you, wasn’t he?” Mrs. Wilkins said smiling as if she had known, or even played with, the previous world champion.

Bush walked up and stood in front of the chess table while the Count and Mrs. Wilkins

remained focused on the board. He leaned over the Count as if studying his position.

“While we couldn’t come to terms on this deal, being that I am director of the Union Banking Corporation, which represents Thyssen’s holdings in America, and you seem to deal with him in some of your Dutch companies, we might be able to streamline a few goings on to help get some of Thyssen’s steel money out of Germany and over to America for safe keeping.. .going by way of Holland, of course.”

Again the Count was astonished. Krafft had mentioned the plotters are those who play both sides. Was this American banker *already* working with the Germans?

“Herr Bush. Perhaps we can speak of this tomorrow? After my defeats here, both on the conference table upstairs and on the chessboard here, I shouldn’t want to make it three in a row on the same day.”

“Tomorrow, then.” The six-foot-four-inch elegantly dressed banker uttered and bowed to Mrs. Wilkins, then departed.

“I hear you have a wonderful singing voice, Prescott, do sing something next time we have a party. Yes, sweetie?” Jean said without looking up from the chessboard. Prescott Bush ignored her comment and returned upstairs.

“Piece of shit.” Jean said as she pulled out another cigarette as if to wave Bush out of her life. Her eyes returned to the board and then moved her knight. “Check-mate.”

“And it’s mine.”

The bell shaped device was approximately nine feet wide and fifteen feet high. When the switch was flipped for the first time, the counter rotating cylinders swirled into motion and emitted a humming sound that was ten pitches lower than a Mercedes engine idling.

Small items in the underground test bunker such as papers, pens, and photos on desks began to rattle, and then slowly as if by magic, lift into the air. The switch was pulled down even more and the humming sound increased in intensity. Now larger objects not tied down began to shake and slowly rise in the air, as if all gravity in the room was being sucked into the bell-shaped object that was now radiating in a bizarre reddish glow.

Then the bell itself began to lift. Applause broke out all around the bunker.

And it’s mine. Sporrenberg thought while applauding and smiling at his colleagues. *All mine. The allies will be finished and Hitler and all his cronies will then answer to me.*

Chapter 21 - The Break

“Gentlemen, you may relax, I am unarmed and quite alone.”

At precisely 3:36 am, each of the Messerschmitt's 110's engines coughed and sputtered as if they, too, thought it was too early in the morning to get moving. It was also colder than usual for a May. The ground crew were long gone having prepared and gassed the plane around midnight. They were told there was no need to see the pilot off, since Hess wanted as few people as possible to see him leave.

“SM2928 ” A voice filtered through the headphones. He only half heard the instructions, since the headset was not on his head. Rudolf Hess did not answer. As Deputy Minister of the Nazi Party, he rarely answered to anyone.

Hess let the engines idle for a few minutes, not only to warm them, but simply too allow him to sit on the ground a little longer. He knew this more than likely will be the last time he ever saw German soil again.

Hess was born in 1894 on the 26th of April in Alexandria, Egypt, the son of a German in the import-export business. His mother was keenly astute in politics and was totally fascinated in the occult - reading tarot cards for friends at parties, taking Rudolf to all of the museums and parlors where she could collect anything she could on Egyptian magic, the supernatural, and astrology.

At eight years old Hess already knew the fundamentals of astrology, and began practicing it a few years later with the help of his mother. It was because of his father, who thought a young man should be interested in other things than whatever his wife was into, that the young Hess

kept his knowledge and practice of this subject a secret. His family and friends had no idea he used their birthdays to cast horoscopes, which he later analyzed. He was the first person ever to make a horoscope chart on Adolf Hitler after they were assigned in the same regiment in WWI.

Astrology, the secret life hobby and tool of the man who was second in line of succession to the Nazi throne after Hermann Goring, was the main reason why his ME 110 was flying due north out of Bremerhaven over the North Sea on a course that would soon put him near Bergen. Once he could see the lights of the second largest city in Norway, he would then head due east and land in Scotland, where he would be least likely to run into RAF patrol.

Once in Great Britain, he would then speak with the King of England himself, convince the monarch to make peace with Germany so they could team up against the real villain of Europe - Stalin's communist Russia.

A crackle came from the radio set, which Hess picked up and then pressed against his right ear.

“Jestem, j estem, pour, thu-rea, dwoo, nie mam contact. Marek? Mas?” Said one voice.

“Nie, mam, Janus.”

Hess could hear the pair of RAF Polish pilots on patrol trying to speak with their British controllers. Since he knew a little Polish, he knew where they were and thus altered his course to avoid them. The British controllers on the other hand, had no idea where their precious planes were, or where Marek and Janus were planning to take them.

“Polski Patrol, *four, three, two!* Report your position, *pleased*

“Gdzie? Nie wiem. Marek? Wiesz?”

“Nie wiem, Janus.”

The situation made Hess laugh out loud. *Ridiculous*. He scanned the night sky. *Yet ironic*. *We crush the Poles in a matter of weeks and we now have Britain on her knees. England is so desperate for fliers, any fliers, they use these Polish fools, yet we still can't defeat the British.*

Since May of 1939, Rudolf Hess knew something that only Ernst Schulte-Strathaus and Karl Ernst Krafft saw in the stars: if Germany had not made peace with England by June of 1941, then the tide of war would begin to turn against Germany. It was also during this month Hess met with Wing Commander Sir Louis Greig, special assistant to the Duke of Kent and member of the January Club, a secret group that supported the British Union of Fascists.

Rudolf Hess has strong connections within the British Royal family and he would use them to make a peace with this war no one wanted - not even Hitler.

Karl Ernst Krafft was the first to see a war with England, published in 1933 describing a Germany future war after looking at Hitler's chart. In this article Krafft also predicted the start date of this next war - September 1939 - when it would end, the spring of 1945. Krafft never published who he thought would *win* the war. (Although later revealed Germany would be defeated, but the Nazis would not be. This turned out to be the case with *Operation Paperclip*, where thousands of Nazis were brought over to America after the war and given key positions in science, business, banking, industry, aerospace and even made up much of the early CIA.)

The planet Pluto, discovered in 1930, fascinated Krafft. He used his mathematical skill to plot its movement 20 years in the past, and 20 years into the future creating one of the first ephemeris for the new heavenly body. Krafft found whenever Pluto entered new sign of the zodiac this affected Germany. This aspect was present at the start of the first Great War, when

Pluto entered the zodiac sign of Cancer in late summer of 1914.

In 1933, when Hitler came into power, Karl Ernst calculated the next time Pluto would change into the next zodiac sign - Leo - occurring in the summer of 1939, the year Hitler invaded Poland to start Germany's second war of the 20th Century.

Hess, Krafft and Ernst Schulte-Strathaus all came to the same conclusion: the Third Reich had to make peace with England by June 1941 or the tide of war would turn against Germany.

Besides all of the astrological indications, Hess was aware of a fact few outside the Nazi inner circle and German High Command knew - that Germany would invade the Soviet Union in June 1941. Peace with England would prevent a war on two fronts. A war with Stalin was something Hess and many others in the Nazi party were against, but dared not speak out, since all knew the Fuhrer's decisions were final.

"...to be dancing, to be dancing with you..." A Norway station playing music filled the headphone. The song took Hess back to the time he first saw Hitler speak while just a student at the University of Munich. So moved by the fiery speech and point over what was wrong with Germany, Hess joined the Nazi party the next day. Now, almost exactly twenty-one years later, after answering to and faithfully following Herr Hitler for almost half his adult life, Rudolf Hess was doing something on his own for the Third Reich. He would save the Nazi Germany he worked so hard to build.

The lights of Bergen could be seen on the horizon, so Hess banked his plane to the left and headed straight towards Scotland. A quick check of his instruments indicated the plane was still in good order and had enough fuel to make the final leg of his trip. Almost an hour and a thousand thoughts later, Hess should see some lights of the ground through his windshield. He

would follow his flight path to a lighted runway on land owned by the Duke of Hamilton where he would secretly be given diplomatic immunity and arrangements would be made for him to meet the king.

Hess was not aware the Dukes of Hamilton, Winsor and Kent and their network managed to order all anti-aircraft guns not to fire on any plane along his flight path along Scotland.

“Will the Fuhrer understand?” He said out loud as he headed into the unknown political peace deal. He turned around and saw a faint semi-circle of light on the horizon behind him - the Sun would be coming up soon. He timed his trip perfectly. He would be over Scotland just as first light broke. Once he found the pre-arranged landing strip, the most dangerous part of the trip would be behind him. He would feel more secure if he could have met some of these royals before taking this flight. Sir Louis Greig was after all, on a secret mission when they met - nothing was in writing - nothing was formally agreed to.

After crossing the coastline the faint land turned into visible farmland and rolling hills below him. The Sun was now peeking above the horizon, and he noticed a pair of Spitfires on his 9 o'clock position. *If they see me I'll be shot down.* He thought. He watched for a moment to see if they appeared to be heading his way. After a moment of observation he saw they were. “I'd better bail out now while I can.”

Hess rolled his plane over and fell out 4:43 in the morning. As soon as he landed the pasture about a mile behind a Scottish farmhouse, three cars drove up and surrounded him. Hess casually took off his flying gloves as men from the cars approached with guns trained on him. The local men were dressed in their nightshirts and several only had on trousers and their undershirts. Hess, in complete contrast, had on his formal Deputy Minister uniform.

Hess could see the men were nervous. Their gaping mouths and shocked eyes indicated they had no idea what to do next.

“I am Alfred Hom, here to see the Duke of Hamilton.”

“Blimy...” One of the men shouted, ‘e speaks English!”

The men from the other cars began to talk wildly among themselves, but Hess could not make out a word with their thick Scottish accents. Their guns remained fixed on him. He sensed they recognized him, so decided to tell the truth.

“Gentlemen, you may relax, I am unarmed and quite alone.”

Hess was ignored. The men stood their ground with guns focused on him.

“D’ya call Aberdeen?” A redheaded man nearest to Hess shouted to one of the cars.

“Mary’s a-don’en.. .as we speak.” Came the reply from the car.

Hess was not used to being ignored - he again politely identified himself. “Sirs, I am Rudolf Hess, Deputy Minister of the German Reich. I am here on a diplomatic mission to see the Duke of Hamilton.” Several of the men seemed to pay attention to him this time.

“ *Who’d* he say he was?”

“He said minister! Quiet, gentlemen! Quiet!” A middle-aged man coming forward shouted. Hess reasoned he was the authority of this group, or at least the one most respected.

“Well, asked him why he landed in Aberdeenshire.” A bearded man in back of the crowd yelled.

Hess looked directly at the bearded man. “I am Rudolf Hess. Deputy Minister of the

German Reich. I am here on a diplomatic mission to see Duke of Hamilton. Please take me to see him.” Hess noticed the bearded man supported himself with a cane.

“I’m Andrew McGuire of Aberdeenshire. Mr. Hess, I afraid I must keep you here until....”

The roar of two Hawker Hurricanes buzzing by directly overhead no more than 20 meters above the ground interrupted McGuire’s words. Both planes slowly climbed, then veered off in opposite directions and began to circle the field in a wide, choreographed climbing spiral. All of the men on the ground watched the two planes perform their aerial ballet of covering and protecting the field. Hess turned to McGwire, who then finished his sentence.

“I have orders to keep you here until our Royal Air Force people arrive.”

The word ‘orders’ struck an understanding cord within Hess. “I understand, Mr. McGwire.” Hess said politely.

For almost half an hour the men stood around in an awkward silence. Hess had nothing to say to these seemingly dull farmers and they in turn didn’t want to speak to him - both out of fear to reveal anything about themselves, or to be seen as one who would talk with the enemy.

Most of the men in their nightclothes and underwear were simply trying to stay warm, while the others who pointed their guns at Hess wondered if their neighbors would think any less of them if they relaxed their guns. None of the Scots had any idea what to say to this obviously important German official who spoke the Queen’s English as if he had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge. Even with a slight German accent, the presence of Hess impacted the farmers as any Lord or one with Royal blood would. This was *news* in this county.

Finally, McGwire broke the nonverbal standoff with an act of kindness.

“Eh, would you be needing a cigarette?”

“Yes, thank-you, Mr. McGwire, that would be most kind.” Hess was not a heavy smoker and actually did not feel a need, but the act of smoking would be an acceptance of McGwire’s thoughtfulness and give him something to do until the RAF officials arrive from Aberdeen.

Before Hess finished the cigarette, five black sedans sped down the country road and on to the field. Three were filled with military police, while the other two appeared to have top brass from the nearest base. All of the RAF cars emptied at the same time, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and commanders. It was only when the RAF people approached Hess that the farmers lowered their weapons. The ones in their nightclothes and underwear then nonchalantly worked their way back into their cars.

An RAF commander stood directly in front of Hess staring, trying to confirm if this was indeed the man whom he had seen on all of the Nazi weekly newsreels.

“I am Rudolf Hess. Deputy Minister of the German Reich. I am here on a diplomatic mission to see the Duke of Hamilton to discuss peace between the German Reich and the British Empire.”

“I am General Henry Hume Worthington. Welcome to Scotland. Would you come with me please?” The general then led Reich Minister Hess to his car where a sergeant held the car door open for both of them.

As the car drove off, Andrew McGwire and his neighbors drove off their cars and soon were back to their normal routine of tending their fields and cattle of Aberdeenshire. The RAF, or any other British agency, never gave the Aberdeenshire men any official commemoration or citation for fulfilling their duty in a most professional manner in one of history’s strangest

apprehensions. The local Aberdeen paper did, however, hail the men as heroes and a correspondent from Radio Edinburgh later interviewed them. The men from Aberdeenshire also appeared in a parade in Glasgow a year later.

