

CHAPTER FOUR

Invitation to the Obersalzberg

September 1933

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In late September of that year, Streichland received an invitation to the Reichskanzler's retreat on the Obersalzberg. When the invitation arrived, he mentioned the matter to the Schönborns and received a cool reception from the pair. Wilhelm especially, but also Alma, expressed their concern for his safety—indeed, as Wilhelm put it, for his “future and life.” But he didn't have time to explain himself or divulge his thoughts, which, Streichland confessed in one of our taped sessions, weren't very formed at the time. “Let's say, I took their sincere concern to heart, yet still felt I couldn't refuse such an invitation—to the chancellor's lair among the Berchtesgaden Alps, a four hour drive from Munich.”

The same young chauffeur who had driven him to the Reichskanzler's apartment earlier in the summer arrived at the Schönborn residence a little past nine o'clock, driving the same coal black Mercedes Tourenwagen as last time. Much of the scenery along the Munich-Salzburg motorway was familiar to him as well, from his trip to meet the Reichskanzler at the aerodrome years before, and from his summers at nearby Chiemsee. The highway, an old Roman route, whose surface was disintegrating in spots, skirted the alpine massif to the south, until they reached the town of Bad Reichenhall, where they turned in the direction of the mountains proper.

Though he was much less apprehensive about this meeting than their two previous ones, his stomach registered its usual nervous displeasure. Over the summer, he had thought a good deal about and even

dreamed of the leader a number of times—an attempt by his unconscious, he supposed, to come to terms with the latter's presence in his life. The Reichskanzler liked him, that much was clear, and seemed to think that he could be of use in his grand scheme “to forge the future of the Germanic race,” as he proclaimed at their last meeting. Nor did he find this attraction difficult to accept—for he had begun to feel a certain sympathy for the new chancellor himself, or at least for his determination to improve the lot of the German people.

The Reichskanzler's ideas, in refined form, weren't strange at all—were to a degree identifiable and even commendable, given Germany's social unrest and given mankind's predilection for doing harm to itself. He tried to grant the new leader the benefit of the doubt—in any case; though deploring the man's somewhat demagogic personality and finding his entreaties for a renewal of the Germanic Christian spirit a bit suspect. Though, he also knew, that were someone to query him, he wouldn't have been able to provide a suitable or even coherent defence of these doubts at the time. Basically, he supposed, he had confidence in his own instincts—his moral instincts, in particular; and, despite a certain queasiness, a certain hesitation, wasn't overly troubled by events.

He fell asleep but then awoke to find they were passing through a deep valley wedged between steep mountains. They were approaching the town of Berchtesgaden, a settlement founded by an order of monks in medieval times. Leaving the motorway, the driver began to mount a rougher clay road, an area he referred to as the Obersalzberg. “Our leader's private preserve,” he described the place.

They passed copses of mature pines and firs, broken by the occasional stretch of mowed meadow, the stubble brown from a summer of intense heat, and soon came to a high barbed-wire fence and guardhouse, manned by a pair of black-uniformed youths. The guards—recognizing the driver—engaged in a round of playful banter before raising the barrier. Another few hundred metres—the big engine was showing signs of strain by then—and they came to a stop outside a small chalet. The chalet, constructed of timbers and stucco in the hunting lodge style of the area, was a modest dwelling. Tarred beams extruded through the plaster for decorative effect. Executing a wide turn on the flagstone

terrace, the driver eased the auto to a stop beside several other expensive automobiles.

There was no one in sight. Exiting the auto, he instinctively went to the stone parapet to take in the panorama of deeply incised valley and towering Alps, many ranges of which were visible from this height. Their jagged grey and blue peaks were dazzling against the blue canopy. On the valley's opposite slopes, the same pattern repeated itself—forests of blackish evergreens alternating with summer-scorched meadows, the forests giving out first and then the meadows about three-quarters of the way up the massif. Below, in the valley, sprawled the town of Berchtesgaden but at such a distance that no life, only the town's dwellings, was visible to the human eye.

