

PROLOGUE

His moment had arrived.

A collective roar, muffled and distant, reached his ears. He sensed the impatience of the throng outside as they waited to greet him, their new leader. Inside, an expectant hush descended on the group. Very deliberately, he turned to meet the gaze of each man present in the room. He saw fear in some, and respect in others.

He closed his eyes and collected his thoughts as he prepared to greet the masses and face the television cameras. He wondered how many in the room, in the crowd outside, and among the billions watching on television grasped the historical significance of the moment. This was not just a changing of the guard; this was the birth of a radically different form of global power.

For a brief moment, he was transported back to another time, another place. September 7, 1934. Nuremberg, Germany. The *Zeppelin Wiese*. Goose bumps crawled up his spine as his mind flashed back to that evening. The Fuhrer raised his hand and two hundred thousand people were stilled to a deathly silence. Nothing moved except the eerily

dancing shadows of the twenty thousand flags that caught the glare of the circling searchlights. Then, the Fuhrer began to speak. What he witnessed that day rocked the bottom of his soul.

It was his turn now. But the present time did *not* resemble the world of the Fuhrer. It was different. *Better*. It hearkened to a time *before* the Fuhrer. *More than a thousand years before*.

Then, like now, the world was in turmoil, fueled by religious, ethnic, and racial unrest. Yet, in the midst of the upheaval, one man was able to draw diverse peoples together and create a global *supernation*, an empire that lasted nearly ten centuries. The man was Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire was a grand example of enduring power. It was the empire that the Fuhrer referred to as the *First Reich* and sought to emulate through his self-proclaimed *Third Reich*, with disastrous results.

But what the Fuhrer couldn't accomplish, he would, starting today. *And it would be just the beginning*.

History would record this day as the dawn of the first *global Reich*. Posterity would recognize him as the leader whose power transcended national boundaries and prevailed

over race and ethnicity across the world. The first leader to be a true global master.

After a lifetime of planning and waiting, his moment had finally arrived.

BOOK 1

1945

Chapter 1

Thursday, April 5, 1945

Washington D.C.
9:10 AM

The largest cash deposit, ever.

Warren Terrell, Deputy Director of the OSS—the Office of Strategic Services—propped the steel rimmed pince-nez on his nose and re-read the intelligence report. *Estimated to be the largest cash deposit in the history of Swiss banking.* He closed his eyes and let out a muted sigh. This was a whole new problem. Thus far, it had been looted Jewish gold, not cash. There had always been rumors of the Nazi high command stashing money in secret Swiss bank accounts, but nothing had been confirmed. Now, this. According to the report, it was expected to be in the hundreds of millions of Swiss francs. Hundreds of millions! Every franc set to disappear into the anonymous abyss of Swiss banking. The guaranteed secrecy of the so-called “numbered accounts”.

Should he ask their Bern office to research the

information? He eyed the document in front of him and picked out the code name of the Allied agent on the top left hand corner, just below the stamp that said "Top Secret". No. The agent was one of their best, very reliable. The OSS should have expected this turn of events, he thought, as his fingers drummed the desktop. With Germany on the brink of defeat, they could expect more pillaged money and goods making their way to Zurich with increased urgency. He lit a cigarette and stared at the white smoke, dancing lazily away from him. The Swiss banking system made it easy. It was madness; anybody could walk into a Swiss bank with a stack of cash and open a secret numbered account. Custom built for the Nazi rogues and their looted money. He turned to the document again. Like these men, *the Heydrich Three*.

Warren picked up the telephone and requested a file. While he waited, he tried to recollect what he knew about the Heydrich Three. They were close associates of the now deceased SS General, the infamous Reinhard Heydrich. The three operated as a team: a man, his son, and an unknown, shadowy third member, considered the most dangerous of the lot. He recalled one Allied undercover agent refer to the Heydrich Three as *the father, son, and the unholy ghost*. *An ungodly trinity*. It was the work of these three that helped

Reinhard Heydrich gain notoriety and move up the Nazi ranks to become the *SS Obergruppenfuhrer*—the number two man in the SS. He wasn't called "Hangman Heydrich" for nothing; Heydrich was a ruthless killer whose drive for personal power in the Nazi regime was cut short by Czech assassins in May 1942. Besides being the man behind the cold blooded killings of the SS, Heydrich had been the Commander of *Einsatzgruppen*—the battalion-sized, mobile killing units that followed the German army as it cut a deadly path through Europe. Heydrich's directions to the *Einsatzgruppen* had been simple: round up as many civilians as possible, and machine gun them *en masse*.

It was widely accepted that Heydrich had been one of the most evil men in the Third Reich, and many had considered him the likely heir to the Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler. Intelligence reports after Heydrich's assassination confirmed the extent of his power in the Nazi regime. The Nazi top brass were clay in Heydrich's hands, including men like Heinrich Himmler, Adolf Eichmann, Hermann Goering, and Josef Goebbels. It was Heydrich who gathered the Nazi high command on January 20, 1942 at the infamous Wannsee Conference and proposed what he called the "final solution" of Russian and European Jewry. And it was Heydrich who—at

this conference—sought approval for mass killing of the Jews using the deadly Zyklon B gas in specially constructed gas chambers in the death camps.

Warren felt his stomach churn as he recollected photographs of the gas chambers discovered at Auschwitz-Birkenau when the Allies liberated the death camp in January. The grisly pictures were etched in his memory: grotesque mounds of dead bodies, piled one on top of the other like wretched rag dolls, and the rest of the emaciated prisoners, zombies with emotionless faces and wasted bodies. How many more camps were yet to be discovered? His thoughts were interrupted with the arrival of the file. He stubbed out his cigarette and opened the bulky file, spilling with papers. They smelled damp and musty; he twitched his nose and reached for another cigarette. Soon he was skimming the pages rapidly, taking in the material with a practiced eye. After a few minutes of reading, he pulled a notepad towards him and started to write:

The Heydrich Three

Erich: 6ft.1-3 inches, 190-210 lbs, 16-18 years.

Günter (Erich's dad): 5ft.9-11inches, 200-220 lbs, 40-44 years.