The Hurricanes, now joined by four Spitfires which were circling at an even higher altitude, remained overhead until one of the RAF captains, John Whirly, received orders to return to base. By noon, no sign of Hess's peace initiative were left on the turnip fields in Aberdeenshire.



Based on Krafft's 1933 prediction the tide of war would go against Germany if peace were not made with England by the summer of 1941 - Rudolf Hess shocks the world by flying to Scotland in an attempt to forge peace talks via the Duke of Hamilton.

Rudolf Hess was taken directly to military prison where he was interrogated for two months. His request to meet with the Duke of Hamilton and King George VI in order to sue for peace was declined by the British government. What Hess thought would be one of the greatest acts to preserve the Third Reich turned out to be Hitler's biggest political embarrassment. Since astrology was the key factor in motivating Hess's endeavor to fly to England to sue for peace, Hitler would punish this act. The next day the Nazi Fuhrer order "Acktion Hess", the arrest of every known astrologer in Germany, who were all then deported to concentration camps.

Karl Ernst Krafft would be one of these.

“That was work I did YEARS ago!”

“We’re being used by Fesel.” Krafft blurted in disgust. “In the short time I’ve known him it’s apparent everyone is merely a footstool so Fesel can earn points for those above him.”

Ewa laughed in recognition this truth. “I have something to tell you.”

“I hope it is good news.”

Ewa took a step forward and put her arms around Karl Ernst. “It is if you want to hear how much I love you.”

“How much *do* you love me?”

“I love you, simply that.” Ewa put her head on his shoulder. “I just wanted to tell you.”

“Ewa...I’ve felt love since seeing you through that very window when I first entered this building.”

Ewa leaned back so she could see Karl Ernst’s face. “There is something I must tell you, it may be dangerous.”

Karl Ernst could see she had a worried look on her face, and thought this had something to do with Elaine. He was wrong.

“It’s Fesel. Please don’t ever tell him I am telling you this, no matter what happens between us.”

“Nothing could ever come between us.” Krafft said, at the moment forgetting Elaine.

Ewa released her embrace and walked over to the door checking the hallways. “Fesel

wants horrible things done to you.”

“What do you mean?” Concern came Krafft’s voice. Georg Lucht had warned him about Fesel several times, but was never specific. Krafft suspected Lucht was being blackmailed in some form or another.

“He’s using you. Of course he is using all of us, but he is using you to destroy you. He wants to take your place so he can be Germany’s *great* astrologer.” Ewa’s eyes began to water as she stressed the word ‘great’ with sarcasm. “He’s taken the credit for nearly all of the work you have done.”

“How do you know this?” Krafft thought for a moment. “*How* is he taking credit for my work?”

“I heard him speaking to Goebbels once how *he* found the relation between one’s career and their horoscope.”

“That was work I did *years* ago!”

“I know, I started reading your work.” Ewa turned to look out the door again. “I see now how all the papers he delivers to Goebbels are simply the ones you’ve done, with his name on it.

Karl Ernst began to put the odd pieces of Fesel’s behavior and actions - he became angry when he realized what all this pointed to with this additional piece of information from Ewa.

“Karl Ernst, there is something else. Fesel is blackmailing me. He is trying to force me to come between you and Elaine. He wants to ruin your marriage, then you.”

“Why, that little weasel, I’m going right now to...”

Ewa became horrified. “*No!*” She managed a subdued scream. “He will know I told you. If I ever ruin any part of his plan he would have me in a concentration camp....and he would.”

Karie Ernst Krafft had never seen a concentration, or a work camp for that matter, but had begin to hear about them from various acquaintances. He wondered if the horrors that were described were for real or just exaggerations.

“Then, we must ruin him *first*” Krafft said after some analysis of the situation. “You mentioned him speaking to Goebbels... hmmm... ” Karl Ernst began to develop a plan. “Fesel answers to who, Goebbels, or Himmler?”

“I don’t know.”

“Then that is our first step. We’ll now start to work on our own plan for Fesel.”

“Get me Himmler!”

“Rans’”

The unfortunate Luftwaffe captain, just ordered to come in and deliver a stack of papers to the Fuhrer’s office, froze. “Jawohl, Mein Fuhrer!” He shouted, then turned and left the room in a state of shock.

Goring gave the captain a look that said: *Don’t take it personal, son, he’s angry with all of us.*

Goebbels, seated across from the portly Luftwaffe Field Marshal looked at no one, his eyes fixed on a 1929 photograph on the wall showing Hitler, Hess, Goebbels, Goring, and Alfred

Rosenberg at a rally in Munich. *The good old days. When they all worked together with a vision.*

Hitler noticed the subject of Goebbels' stare. The Fuhrer then stormed over to the photograph, pulled it off the wall and smashed it to the floor. "The *foo!* " Hitler shouted. What on earth did he think *he* could accomplish?"

Everyone in the room remained silent.

"I want answers, dam it, *answers!*" Hitler's eyes pierced through everyone breathing.

Goebbels, his mind on damage control, stated the first thing that came to mind. "We could say he had some kind of mental break down or mental..."

"What? *Officially* admit a Deputy Minister of the Third Reich is an idiot?" Hitler whirled around in a circle and switched into his 'old lady' voice. "Hello, London? Washington? Yes? Yes, Mr. Churchill, yes, Mr. Roosevelt. The Deputy Minister, the number *three* person in the Nazi party *is* a moron. Certainly, of course, you are absolutely right. If *he* is a moron, then that proves the *rest* of the leadership are morons as well! *Great propaganda*, Herr Goebbels!"

The entire room returned into a deadly silence. Hitler switched back to a wall of silence that lasted for several minutes. Then suddenly, their Fuhrer erupted once again. "Lovely, just lovely. And you, the Minister of Propaganda, to come up with a dimwit explanation like that! You are supposed to be the *master* of such ideas!" Hitler's face turned a darker shade of red while throwing the pen in his hand at Goebbels. "I need something far, far better than *that*, Herr Minister!"

Goring bit his lip. He had something in mind, but could not for the life express it out of fear. Goebbels noticed the Luftwaffe leader squirming in his seat, leading Hitler to notice as

well. The focus of wrath was now about to shift gears.

“Have you any ideas, Herr Field Marshal...?”

Goring flashed a frown to Goebbels. Hermann Goring, the air force master, had no solutions for the propaganda or political implications of Rudolf Hess flying to England. However, after knowing Hitler for so long, he did have a gut feeling on how to appease.

“We should arrest all his astrologer friends. *They* are responsible for this!”

One of the reasons Goring was the number two man in the Nazi party was he and Hitler saw most circumstances in the same light, plus both reacted to certain circumstances with similar impulses - place the blame on someone else.

“Yes!” Hitler shouted to what appeared to be an imaginary audience behind his desk.

“Yes! Do it now, at once! Arrest *all* of the astrologers in the Third Reich!” Hitler stomped over to his desk and pulled up the oversized brass phone. “Get me Himmler!”

Goring and Goebbels both took this chance of having the Fuhrer off their backs to take a breath and down a gulp of coffee that had been sitting in front of them for almost an hour, untouched.

“Heinrich? Are you questioning all of Hess’s friends? I want everyone he ever talked to be brought in! Make this a complete action Hess, and I especially want all of this astrologer friends arrested at once. Do you hear me? Arrested! Now! At once!” Hitler took a breath, but kept the phone glued to his ear. “What? Then arrest *every* astrologer in the Reich! But do it now! Do you understand me? Now!” Hitler threw down the phone in a child’s tantrum. “Well, that takes care of one side of this problem. I’ll be dam if I’m going to let....” Hitler suddenly

froze motionless in mid-sentence as if he was experiencing a heart attack.

Goebbels started up immediately out of his chair to assist the stricken leader but Goring waved him back. Hitler's eyes bulged, then he started to shake, which seemed to return his consciousness to his mind. He then slowly began to head for his side office, where both his Ministers figured he would lie down for a moment. His unsteady walking indicated one who might be dizzy, or drunk.

When Hitler could be heard collapsing on the huge couch in the other room, Goring walked over to shut the door to the side office, then walked over to Goebbels.

"The mustard gas."

Goebbels nodded. While he had never seen Hitler in such a powerless state, we were aware that three weeks before the armistice in the Argonne Forest Hitler's company was hit with the deadly gas. Hitler was treated at a hospital in Pasewalk when the news of surrender came.

Both men's minds returned to the problem at hand.

"Now, what *can* we do about Hess?"

"Wait."

"Wait?"

"You want to order, or even think of something in this matter without *his* approval?"

Goebbels remained silent.

“Is there some sort of an astrological pattern?”

“Admiral?” Elizabeth Hurly’s voice crackled through the speaker.

“Yes?”

“Louis DeWohl has arrived.”

“Send him in.”

DeWohl walked into a huge office with two-meter high large pane windows that overlooked the Thames. Around a conference table sat several men, two in navy uniform and three in civilian clothes. Admiral Payne greeted DeWohl at the door.

“Count DeWohl! Come in! I believe you already know Captain Jameson. Edward Jameson rose and snapped to attention before shaking DeWohl’s hand, the near Prussian formality nearly triggered the German in DeWohl to click his heels in response to the military salutation, but he refrained from doing so.

The Admiral then lead DeWohl to one of the empty chairs, introducing the others already seated as they passed by. “This is Lt. Commander Walter Kingston, Paul Windelton, Bryant Jenkins, and our wonderful Lord Everton.” Admiral Payne did not introduce himself, which he was not accustomed to doing anyway.

DeWohl announced while standing in front of his chair, “Gentlemen, I am truly honored to make your acquaintance,” then added while sitting down, “and to be a part of this group.” Looking around the table, DeWohl noticed there were no ashtrays.

“Gentlemen,” Admiral Payne began while returning to his chair at the head of the oak

wood conference table, "I believe you all have read my letter with the accounts from Lord Everton and the facts collected from our interview with Count DeWohl, so if we do not have any questions..." Payne paused and looked around the table to allow a question to be posed, "...then I suggest we begin with trying to decide the probable next pieces of advice our friend Krafft will be giving Herr Hitler."

Admiral Payne had invited Lady Hightower to this meeting, first to interpret his sometime odd metaphors that spewed from her husband, and to have her apparent psychic abilities available for this important meeting. She had refused. "I think Lord Everton is who you want at such a meeting, he's the only one with a feel for astrology." When the concern was raised as to whether or not anyone could even understand Lord Everton's peculiar phrases, she replied, "Admiral, you did a wonderful job when you were here last, I just *know* you two will get along just fine at your next meeting." After one last attempt for her presence, she said, "I just really can't. When I sense them, I feel ill, *horribly ill*. They are using a strong form of darkness over there... very, *very* dark... and evil. You wouldn't want to put an old lady like me in *that* kind of danger, would you, Admiral?"

Bryant Jenkins was the first to speak up with a question. "Does anyone else have the opinion or justification that if Hitler strikes *this* month, it will be within the first week?"

Everyone looked at one another, except Lord Everton, who stared at the wall.

"What do you mean?" Admiral Payne asked perplexed.

"It seems each time Hitler goes on the offensive for his invasion, so far it has been done in the first week of the new month." Jenkins pulled out a large sheet of paper and passing it to the Admiral, motioned to pass it to the others around the table. On the paper were notes, followed

by the date of each German invasion and corresponding astrological symbols:

Poland -----	September 1, 1939	☉ ♀ ☽ ♃
Denmark & Norway -----	April 9, 1940	☉ ♃ ☽ ♌
Belgium & France -----	May 10, 1940	☉ ♌ ☽ ♀
Air Attacks on Britain -----	July 10, 1940	☉ ♄ ☽ ♀
Greece & Yugoslavia-----	April 6, 1941	☉ ♃ ☽ ♄

“Is there some sort of pattern here?” Lt. Kingston asked after a few seconds of study.

“From what I can see in the Sun and Moon relationship, there seems to be a progression, Aries to Taurus, Taurus, to Gemini and then Gemini to Cancer ...” Jenkins pointed this out as he spoke, his finger running from line to line.

“Yes, but what is left in Europe for him to attack? He has nearly everything already, and what he doesn’t have will probably come over.” Lt. Kingston expressed the general feeling of the British public and the indications from British Intelligence concerning Hungary and Rumania.

“Oh, he *will* go after a big one, and it will be *this* month.” Lord Everton finally spoke while looking at the wall-sized map of Europe. “But it won’t happen this week, he’s behind, you see, Herr Hitler is *behind*.”

Nearly everyone looked at each other with a shocked expression of disbelief, except for Admiral Payne, who looked at the map trying to follow Lord Everton’s eye, and DeWohl, who stared at Lord Everton in amazement.

Jenkins ignored the seemingly preposterous statement by Lord Everton, and continued on with his commentary. “As you can see also in *my* analysis, each of these attacks came precisely just one day *before* the moon went void-of-course, which Krafft believes and has shown statistically that endeavors started after a void-of-course moon usually ends up unfulfilled, or flawed in some way. I believe he will continue to follow this patten.”

“What do you mean, a big one?” Admiral Payne asked Lord Everton, completely ignoring the analysis by Jenkins.

“Yes, yes, a big one.” Lord Everton said, still looking at the map. Admiral Payne could see that Everton’s eyes seemed to be focused on Poland. “He knows we will never surrender, but he thinks we are a threat no more. He wants to go after his *real* enemy.”

Lord Everton gave out an almost hysterical laugh, which again had many of the group looking at each other aghast. Paul Windelton faced Lt. Kingston and rolled his eyes. DeWohl bit his cheeks to prevent from laughing so he may appear to remain serious in front of the Admiral and others. He too, thought Lord Everton a bit daffy, but somehow liked the old man.