A gentle quiet hung over the scene. Not even the sound of birdsong was audible, only the souging sound of the wind through the trees. Such a view, changing from hour to hour and season to season, could provide inspiration for a lifetime. He felt an instant exhilaration, though he experienced a sudden rush of sleepiness as well. By now, the young driver had joined him and was delivering some platitudes of his own on the scenery, which dampened Streichland's enthusiasm to a degree. He followed the youth to the chalet, where they were met at the door by another young man, a valet in white tunic and black trousers, his hair cropped short. Streichland was escorted to his room on the second floor, a whitewashed chamber with rough-hewn beams supporting a stucco ceiling; and with a view through the small window of the peaks and town below. He would have liked very much to stretch out on the inviting bed and sleep for an hour. But he was also quite hungry, the hour being close to one o'clock, and expected downstairs for lunch with the other guests, whose laughter had been audible when he entered the chalet.

He descended the stairs to a sunlit room at the chalet's rear and found a number of male guests gathered before the window. They greeted him as a group and then introduced themselves individually. He met a handsome, silver-haired officer from the Reichswehr, wearing a finely tailored dove-grey uniform with crimson satin stripes highlighting the trousers; an overweight Gauleiter from Baden Württemberg—one of the first party members elected to office evidently; a middle-aged economist

from Deutsche Bank with tired eyes; and a boyish-faced older man who said he was the Reichskanzler's personal photographer. Streichland introduced himself as a history professor at Munich University and this seemed to quench the group's curiosity. Whereupon they resumed their conversation and ignored his presence, which was of much relief.

After some minutes, the Reichskanzler joined them. Though his eyes conveyed the same weariness as at their previous meetings, his movements seemed more youthful today. He ushered his guests into the dining room next door, a smaller, more cramped space than the lounge, with, however, the same splendid view of the valley and peaks. He seated himself at the table head and invited Streichland to sit at his right. The valet wheeled a trolley into the room and began serving a variety of meat dishes and vegetable salads.

Conversation began in a minor key, with the Reichskanzler extolling the fine autumn weather, and continued in this key for some time. No matters of a political nature were discussed, nor did the Reichskanzler display any special favouritism towards him, beyond what he bestowed on his other guests. A stranger might think this a gathering of old friends at a mountain resort for a casual weekend—nothing more. The man described a dispute between himself and a group of local landowners over the purchase of his retreat. Certain town officials had objected to an *Aüslander* buying so much land. He had recently acquired even more acreage, he told them, the whole face of the mountain in fact—which was known locally as the Obersalzberg—and intended to build a fine retreat on the present site worthy of Germany's chancellor. This was the only mention of the man's office thus far.

The Reichskanzler continued with such lighthearted banter through dessert, which was an assortment of delectable cream, marzipan, and chocolate confections, and then proposed a walk down the mountain. Streichland returned to his room to change, joining the others on the terrace minutes later. All had changed into suitable walking clothes, wool sweaters or jackets, and sensible hiking boots. Herr Hoffmann, the photographer, had a Voigtländer box camera slung over his shoulder. Then the Reichskanzler joined them, wearing mustard-yellow chamois shorts, thick wool stockings to the knees, and sturdy hiking boots. The

boots looked as though they had withstood many such outings. They left the chalet through a rear door and set out on a steep path down the mountain—not the usual “civilized” path, their host informed them, which was presently under repair. The overweight Gauleiter registered a look of displeasure when the Reichskanzler announced that they would be following “nature’s own course instead” this afternoon.

Soon the Reichskanzler assumed the lead and signalled that he wished to have Streichland walk by his side—causing the others to fall a discreet distance behind. Once on their own, the man warmed to him as he had done at their previous meetings. He began talking about their mutual interests in history—including the project mentioned at their last visit, the Reichshistory, as he referred to it this afternoon.

“I shall orchestrate events, and you, Historiker Streichland, will sort, assay, and compose a suitable history. . . . There’s much to be done and posterity will need to know how I did it. I want you to produce the most important historical study since the great nineteenth-century works of Hegel, von Ranke, and von Treitschke but with the power of mind and ruthless frankness of a Nietzsche.