Direktor: ???

Zurich, Switzerland
3:25 PM

The buzz inside Zurich's elite banking circles was that it would be a *Gustloff* account. Not an ordinary Gustloff account, but a history-making one in terms of the amount that would be deposited. Nobody was sure, but rumors were flying that it was over three hundred million Swiss francs.

"Gustloff" was the Swiss bankers' term for secret accounts opened under fictitious names by Nazi officials. The name was coined after one of the Nazi high command—it was debated if it was Field Marshall Hermann Goering or Propaganda Minister Dr. Josef Goebbels—opened a secret numbered account using the name of a martyred Swiss Nazi: Wilhelm Gustloff. Many other Nazis opened similar accounts, including former Chancellor Franz Von Pappen, foreign minister Joachim Von Tripp, and even Adolf Hitler, who had

more than one fictitious account in Switzerland to funnel the royalties from his book, *Mein Kampf*.

The hushed speculation was that the money coming this time included the booty of the late SS General, Reinhard Heydrich—money, they said, that he and his cronies had systematically siphoned off the Nazi coffers. Money that came from confiscated Jewish properties, sales of looted gold, as well as Nazi taxes, such as the *Reichsfluchsteuer*, the so-called escape tax, levied on Jews leaving Germany. However, it was not the source of the money that was the focus of the discussions in boardrooms of the Zurich banks, it was the question of which bank would be the fortunate recipient of the booty.

John Graetz, President of Graetz Bank, mulled over the same question. He looked out the window of his office on Bahnhofstrasse, near Zurich's city center, watching the bustling activity of people on the tree-lined street. The lush green of the budding trees was starkly contrasted against the dour gray of the buildings that packed the Bahnhofstrasse—buildings that housed some of the most famous banks in the world. He knew that the odds of his bank receiving the deposit were close to nil, if the past was any indicator. It angered him that Graetz Bank had yet to get a

piece of the Nazi money that had made its way to Switzerland over the last few years. All the Gustloff accounts were being set up at the largest and most reputed banks: Credit Suisse, Union Bank of Switzerland, Swiss Bank Corporation, and Basler Handelsbank. And now, with the Third Reich falling apart, more money would be making its way to Switzerland in the next few weeks, and there was the danger that Graetz Bank would get no share of it. It was difficult enough competing as a small private bank against the behemoths; but losing out on the Nazi windfall was going to make things even more difficult. Something had to be done!

Graetz Bank had been family held for over seventy-five years. Even today, all its general partners belonged to the Graetz family—something that John was immensely proud of. Many of the other private banks were having a difficult time keeping ownership within the family as increasingly, young Swiss men were looking to other professions, many of which were more lucrative. In fact, a few years ago John had resigned himself to the fact that his son would not follow in his footsteps. Peter had written from England saying that he was switching his area of study from reading commerce and banking to what he called the “fascinating” new sciences. It shattered John when he read the letter, but

Peter seemed very excited about the prospects of the emerging fields of science and technology. John could only laugh at his son's youthful ignorance when Peter wrote that they could use some of the new developments of science at Graetz Bank. What could science possibly do for the world of banking? But when Peter returned last year after completing his studies in England, John was surprised at the many suggestions that he had to improve business at Graetz Bank. The ideas were intriguing—but they were all so radical that John couldn't think of proposing them to the general partners of the bank. He knew what the response of the partners would be: don't rock the boat; why take on risky ventures when the bank was doing reasonably well? In particular, his uncle, James Graetz—the old conservative banker that he was—would vehemently oppose any change. But now, as he reflected on the elusive Nazi money, he decided that perhaps it was time to be bold and innovative. Time to try some of Peter's radical ideas.

John picked up the telephone and dialed Peter's number.

Berlin, Germany
3:45 PM

Erich looked up from his book, glanced at his watch and then out of the window of the coffee shop. Where was Günter? His heart began to accelerate as he thought of the possibilities. He closed his eyes; he had to relax and shut out the negative thoughts. Everything would be fine. Günter would arrive any moment now with the money and the escape routes. The waitress placed a plate with toast and marmalade, along with a cup of coffee on the table. He looked at the food, but he had lost his appetite. He took a sip of the coffee.

Outside, the sky was unusually gray and there were few people on the street. What a difference a few months had made! The streets used to be lively, bustling with people, interspersed with brown-shirted storm troopers and the black-coated SS guards. There was order and pageantry in Berlin, from the crisp salutes and clicking heels of goose-

stepping soldiers to convoys of shiny black Mercedes cars winding their way through the streets. Most of all, there was pride in the faces of the German people. But today, the red banners that peppered the streets with their black swastikas seemed to hang limp. Even the gilded statues of the eagle that had once perched majestically atop the metal poles, seemed to cower, as they rested on their wreathed swastikas. The end was near, without a doubt. Ever since the Allies broke through the Siegfried line and crossed the Rhine, Erich had known that it was a matter of time.

He wondered what historians would write about the last days of the Third Reich. Would future generations ever understand the emotional impact of the fiery rise and fall of the Third Reich on the German people? He watched the pedestrians on the street; they were either shuffling listlessly along or walking quickly, with nervous urgency. Was it different in the last days of the First Reich and the Second Reich? He turned his attention to the book he was reading, *The Rise and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire*—the thousand-year reign that the Fuhrer referred to as the First Reich. Like most historical books, it was packed with facts and figures of the empire that started in the year 800 under Emperor Charlemagne, but there was little insight into the

emotions of the people as it rapidly dissolved in 1806. He surmised that it was very unlikely that the end of the First Reich—or for that matter, the Second Reich, under the Hohenzollern dynasty from 1871 to 1918—would have come as unexpectedly and swiftly as was presently happening to the Third Reich.