“Lord Everton,” DeWohl asked politely, “what do you mean Hitler is *behind*?”

“Yes, yes, finally, one who understands! Yes, correct. He’s late, very late, and he’s furious. He wanted to start a month ago, when the stars were right, but his little Roman friend by the seaside jumped the gun. Yes, the little Italian tried to take Athens again but jumped the gun....*and* without telling his partner. Yes, yes, Herr Hitler is angry over this. Very, very angry, they were supposed to be friends, but now the strutting little bully has really made a mess.”

Everton stood up. “That little Caesar thinks he’s hot shit, but he’s not even warn diarrhea. That’s how Hitler feels about his little friend now. Really. He said *that*”

Still holding his second sheet while everyone focused on Lord Everton, Jenkins was visibly upset everyone paid attention to Lord Everton. Jenkins raised the paper higher to regain control of the conversation. “Now if you look here, you will notice that....”

Admiral Payne cut him off with a wave of his hand. It was if the Admiral could see something in the old man’s statements. Captain Jameson was looking at the map with the look that something was dawning on him as well.

“Admiral, could he mean that Mussolini’s going into Greece was something *not* coordinated with Hitler?”

“Hmmm” The Admiral walked up to the wall map. “Let us say that is true, that Hitler had to spend April to bail out Mussolini in Greece.”

“Plus he had to take out Crete to secure his flank in Greece in the process.” DeWohl, being up on current events and their ramifications, added.

“That would mean most of May was perhaps preparing where he wants to go now.” Captain Jameson figured out loud.

Jenkins put down his second sheet of paper. He could see the military wanted to play with theory now, instead of looking at, what in his mind, were facts.

Admiral Payne noticed the discounted Jenkins. “OK, gentlemen, let us assume Hitler wanted to go somewhere now, as Mr. Jenkins has showed us is highly probable, but was delayed by helping Mussolini in Greece. Where could he be headed next?”

Paul Windelton raised his hand as if in a classroom. “Turkey?” Everyone looked at him collectively, seeming to demand clarification. “To provide a land route to Egypt. It would open

a second front in the Middle East, plus take some pressure off Rommel.”

“Probable,” Lt. Kingston responded, “but Turkey’s neutrality is benefitting Hitler now as it is, he moves things through there freely now, in secret of course, they still have third party trading, why would he want to use troops there for access he already has?”

A murmur of agreement came from Jenkins, Captain Jameson, and the Admiral over the logic from the young Lieutenant. Lord Everton had moved closer to the wall map and was standing just below what was once Poland.

“Lord Everton?”

Lord Everton took two steps to the right and was now standing under Moscow.

Does this old fool suggest Germany will attack Russia? Jenkins thought. *Impossible!*

“He hates them - he hates them more than us - and he had this in his mind a long, long, time ago. Mr. Jenkins knows, yes, Mr. Jenkins knows he wants to start now, but he has to wait. But he won’t wait long. He will feel it is right on the 4th day of Mercury’s retrograde, and he will think this day will be just fine. But when it is too late, and surely Krafft knows also it is too late, the Sun entering Cancer will *get him there*, but *not* allow him to *finish the job?*’

A look of pain overcame Lord Everton. “I fear,” he looked at DeWohl, “that it is too late for our friend Krafft. He had been taken away...from all he loves. Many others who look at the stars are being taken as well. Many others.”

DeWohl felt another chill. He took out an ephemeris out of his briefcase and looked ahead in June on the day the Sun entered Cancer. His finger scrolled across to the Mercury position on that day and saw that Mercury would indeed be retrograde - the apparent backward movement

starting four days earlier. His finger then scrolled across on the aspects Lord Everton mentioned, but did not say it aloud. He closed the book with his finger still on June 22, 1941.

DeWohl looked at Lord Everton and the Lord immediately turned to him and said. “You are correct. That *is* the date. It’s a bad day for Hitler to start an attack. But there are no astrologers to warn him against such a move. All German astrologers are with the Gestapo now.”

Chapter 22 - The Scientist

“I am Wernher von Braun, the director of this facility.”

The prison door slammed shut behind him. Karl Ernst Krafft noticed around twenty other men standing around in an area the size of his tiny living room at home. The walls were once painted a light green, which had aged to an off white tint of green mixture that matched the color of many of the faces inside the cell.

“Karl Ernst?” A voice came from the left side of the cell behind several men who wore what once were fashionable suits - minus ties - with beaten and unshaven faces that were at least three days old. When the men parted Ernst Schulte-Strathaus wedged his way towards Krafft.

“Ernst!” Krafft had not seen the professor since his lectures at the Hamburg School of Astrology in the late 20’s, although they did maintain contact by an occasional letter. “Ernst Strathaus! What are you doing here?”

“The same as you, my old friend, the same as Hubert Reinholdt over there, Martin Schneller over there, Peter von Holstein.. we’re all here!”

Krafft took a closer look at some of the faces, masked by scrappy beards, tired eyes, bumps, cuts and bruises from interrogations. After a few seconds he began to recognize some of the features of professors and researchers that had attended his lectures and vice versa.

“What’s going on here? Why are they arresting *us*?”

“Didn’t you hear?” Peter von Holstein asked surprised. “You didn’t hear about Hess?”

Krafft shook his head.

“Hess flew to Scotland!”

A mumbling clamor spread around the room. An unseen irritated guard down the hall screamed, “Quiet in there!”

“For peace?” Confused, Krafft thought the mission by Hess was officially sponsored.

“For peace? Ha! For a British prison!” Ernst Strathaus’s voice was parched and weakened, but his fervor could still be heard. “The BBC is having a field day with this one! Hess himself said Hitler had not knowledge of his visit...”

“He flew alone, bailed out over Scotland.” Hubert Reinholdt added.

Krafft had spent the entire day and night at the Dark Fire building complex with his work - and Ewa Mann. Neither had listened to the radio nor spoke with anyone else over the past 48 hours. “Flew alone...when... why?”

“You really haven’t heard? All of Germany is talking about it”

“The entire world is talking about it...and laughing about it. Ernst Strathaus’s voice turned to gloom. “That’s why Hitler is over the top.”

“Because of Hess?”

“Because of *you*, Karl Ernst.”

“What?”

“Hess replicated your prediction June 1941 as the time when Germany and England would have to be at peace, and verified this had to be done, or the tide would turn against us.”

“How did you know he verified my work?”

“Because I saw him doing so. He asked me to replicate the findings as well.”

“Well, *did* you?”

“Yes, your work on Hitler’s chart, the Third Reich’s, and the Weimar Republic’s as well. All three showed aspects the tide of a war starting in 1939 would turn against Germany in June of 1941 if peace or victory was not had by then.”

Murmurs of agreement spread amongst many in the cell. Many there knew Krafft had predicted this war, along with Nostradamus in Century 3 Quatrain 57.

Krafft reflected for a moment. “Why didn’t you tell me you replicated my work?”

“Sorry, my friend, I had to swear an oath of secrecy on any work I did for Hess.”

Krafft understood the meaning of an astrologer keeping his oath of secrecy, an important clause in the astrologer/client relationship. However, this new information did not fully answer Krafft’s wondering why so many of Germany’s top astrologers were in jail.

The bars on the jail clanked by three guards running their clubs over the edges and gaps, creating a distinct rhythm. The cell door opened and the guard pointed while shouting.

“You. You. You. *Raus!*”

Krafft, Martin Schneller, and Ernst Strathaus walked out as ordered.

All three were taken down a corridor, up a flight of stairs then outside to be loaded into a truck. One guard sat with the three men inside the covered bed of the truck but did not say a word the entire trip, which lasted six hours. When the trucks stopped and the four men jumped down, Krafft noticed a water tower with a name - Peenemunde - painted on in large gothic style black letters. The prisoners were marched to a building marked ‘Forshung’ (research). Krafft

noticed Georg Lucht, who had a large cut below his ear, standing outside the building.

“George!” Krafft shouted.

“Silence.” The guard shouted while ramming the butt of his rifle in Krafft’s back.

All of the prisoners were lined up in front of the research building’s main door, where a major and man in civilian clothes walked out.

“I am Wernher von Braun, the director of this facility. I understand some of you should have backgrounds in planetary motion, trajectory, differential and integral calculus.” Von Braun looked at each one as he spoke, as if he already knew which man specialized in what area. “I have work for you in these areas - if you are *good*. If you are not, then you will be returned to the Gestapo where you can imagine what your fate will be.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Lucht noticed at the edge of the camp a group of seasoned prisoners digging ditches and wrestling with large stones. Even at this distance, Georg could see the effects of forced labor and poor food in the men’s faces and bodies.

Of all the men, Krafft, Lucht, and Ernst Schulte-Strathaus were unquestionably the best mathematicians of all the six hundred or so arrested astrologers Aktion Hess involved.

Why does this cocky young civilian need prisoners who are good in planetary motion, trajectory, and calculus? Krafft wondered.

“...did you hear if Herr Hitler ever use astrology for anything?”

“You mean he *believed* in astrology?”

“Believed in it? He was practically a professional.” Bettina blew out a puff of cigarette smoke. “A friend of my dated a colonel who was a personal friend of Hess. They were invited to dinner at his house in Spandau quite often. She told me Hess had rows and rows of astrology books in his library and he actually made her horoscope chart. He described her pretty well.”

“I can’t believe the third highest ranking official of the Nazi party took that mumbo jumbo so seriously.” Otto said while rolling over the bed to grab another slice of Swiss cheese and apple. His next report to London will be a gold mine.

As her precarious position with Goebbels grew steadily worse, she began to depend more and more on Otto for emotional and mental support. Subconsciously, the crueller Goebbels treated her, the more she opened up to Otto over what went on in the Reichstag building, something she took an oath never to do. Her unleashing the horrors occurring in Goebbels and surrounding offices seemed to rid her of the stress, shame, and pain - which at the same time had the amount on Otto’s reports grow more and more.

“He’s not the only one. Hess said even Goring wanted to look at something on his chart before he was made a Field Marshal.”

“And Hitler? Did Hess ever mention Hitler wanted something done with astrology?” Otto took a bite of apple. “Or did you hear if the Fuhrer ever use astrology for anything?”

Otto always felt awkward saying “the Fuhrer”, but had to in order to appear German.

“With Hess? No. Not that I know of.” Bettina put out her cigarette. “Goebbels and Hitler talked a lot about astrology for the propaganda projects. I wrote the letters to all of them inviting them to report to Goebbels’ project Dr. Fesel was running. There were a lot of astrologers working on that.”

“Doing what?”

“Mostly finding and twisting Nostradamus text, to be published in neutral countries suggesting they should stay out of the war, or side with Germany, since Germany will win.”

“Did Hitler believe in astrology?”

“Not at all.” Bettina said without hesitation. “He and Goebbels were in our office laughing when they were going over an article in a Swedish newspaper about a British general saying how Hitler must be using an astrologer since the Third Reich was always seemed to be a step ahead. Hitler said; *If everyone is worrying about whether or not I use astrology, then all the better. Let them worry over one more thing.*” (actual quote)

“Well, I think he does.” Otto said plainly. “I mean, just because it has come up in the way it has says there must be something to it. And if Hess is practically a professional astrologer, and talks about it with Goring and Goebbels, then he must have at least some kind of belief or acceptance with it.”

“Maybe you’re right. Maybe *we* should get our charts done to see if we are good for one another.” Bettina laughed as she reached over to embrace Otto.

As they touched the door to the apartment came crashing down. Five men in long black leather coats swarmed in surrounding Otto and Bettina in bed. Two of the men grabbed Otto’s arm and pulled them behind his back, handcuffing him while they dragged him off the bed. Bettina was pulled from bed by a tall man who laughed at seeing her naked, then pulled her to the opposite side of the room from Otto. Both victims looked at each other while the two others torn into Otto’s apartment, pulling out drawers, tearing down paintings from the wall, and just

general destruction. Neither of the men spoke. Otto noticed a Gestapo pin on the one holding Bettina.

The process of tearing up Otto's apartment took exactly twelve minutes.

"Your clothes look rather ordinary." The second searcher said after throwing everything out of a wardrobe and looking at Otto. He then looked at the bull necked man holding down Otto. "I *said*...*your* clothes look rather ordinary." The bull necked man then punched Otto in the ear. Bettina began to cry at the sign of violence.

"Can't you hear me? I said your clothes look rather ordinary."

"What can I say about that?" Otto said angrily.

"I'm *very* interested in what you can say about that." The man shouted louder. Otto sized him up to be the leader of the group.

Seeing the questioning was bordering on the ridiculous, Otto decided to answer as such.

"Well, I have ordinary clothes since I am an ordinary guy."

Again Otto was boxed in the same ear, which launched Bettina into hysterics. "Why are you doing this?" She screamed. The Gestapo agents ignored her.

"Oh, he's a funny one, isn't he?" The leader asked to no one in particular.

"Yes, funny, *very* funny." Answered the thug throwing the punches.

"That's good." Said the leader. "Because I like to laugh. Do you like to laugh, Otto?"

The man holding Otto answered for him. "Sure he does! Ha!" He punches Otto in the ear again. "Ha!" Punch. "Ha!" Punch. Otto's ear begins to bleed. Bettina shrieked and jumped up

but was held back by the thin, pale man next to her.

“So, Otto, you are an *ordinary* guy, with *ordinary* clothes.” The leader pulled out a cigarette and began studying it. “Tell me, Otto, why then would an *ordinary* guy with *ordinary* clothes have any need to visit a tailor so often, and a Jew loving tailor at that?”