“My task will be a difficult one; open to grave misinterpretation by the rest of the world—indeed by history. A sympathetic, fair study of the evolution of modern Germany is necessary to put the record in order. This should entail our spiritual solidification under the great Friedrich, our physical unification under Reichskanzler Bismarck, and the agon of the Great War—Germany’s great misspent opportunity to gain European hegemony—from which, however, a greater good may yet arise. You shall describe the fragmentation of the post-war era—and, of course, my own arrival on the scene: the providential meeting between myself and the Bavarian Workers’ Party.

“This magisterial catalogue of fateful events must now be chronicled. You should begin with Friedrich and end with myself . . . detailing my humble beginnings, my fourteen year *Kampfzeit*, my role as final unifier of the collective German spirit and saviour against Bolshevism—that modern degradation of the human spirit!”

He cited similar chronicles throughout history: Caesar’s *Histories*, Claudius’ *Augustan Memoirs*, Einhard’s biography of the great

Charlemagne and his court, who, legend had it, lay buried in this region, beneath the glowering Untersberg on the other side of Berchtesgaden valley, and would one day rise to restore the German Empire.

“With God’s help we shall witness that legend come true in our own lifetime!”

The Reichskanzler started down the slope again, his sturdy legs engaging the jagged rock face like pneumatic drills. Streichland considered himself an avid hiker from his boyhood in the Tyrol, but the Reichskanzler’s dexterity on the slopes was truly impressive. He had to struggle to keep up with his host, who always seemed to choose the most difficult rather than the easiest points of descent, negotiating the blade-sharp crags with the agility of the native chamois. Every so often the man would stop to face him, usually mounting some ledge of rock to do so. In the bright sunlight, the man’s eyes were a piercing blue, the same colour as the Königssee, a glacial lake filling one of the adjacent valleys, a small sliver of which had come into view that moment.

“You shall write the history of the greatest nation on earth! You, better than anyone, can accomplish this task!”—the Reichskanzler continued on this lofty note, his voice as vibrant as in his public addresses. And what a remarkable voice it was, too, when experienced up close. It never seemed to tire, only become more clarified and sure of itself with use; as with certain musical instruments, loudness seemed to enhance rather than diminish its tonalities.

Mounting another ledge of granite, its surface sparkling with mica crystals, he exclaimed: “It takes no great philosopher to see that humans have consistently chosen the worst possible paths for themselves . . . set the worst possible trials for themselves . . . embraced the most self-defeating goals, the most abject gods and religions, instead of looking within themselves for spiritual succour and guidance! See how Roman Christendom, that scheme to save humanity from itself, has diminished our inner strengths! See how Bolshevism, that act of revenge by the crass Jew, has degraded our basic instincts!”

The man’s despairful, plaintive tone struck a note of recognition if not actual sympathy in his heart, as Streichland strained to take in enough air and stay upright. Many might recognize their own confusion,

frustration, plight in such impassioned pleas. Many had already done so—rushing to embrace the man’s promises with the anguish of the perennially oppressed and downtrodden.

They had come to a kind of natural division in the path. The choice was now between a sudden drop and a more gradual descent that eased its way, in even bootlace fashion, down the last section of mountain. The Reichskanzler stopped to ponder the choice and then chose the steeper of the two paths, throwing his stocky body into the descent once more and motioning Streichland to follow close behind.

For some minutes the leader didn’t speak, as he negotiated a treacherous patch of rock. At one point Streichland had to actually sit and ease himself down a particularly declivitous section. But soon this difficult stretch gave way and the descent became manageable again. Looking back, Streichland saw that the others had chosen the less precipitous route and fallen to the rear.

Again the man’s tone changed, becoming less hectoring. “You must understand what I am about to tell you, Streichland. My present life isn’t the one I had envisioned for myself. I would have preferred to live the life of the humble artist, to be born in some grand age, to linger on the sidelines of some great historical moment. But a successful existence, one in which talent and opportunity came felicitously together . . . a fulfilled existence, as mine was not and could never have been in the Vienna of the pre-war years. To be a great artist in a great age—I could wish for nothing more. Unfortunately, the times weren’t auspicious. My epitaph shall probably read: ‘In order to fulfil himself he had to change the times. . . .’ But others, such as yourself, will reap the rewards . . . will inherit a world different from the one I was unfortunate enough to inherit!”