Erich stood up and looked outside the window again, straining to see as much of the street as possible. He should not have allowed Günter to meet the Direktor alone. But really, he had little choice. That's the way the Direktor wanted it: a private meeting with Günter, to divide the money three ways and to discuss their means of escape out of Germany. Of course, it was not surprising that the Direktor refused to meet with him. Their last meeting very nearly ended in violence, and if it were not for Günter who physically restrained him, Erich knew that there would have been physical blows. Even now, he felt the bottled rage stir within. But that meeting taught Erich an important lesson: know when to pick your fights. If he had hurt the Direktor, they would have lost access to the money. That would have been stupid. He had to be patient; one day, he knew that he would get even with the Direktor. But now, he had to focus on getting the money, and finding a way out of

Germany before the Allies arrived. The time to settle scores would come later. But his pulse raced as he pictured the Direktor meeting with Günter. No doubt Günter would be silent and acquiescent, accepting everything that the Direktor said. Günter was a simple man, and could be talked into anything. The Direktor knew that. So had Heydrich when he picked Günter to be part of their team. Erich remembered Heydrich's words: sometimes it was more important to have loyalty than intelligence among your men.

Erich spread some marmalade on the toast, took a bite, and washed it down with the last of the coffee. He looked out into the street again, as he hailed the waitress for more coffee. His eyes caught a young boy, not more than ten years old, walking alone on the street, his face downcast. Erich stared at the boy as he dragged one foot listlessly after another. For a moment Erich forgot his present concerns—the money, Günter, the Direktor, the end of Nazi Germany. He was transported back to 1938. Munich. The orphanage. Suddenly, he could smell the mattress he used to sleep in. He saw clearly the faded urine stains on his lumpy mattress and he remembered the uncomfortable dampness that never went away, along with the holes in his blanket, and the bitter cold of the winter nights. He recollected

putting his toes through the torn blanket and letting his imagination run, producing laughter among the other boys—laughter that was rarely heard in that wretched place, as rare as a full tummy, clean clothes, and genuine adult affection.

Erich barely noticed the waitress place a cup of steaming coffee in front of him. He watched the boy turn the corner, and walk out of sight. The despondent look on the child's face had nothing to do with the falling fortunes of Germany. It came from an acute loneliness. A starved heart. He knew it; he had lived it. As had all the other boys in the orphanage. Emotional loneliness that ate away at the core of their beings. He wondered if the boy had a home. Father? Mother? An adult he could count on for solace, comfort, and reassurance? Or was he no different from his friends at the miserable orphanage? He thought about the only ones who seemed to care about the orphans. They came with surprise gifts: candy, ice cream, hugs and kisses, satiating the boys' starved stomachs and hearts for a few hours each week. People like Father Damien. Now, at seventeen, he recognized them for what they were: perverts and pedophiles. Selfish animals who took advantage of the orphan boys. If there was one individual he hated more than

the Direktor, it was Father Damien. He wondered which orphanage in Rome was Father Damien preying on, now? Which ten year-old looked forward to Father Damien's weekly visits, and the long walks? Walks, where Father Damien would captivate the boy with stories of history, religion, music and the noble objectives of the Fuhrer and Nazism. Walks that would invariably lead to a lonely spot or a clearing in the woods. Erich felt his hands shake as he attempted to pick up the cup of coffee. He felt bile rise to his mouth as images of the past flashed through his mind. He figured that today, as Associate Secretary of State in the Vatican, Father Damien would be virtually beyond suspicion. And as one of the most powerful men in the Vatican, Father Damien must have the pick of Italian boys: the orphans, the choirboys, and the altar boys.

He had to focus on the future. After all, he was the lucky one. Fate had plucked him from that hell for bigger and better things. Here he was, seventeen years old, rich beyond his wildest dreams. It struck him how odd life was: if Father Damien had not chosen him for his sexual pleasures, he would still be at the orphanage sleeping on the damp, smelly, urine-stained mattress. He would not have been introduced to Father Damien's friend, Martin Bormann at

his home in Pullach, outside Munich. It was Martin Bormann, the man who ultimately became *Reichsleiter* Bormann, head of the Reich Chancellery, and the Fuhrer's personal secretary, who introduced him to Reinhard Heydrich. And Heydrich had teamed him up with the Direktor and Günter. How ironic that the two individuals he detested the most—the Direktor and Father Damien—helped get him to where he was today.

Erich clenched his fists; he would get his revenge, real revenge. The Direktor and Father Damien had yet to see what he was capable of. Revenge like that practiced in the Middle Ages. He cheered up as he turned to the book on the table, flipping pages to his favorite chapter in the *Rise and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire*. Emperor Otto III. A master at the art of revenge, he used both physical and emotional pain to gain retribution. It was that kind of revenge he yearned to inflict on the Direktor and Father Damien.

Otto III fascinated Erich in other ways too. Otto was a year younger than Erich when he was crowned emperor in 996 AD. A sixteen-year-old ruling most of Western Europe, from Germany to Italy! And Otto's vision was grand: unite the Holy Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empires, thus controlling all of Europe. Otto did not accomplish his

goal, but nearly a thousand years later, Erich had hoped to see it happen: Europe united under Hitler. It had been one of Reinhard Heydrich's favorite subjects. Erich recollected cherished memories sitting in Heydrich's study, as he talked loftily of the importance of the times they were living in. Heydrich would pace the room, cognac in hand, and his brilliant blue eyes would take on a dreamy, far-away look as he talked, almost reverently, of the revolution that was underway. A Europe under one leader, accomplishing what the First Reich and the Second Reich couldn't. A goal that was as intriguing as it was challenging: bringing peoples of the various European countries, with their varied languages, and cultures under one ruler.

But now, Erich mused, that grand plan was in shambles, thanks to the mistakes of the Fuhrer, and the carelessness of brilliant men like Heydrich. Erich was certain that the Allies would not be moving into Berlin today if Heydrich hadn't made that foolhardy trip to Czechoslovakia in 1942 and gotten himself killed. Things would be so different! The Fuhrer would not have made the mistakes of the past three years if Heydrich had been there to provide advice and insight. And today, they would have been on the threshold of a united Nazi Europe! Erich's future would have been

limitless. Heydrich would have become the Fuhrer after Hitler, of course. And then, who knew? If he kept his eyes open and played his cards right, one day he, Erich, could have achieved what Otto III dreamed of doing: rule over a united Europe. The very thought made him giddy. Europe under his power! Yes, it would have happened! After all, Heydrich had regarded him highly. *Trust your instincts. You are destined for greatness.* Heydrich's own words. Words that were branded on his mind. Words that he had come to believe.