A sickness sprang from Otto’s stomach. Stephan Johanstall and any part of the network connected to him were now perhaps known. *Was this just anti-Jewish harassment or was the British connection already discovered? Had Johanstall already been picked up? Has he cracked already?* The sick feeling from Otto’s stomach spread to the rest of his body.

“A tailor? I don’t use a tailor. I can’t afford one.”

“Is that so? Then Otto, why do I see you go in and out of the tailor shop on Wilhelm Alle so often?”

“Stephan. I go to visit Stephan, who is an old friend of my family. My aunt used to work in the theater with him a long time ago when they were actors.” Otto gave his cover story.

“How interesting. Your aunt’s name?”

“Dagmar Radtka.”

“And do you know where these actors played together, by any chance?” The leader said while exhaling his cigarette smoke.

“Yes, at the old Popenbittel House north of Hamburg was one.” Otto had rehearsed this story many times. “They spoke of their old theater times often.”

“I see. Tell me, Otto, what do you and this tailor friend of yours talk about when you visit him?” The leader asked mockingly. “I mean, a young, energetic, man like you, with a future in

radio and electronics, and an old crippled, hanging on to the old days of vaudeville theater possibly have in common?”

“We play chess.”

“Chess?”

“We like to play. None in my family does, and he has no one.”

“Hmmm” The leader’s *hum* continued while looking around the room. “Tell me, Otto. Do you like the theater here in Berlin?”

“Well, I like hearing the stories about it from Stephan.” Otto was grateful he was not being punched anymore.

“And did Stephan ever tell you about his *Jewish* friends?”

“No, he never mentioned anyone being Jewish.”

“*Never?*”

“Never.” Otto felt the sickness slowly dissipate from his body. It seemed for now it was the Jewish connection being investigated. But why were the interrogations so brutal? Is this the way every German was treated for having contact with one who once had Jewish friends? Perhaps something of his connection with Johanstall was not being revealed right now.

After a pause while finishing his cigarette, the leader shifted his attention to Bettina.

“And you, my dear. Your name?”

“Bettina Meyer.”

“And this is your husband?”

“We’re engaged.” Otto answered for her.

The leader slowly turned to Otto. “I asked *her*” The bull necked man raised his fist as if to strike again. The blow, however, never materialized.

“You are very beautiful, my dear. It would be a shame if such a lovely woman, with such an important job in the Ministry, loses everything for associating with those who wish to destroy the Third Reich.

“Otto is a loyal German, doing very important work for the war effort. What right have you to just come in here and ”

“*Right?*” The leader became angry at the sound of the word. “I will show you both what right I have to handle enemies of Germany. The leader snapped his fingers and pointed towards the door, where Bettina and Otto were then dragged through. There was another Gestapo agent standing guard in front of the door who simply watched as the two lovers, still naked, were hauled downstairs and out the back courtyard. In the alley both were shoved into separate cars, each one containing a driver and two men in the back with the arrested,

The number of men apparently involved in this arrest surprised Otto. He began to expect the worst, he must have been found out for spying. All this effort and resources are not just to investigate his association with someone who was labeled a “Jew-lover”.

Bettina and Otto stared at each other as their cars drove off. They would never see each other again.

“..not a time to start a conversation...”

“Ladies, we have a new boarder that will be staying with us for a while, I present to you Elaine Krafft.” Frau Schubert announced as she entered the dining room with Elaine. Despite the somewhat rundown condition of the house due to the men being off to war and the shortages,

Frau Schubert tried to maintain the dignity and class the house once represented.

Frau Schubert showed Elaine to the only empty seat.

“I would like for you all to introduce yourselves while I return to the kitchen to bring out the potatoes.” Schubert said, exiting through the double French doors.

The other women knew the real reason Frau Schubert did not introduce each of the eleven other women seated at the table - she could not remember each of their names. Even when they paid rent she required the money be put in an envelope with their names clearly written on it.

Elaine sat down and looked around into the eyes of the other women, most ignoring her and continued eating the soup Frau Shubert had put out earlier. Three women did, however, smile and bow their heads, as if to welcome Elaine to the table and her newly shared home. Then they went back to eating - hunger was an unseen growing condition among a certain groups now. These three were closer to Elaine's age, except the one opposite Elaine, who looked only about eighteen. The others were much the same age as Frau Schubert - grandmothers, great-grandmother types who were either too weary or too senile to be interested in anyone. All of the women felt too insecure to speak with an elegantly dressed and naturally beautiful woman.

After Elaine saw this was perhaps not a time to start a conversation, she began eating her soup.

Chapter 23 - The Friend

“However, it doesn’t look like our new ally may last that long.”

Admiral Payne put the report gently down on his desk, then took off his reading glasses and placed them on top of the papers. He rubbed his eyes then looked at DeWohl. “So you believe their time table is to be in Moscow by the middle of August?”

“Most definitely.”

“And you believe they can really achieve this?”

Most of the men around the room shook their heads in the affirmative.

Admiral Payne seemed to have this worst fears confirmed. The German propaganda machine boasted every day of the huge advances they were making into Russian territory, which was confirmed by the Russians and the few independent neutral observers on the rapidly collapsing front.

“Well, on the bright side, it could be we gain an ally out of this, if the old adage; the enemy of my enemy is my friend holds true with Stalin.” Payne commented, the solemnly added, “However, it doesn’t look like our new ally may last that long.”

DeWohl did not make any further comment, since he had mixed feelings about the German successes. Being born and raised in Germany, there was a sense of pride for his native country, and people, who were now without question the masters of Europe. He secretly wished he could be back in his beloved Berlin, especially now. *What excitement and energy that must be flowing over the streets and cafes now!*

“Well, let’s change the subject for now, Count DeWohl, Russia is a rather depressing story

at the moment.” The Admiral coughed out while going to his liquor cabinet.

“Don’t be depressed, Admiral. It was really to be expected.” DeWohl glanced at the wall map. “The Russians were mostly talk anyway. Despite what Stalin says, they are basically a failed system and third-rate power. It’s in the stars as well.” DeWohl was expressing his own hatred of the Russians from personal experience. A gang of Russian thieves stole the first and only car that DeWohl had ever purchased - a brand new 1936 Mercedes-Benz - from him at gunpoint while he was stopped in Miskoc, a Hungarian city near Ukraine.

“Do you think Krafft saw Stalin really being so weak?”

“Undoubtedly. If someone like me can see something so obvious in a nation’s horoscope, then Krafft certainly would have seen it.”

“How do you see such things in a horoscope, Count DeWohl? How can you get such clear descriptions of a country’s military or economic strengths and weaknesses just by looking at the position of the planets and stars?” The Admiral began to look at his wall map also, focusing on the last reported German positions.

“Admiral, do you remember your ancient Greek philosophy?”

“Well, yes. Vaguely.”

“I think it would be best to describe the workings of astrology by using the ancient Greek ideas of microcosm and macrocosm. Basically we could say cycles occurring on earth - such as a country’s economic cycle - can correspond to cycles seen in the heavens. Astrologers simply find a pattern in the sky that matches the one seen on earth. For example, Jenkins found each of Hitler’s invasions came exactly a day before a certain Moon position in relationship to Saturn and the Sun. All Jenkins had to do is find when that next relationship occurs, and presto, there is

your next invasion date!”

“But Jenkins was *wrong*”

“Well, nothing is perfect,” DeWohl thought for a second, “...yet it could have been *planned* to occur then, remember Lord Everton even said in order to bail out Mussolini, Hitler fell behind in his schedule. Jenkins could have been correct...we’ll never know.”

“Hmrrph.” The Admiral blurted out to show his dissatisfaction. Being a military man, he preferred clear cut logical explanations that could exploit enemy field positions, not the ‘could haves’ and ‘what ifs’ in philosophy and abstract thought. “But I need something definite on what Hitler’s next moves will be.”

The Admiral walked over to the windows and stared out at the lights of London blurred by a drizzle of rain. “When Russia falls, then the Germans will be back over here with everything they have.” The Admiral sighed. “What I’m hearing now, we may be surprised what this everything actually is. We’re getting reports of rocket bombs without pilots and super aircraft that can go over 500 miles per hour. If they finish Russia off as you say, then London will be in danger by Christmas.

DeWohl made a mental note to be out of London by then. He was living the high life as a commissioned officer in British Intelligence, and enjoying the salary that came with it also. He managed to get living quarters in the luxurious King Charles Arms Hotel, since he was, after all, a Count. But the fun was now wearing off and he didn’t know if he could pull off the charade of being an expert in astrology and of Karl Krafft any longer. Even more pressure was on him with all the Nazi successes that seemed to continue after the fall of France and his inability to offer anything substantial. The knowledge of the soon-to-come German super weapons bearing down

on London was certainly another reason to leave.

“Yes, well, thank-you, Count DeWohl for your efforts, I’ll read the rest of your report this evening.”

“You’re welcome.” DeWohl lowered his voice. “Admiral?”

“Yes?”

“I took the liberty to draw up some plans on some possible ways to rescue your son. As you know I spent some time in Berlin and some of the routes and layouts of neighborhoods might be useful.”

The Admiral was pleasantly surprised. “Thank-you, Louis. I sincerely appreciate that. Any assistance to get my son out of the hands of the Gestapo is greatly appreciated.”

DeWohl saluted and left. He had written the possible escape plans in order to score points with the Admiral since rumors were that the military was not happy with the work DeWohl and others were going in trying to predict future plans of the Third Reich’s military machine.

The exception was Lord Everton, whose 100% accuracy in anything the Admiral requested, and even in matters the Admiral or intelligence had no clue on. “Not only did Lord Everton correctly predict June 22 as the date of Hitler’s next attack,” the Admiral told a colleague, “as I recollect he was looking at Poland when he made his strange remarks, one could credit him with pointing out *where* the attack would come, since Poland was the jumping off point into Stalin’s Russia.”

“Well, this is a small world!”

“Only 30 more kilometers to Peenemunde!” Birgit shouted through the rushing air from the back seat. The convertible sped past a road sign narrowly missing an old man on a bicycle also using the winding country road. Although it was almost 9 o’clock in the evening, there was still at least two hours of sunlight left, the July sunlight not disappearing in northern Germany

until just after 11:00 pm.

Captain Reidler smiled to Birgit through the rear view mirror, then looked at his wristwatch and turned to Elaine, who was sitting in the passenger seat. Elaine smiled, and he returned his own expression of satisfaction. They were making good time despite getting stuck on the outskirts of Berlin, where a road repair crew had traffic backed up several kilometers. Once past the obstacle, the handsome naval Captain pressed north as fast as his red BMW could go.

Birgit had come through on every count, and more. The permission from General Schmidt-Prange for Elaine to see Karl Ernst was made out directly to Major Niehardt. She would be able to visit Karl Ernst as long as he was there, which may not be long thanks to Captain Reidler.

The Captain, on leave for three weeks from his U-Boat, volunteered to drive the girls up with just a touch of Birgit's breasts against his side when Birgit approached him on the matter after driving her to her boarding house. Once Reidler heard Elaine's story, he volunteered more than just his time and brand new sports car.

"You are the wife of Karl Ernst *Kratfff*?"

"Sure she is!" Birgit answered for Elaine. "Why would she make up such a story?" Birgit looked at Elaine, as if the former was too fragile to speak up for herself.

"Well, this *is* a small world!" The Captain smiled. "I would love to see Herr Krafft again!"

Both girls looked at each other puzzled.

"I attended his lectures all the time at the school when I was stationed in Hamburg. We went over several of my family member's charts together." Even though the Captain was

looking at Elaine, he couldn't help notice out of the corner of his eye the assets of Birgit - a seemingly irresistible pair of womanly features for a man who had been cramped in a U-Boat for several months out at sea. "Did you know everything he said about every one of my family members was right on target?" Reidler's inability to control his attraction now had him turn to Birgit. "You, know, Karl Ernst even said I would be in a leadership role responsible for many men's lives, and that was long before I even thought of joining the navy...and look at me!"

Reidler smoothly accelerated around a curve the full moon lit up perfectly.

"Peenemunde!" Birgit shouted when they stopped in front of the camp's front gate. The guards saw Reidler's papers and snapped to attention. All four men at the front gate gave Birgit a second and third glance, which evolved into long stares as the car pulled out of the gate and into the camp. All in the car witnessed firsthand a huge rocket, before the likes of which were only found in science fiction films.



A V-2 rocket being tested in Peenemünde.

After entering Major Niehardt's office, Reidler came out a few minutes later following a lieutenant who led him into a building 100 meters away. Soon the lieutenant, Reidler and Karl

Ernst emerged from the building and started towards the car. Elaine could not contain her joy.

“Karl Ernst!”

As Elaine ran out to him she could see he had lost several kilos and was extremely pale.

“Elaine!” His voice revealed another thing that had definitely changed for the worst.

“Each one of our jobs is important for the Reich.”

“When was the last time you saw your aunt?”

“She died three years ago.”

“Did you attend her funeral, Herr Huber?”

“No”

“No? Why not? Isn’t your family important?” Lt. Kriederman seemed to raise his voice after each question.

“I have four aunts and seven uncles, I can’t make *every* funeral and birthday.”

“You didn’t answer my question, I asked why didn’t you attend *her* funeral?”

Otto thought for a moment. “Let’s see, that was...March ’39 when she passed on...”

Otto’s eyes shifted to Lt. Schiller on the other side of the room with his arms folded. “. . .yes, the station could not let me off then. They were testing a new transmission system, frequency modulation, that was about to be installed.” Otto returned to facing Lt. Kriederman, “I was the only one who was familiar with working on it.”

“This was at North Deutsche Radio One, correct?”

Yes, that is correct.”

“You have an important job there.”