Streichland experienced some discomfort at this confiding tone, as he had at their meeting the previous summer. His host must have sensed his unease for he reached behind and patted him consolingly on the arm.

“I grow inordinately sentimental at times, I know,” he said, with what sounded like a note of genuine contrition in his voice.

“Yet, when I consider my past, I can’t imagine things turning out differently. Only through trial and suffering do we achieve the truly important things in life. You see, I don’t believe for a moment that I chose

my life . . . life chose me . . . rather, fate chose me. I haven't instigated events as much as been moved by them. Let me tell you a rich secret."

He tossed a glance over his shoulder to make sure that the others were still out of earshot.

"I had no idea I would be so successful . . . no idea history would fall into my hands so easily. That I, of all people—indolent, intellectually and morally arrogant—could wrestle a place for myself in history like those I had dreamed of in my youth.

"When I was twenty-five, I studied the lives of all the great figures of the past two centuries. I knew the dates of their first accomplishments. *The Sufferings of Young Werther* . . . written when Goethe was twenty-five. *The World as Will and Idea* . . . written when Schopenhauer was thirty. *Rienzi* . . . when Wagner was twenty-seven. I made myself sick with such calculations. When I turned thirty-five, I knew all the giants who, at my age, had accomplished great things. The older I became, the more desperate and lonelier I became. And yet always, providentially, there was someone ahead of me, some figure who had come into his own later than me—someone to light the way and lend me hope. And indeed I never relinquished hope—which is possibly my greatest strength. I believed, if I endured long enough, I would find my way; my purpose in life would become clear.

"Then, one day, all this changed. I realized I was out of tune with the world because the world was out of tune with itself. From that day forward, I took control of my life—took control of my destiny, you might say, created my world. I grasped the age's confusion; the need for order and stability. Yet no one I knew seemed capable of understanding the times, let alone saving the age from itself. Many of the restless souls with whom I came in contact—and the Vienna of my youth was full of restless souls—held pieces of the puzzle but none possessed a sense of the whole puzzle—none save myself. Suddenly I knew what I must do. I felt the boards creak under my feet as I mounted the platform for the first time; heard my voice crack like an adolescent's before finding the right words. But then, amazingly, I found them. Through the murkiness of the present appeared a path. My vision inspired and propelled me forward. It still does to this day . . ."

For the remainder of the descent, the Reichskanzler continued like this, stoking the passion that burned deep within his breast. His words seemed to ignite with an acetylene brightness—bursts of emotional fire that lit up the landscape of his mind—and contrasted vividly with the man's physical appearance, which was ordinary in the extreme: the distended stomach and narrow, stooped shoulders, the body hardened in places with musculature (his overworked calves); the splotchy facial skin; the at times shifting, low-cast gaze that always reminded him of the look of the born retainer.

Directionless, Europe—mankind—needed leadership as never before was the message, repeated over and over. Yet he could understand the man's appeal. In truth, he had never fully understood that appeal until now. His initial judgment of the man as coarse and uncouth remained unchanged but tempered now. The coarseness came and went: a coarseness of manner, speech, thought—which traits seemed to push their way to the surface like street noise through the veil of sleep—but a coarseness counterbalanced by a keen common sense that was like a beak pecking at something hard. One listened—at least Streichland found himself listening—because of the other's powerful convictions; because of his acute sense of history; a sense of mankind having let itself down.