Erich felt a finger on his shoulder. He turned to find Günter, rasping for breath and sweat dotting his face. Erich knew at once that Günter didn't have good news.

"Weinmann," Günter wheezed. "Esther's husband: Benjamin Weinmann. He knows all about us. That bitch, Esther! Before she was gassed she talked to some of the Jew pigs at Auschwitz." Günter stopped to gather his breath. "Pigs who talked to reporters when Auschwitz was liberated. Now Weinmann has vowed to kill us."

Benjamin Weinmann. Erich wasn't worried. He could be taken care of. It was just like Günter to lose sight of priorities. "What about the money?"

"Don't worry," Günter said as he sat down. "We'll get

our shares."

Erich's heart sank. "What do you mean?"

"It will be safe in Zurich." Günter wiped his face with his handkerchief. "We'll get our shares later. The Direktor promised."

"What are you talking about? *Promised?*" Erich stood up, the blood pounding at his temples. "Where is the Direktor? How are we going to get it later? I want my money now!"

"Son," Günter reached for Erich's hand. "The Direktor has left for Switzerland, and then on to Italy. But don't worry; we'll get our shares. It's best this way. There's too much uncertainty, what with the war—"

Erich felt himself begin to quiver. "Fool. *Fool!* How could you?" He closed his eyes, trying to compose himself. "And stop calling me son. Our father and son act was over long ago." He could barely contain himself; he wanted to punch Günter in the face. The money! It guaranteed his future! The Direktor was obviously going to flee with their shares. What was he to do?

Washington D.C.

10:15 AM

Warren Terrell stubbed the cigarette in the overflowing ashtray and continued to read through the pages of the file on the Heydrich Three.

The intelligence reports suggested that Erich and Günter were recruited by Heydrich—or someone close to him—in 1938. They were put under the direction of an individual close to Heydrich, simply known as the Direktor. The Direktor was considered to be one of the Nazi's most prized scientists; it was thought that it was his work that led to the choice of the deadly Zyklon B gas in the death camps. Very little was known about the Direktor, and before he began work on the gas experiments, Heydrich used him for other projects—projects that were not of a scientific nature, but that were often as deadly. One such project was what the Allied undercover agents had come to call *The Altar Boy Ploy*.

The Altar Boy Ploy was possibly the most devastating method of rounding up Jews in hiding—Jews living in

basements and attics of sympathetic German families, loosely organized by the local Catholic churches.

Starting in 1938, in town after town, the underground system that hid and smuggled Jews out of the country was compromised. In each case, it seemed that an insider sabotaged it. It took two years for the Catholic Church to recognize the sabotage—after the Vatican received startlingly similar information from various parish churches of events leading to the discovery and arrest of Jews hiding among their parishioners and other sympathetic families.

The Vatican pieced together the modus operandi of the saboteurs. A father and son would arrive at the local Catholic Church, and portray themselves as devout Catholics. The son would volunteer to be involved as an "altar boy" in the church. Within days, the son would reveal to the other altar boys that he and his father were on the run from the SS for harboring a pregnant Jewish mother and her daughter. Their story would spread among other parishioners and soon the local underground leaders would approach them to tap their expertise and experience in fleeing from the SS. Within a month they were wholly immersed in helping organize and support the local underground system that hid and smuggled the Jews. Then, abruptly, the father and the altar

boy would disappear. Within hours of their departure, dozens of SS officers would descend on the town, with clear knowledge of the exact whereabouts of the hidden Jews. In the meantime, in another town, the ploy started all over again: a new altar boy was welcomed into a local parish church. In this way thousands more Jews were found and dispatched to the Nazi concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, Belzec, Sachsenhausen, and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Allied intelligence now confirmed that the father and son were Günter and Erich respectively, and that their activities were coordinated by the Direktor, ostensibly under orders from Heydrich. But by early 1940, the ploy was no longer in operation. Either it had accomplished its objectives, or more likely, it was halted because the Vatican and the parish churches had figured out the scheme.

Warren stopped reading and picked up the pen. He thought for a few moments and then began to write:

*1938-40: The Altar Boy Ploy
Details: Contact the Vatican.*

He jotted down key points, referring back and forth from the file. He re-read what he had summarized and then turned back to the file.

Erich and Günter disappeared for a few months before resurfacing in mid-1940 in a studio flat in Berlin's affluent Kurfurstendamm. Allied agents were drawn to the flat when neighbors talked about blood-curdling screams coming from the flat, and late night visits by seemingly important SS officials. One visitor was identified as Reinhard Heydrich himself, and an undercover agent speculated the so-called Direktor was one of the others. Further, neighbors reported seeing motionless bodies removed from the flat late at night and driven off in official SS vehicles. But it wasn't until a few months ago—in January—that Allied undercover agents, after talking to liberated prisoners from the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp were able to piece together what Erich and Günter were doing, holed up in the Kurfurstendamm flat.

Apparently, beginning in early 1940, Erich and Günter, under the direction of Direktor, were involved in conducting human experiments on Heydrich's pet project: death by gassing. According to intelligence reports, as early as 1938 Heydrich foresaw the need for an efficient mass killing method, such as gas. He had recognized the inefficiency of what was then the accepted method of mass killing: lining the Jews and machine gunning them into ditches. The wastage

of bullets by machine guns was enormous and as the war dragged on, there was a need to minimize waste and increase efficiency.

Many methods were tried and rejected. The so-called "single-shot method", where the SS soldiers shot the Jews individually with one shot at the back of the neck, was used for some time. It saved bullets, but it was time consuming. Moreover, this method had an unforeseen side effect. According to a report filed by one undercover Allied agent, *"..the single-shot method took an emotional toll on many Nazi soldiers. It was difficult for the men to repeatedly place the gun to the base of the necks of the trembling, moaning, and sometimes shrieking victims as they lined up to be shot. Also, the flailing, twitching limbs of the dying bodies in the ditch, and sometimes the pleading eyes of the nearly dead were difficult to stomach for many Nazi soldiers."* The psychological impact of this method was so strong that there was evidence of increased drinking among the soldiers, and even instances of suicide. These drawbacks made Heydrich look to other alternative killing methods. It was assumed that he had turned to the Direktor, and the help of an unnamed industrial firm, to start researching the use of gas as an efficient mass killer.