“Each one of our jobs is important for the Reich.” Otto surprised even himself with his answer. Far from being a party member, it sounded like something any diehard Nazi would say. The statement appeared to have a positive result; both Lt. Schiller and Lt. Kriederman lessened their frowns - a little.

“How right you are Herr Huber. Each of our jobs is important for the Reich, yours to inform the people and ours to protect the people.”

Otto relaxed a little thinking they were buying his story.

“Your girlfriend has a very important job as well, doesn't she?”

“I believe so.”

“So you know where she works?”

“She told me she works at the Ministry of Propaganda.” Otto of course knew Bettina worked directly for Minister Goebbels, but Bettina told him long ago she was only allowed to say she worked for the ministry. It was one of the ministry's strictest rules. She was never to say she worked for Goebbels exclusively. Otto had always respected her request - except to London.

“I see.” Kriederman sounded unconvinced and glanced over to Lt. Schiller who gave the look he was not satisfied with Otto's answer either.

“Herr Huber, what do you know about the Jewish blood in your girlfriend?”

“I beg your pardon?” Otto tried to act totally surprised with the info he had only recently discovered. “Bettina? Jewish? I can’t believe that!”

“Are you a Jew lover, Otto?” Lt. Schiller spoke from across the room, his voice almost cordial, friendly.

“No, of course not.”

“Then, why do you hate Jews?”

The question required a different kind of lie than simply answering “yes” or “no” in an opposite way. *Otto had to create hate that did not exist within him.* As he began his answer, he wondered if the lie would be convincing enough. “Because they are an enemy of the Reich. The reason Germany was on her knees economically and spiritually is because of the Jews, until our Fuhrer saved us.”

This particular party line was one that any German could say in their sleep, since this was the theme that Goebbels has broadcast for years over the radio.

Both Gestapo men smiled. Otto thought he had convinced them.

“Otto, do you love Frauline Meyer?”

“Yes, of course.” Otto declared without hesitation.

“Would you love her if she were a Jew?”

A lump immediately formed in Otto’s throat. His mind knew he had to answer with a lie, but his heart made him hesitate, as if to rebel against all the twisting of the truth that had previously occurred. The hesitation, however, was giving him away. He had to say something

quick. "I...uh..." Nothing was coming to his mind.

Kriederman's face moved to within 10 centimeters from Otto's nose. "Would - you - love - her - if - she - were - a - Jew?" He repeated slowly.

Otto's mind finally regained control over his heart. "*No!*" He shouted, to make up for the hesitation.

Both Lieutenants smiled again. Kriederman took a folder off the desk, opened it and began reading, "Bettina Meyer, Lutheran, daughter of Ursula Meyer, born Ursula Henkys, Lutheran, daughter of Daniela Henkys, born Daniela Bogdanowicz. Both Lieutenants acted greatly pained by reading a Jewish last name.

"Otto, my good Otto, do you know what happens to a boy, even a good German boy like you, when they are found sleeping with a Jew?" Schiller said the word 'sleeping' with a tone of disgust.

Otto did not answer.

Kriederman then picked up the phone and said one word: "Ready."

"I wish I could help you, Otto, you seem like a nice boy, a good German boy. It's one thing to innocently fall in love with a Jewish slut, but it's quite another to be in contact with the British - that's treason."

Otto's worst fear, only a few moments ago forgotten, now resurfaced as two guards entered the room and grabbed him.

"Goodbye Otto."

Dragged out of the room, Otto shouted, “What’s going on here?” The guards and both Gestapo lieutenants ignored him. Downstairs in the basement, the guards threw Otto in a cell. Looking around Otto saw there were nine other cells, but only one other occupant, who sat silently in the cell next to him. Neither man spoke to one another out of fear. Had they spoke, Otto might have found out the man next to him was Captain Best Payne. Without knowing it, in one of the odd ironic twists history so often holds, Otto was placed in a cell right next to the man the British had wanted him to rescue.

“He's making his biggest mistake now, right now!”

This was the third time DeWohl attended a meeting with his Counter Dark Fire Group and the first time Lord Everton was not present. The other astrologers and military men did not mention his absence, since despite his accurate prognosis, they thought Everton was crazy.

DeWohl thought the meeting was boring and unproductive without the Lord who spoke in riddles. While each man read his report and gave his predictions on what they thought Krafft might be advising Hitler, DeWohl gazed out the window to see the drizzle and city lights outline the thick clouds on the London skyline. The barrage balloons scattered around the city could be clearly seen. DeWohl wondered if Berlin had barrage balloons, or if the Germans would ever need them.

A ringing sound stopped the current speaker and awoke DeWohl from his daydream.

“Lord Everton is here.” Admiral Payne said while putting down the phone.

A few moments later Everton walked into the room, but looked at no one. He circled the table several times while mumbling to himself. Finally he stopped in front of Admiral Payne’s

huge wall map right and stood just to the east of the east coast of Africa and put his hand straight up which covered Saudi Arabia, and his finger pointed to the Caucasus Mountains. “The tide is beginning to shift, gentlemen!” He finally blurted out. “We won’t see it for a while, but it is going to get worse for *him* now!” Everton recently began referring to Hitler as ‘him’.

“The momentum is slowing down for him...in Russia?” Jenkins wondered out loud, not wishing to appear that he was speaking to Lord Everton directly.

“Yes, yes! Russia, the whole of Russia and soon will turn against him on every ocean. He’s making his biggest mistake now, right «ow!”

“Mistake?” DeWohl asked directly to Everton. “Where? How?”

“Here!” Everton tapped on the Caucasus. “Right here. He is changing his mind! He won’t go after the *heart* of Russia.” Everton pointed at Moscow. “Oil. He’s going after the oil. Not Stalin the *man*. He’s going after Stalin the *place*, to get his oil.”

Outside of Admiral Payne and DeWohl, who grasped the idea that Hitler had changed his objective in midstream, going after the oil fields in the Caucasus instead of Stalin and his central government in Moscow, no one fully understood the comments of Lord Everton. Not until a month later would his comments make sense when Germany’s Sixth Army and Fourth Panzer Army would clash with the Soviet Armies in Stalingrad.

“Let’s start over.”

DeWohl picked up the room service menu. “Look, we can start with the American Salad,

we haven't tried *that* yet.”

Without realizing it, DeWohl had made the wrong selection. The word “American” reminded her the Count was in America and she was not, as well as the reason they were not together in America. The current dissatisfaction with DeWohl added to the unpleasant feeling of the unresolved issue with her husband that only doubled her irritation.

“Men! You never listen!”

“Countess, please. We agreed not to stereotype each other, remember?”

“Excuse me, then, you - *Count* Louis DeWohl - never listen!” The Countess mocked DeWohl's falsely acquired new title. DeWohl was bewildered as to how simply suggesting a salad could make a woman so angry. He did not know his suggestion took her mind back to a moment several weeks before.

The Count and Countess both surprised each other in New Orleans, arriving together at the same party with different partners. Neither knew the other was in New Orleans at the time, for the Count had traveled to New York while the Countess remained in Chicago.

While each accepted the ‘occasional outside attraction’ and tolerated the occasional affair that resulted from such, something happened at this particular event in New Orleans. Something neither the Count nor Countess realized at the time. They both became jealous.

The Countess felt insecure the way Mrs. Arthur Finley carried herself with the Count, as if she had some kind of control over him. Infuriated, the Count could not believe the Countess ended up with the American banker he despised from the start since first meeting him in London and betrayed him in Holland; Prescott Bush.

How did they meet? The Count wondered, when he saw them enter the Mardi Gras party at the Hotel Monteleone. *They did not meet in London while I met with the Americans, nor in Holland when the deal was to be finalized.* The Count thought more. *He must have sought her out. He's playing her to get to me.* The Count's anger raised even more. Not only had the tables been turned with someone using the same tactics as the Count, but this was being done in a very personal nature - using his wife."

After New Orleans, the Count returned to New York with Mrs. Wilkins, and the Countess returned to London... alone. What the Count did afterwards is unknown. The Countess merely passed in circles of those she already knew. Louis DeWohl certainly being now one of the links in this circle of friends.

"Let's start over." DeWohl began. "We were laughing and joking, and then you mentioned food. Usually when you mention food, this is a signal you are hungry, and I make a suggestion that was on the menu. Then you became angry."

"Oh shut up!"

"But Countess, I'm merely trying to help."

"Help? I ought to go to the Naval Office right now, and tell them what a phony, a fraud, you are. In fact I ought to tell them your *real* name!"

Panic ran through DeWohl. His rank, social position and salary were now all in jeopardy.

The Countess began to collect her coat and purse.

"Please, Countess, where are you going?"

"Away from *here*" She shouted as she slammed the door.

DeWohl wondered if she would follow through on her threat.

Chapter 24 - The Chase

“...using Germany’s own radio station to get his messages out...”

Maxi again carefully made a sweep around the neighborhood with his eyes - no uniform police, no apparent Gestapo agents. “So far, so good.” He thought.

Francis Endels sat in the back seat with an old Vickers sub-machine gun under a spread out newspaper. “Any minute now.” Endels said, looking down the alley servicing the back of several buildings, one being the feared Gestapo headquarters.

Maxi’s regular taxi was back in his company’s garage so he would not be implicated. Should they be successful, this marked taxi would be found and studied. Being used was a taxi that had been salvaged and modified from the parts of other taxis over the years for just such a mission. Armor plating on both sides and rear, and protection for parts of the engine were added as well as an 8- cylinder engine instead of the standard four.

Maxi and Endels’ job was as the getaway car. The other car in the team, driven by Max Rupert, would ‘accidentally’ crash into the Gestapo car as it pulled out of the alley. The plan called for hitting the driver’s door hard, hopefully taking out the driver and devices of the car to eliminate it being used to pursue Maxi and Endels.

“Sorry to hear about Otto.” Endels said while still watching the ally.

“He’s probably in there right now.” Maxi’s eyes continued to scan the environment. “I wonder how they found him.”

“They also picked up Johanstall. It must have come from *his* side. Otto was always careful. Very careful.”

“Do you know who will take his place at the radio station?”

“I don’t know. Is it important?”

“Important!” That’s how all of our messages got out of Berlin! You didn’t know? Otto and some American chap, Armstrong, developed a way to have a radio wave travel inside another undetected, unless you have the right equipment. Otto was using Germany’s own radio station to get his messages out of the country.”

“Yea, that Otto was something.” Maxi now had an even greater appreciation for his good friend. “We never talked about his work, I guess we thought it would be...”

“Look!” Endels became excited. “Rupert is starting his car!”

Maxi started his car as well. He didn’t see anyone open the back garage door to the Gestapo building, but the instructions were that when Rupert started his car, Maxi was to follow as well.

At the opposite entrance of the ally, a black sedan with a driver and passenger pulled up the back entrance of Gestapo Headquarters. “How did Rupert see that coming?” Endels wondered aloud.

“I’ll ask him when we’re finished.” Maxi noticed his palms were sweating, and tried to ignore it. “Ready?”

“Ready.”

The back garage door to Gestapo headquarters opened and two uniformed guards stepped out with Captain Best Payne between them. “That’s him!” Endels was clearly excited.

A man in civilian clothes signed a paper in a clipboard given to him by one of the uniformed guards, then pushed Payne into the back seat. After giving the Nazi salute, they entered themselves and sat next to their prisoner.

“Here we go.” Maxi whispered to himself.

The black sedan idled for a few moments, when another car entered the alley and stopped behind it, also bearing the plates that identified it as Gestapo as well.

“Uh oh.” Endels moaned in pain.

Maxi and Endels both looked over to Rupert’s car with their mouths open. Rupert shrugged his shoulders and gunned his engine. They were only expecting one car, this extra car might change things...for the worst.

“Let’s hope the first car will block the second as well...” Maxi said through his teeth.

Again the door opened with two different guards in uniform, holding another prisoner to be taken off.

“It’s Otto!” Maxi shouted in disbelief.

“Come on, get over into position, Rupert’s started to move up!”

“But, Otto...!” Maxi tried to think how what they had already planned could save his friend as well.

Just as the first black sedan started to pull out of the alley, Rupert plowed into the driver’s side as planned.

“Go, go, go!” Shouted Endels, even though Maxi had already punched the accelerator to

the floor.

Rupert did his job perfectly. The driver side was totally smashed in, and it appeared the driver was either dead or unconscious. The man in the back with Payne was dazed, and a Gestapo agent from the second sedan got out and began chasing Rupert, who had already disappeared into the huge copper doors of the nearby Excelsior Hotel.

Maxi and Endels ran up to the smashed car appearing to offer help, assisting the dazed man next to Payne out of the car and out of the way.

Engels then ran back to Payne in the back seat. “Come on, get out! Payne looked dazed, but started to climb out. “Hurry! We’re here to rescue you!”

As Endels and Payne took their first steps away from the car, several gunshots echoed out of the ally. Endels could see Payne drop with a bullet hole above his ear. Blood was still squirting out as he hit the ground.

Bullets began popping all over the smashed cars, aimed at Endels, who rushed into Maxi’s protected taxi. Maxi was already in *gunning the engine to maximum rpm’s*.

“Go! Let’s get out of here!” Endel shouted in panic as he saw Maxi was not moving. “What’s the matter?”

As the four Gestapo men in the second car rounded the corner of the alley, Maxi shifted gears and shot straight towards them.

“Are you... ?” Endel was not able to finish his sentence. Within seconds the two uniformed guards were dead bodies rolling beneath the undercarriage, while one of the civilian clothed men was doubled over in pain after being ricocheted off the right headlight. The fourth

man managed to dodge the deadly taxi, but had to jump in the middle of the busy street. A shot from Endel in his back made sure he did not get up.