Here, perhaps, was this extraordinary new leader's most distinguishing feature—already in his mind, Streichland could sense, he was beginning to analyze the man, already he was thinking in terms of a Reichshistory. The man was a philosopher of life, of the world, not the mind. He was a belated Romantic, with a gift of plain common sense that was as acute as the Romantic sense of nature. Were the man, in his thoughts and speech, more cultured, more subtle, he would have lost his sense of purpose—and likely would have become some melancholy coffee-house *condottiere* lost to the bohemian demimonde of his age. But his high common sense, which had honed his nature from the start, annealed with his bohemian side to powerful effect—thus powerful appeal. It was as if nature had wedded Nietzsche and Robespierre together in one being—the cold idealism of the one, the cruel realism of the other. Given a chance—Streichland found himself thinking—this Reichskanzler-Führer might accomplish what all the great thinkers of the last century had

failed to accomplish. Here, in any case, was a uniquely practical nature reared on the highest Romantic ideals; someone determined to bring about change. The appeal of such a figure, at such a lost moment in history, would be incalculable.

But then an even deeper pensiveness seemed to overtake the leader. He stopped to allow Streichland to catch up with him. Streichland could see that the man's mood had changed, had grown sullen; the eyes had become clouded, as though storm clouds were passing over them, darkening their blue Königssee depths.

"You haven't said much. You have nothing to say for yourself, Professor?"

The man suddenly gave the impression that he had noticed the landscape for the first time.

"This landscape, so startlingly peaceful yet so violently torn from the earth . . . so expressive of the earth's endless mutations, of time's inexorable mutability . . . always roils my thoughts. Strange how humans posit beauty amid such chaos. I find my deepest tranquillity here, yet inhabit my blackest thoughts as well. While here I seldom think of individual lives . . . or even the German nation. Amid such terrifying grandeur I think only . . . of history . . . *the merciless mutability of history*, as you call it in your book—a process that requires rigorous attention and revision, as you note. But today you have nothing to say for yourself!"

Streichland was taken aback by this sudden impatient tone; by this question of all questions—to which, of course, he had no answer.

The Reichskanzler saw his discomfort and said, with a hardness that took Streichland aback, a scolding intimacy: "We must change all that! We must root out human deficiency wherever we find it! That is what this landscape drives me to accomplish!"

And then: "You will write for me a terrible book. I would attempt such a history myself but haven't the talent for it. But do you have the will, the uncompromising will? I ask myself."

The ice-cold eyes seemed to press him against the whale-sized outcropping of granite that they had just surmounted. Against what felt like pure, overwhelming force, Streichland felt himself give way; felt the resistance of any will to fight this man give way; a feeling of humiliation

and shame mixed with awe—though because he did give way a feeling also devoid of fear, a feeling that, as it waned, was strangely purifying.

The Reichskanzler released his cold stare and turned his attention to the slope again, randomly sloughing off his words so that Streichland could barely hear them: “You lack a certain will but we can change that!”

The man fell silent again, while continuing to take the lead. After another steep descent they reached a kind of natural plateau—their destination, as it turned out, on their outing this afternoon. Streichland was left alone in his thoughts to meditate on what the leader had said. The sense of rebuke and acquiescence passed and he felt a sort of peace, a sort of benign release, and something else besides—a sense that he could do nothing to offend this man as long as he didn’t counter him in any way.

The Reichskanzler motioned the others to speed up. They were still several hundred metres behind, the puffing, sadly-disoriented Gauleiter the last of the pack. The storm clouds in the Reichskanzler’s eyes had passed and the eyes resumed their Königssee blue depths again. When the others stepped onto level ground, he led the group behind a stand of pines to an asphalt road. There, shaded by giant trees, waited the ubiquitous coal-bright Mercedes tourer, with the young chauffeur behind the wheel. They scrambled on board and were back at the chalet within minutes. In the foyer, the Reichskanzler excused himself. He was tired and wished to retire to his room. The look he tossed his guests from the stairs was meant for him, Streichland knew. It was a look of mischievous playfulness, a look that a God might bestow on a mere mortal.

A devious smile broke from the man’s face. As he darted up the stairs, he quipped: “The Herr Professor has worn me out with his heavy metaphysical talk!”