They first conducted experiments with carbon monoxide, using the so-called "gassing vans". The exhaust of these diesel engine vans were re-circulated to sealed enclosures at the back of the vans, packed with Jews. The results were messy and in general, less than satisfactory.

The Direktor looked to other alternatives and found the answer in a specific form of hydrogen cyanide gas, Zyklon B. Once the Zyklon B gas method was perfected, Auschwitz-Birkenau was among the first camps to be equipped with Zyklon B gas chambers. The chambers turned out to be a very effective and efficient means of killing prisoners en masse. The prisoners were packed inside the airtight rooms, and a granular form of Zyklon B was allowed to trickle into the room. The granules were carriers of liquid Hydrogen Cyanide, which when exposed to air, evaporated, producing the lethal gas that killed the trapped people in minutes.

However, the experiments that Erich and Günter conducted in their flat had little to do with mass killing, as was done in the gas chambers. They were involved in testing the application and use of a reformulated Zyklon B in innocuous objects such as pens, watches, and letters—all of which became deadly means of assassinating enemies of the Third Reich. Allied agents had only recently confirmed

details on these ingenious assassination tools, after the unusual way that two Czech resistance leaders died: both collapsed soon after they used an exquisitely designed fountain pen that each had received as a gift. The pens were found to have a built-in vial of reformulated Zyklon B that ruptured when the pen's nib was pressed against paper.

It was acknowledged that such ingenious use of the Zyklon B was possible only because the brilliant Direktor had accomplished a major breakthrough in reformulating the Zyklon B gas, to increase its lethal life span. Further, in the case of the deadly Zyklon pen, he had successfully modified a fountain pen to include a vial of highly concentrated reformulated Zyklon B that killed the writer the instant the pen was used on paper. In fact, it was known that among the Nazi bigwigs, the vial in the pen was dubbed "the *other* gas chamber".

Intelligence reports surmised that Erich and Günter tested, experimented and perfected the application of Zyklon B in other gadgets besides the pen, but there was little doubt that their most successful innovation was the Zyklon pen. There was some concern that today, as the Third Reich crumbled, there were a large number of Zyklon pens—or other lethal gadgets—left behind by the fleeing Nazis. It was

possible that Allied troops could become inadvertent victims of the deadly gadgets if they happened to pick up and use these seemingly harmless, everyday gadgets.

Warren turned to his notes, and began to write:

*1940-42: Berlin (flat in Kurfurstendamm).
Experiments on lethal gadgets, including the Zyklon
pen.
Contact: Benjamin Weinmann.*

Without a doubt, Mr. Weinmann had to be an important starting point in tracking down the Heydrich Three. If the Vatican was the best bet for details of Erich, Günter, and possibly the Direktor, in connection to the Altar Boy Ploy, Weinmann was likely the best source with regard to information on the activities at Kurfurstendamm flat. Most of the intelligence on Kurfurstendamm came from his late wife, Esther Weinmann. Esther was among the last Jews gassed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, before the Allies liberated the camp in January. Two of the liberated prisoners who had known Esther in the camp, talked to a reporter about Esther's story: how she had been kept imprisoned for years in a flat in Berlin, cleaning, cooking, and taking care of two Nazi men. Within days of the newspaper running the story, a man named Benjamin Weinmann contacted the newspaper

inquiring about the story's sources because he was certain that Esther was his long lost wife. The newspaper reporter put Weinmann in touch with the women who had known Esther at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Today, Weinmann was running a one-man crusade to track down the Heydrich Three, and bring them to justice.

It was unlikely that at this point Weinmann had any more information than the OSS had in their files—but from years of experience Warren knew that no undercover agent could match the passion and perseverance of an individual who was driven by personal revenge. He had little doubt that Mr. Weinmann was going to be a critical asset if the Allies were going to track down the Heydrich Three.

Warren yawned, stretched, and loosened his collar. He looked at the notepad. More information was needed, but his sources were limited: *The Vatican*. *Benjamin Weinmann*. He underlined his two sources and then proceeded to lazily circle the words over and over again. It was disconcerting that the OSS had no intelligence on the Heydrich Three after the middle of 1942. Where had Erich, Günter and the Direktor been for the past three years? He scratched his chin thinking that perhaps, it wasn't very important. What was important was that the Heydrich Three had surfaced now—

at least their enormous loot had. And it was making its way to a bank in Zurich. As with Benjamin Weinmann and the Vatican, the help and cooperation of the Zurich bank was bound to be important if they were to bring the Heydrich Three to justice and recover the looted money.

Warren picked up the phone and began to dial. He hoped his contacts in Zurich and at the State Department would be able to help him.

Zurich, Switzerland
4:20 PM

While John Graetz waited for his son Peter to come to his office, he turned to the wall behind his desk and stared at the stately painting of his grandfather. A legend in Swiss banking, Al Graetz was famous for his ability to outfox large rival banks through innovative banking methods. During his tenure—in the 1860s—many small, privately held

banks banded together to form large syndicates to take advantage of business volume, diversify risk, and compete more effectively. But Al Graetz refused to cave in to the security of a large syndicate. When Bank-Verein approached him to become part of large conglomerate, he held his ground, while six other private banks gave up their independence and banded together to form the present Swiss Bank Corp. At first it seemed that Al Graetz had made a poor business decision; with large mushrooming syndicates, the small private banks like Graetz struggled. But ultimately not only did Graetz Bank survive, it flourished, thanks to unique banking innovations that Al instituted at Graetz Bank.