Maxi stopped the taxi in front of the two smashed cars and jumped out. “Otto! Here! Come on!”

Otto sprang out of his car and sprinted towards Maxi. Suddenly bullets began to rain from the windows above.

“Otto!” Maxi shouted one last time.

“Peenemünde was bombed two nights ago.”

“Come in, Captain.” Karl Ernst greeted.

Reidler came right to the point. “Well, what did you come up with?”

“I think they will choose this man.” Karl Ernst said while handing Captain Reidler one of five folders that were on a coffee table in the middle of the room. During the past two weeks, Krafft was going over the horoscopes of five candidates the Germans knew who were possible replacements as commander in northern Africa.

“Montgomery?”

“Based on each of these horoscopes, he represents, in my opinion, the kind of commander the British would choose.” Karl Ernst thought for a moment. “He was born in London, was he not?”

“Aren’t *all* British people born in London?” Reidler joked.

Krafft did not see the humor. Horoscope charts were serious business. “It is very important where one is born to do a chart. Many of these other candidates were born in various parts of the British Empire, I just wanted to make sure he was indeed born in London.”

“This was the information given to me.” Reidler said without thinking. “I see you have made two horoscopes for each man, why is that?”

“One horoscope is the man’s natal horoscope, or birth chart, for describing his basic personality. The second chart is a location chart, showing us how this personality will operate in the area of question.”

“You mean, he might change his personality by being in another *place*?”

“Do you change *yours* when you travel to another place, Captain?”

Reidler thought for a moment but did not answer. He could not think of an answer at that moment, but somehow felt intuitively Krafft’s statement was true.

Elaine brought three coffees in and sat them on the only table in the tiny apartment.

“You seemed surprised by Montgomery as being the most likely candidate. Does his record suggest otherwise?” Krafft continued.

“No, his record is pretty much like the rest of them. They all come from the same schools, do what they are told when they come out, all fight pretty much the same way. Rather boring lot, I’d say.” Reidler took a final drag on his cigarette.

“I’m curious, Captain, just what experience does Montgomery have?”

“He was in command of the British Third Division in France for nine months before we pushed him and all the other to Dunkerque. He then was in charge of the defense zone in

southeastern England. Nothing special, really.”

Karl Ernst on the other hand did see something special in Montgomery’s chart, especially the one cast for Montgomery in Egypt. He however, did not tell Reidler. Long ago, Karl Ernst learned that volunteered astrological information went unheeded and unappreciated, especially with military men. Astrologers were only consulted when a military man had no idea about an unknown aspect of the enemy, and even then it was just a matter of curiosity. In most military matters the military felt they knew everything. Even now with Karl Ernst’s advice, it appeared Reidler was not convinced Montgomery would be the choice anyway.

“Which one of these horoscopes is the best match against our Rommel?”

“Montgomery.” Krafft said without hesitation.

“You seem to like this Montgomery.”

“I don’t like him, I’ve never met him. I’m only saying what the chart reveals.” Since working with astrology, Karl Ernst hated to justify his work.

“I see, well...” Reidler was interrupted by a knock on the door, which Elaine got up to answer. It was Frau Schubert.

“There is a young woman to see Herr Krafft, but she didn’t want to disturb your meeting.” Frau Schubert remained in the doorway as if waiting for instructions.

“Thank-you, Frau Schubert.” Karl Ernst said while getting up. “Captain, Elaine, will you excuse me for a moment?”

As Karl Ernst followed Frau Schubert down the steps, his heart stopped when he saw the slender figure waiting at the bottom of the stairs. It was Ewa Mann.

“Karl Ernst!”

Although elderly, Frau Schubert could still recognize that certain kind of energy when two people needed to talk in private. “I’ll go check on things in the kitchen,” Schubert said while passing Ewa, “you both may have your conversation in my room.”

“Thank-you, Frau Schubert.”

Ewa immediately put her arms around Karl Ernst as he shut Frau Schubert’s bedroom door. “Oh God!” She cried. “I thought I’d never see you again!”

“How did you know I was here?”

“One of Schmidt-Prange’s aides told Fesel, and he told me.”

“Ewa, so much has happened, I’m not sure...”

“No, please, don’t say anything now, I just had to see you, to make sure you really are alive.” Tears rolled down her face.

“What do you mean? Alive?”

“Weren’t you sent to Peenemunde?”

“Yes. Why?” Krafft notice Ewa was visibly upset. “Ewa, what’s wrong?”

Ewa finally collected herself. “Haven’t you heard what happened?”

Karl Ernst shook his head.

“Peenemunde was bombed two nights ago. Totally destroyed. Nearly everyone working there lost their lives.”

Karl Ernst thought of all his good friends who had worked there. “God, no. Oh my god, no!”

Ewa began crying again. Karl Ernst held her and began to think of the others.

“Have you heard anything about Schulte-Strathaus? Georg Lucht? You remember Lucht, don’t you?”

The pain in Ewa’s eyes grew. “Dead. They’re all dead.” Ewa wiped her tears. I have to go.”

“Karl Ernst?” Elaine called from the top of the stairs.

Ewa opened the door and put her finger to her lip. “I have to go. Till leave you a message with Frau Schubert.”

Karl Ernst wanted to embrace Ewa one more time, but she was already gone before he raised his arms up. He walked out into the hallway and to the base of the stairs. Elaine was waiting at the top of the stairs.

“What is it?” Elaine asked.

“George Lucht is dead.”

“We have enough problems justifying this department...”

“Lord Everton, do you see anything that would suggest Stalin being swept from power and a new Soviet leader making peace with Germany?”

“No, no.” Lord Everton said in a singsong manner. “Those in the Kremlin fear Stalin more than they do the Germans.”

“Well, then, gentlemen,” Admiral Payne addressed the entire table, “is it then the general consensus that our Count DeWohl is pulling his material out of thin air, or is there any astrological basis for all of his predictions?”

The men looked at one another and nodded their heads in agreement, as if they agreed it was now OK to reveal a long kept secret.

“The Count does have an understanding of astrological principles,” Jenkins began in a diplomatic manner, “however, when it comes to the relevant use of these principles for interpretation, then it seems, as you put it - he is pulling this out of thin air.”

The other men shook their heads in agreement, and a muffled “Hear, Hear” could be heard from several members.

“Lord Everton? What do you think about DeWohl?”

“Oh, I think he remembers *more* about Berlin than he is telling us, yes, yes, I do at that!”

“Remembers, Lord Everton?” Windelton asked. “As in a memory?”

“Yes, yes, he has lots of memories of Berlin. As a small chubby school boy who was teased a lot, as a young teenager having an affair with a 30 year-old divorcee. Yes, yes, his mind is full of the ladies!”

Admiral Payne began to see the picture first. “You mean he *lived* in Berlin as a *child*, he grew up there?”

“Oh yes, certainly yes. He read Goethe like all the others. He didn’t like math though. A pity, he could have been a really good musician. Yes, he would...”

Admiral Payne looked around the room. “We may have a dangerous situation here,

gentlemen.” The other men began to get the picture as well.

Lt. Kingston spoke first. “If our Count is really not from Hungry, but actually a German, then...”

“...we are all in a lot of trouble.” Jenkins finished.

“Oh, no. No trouble at all.” Lord Everton said while getting up and walking over to the photo that seemed to fascinate him. “He’s not a patriot or anything, he’s only in it for the money...and the girls. It’s the uniform that gets the girls, you know.” After examining the photo, Lord Everton turned to the group and smiled.

Lt. Kingston turned to Admiral Payne. “Does he mean DeWohl has been hired by the Germans?”

The Admiral did not answer. Instead he turned and stared at Lord Everton. After a few moments, the Admiral questioned the eccentric Lord. “Lord Everton, if he is doing it for the money, just who exactly is *paying* him?”

“Why *you* are!”

There was a silence around the room.

“Yes, we pay him. But is there anyone else?”

“Why no. That’s the reason he is here. You are the only ones who *would* pay him now. This is the best job he’s ever had. That’s why he’s here, the money, the fancy hotel room, girls, and the uniform to get the girls.. .especially...a pretender.. .the uniform...”

His commission. Payne thought to himself. “That’s why he insisted on a commission.” The Admiral’s angered was tempered by a sense of relief that - at least according to Lord

Everton - DeWohl was merely an opportunist and not a German plant.

“Shall we have him arrested?” Lt. Kingston asked.

“No.” The Admiral decided. “We have enough problems justifying this department without the press getting ahold of a story like this. What can I say to the Prime Minister if the papers read ‘*Naval Intelligence recruits phony astrologer*’? Just search his room for now. We’ll handle this in house.”

Jenkins nodded to confirm his understanding.

“Now, gentlemen. If this turns out to be just a minor problem as it appears, I think we can solve this discretely. We can transfer him to another department, then out of the picture all together.”

The group gave a murmur of agreement.

“With *that* resolved, gentlemen, let’s focus on these new wonder weapons the Polish underground has been sending us so many reports on.”

“So you will be building a new empire here?”

“I see why the early Spanish explorers called this place ‘the fair winds’, the breeze here is absolutely perfect.”

“Thank-you, senorita.” The waiter said, as he placed the two decorated drinks down on the wicker table. “Would the couple like to order their dinner now?”

The Count looked at his wife, showing the decision was being left up to her.

“Please, let me see what this drink does to me, I think that will determine what kind of food will follow.” The Countess said with a smile.

“Very well, senorita, a wise decision.” The waiter replied while standing at an almost military style of attention, then bowed and left.

“Where did you learn what Buenos Aires meant?” The Count said while raising his glass for a toast.

“It was on the hotel information booklet in our room.”

“I see.” The booklet was the very same one the Count had said was useless when they first entered their room - prompting him to throw it into the trash so he could set his personal belongings on the table.

“I’m glad you told me to meet you here darling, I wondered where you ran off to after New Orleans.” The Countess pretended not to know she knew the Count returned to New York with his mistress.

“I felt we needed to talk, my dear. I mean, really talk... about us.”

The Countess had never heard such a tone from her husband before. “Dear, do continue.” She said while taking her first sip of the fruity drink.

The Count looked out over the ocean, as if contemplating what was happening on the other side. “Dear, if the war continues as it has, and the Nazis win - which at this point looks like they will - I don’t think we could ever go back to Europe again.” There was a deep sadness in his voice, from one who has lost his home, and in the Count’s case, an empire.

“So where will *you* go?”

“That’s why I asked you to come here. I don’t want to simply decide where I will go, I would like for us to decide where *we* will go.”

The Countess put her drink down. She had not heard him talk like this since he courted her decades ago. “Us?” She asked acting surprised.

“Yes, dear, us. Please, let’s not play games or use this moment for revenge.” The Count said sincerely. “I became jealous in New Orleans. For the first time in my life, I became jealous. It was a rather ugly feeling, actually.”

Emotionally moved by the openness, the Countess reflected on her horrible sensations in New Orleans as well. *Is what she felt jealousy as well? “And your suggestion for our future?”*

The Count looked relieved. Her answer suggested hope for their relationship. With the Nazis and Japanese taking nearly all of his possessions and instruments for manufacturing wealth, he now realized the value of his relationship with his wife. “During the years I have done some investments here in South America, just in case of such an emergency.”

“So you will be building a new empire here?” The Countess wasn’t surprised.

The Count knew what this question really meant - would he be devoted to his ventures or to her. “No, not at all. This is just a few coffee and banana plantations, and some manufacturing holdings in a few cities. They are already built. We will simply relax and enjoy life.”

“Do you really mean that?” The Countess could hardly believe her ears. For over fifty years she wondered if he would ever see that money and power were of no use unless enjoyed.

“Yes, dear, I do. Sometimes the world needs to be turned upside down to learn what is important. Let’s quietly enjoy life....let the rest of the world tear itself apart.”

“But don’t you think the war will eventually come here?”

“Politically perhaps. But having armies invading and planes fighting overhead? No, I don’t think so.”

“Another drink, seniorita, senior? The waiter passing noticed both had empty glasses.

“Yes, please,” the Countess answered. “...and I’d like the house salad.” She said while looking at her husband.

The Count smiled. “I’ll try one of your famous Argentinean steaks. A T-bone, please medium-rare.”

“Of course he did.”

“Yes, gentlemen, what seems to be so urgent?”

“Herr Minister, we have uncovered some shocking evidence in one of our investigations. We are truly sorry to disturb you, but we thought you should know immediately.”

“And I take it this information is top secret since you could not tell me over the phone?” Goebbels was a bit miffed since he had to ‘put on hold’ a meeting with a general in the next room who was arranging stolen art treasures from France to be delivered to Goebbels country home.

Lt. Schiller tried to fake his concern. “Herr Minister, our investigation of Bettina Meyer’s boyfriend, Otto Huber, revealed that Frau Meyer has Jewish blood!”

“What?” Goebbels tried to fake his surprise.

“Herr Minister.” Lt. Kriederman handed the Minister of Propaganda the entire file of the Meyer family, a set of documents Goebbels thought he had buried for good.

After leafing through several pages and pretending to read select parts, Goebbels gasped, “How can it be this was overlooked?”

Kriederman and Schiller simply continued to look at Goebbels with blank faces. They wanted Goebbels to sweat a bit, for both lieutenants already knew this file was the work of Goebbels himself.

“I want an investigation into this oversight!” Goebbels acted outraged. “I want both of you to handle this personally, and to report directly to me to find out who is responsible for this oversight!”

“Jawohl, Herr Minister!” Both lieutenants shouted in unison, as if they both were completely loyal to him.

Goebbels took a deep breath, his mind racing on how he could control this situation *and* these two Gestapo agents.

“Herr Minister, I believe under the circumstances we ought to take Fraulein Meyer out of the picture as soon as possible.”