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At seven the next morning, Streichland descended the stairs and followed the smell of baking bread to the kitchen. An elderly servant, her face flushed from the coals, was removing a tray of loaves from the old-fashioned oven. Both the Reichskanzler and Herr Hoffmann were late sleepers and weren’t likely to rise before noon, she informed him. She told

him to sit at the kitchen table and eat—bringing him one of the steaming loaves, some cheese, and a pot of coffee.

He saw the Reichskanzler at lunch. The man was his public self again—gracious and gregarious host to yet another group of visitors, chauffeured from the town in the funereal black touring automobile. After lunch, he repaired with some of these to his private study on the second floor, and Streichland took a walk by himself, choosing to ascend rather than descend the slopes this afternoon. Soon he reached a natural lookout of extruding granite from which he had the best view yet of the peaks and valleys, including the distant Königssee.

At six o'clock, the valet knocked on his door and informed him that supper had been advanced to six-thirty. The Reichskanzler would be leaving for Munich immediately afterwards and wanted Streichland to accompany him. The manservant, who had made it quite clear the day before that he didn't fraternize with guests, continued to maintain his aloof stance. No explanation was offered for the sudden change of plans. Streichland was disappointed, of course, for he had anticipated a stay of several days and the chance to discuss his Reichshistory project more fully with the leader; but relieved at the news as well.

After a rushed supper, they departed the chalet, with the athletic young chauffeur at the wheel, and the Reichskanzler and Streichland in the back seat; followed by a number of guards in their own automobiles. He would have liked a longer stay, the Reichskanzler complained, as the car descended the mountain, but urgent business concerning the League of Nations and the matter of Germany's rearmament forced him to return to Berlin.

The Reichskanzler had been preoccupied over supper—merely playing with his soup and hardly touching his salad of root vegetables—and became even more so now. Once on the valley road he explained why. He didn't like to drive on country roads at night, as he was afraid of accidents. The chauffeur was a more subdued driver this evening, Streichland noticed, having clearly been instructed to drive with caution—with both hands on the wheel and no craning of his neck to converse through the glass partition, which, on this occasion, was closed. But perhaps he would have a chance to talk to the leader after all, during the

three or four hour ride, to pose some questions of his own about his project; he hadn't actually spoken to the Reichskanzler since their walk down the mountain the day before. But he was mistaken. The man was too distracted.

Whenever the gears of the big car made a straining noise, signifying a steep climb, the Reichskanzler became particularly agitated. Glimpsing him in the darkness, Streichland could see a fine sheen of sweat on the man's brow. His eyes, flashing like torches, focussed on every turn in the rock-faced road, while casting terrified glances into the black depths below.

For a long time, his companion said nothing, engrossed as he was in his thoughts—or perhaps his fears. Every so often he shifted forward nervously to read the speedometer through the glass screen. Streichland couldn't bring himself to speak, not wanting to interrupt the man's concentration, and instead stared out the window at the passing blackness. Few cars approached from the other direction. Once a large noisy auto passed them from behind, and the Reichskanzler became angry. He lunged forward and opened the glass partition to share his fury with the driver, but neither was able to make out the licence plate. Whereupon, the Reichskanzler dissolved into a rage against the careless upper classes and their arrogant drivers!

“Good riddance if they kill themselves! These mountain passes are far too dangerous for that kind of recklessness. Do you know over a hundred Bavarians lost their lives in road accidents last year. I shall build divided motorways throughout the Reich . . . and put a stop to this madness!”

At last they left the mountains and entered more level ground, joining the Salzburg-Munich motorway outside Bad Reichenhall. By then, a full moon had mounted the alpine massif and illuminated the landscape—calming the Reichskanzler somewhat. Streichland tried to engage him in a discussion of the Reichshistory. But his companion returned short, dismissive answers to his questions and refused to warm to the subject.

Münchenerers were asleep by the time they entered the city's suburbs, its streets wet from an earlier downpour, the air considerably cooler than

on the Obersalzberg—quite cold in fact. The driver dropped the Reichskanzler off first. No lights were on in the apartment on Prinzregenten Platz, else the curtains were drawn. The driver rushed around the auto to open the door for his master, whereupon a figure in a black raincoat stepped from the doorway to greet the leader. The pair, exchanging a few words together, hurried inside the building. The driver returned to his seat. But before easing the auto from the curb, he opened the glass partition between the two compartments. Looking back through the rear window, Streichland could see a block of lights come on in the Reichskanzler's upper floor apartment. The lights were extinguished one by one as heavy curtains were drawn across the windows.