John realized that Al Graetz's son—his father, now retired—and even himself, had to be thankful to the work of Al Graetz. They were able to grow by holding the course that Al had set over seventy-five years ago. But today, John mused, they were faced with what were some unique challenges that likely required unusual answers. Answers in the form of banking innovations—not unlike the extraordinary innovations that Al pioneered to thwart the challenges he faced during his time. It struck him that his son Peter was exhibiting traits that had to be drawn directly from his

great-grandfather's genes. Peter's unique ideas and strategies were no more radical than what Al Graetz implemented in the 1860s. His heart ballooned with pride, thinking of his son. How wrong he was in being disappointed when Peter decided to switch to reading the sciences in England. His boy had the makings of a great banker! He smiled to himself, as he heard the knock on the door and his son walk in. John walked across from his desk, shook his hand and gave him a bear hug. Peter looked up, amused.

"What was that for?" Peter settled into a chair as John walked back to his desk.

John went directly to the topic of the large sum of Nazi money that was expected to arrive in Switzerland. "If the past deposits of the Nazis are an indication, it will end up at Credit Suisse or Swiss National bank."

Peter nodded. "Bum."

John winced; he wasn't proud of his son's expanded vocabulary from his stay in England. "I was thinking we should do something about it. That idea of yours—"

Peter's left eyebrow shot up. "Which one?"

"The FP Account."

"The FP account!" Peter's face lit up in a huge smile.

"Yes." John stopped and looked Peter squarely in the

eye. "The numbered accounts, as good as they are, are not perfect. I was thinking to myself, if I were a Nazi general depositing thousands of francs in a secret numbered account, I would worry about the risks of such an account. For example, I would know that it's not *completely* secret. A few bank executives will be privy to my identity. And I'd worry that bank executives being human, would be vulnerable. You know, bribery, blackmail." He paused.

Peter nodded, the smile stuck on his face. "Exactly. In fact, I know you're right. I've found out that it is *the* issue of concern for many of the Nazis planning deposits in Swiss banks."

"Really?"

"Yes. Word has already spread that the President of Dresden Bank has been able to access the names and numbers of certain Jewish secret accounts here in Switzerland. There is word that the Nazis are worried that the same may happen to them once the war is over—that the Allies would have access to their accounts. Yes, the integrity and reputation of our numbered accounts are falling apart."

"Which is why we need an innovative account, such as the—"

"The FP account!" Peter finished the sentence

gleefully.

Berlin, Germany
4:35 PM

"Zurich and then, Italy? Why Italy?" Erich asked, puzzled. He could understand the Direktor going to Zurich, to deposit the money. But Italy? Why not South America? Argentina welcomed members of the Third Reich. If Argentina was too far away, there was Spain. Italy on the other hand was a country in turmoil, wrought with uncertainty.

Günter shrugged. "What does it matter? We have our escape plans. Take a look at it, won't you?" He pointed to the large brown envelope on the table. "Why are you so stubborn?" Günter pushed the envelope closer to Erich. After a second, his eyebrows knotted together. "But I am concerned about Benjamin Weinmann. You know, he's vowed to kill us!"

"Weinmann is not our priority!" Erich snapped. "At least, not at this point. We've got to follow the Direktor. Otherwise, we risk losing all our money." He gritted his teeth, staring at the envelope. "Thanks to you, we are still tied to the blasted Direktor!"

Günter opened his mouth to speak, but Erich continued. "If we had our money, we could have gone anywhere in the world, right now. *Anywhere!* For the right price, there are pilots and planes ready to take people out of Berlin. And with the money, we would not only be rich for life, we wouldn't have to worry about Weinmann. We could have him professionally disposed off." Erich shook his head, feeling his anger rise. "The money! It would have solved everything." He pointed to the envelope, and as an afterthought, added softly: "Nothing has changed. We are still beholden to the Direktor."

"Why don't you at least look at it?" Günter persisted. "You know, we are very privileged." He tapped his fingers on the envelope. "The papers in there are meant exclusively for top officials of the Reich. We are fortunate that the Direktor is still well connected."

Erich's instincts told him that the escape plans inside the envelope was really the Direktor's scheme to get rid of

them. He suddenly sat up, looking at Günter. What if Günter and the Direktor were in this together? They could share the money two ways, rather than three. He looked at Günter. He was patting his forehead with a handkerchief. He gave Erich an encouraging smile, and then began to wipe the beads of sweat around his neck. Erich looked away. No, definitely not. It was impossible to think that Günter would stab him in the back. Günter was fiercely loyal to people he cared about. And Erich knew that Günter had a curious paternal affection for him—an affection that grew out of the years they played the roles of father and son, traveling from one town to another, infiltrating the underground efforts to hide Jews. In fact, Günter had taken his paternal duties to heart; it was as if Erich was the child he never had. And Erich had to concede that there were times when he enjoyed calling Günter "dad." After all, Günter was the closest to a father he'd ever have. Most of his friends at the orphanage would never experience the pleasure and comfort of addressing someone "dad". No, he decided, there was little chance that Günter was conspiring with the Direktor to get rid of him. He could count on Günter's loyalty. What he couldn't count on in Günter was intelligence, even common sense.

"Did it occur to you that we might lose the Direktor for good?" Erich asked. "How are we going to get our money if we don't know where in hell the Direktor is going to? I mean—"

"You assumed I didn't think of that?" Günter smiled. "Hah! That's where you are wrong." He pointed again to the envelope. "Like I said, these escape plans are not ordinary—" His voice was hushed. "It's *Das Spinne*."

Erich realized that his jaw had dropped. *Das Spinne?* His eyes went from Günter to the envelope and back to Günter. There was a smile on Günter's face. He was obviously enjoying the effect his words were having on him.

"Yes. The real thing," Günter continued, beaming. "The Direktor said that we are going to be a part of the revival of the Third Reich. And like the other *Das Spinne* sponsored escapees, we'll be contacted soon after we reach our destinations, and given access to every other *Das Spinne* escapee, to begin the great revival of the Reich!" He smiled. "We will know exactly where the Direktor is—through the *Das Spinne* network!" Günter beamed.