“Yes, yes, you are right. But I don’t want anyone in the Reichstag to be aware or involved in this, she has many friends here, and...” Goebbels could not think of anything else to add.

Kriederman used the pause to make his planned suggestion. “Herr Minister, we have a safe house in Rudersdorf we could keep her until this is all sorted out.”

“Yes, good thinking Lieutenant. We may need her later to finger out any accomplices in

this matter.”

“We’ll pick her up at once.” Schiller lied, since they already had her.

“Very well, call me when she is secure.” Goebbels pretended to study the files intensely again.

“Jawohl, Herr Minister.” Both men gave the Nazi salute and left. In the hallway Schiller and Kreiderman broke into smiles. They both had exactly what they wanted:

- The appearance to Goebbels they both were doing their duty
- The appearance to Goebbels they were trying to help him
- They had Bettina Meyer - the Achilles Heel of Goebbels - in their possession

“Do you think he had sex with her?” Kriederman asked.

“Of course he did.”

“Then we really have something on him. We can show he was the one who overlooked her background...”

“And sex with a Jew would ruin his standing in the Reich, *that* ought to keep him under our thumbs!”

Again, both men laughed at their fortune in finding Bettina Meyer.

“Then there shouldn’t be any problems.”

Karl Ernst normally did not sleep past 9:00 am, but his weakened state from the camp and the rationed food in Berlin had him mentally and physically exhausted. The bombing raids

over Berlin, which only a year ago were just a scattered nuisance from time to time, were now a regular part of daily life, and becoming more and more deadly. Many of their friends, both old and new, fell victim to the American bombings by day, or the British ones by night.

A knock came on the door as Elaine was stirring the last grams of sugar into her morning tea.

“Krafft residence?” The two men were not in uniform, however Elaine sensed they were police, military, or Gestapo.

“Yes...?”

“Karl Ernst Krafft’s residence?”

“He’s sleeping.”

“Get him up.”

Elaine turned around to get him, but Karl Ernst opened the bedroom door before she took a step. He was partially dressed in a shirt and pants, but without his socks and shoes.

“Karl Ernst Krafft, come with us.”

“What is this about?” Karl Ernst asked, obviously still half-asleep.

Both men remained silent.

“My husband is serving the Third Reich in a special program with General Schmidt-Prange, why is he being taken away?”

“There is no trouble, we only need him to answer some important...” the taller one said to Karl Ernst, then turned to Elaine, . . .and *confidential* questions.”

The shorter one, who had a large scar on his neck, reached down by the shoes near the door and held them out to Karl Ernst. Elaine then walked over to the radiator by the window and pulled off a pair of socks that were being dried.

“And when will he return?” She asked while handing them to Karl Ernst.

“It shouldn’t take long, //he cooperates.” The taller one answered.

Elaine instinctively did not like either man. “My husband has always gave his full cooperation and service to the Third Reich!”

“Then there shouldn’t be any problems.” The shorter one said as they walked out with Karl Ernst.

Chapter 25 - The End

“We’ll meet again when this is all over.”

“Admiral?”

Admiral Payne took a breath. “What is it Captain?”

“Confirmation, sir.” The Captain handed the Admiral a telegraph. “Im sorry, sir.”

“Thank-you, Captain, I think I can handle it from here.” Payne had been expecting this confirmation after the initial report his son had been killed.

“Is there anything I can do, sir?”

“Thank-you, Captain, no, your thoughts are appreciated.”

The Admiral returned to his desk and rested his face in his hands and dozed off. The fog from outside somehow filtered into and filled his room. As air raid sirens could be heard in the distance, a light began glowing in front of his desk. Payne could feel the warmth of the light and looked up.

“So nice to see you.” It was Lady Hightower’s voice.

“What?” The Admiral was confused. He could not see her clearly and did not notice her entering the room.

“I’m going to visit your son.”

“You know?”

“Yes, we wanted to thank-you for allowing two old timers to have a sense of purpose in life

again.” The voice seemed to come from the light, which was now slowly moving towards the window.

“But where are you going?”

“We’ll meet again when this is all over.” The light then disappeared.

“Lady Hightower! *Lady Hightower!*”

Commander McMorrison opened the door. “Admiral! Is everything alright?”

Admiral Payne looked at the window, then the door the McMorrison entered.

“Commander, did Lady Hightower come by my office today?”

“No sir.”

The Admiral began looking around his office.

“Admiral, are you sure everything is alright? Some coffee or tea, perhaps?”

“No, no thank-you.” The Admiral thought for a moment. “Please call Lady Hightower, I have a question for her.”

The Commander left and the Admiral turned on the radio. His empty room now vibrated with Glenn Miller. After a few other dance songs the news came on. Rome had been captured.

“Admiral?” Commander McMorrison stuck his head through the door but did not enter. He seemed apprehensive.

“Yes?”

“I called the Lady, but their phone was out.” The Commander swallowed. “I asked

communications to run a check and they said the entire EW- 5 section was out.”

“Out?”

“Yes, sir. I then asked general services about the lines being out in that area and...”

Payne could see from the pause the Commander needed to draw some extra energy to finish his statement.

“... and they said a V-1 buzz bomb made a direct hit on Everton Manor around thirty minutes ago.

“My god!”

“I’m sorry, Lord Everton and Lady Hightower are dead, sir.”

“Next time I’m going to just let the Ami go...”

“Thank God you decided to come down this road!” The man said as he got into the car with his two heavy bags. “I’ve been stranded by the road for over four hours!”

Doesn’t the sixty-five buses service this road? Maxi asked as he started off.

“It’s supposed to, but it passed me by if it *did* come!”

Maxi laughed. Humor was scarce in Germany these days, yet this man retained his fairly well despite Germany’s and his misfortunes. “Where are you trying to get to, friend?”

“Rudersdorf.” The old man said. “That is, if it is still there!”

“Now why would the Americans and British want to bomb a nice quiet town like

Rudersdorf?”

“I wouldn’t know why, but they do.”

“Are you kidding?”

“No, I’m not. We’ve been hit three times this month. All we have there are smelters for rocks!”

“Well, maybe they think all those smoke stacks you have there are factories.”

“Funny, that’s exactly what our Bettina says.”

“Bettina?” A charge went through Maxi when he heard the name. He hadn’t heard it pronounced in over two years, but hearing it resurfaced the intense love he felt for her.

“Yea, a nice girl staying with us. She has been...” The old man stopped to watch a shiny silver plane roar overhead at tree top level, and a few seconds later followed by two green and tan ME-109’s chasing it.

“What was that?” Maxi asked. “That wasn’t a bomber!”

“That’s those new American 47’s, rather fast for such a fat plane, and rugged too. I saw two FW’s have at least a hundred hits on one those American fighters and it never did go down.” The old man looked around the sky. If the 47’s are here that means the bombers will soon be here too.” The old man’s eyes never left the sky. “Would you mind driving, let’s say, as fast as you can now? I’d hate to be out in the open when the bombers come. You can use our shelter.”

Maxi floored his taxi and began scanning the horizon as well. In just over fifteen minutes they were in Rudersdorf and in front of the old man’s house.

“Marcus Diehl is my name,” the old man said, “welcome to my house.”

The heavy rumble of several hundred B-17's could be heard just beyond the horizon. Both men made haste inside the house to the kitchen in the back and opened the door to the cellar.

“Bunny! Bettina! Are you down here?”

“Yes. Hurry, Marcus!”

Marcus and Maxi filed down the stairs.

“Maxi!”

Maxi looked in the corner. It was Bettina Meyer.

“Bettina! What are you doing here?”

“You two know each other?”

“Why, yes. I would take Maxi's taxi home when I worked at the Ministry.”

Bettina gave a stem look to Maxi as if to not say anything more, a look that Maxi understood. Bettina then did all of the talking so Maxi could understand her situation. Lt. Kreiderman had taken Bettina to his parent's house for safe keeping from Goebbels. When they and their house were destroyed in a bombing raid, the Diehl family across town took her in. Lt. Kreiderman assumed Bettina was in the house with his parents when they were killed; being the house was completely destroyed and there was no sign of Bettina.

Marcus then told the story of how he captured a P-51 pilot who had bailed out.

“Paperwork, interviews, questioning, and that's what they made *me* do! Next time I'm going to just let the Ami go....not going through *that* again!”

After the air raid, Bettina and Maxi had a chance to talk in private. Bettina learned of Otto's death in the escape attempt, and Bettina learned about her family.

“... and my mother?”

“They took her away nearly nine months ago...”

Lt. Kreiderman had lied when he told Bettina her family would be safe. After several hours of talking and piecing together what each had discovered, both had a better understanding as to the true nature of the crumbling Nazi state. Bettina and Maxi both realized there was nothing in Berlin to go back to, and Germany was not a place to be either. Bettina had a relative in Czechoslovakia who lived out in the mountains far from any town or city. They both felt this would be the safest place to go. With three quarters of a tank of gas, the clothes on their backs and just under 300 Reichmarks, both made their way south to freedom and a new life...together.

* * * * *

“Ah Deutschland, my great, poor Deutschland, will we ever.

“Hurry up there!” Shouted Schellenberg while standing on the docks directing the assortment of Russian and Polish prisoners who were struggling with the heavy wooden crates onto the ramp that led to U-437.

Kriederman and Schiller, now both in major's uniforms, were on deck of the U-437 with Captain Martin Pressler.

“They have quite a blockade from Skagden to Goteborg, so we'll try to cross there after 2:00 am, the Moon will be down after then so we won't get lit up.”

“Can't we pass that area submerged?” Schiller asked.

“I don’t want to take any chances. They got Michael Stover’s boat two nights ago...he was submerged.. .they must be using magic.”

Schellenberg joined the three men on deck. “Is all the gold loaded?”

“Every case.” Kriederman answered.

The fourth man in this enterprise, Olaf Janke, the Painted Man, popped out from a hatch below. “Ah, we’re all here and we’re already! Let’s depart!”

The four had been classmates in Gestapo school and were known as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” since they were judged the best example bringing Conquest, War, Famine, and Death to friend and foe alike. All four ended up stationed in Stettin, and they were not going to fight to the end as Hitler had ordered.

Schiller turned to take one last look at the skyline and castle of Stettin. “Ah Deutschland, my great, poor Deutschland, will we ever... ?” Schiller’s words froze seeing three P-51 Mustangs suddenly appear over the rooftops of the city, each launching a series of deadly rockets heading straight for the docks... and U - 437.

“Nooooo...!”

The first salvo from all three planes were aimed directly at their U-Boat, the only military vessel in the already bombed out docks. Five direct hits had the submarine in flames assisted by several hoses that were still attached for refueling, which spread the fire on the docks as well.

Olaf froze as he watched the flames shoot towards him, reliving the childhood horror of being awakened in his burning bedroom that disfigured much of his body. Since that time had to appear ‘normal’ using woman’s cosmetics to pencil in such features as eyelashes and eyebrows.

The flames caught up with him and he again experienced the pain of being burned, this time until his death.

Schiller and Kriederman were both killed instantly by heated shrapnel.

Schellenberg managed to save himself by diving into the sea, but landed on a sunken barge about a meter under the surface that entangled his left foot like a metal shark. He was able to keep his head above water by treading with his hands and bouncing his right leg on the wreck. He noticed several figures on the dock. "Help!" He managed to shout on one of the bounces.

The burning oil created a stench making it difficult to breath.

"Help! Down here!"

Three faces peered over the side and saw Schellenberg in the water. At first Schellenberg was relieved to be seen by someone, until he saw the hatred in the Polish POW's eyes, the very same Polish POW he had been abusing, humiliating, and beating these past several months.

The three began throwing shattered pieces of concrete from the damaged dock on him. Schellenberg ducked under water, which cushioned the blows from the heavy objects, but still had to come up for air. The Poles were finding larger and larger pieces of concrete, and becoming more and more accurate. On his fifth time up for air, Schellenberg felt a blow on his head that had him seeing stars. Even with his eyes open everything around him faded to black, and with his arms and legs already numb, the last thing he felt was the cold, oily Baltic seawater entering his lungs.

“...since many records on both sides have been destroyed.”

“Name?”

“Harais Keun von Hoogerwoerd.”

“Address?”

“14 Dornerstraat, Amsterdam.”

“Herr von Hoogerwoerd, what can you tell me about his man?” The American Captain held out a photo of Ion Antonescu, the Premier of Rumania who cooperated with and allowed the German occupation of his country in spite of a declaration of neutrality.

Baron Von Hoogerwoerd recognized him as the man who had many meetings with his father before the war. “I know he was the one actually ruling Rumania when King Carol’s son, Michael, became king.”

“And how do you know this?” Unlike most Americans, the Captain spoke Dutch perfectly, with no regional or foreign accent. At first Von Hoogerwoerd thought this captain might have Dutch parents, but he did not have a Dutch surname.

“From a man named Nicolae Ceausescu.”

“Can you tell me about Nicolae Ceausescu?”

“I know he was a weapons dealer.”

Silence from the Captain suggested he was waiting for more information.

“I also heard he was a member of the Iron Guard.”

The Captain began writing in his notebook. After two minutes, he stopped and pulled out a photograph. "Is this Nicolae Ceausescu?" He asked while pointing at one of three men in the photo.

"Yes, I believe that is him."

"Did your father have any dealings with him?"

"Not that I know of." Von Hoogerwoerd lied.

"And this man?" The Captain held up another photo.

"I don't know him," the Baron lied again, "who is he?"

"An American. One who had supposed dealings with your father. Have you ever heard of your father mentioning a Prescott Bush?"

"No, never." Von Hoogerwoerd lied to cover the other lies.