The driver conversed with him for the remaining blocks to the Schönborn residence—the young man's casual, free-wheeling speech returned in full force. Possibly he was trying to compensate for the brusque way that his master had bid his weekend guest good night. But in truth, Streichland was too exhausted to care about such things. The extremes of emotion that he had experienced the last two days were too much for him. He craved his own quarters, his own bed, his own dreams.

The driver, stepping outside the car to open his door, promised graciously to wait until he saw Streichland's lights come on before driving away. Stepping from the car, Streichland could smell a strong odour emanating from the sewers, an odour like boiled cabbages. The yellow lamp outside the Schönborn residence pulsed like an incandescent heart. The young chauffeur reached to shake his hand. Streichland was nudged from his somnolence when the driver remarked: "I know, Professor, we shall meet again soon!"

Streichland mounted the stairs to his third-floor apartment as quietly as possible so as not to disturb the Schönborns. He turned on the lights, went to the window, and saw the driver wave to him before driving away. He opened the window and crawled into his comfortable bed. Cool night air pervaded the room and with it the sweet cabbage-like odour of the sewers. For some time, he lay in darkness, resisting sleep, reflecting on all that had happened.

Though he had much on his mind—the past two days were among the most emotionally charged of his life—he was finally able to put these

concerns from his mind and sleep. Early next morning, however, he was awakened by Wilhelm Schönborn, when the man burst into his room shouting something about an open window. Wilhelm slammed the window shut and drew the curtains with a rough thrust of his arm. “What is it?” He called out, terrified, torn from sleep. Wilhelm answered brusquely, his voice heavy with morning catarrh. “You’ve frozen the whole house! We could feel the draught all night long . . . smell the stench of the sewers, too!”

Wilhelm left the room noisily, leaving Streichland in a dazed state, pondering what he had done to ignite the man’s anger. He rolled over and slipped back to sleep. But when he woke, several hours later, he felt quite wretched. He rose from the bed and went to the window, wondering whether he had had a bad dream. But the window was locked shut.

He descended the stairs and made himself breakfast—which he sometimes did in the Schönborn kitchen—uncomfortably aware of every noise that he made, though the house was empty, the Schönborn family having left for work and school hours before. He sat at the kitchen table and tried to make sense of what had happened. Wilhelm’s rude visit to his room and the rough manner in which he had closed the window left him feeling shaken. It was not just the open window. The man was expressing some deeper resentment, Streichland realized, though the man’s appearance and impetuous action still seemed part of his dream. Had he not sensed such resentment from the husband in the past—since his meeting with the German leader especially? Their uncomfortable discussion, when he had told the man of the Berchtesgaden outing, returned to mind.

That morning, Streichland sat at his desk in his study on the third floor and examined his notes from his Obersalzberg trip. He had made these notes only two days before, after his walk down the mountain with the Reichskanzler, but found them this morning to be very remote and altogether inadequate as reminders of what had passed between the leader and himself. What had the man said? Perhaps a word, a phrase uttered or pounced upon here and there, returned now; but little else. Like a dream that forces itself upon the dreamer with great urgency during sleep but fades to insignificance upon waking, the man’s words had passed from

consciousness. He would have to reconstruct them himself—otherwise they were lost for good. What he did remember was the power of the man's wounded ego, his sense of the damaged German psyche, and his belief in his own destiny. Such sentiments might well have been Streichland's own—or any German's. But what he remembered most was the leader's emotional effect upon him. This he couldn't deny, couldn't forget, couldn't discount. Had someone stopped him on the street that day and asked whether he had been swept along by the man's words, he would have had to answer *yes*; but had they asked what the leader had said, he would have had to demur. He would have had to say *I truly don't know*. . .

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