Erich picked up the envelope, almost reverently. If what Günter said was true, they were indeed privileged. *Das Spinne. The Spider.* An underground network formed to

smuggle the best and the brightest Nazi officers out of Germany. Ever since the Allied invasion of France, many of the Fuhrer's top associates had realized that it was a matter of time before Germany would fall. *Das Spinne* was born with the backing and financial help of wealthy German families and business firms who wanted to ensure that the Reich survived, even if Hitler died or Germany was defeated. If indeed this was the *Das Spinne* package, they had been invited into an exclusive and select club. But it seemed too good to be true. He turned the envelope around. Skepticism began to creep in. *Das Spinne*? It didn't make a lot of sense. Their stock in Nazi circles had fallen substantially ever since Heydrich was killed. Worse, many knew—or at least suspected—that Heydrich's riches were in their hands. In fact, during the last few years, the three of them were on the run from many of their own Nazi comrades as they tried to conceal and hide Heydrich's treasures. It had taken them a long time to work the underground markets and convert the jewelry, the gold and the artwork to cash. It was unlikely that they had any friends in the upper circles of the Nazi party.

Erich tore open the envelope. He looked up to see Günter nodding and smiling. He desperately wanted to

believe that all this was true. That it was *Das Spinne*. But his instincts screamed otherwise. Inside the envelope were passports, maps, and papers. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that it was impossible that he, Günter and the Direktor would be invited to be part of the exclusive *Das Spinne* group. Suddenly he was sure; this had to be a trap, set by the Direktor to get rid of Günter and himself. The anger must have shown on his face, because Günter spoke.

"What's wrong?"

"This cannot be the *Das Spinne* escape plan. This is the Direktor's plan to get rid of us!" Erich shoved the papers to Günter.

Günter was visibly taken aback. "But—"

Erich hushed him, and tried to think. They had no choice; they had to figure out where the Direktor was headed if they wanted the money. The Direktor wouldn't risk traveling too far carrying all that cash. It would have to be deposited. Yes, a Zurich bank would be the likely first step. But why Italy? Of course, that could be a lie.

Then it hit him like a punch to his stomach. His mind reeled as understanding dawned. Of course! *Father Damien!* Father Damien at the Vatican! Father Damien was one of the

most powerful men at the Vatican, and there were strong ties between the Father and many of the top brass of the Nazi party, including the Direktor. The Direktor was counting on the power of the Vatican to secure a safe future from the Allies and the likes of men like Weinmann! Under the diplomatic cover of the Vatican, the Direktor could get a new identity and start a new life virtually anywhere in the world. It made perfect sense.

Erich's mind worked fast. Within seconds he knew what he had to do. He turned to Günter.

"We are going to get out of Germany using the *monastery* route."

Günter was still staring at the documents. He seemed to be in a state of shock. He turned to Erich. "Are you sure—"

Erich grabbed the papers and tore them in half, deliberately, one at a time.

Günter watched, stunned, but made no effort to stop Erich. After a few moments he asked, "Monastery route?"

"Yes. There are numerous monasteries all over the countryside, stretching from Germany to Italy. The monks ask no questions, and welcome all travelers. And most important, the route will take us directly to the Vatican."

"The Vatican?" Günter shook his head. "Why?"

"I bet that's where the Direktor is headed."

"The Vatican?" Günter repeated. "How can you be sure?
And why—"

"Listen, Günter!" Erich's voice was a fierce whisper. "I know I am right. The Direktor is going to meet Father Damien." Erich wondered why he was trying to convince Günter. It was the same story all these years: at times when critical decisions had to be made, Günter would gamely fight Erich's views and then give in. It was getting tiresome. This may be a good time to break away, dump Günter and get on with his life. But somehow Erich knew he couldn't; after all, Günter had been with him virtually every day of the last nine years. He was family. His *only* family.

"Father Damien? The one who got you out of the orphanage? The one who introduced you to *Reichsleiter* Bormann?"

"Yes. Father Damien and Bormann were good friends, and through Bormann I was introduced to Heydrich, of course. Anyway, today Father Damien is a powerful official at the Vatican. He is the Associate Secretary of State at the Vatican."

"Why would he help us? I can see him helping the Direktor, but us?"

"He won't have a choice," Erich said grimly. "Father Damien was my best friend at the orphanage. At least, I thought he was. The bastard. He used to bring me chocolates, took me out for ice cream. We used to go for long walks. He gave me a fascination for history." Erich pointed to the book on the table. "The Holy Roman Empire, the Crusades, the Reformation, Napoleon. He taught me basics of French, and Spanish, and opened my mind to religion, the greatness of the Nazi cause, the destiny of the Aryan race, and music. Mozart, Schubert, Wagner. He was the big brother, and father I never had."

"So, why-" Günter started.

"He was also my sexual tutor." Erich's voice took on a hard edge. "He used me, the pervert! He introduced me to pornography and taught me to masturbate. And that was just the beginning." Erich stopped.

Günter said nothing.

"He'll help us not because he wants to, but because he doesn't have a choice. I'm sure he doesn't want the press to know that he is a pervert, a pedophile!" Erich laughed. "I am going to enjoy seeing him grovel. I have no doubt

he'll do whatever I ask."

Erich felt himself buoyed with the thought of meeting Father Damien. The pleasure of settling old scores with Father Damien was second only to getting his revenge on the Direktor. The thought of the Direktor brought him back to the present.

"Okay. Let's get to work," Erich said, taking a pen and beginning to draw a rough map on the back of the envelope. He felt charged and excited. "I think I am going to enjoy tracking down the Direktor, getting our money and then—" Erich paused to laugh. "Like Father Damien, the Direktor too will pay dearly."

Günter looked at him, his brows furrowed. "No!" He shook his head. "It's over Erich. That was years ago. Let it go. We'll get our money. Leave the past. Leave the Direktor be."

Erich's felt anger flare within. "What do you know? You never experienced fatherhood—all you had was I, your fake son. I had my very own child." Erich stared intently at Günter. "And the Direktor murdered her."

Günter opened his mouth to speak, and then changed his mind.

"I want revenge." Erich whispered. "The Direktor

killed my daughter."