The truth was that Nicolae Ceausescu was an important link in the Von Hoogerwoerd's control of Rumanian politics and oil. Prescott Bush was the link into UBC (Union Banking Corporation) headed by Bush and his father-in-law George Herbert Walker.

"Captain?"

"Yes?"

"Am I under arrest or something?"

"No..." The pause seemed to almost suggest 'not yet'. "Surely you realize your knowledge is critical, since many records on both sides have been destroyed."

"I see"

The Captain pulled out a pack of American cigarettes, and offered it to Baron von Hoogerwoerd, who declined. "Excuse me for a moment." The Captain said and then left.

The Baron wiped his hands, which were sweating. He wondered now if his decision to return to Amsterdam immediately after it was liberated was a wise one. He thought of the past over which he was being questioned over, the suitcases of money he and his father would bring in to Rumania, and the gold they would take out of Germany.

After 15 minutes, the door opened and the Captain entered with Nicolae Ceausescu, who had a blank and detached look on his face. The Captain faced von Hoogerwoerd and then glanced at Ceausescu, who nodded. The Captain then motioned Ceausescu to leave, who exited to a waiting MP guard with pure white gloves.

"Herr von Hoogerwoerd, *now* you are under arrest."

"...unfortunately there has been a problem since our last correspondence."

Elaine felt a chill when she arrived at the gates of Dachau and was surprised when she saw 1933 marked as the construction date of the complex. She had been in Munich many times since that date, yet never heard the name or anyone mention such a place existed.

The guard at the gate waited until she knocked at his window before he looked up from the newspaper he was reading. After heaving a long sigh, he slowly put down his paper and slid open the window.

"I'm here to see my husband."

The guard looked lifelessly at Elaine.

"I was told he is here and I want to see him."

“May I see your permission?” The guard finally said.

Elaine took out a folded letter from her purse and handed it to him.

“Hmm.” His tone made it appear that something was wrong, but Elaine maintained her stare directly into his eyes. He put down the letter and picked up the phone. “Schulze here. An Elaine Krafft to see a Karl Ernst Krafft.” After a pause, Schulze looked at Elaine while still holding the phone to his ear. “Yes.” He continued eyeing her. “Yes.” He finally put the phone down. “Frau Krafft, you may go to building number three, which is straight ahead. Colonel Buerger will meet you in the front.” He handed her back the letter.

“Thank-you.” Elaine mouthed, but did not utter a sound to show her contempt.

Colonel Buerger was a pocked-marked faced man with greasy black hair slicked straight back.

“Elaine Krafft?”

“Yes, I’m here to...”

“Yes, yes, I know... coffee?”

“No, I’m here to see...”

“Frau Krafft, unfortunately there has been a problem since our last correspondence.”

“And what problem is that *now*?” Elaine said coldly. She had been misled by the Third Reich for nearly two years now and was hardened by it.

“Just after sending you the permission to visit here, he was sent to Oranienburg.”

“Couldn’t you have informed me? Or delayed that order? You knew I was coming, didn’t

you?” Elaine turned around to leave.

“Frau Krafft...please, wait. All I can do is follow orders.”

Elaine walked out exactly the same way she came in, not speaking to the guard at the gate to let her out. She opened the front gate by herself.

“Where are we going?”

From his bunk in the infirmary Karl Ernst could see out of a small four-pane window, half of which was covered in snow. Eight days going into 1945 seemed more of an ending than the beginning of a new year. There had been no New Year’s celebration among the prisoners or the guards, many of who seemed nervous of the advancing Americans and British from the west and the Russians from the east.

“You’re up early this morning.” A raspy voice from below him said softly.

“Good morning Henrik.”

“Good morning Karl Ernst.”

Henrik, a film cameraman who had the misfortune of telling his true feelings to the wrong person after the German public was made aware of the assassination attempt against Hitler on July 20, 1944. A person still blindly loyal to the Nazi cause reported Henrik Sternberg to the Gestapo as fanatic Nazis were trained to do. He arrived in Oranienburg prison 4 months before Karl Ernst Krafft, yet both of them came down with pneumonia on the same day.

“What can you see up there today, my friend?”

“They are still standing for morning roll call.” Karl Ernst said in disgust. Both of them had been through the ordeal many times. Roll call is normally done at 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. An occasional surprise one might be called due to a discovered escape attempt or for no reason at all.

“Bastards. Who is doing the inspection?”

“Sergeant Weiss.”

“God help them this morning, I thought he was still on vacation.”

Sergeant Weiss was a huge thug who used to be a boxer before the war. His favorite form of entertainment was to shadow box in front of a couple of prisoners, who then had to wonder who would get the damaging blow. Many times the other guards would come to cheer when the victim fell to the ground, or even bet on which one would be hit. Most of the bets were if the victim would die from the blow. With his own eyes, Krafft had seen thirteen weakened and emaciated men who died from a direct blow to the chest, rupturing their hearts.

“Has he started to shadow box?”

“No, he looks angry today.” Karl Ernst hated where his mind had to focus on in order to survive in this camp. Rather than calculating the aspects of planets - his calling and joy - his time was now spent with who said what, who saw what, and wondering what kind of mood the guards or commandant was in. This was the type of information that kept people alive. Over the months of living here his emotions only seem to produce hate. Krafft began to cough.

“You sound worse.” Henrik sensed further talking could be damaging, so he began to hum “In the Hall of the Mountain King”, a melody he knew Karl Ernst was fond of. Karl Ernst coughed deeply several more times and closed his eyes. He saw Elaine. She was walking down

a path and he knew she was looking for him.

“Elaine! I’m here!” The pain in his chest became numb. Elaine walked by, and further down the path he saw his sister Anneliese, who looked exactly as she did on April 23, 1919 before he went off to university. “Ahh!” Karl Ernst tried to speak, but could only manage one vowel sound, which seem to vibrate from his lips to his toes.

“Karl Ernst. How nice to see you.” There was a glow around her.

“Ahh.” Krafft tried to say her name. He knew she had been dead for over twenty years, but enjoyed the experience since she appeared so real. His mind seemed so clear. *Is this a vision or a psychic dream?* He wondered over the images while feeling every part of his body.

He could not turn his head, yet could see Sergeant Weiss inspecting the half frozen skeleton-like creatures in the January morning dew, yet at the same time could see his long lost sister in front of him.

“Annalise.” He now heard his own thoughts as if he had spoken them out loud, but at the same time realized his lips were shut. “Annalise.”

“I’m here, Karl Ernst. Come with me.”

“Karl Ernst was confused. He knew he could not just get up and leave the camp, the guards would never allow it. Yet in looking into Annalisa’s eyes, he instinctively knew she was telling the truth.

“How...?”

A sudden flash of energy into his thoughts seemed to answer his own question immediately. He began to get up.

“Where are we going?”

“With me.” Annalise said while reaching out her hands. “Come, it is time.”

Karl Ernst hesitated. He knew his sister standing before him was real, however at the same time part of his consciousness told him something was not right. He looked around and saw he was still in Oranienburg prison, yet there was something different about his perspective. He could see Henrik in the bunk below him, and Sergeant Weiss out the window punching a faceless man who fell over. He could also see the commandant, working at his desk inside his office on the other side of the camp. He had never been in the commandant’s headquarters, but he could now see every piece of furniture and every piece of paper on his desk. He also saw Elaine again, walking along a road he somehow knew led to Oranienburg.

“Elaine!”

“Karl Ernst, it's time to go!” Annalise said soothingly.

“But Elaine is coming.”

“Elaine has already been here.”

“But I saw her. On the road, she is coming here.”

“Elaine has already been here, and she was too late.”

“Too late?” Karl Ernst now focused on Annalise, who now appeared somewhat older than he remembered her.

“She came some time ago, Karl Ernst.”

“How can that be? They didn’t let her see me?”

“Yes, Karl Ernst.” Annalise began to lift Krafft out of the room.

“Annalise...” Karl Ernst began to feel air rushing all around him. It was as if the pores in his skin had widened so air could ventilate through every organ of his body. “...I’m afraid.”

“I know, Karl Ernst, I know... we all are.”

The breeze of air flowing throughout his body now turned into a wind that seemed to cleanse not only his body, but his mind as well. The tingling of the wind then turned into a comfortable sensation of warmth. From this warmth he could almost see a light radiating from within himself, the same kind of light that seemed to illuminate his sister. The feelings he now had overpowered his mind. *This was not a dream.*

“Annalise?”

“Yes, Karl Ernst?”

“Am I dead?”

“We never die, Karl Ernst.”

“Yes, but I’m with you...and you’re...”

“You and I are leaving now, Karl Ernst.”

It now became clear to Karl Ernst a small part of his consciousness was the only thing keeping him on his bunk. To leave Oranienburg prison, all he had to do was decide to let go.

“Annalise?”

“Yes, Karl Ernst?”

“I’m not afraid anymore.”

“...perhaps the way to choose is with family.”

Elaine looked up as a pair of silver American fighters roared overhead. She could see one of the pilots looking down at her as he flew by and wondered if he was anything like the two Americans she met in Zurich once. How crazy, uninhibited, and open they were!

American planes over Germany were all too common now, what was most rare and caused a lot of excitement among those on the ground was seeing a German one.

To the northeast, looking towards Berlin, she could hear the booms of Russian shells exploding over the horizon.

“Poor souls.” She thought. “Whoever was living under those falling shells.” She had experienced several bombardments herself.

Suddenly Elaine heard a cough behind some bushes beside the road.

“Who’s there?”

Silence.

“Who’s there? If you’re after food, I have none.” Elaine looked to the direction of the cough. “I’m looking for food also.”

A rustling sound came from the woods and a young boy emerged wearing a tattered soldier’s uniform of a private. His malnutrition was pronounced and his pale skin suggested another illness.

“It’s *not* Frau Hessler!” He shouted in the direction further down the road.

A group of uniformed boys then emerged from down the road. They were all aged seventeen or under, except for one who was around twenty. The eldest had the uniform of sergeant, and spoke in a raspy voice.

“Fear not, Fraulein, the boys thought you were someone else, and didn’t want to be seen.”

“Someone else?” Elaine was surprised and a bit disappointed that apparently someone else had the same appearance as her.

“Frau Hessler, our teacher.” The boy she first saw blurted out.

“And she looks like me?”

“No.” A group of boys chimed. “You’re much prettier.” Another one added.

“Why, thank-you.” Elaine had not heard a compliment for almost three years. “And why did you not want to be seen by her?”

The sergeant walked up and quietly whispered in her ear. “They are ashamed.” Then he took two steps back and clicked his heels. Sergeant Hans Heyn, at your service, Fraulein!”

“Elaine Krafft.” Elaine said while looking at each boy. “And where is your company going?”

Each boy looked at one another. Finally Hans spoke. “We’ve been trying to decide that for the past couple of days.

“Decide what?”

“To go east towards the Russians or west towards the Americans.”

The rumbles of explosions on both horizons seem to reveal that either choice offered pretty much the same options.

“I see.” Elaine said looking at each boy again. “And where are you leaning at the moment?”

Hans had a blank look on his face. He was a plumber’s apprentice and had no idea of the political implications of the decisions. He could only see the war as a soldier. “We hate both sides.”

“Well if there is hate on both sides, then perhaps the way to choose is with family.”

“Family? I have no family!” Hans said in a tone that showed his grieving was over.

“Alright.” Elaine pointed at the burning town nearest to them. “If you have no family there, or *here*... do you have any family in *Russia*?” She pointed to the east.

All of the boys looked at one another and shook their heads.

“Does anyone have any family in *America*?” Elaine pointed to the west.

Something strange happened in the minds of each boy. It was as if this was the question they needed to ask several days ago.

“I have a great uncle in Chicago.” The smallest boy first broke the silence. Then, one by one each boy contributed the various forms of relatives they had.

“... a sister in Minnesota.”

“... an aunt in Los Angeles.”

“... a cousin in Baltimore.”

“Do you have any relatives in America?” Hans asked Elaine, as if to settle the matter.

“No, actually I don’t.” For some reason all the boys laughed. A formation of American fighters off to the south reminded them the war was not over yet.

Hans then took the initiative. “Men, let us pack up and head to Wolfsburg.” He gave his last order as a German soldier pointing his hand to the west.

One of the boys collapsed emotionally in the realization that his ordeal was over, although he still did not know the outcome. Elaine walked over to him.

“What’s *your* name?” She used the tone learned from Birgit that seemed to excite and arouse so many men.

“Karl. Karl Ernst Ruggermeyer.”

“Really? I married a man named Karl Ernst.”

“And where is your husband now?” Ruggermeyer asked innocently.

Elaine pointed to the sky.

The group began to walk towards Wolfsburg in silence.

“What did your husband do?” Ruggermeyer asked.

“He was an astrologer.”

“An astrologer? That’s an odd profession!”

“Indeed it is, indeed it is.”

Curious of one in such a profession, the young boy thought of one who would study the

stars. “What was your husband *like*?”

Elaine grabbed his hand and squeezed it. “You know Karl Ernst, I don’t know now. I really don’t know.”

“Do you have a picture of him, Frau Krafft?”

Elaine thought for a moment, then reached into her worn pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. “This is the only thing I have from him.” She handed it to the young Karl Ernst Ruggermeyer, who unfolded the aged paper carefully.

In faded blue ink, an array of hand drawn astrological symbols, geometric angles and half circles covered the paper on both sides. In the middle of the page were four lines of text, with two arrows leading out of the word “cities” pointing at two dates handwritten on the page:

August 6, 1945 and August 9, 1945.

The text read:

Near the gates and within *two cities*

There will be scourges the likes of which was never seen,

Famine within plague, people & steel melting,

Crying to the great immortal God for relief.

—Nostradamus, Century II, quatrain 6