Günter shook his head. "You screwed a Jew bitch," His voice was low. "Your child was a Jew." His voice took a louder, more confident tone. "A *mischlinge*. It deserved to die. What did you expect?" He hesitated, and then said. "Anyway, why did you do something so stupid?"

Erich closed his eyes, heaved a large sigh. "I had to know."

"Know what?"

He had never told this to anybody before. The words came out slowly. It was more difficult than he expected. "I had never been with a woman. I didn't know if I could do it with a woman. After all those years, you know, with Father Damien."

Günter was silent, a silence that seemed to suggest that he understood. Then, he continued: "But anyway, what kind of a father would you have made? You were hardly in your teens. A child dad? Ha!"

Erich's locked his eyes with Günter's for a few seconds, until Günter looked away. Erich spoke, in a measured tone, very deliberately. "Don't ever speak to me like that. What the hell do you know about fatherhood, anyway?"

Günter said nothing.

"I'd have put my baby at Steinhoring. Or
Klausterheide."

Günter looked up surprised. "In the *Lebensborn*
program?"

Erich nodded.

"Impossible." Günter snickered. "The *Lebensborn*
program is to raise pure Aryan children. Unwed German
mothers carrying the children of pure Aryan men. That's
what the Fuhrer wants! Not your mongrel mischlinge!" He
snickered again.

"But that's what the Direktor promised." Erich felt
foolish as soon as he said it. The Direktor's promises
meant nothing.

"You know, who would have been an ideal child for the
Lebensborn program? You! If the *Lebensborn* program had
started a few years earlier, you'd have been there, not in
the orphanage. Look at you, with your blonde hair and blue
eyes!" He stopped. "Have you ever wondered who your
parents are?"

Erich was taken off guard. All his years nobody had
brought up the issue of his parents. In the orphanage the
supervisors deftly changed the topic each time a boy brought

up the issue. Over time, they had been conditioned to not talk about it. He had often wondered who his mother was and where she lived.

"I won't be surprised if you are the son of a somebody high up," Günter continued.

"Why would you say that?" But Erich was intrigued.

"Why do you think that everybody, from the very beginning treated you different? I mean, I'm much older than you are, but all these years, I didn't get the respect and importance that you received." There was bitterness in his voice. "Heydrich, the Direktor, and everybody else treated you better."

Erich wanted to laugh out aloud. "That's because you are not very intelligent, Günter! And I am! I know literature, music, history." He pointed to the book on the table. "Do you anything about the First Reich? No! Do you know French? No! Spanish? No! Really, what do you know?"

Günter's face fell. He looked confused for a moment and then pointed to the plate with toast and marmalade. "If you are not eating your toast, can I have one?"

Erich pushed the plate towards Günter, and turned to the map he was drawing.

Günter bit into the toast hungrily, and then took a

peek at the map. "So when do we start?"

Washington D.C.

10:55 AM

Warren Terrell replaced the telephone handset and scratched yet another name and number off his list. He was getting nowhere with the Vatican. The Vatican seemed as closed, secretive, and impenetrable as the Swiss Banking system.

The lack of cooperation from the Swiss Banks was to be expected. He had given it his best shot: making use of his old connections in Zurich and Geneva. But he made little progress. The hurdle was a Swiss law that made it a criminal offense for bank executives to divulge the names of account holders. He knew the law well: Article 47 of the 1934 Swiss Federal Banking Law. The irony was that the law was originally set up to prevent Nazis from accessing

information on Jewish accounts. Now the Nazis, including it seemed the Heydrich Three, were using it to protect their looted wealth.

But the impasse at the Vatican was a surprise. He used the highest contacts in the State Department, and the response from various Vatican sources was the same: get in touch with the Vatican Secretary of State's Office. The spokesperson at the Secretary of State was brusque and non-committal when he described the OSS knowledge of the Altar Boy Ploy, and the fact that Erich and Günter, who were part of the Heydrich Three, were now on the run. Would the Vatican have any information to help bring them to justice? The spokesperson indicated that they had nothing to offer at present to the OSS and said that the Vatican would be happy to pass on any information, if and when they received it.

It was very perplexing. Warren was confident that the intelligence reports were right: that the Vatican received information from various German parishes and it was that information that helped the Church to see the pattern of sabotage and ultimately made it too dangerous for Erich and Günter to continue with the Altar Boy Ploy. So why was the Vatican not cooperative? Frustrated, he called his old friend, Father Ryan, a Jesuit priest across town at

Georgetown University. Father Ryan had lived and studied at the Vatican for many years before settling down to a teaching position at the local Jesuit University, Georgetown.

"You must understand that the Vatican is a strange place." Father Ryan said when apprised of the situation. "There could be various reasons why the Vatican would not be cooperative in this instance."

"But we're talking about bringing cold blooded murderers to justice."

"I understand." A pause. "I'm afraid that means little."

"What do you mean?"

A longer pause. "To put it bluntly," Father Ryan continued. "The Vatican has so many-how do I put it-issues at stake, they'd rather play it safe and not divulge anything, if there is the smallest possibility that that information they provide could come back to slight their name or reputation."

"I'm afraid I'm lost," Warren said. "The Heydrich Three sabotaged the efforts of many Catholic churches to save Jews--"

"That's not the point. What if the information they

gave you helped the OSS dig up other things that would show the Vatican or individuals in the Vatican in poor light?"

"You mean there could be Nazi sympathizers in the Vatican?"

"I don't know, but there could be. But that's not the only issue. The reputation of the Catholic Church and the Vatican could be hurt in other ways. Remember, many of the Nazi commanders are—I should say were—Catholics. Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels grew up as church-going Catholics. They went to Catholic schools. There are priests among Himmler's immediate family members." Father Ryan stopped.

Warren egged him on. "Go, on. I'm getting a completely new perspective."

"In fact, some say that Hitler got the idea for the Nazi swastika from the Benedictine monastery situated across from his childhood home in Lambach, Austria. The swastika in that monastery were actually a symbol of good luck, and was part of the coat of arms of an abbot named Theodorich von Hagen who ran the monastery, some years before Hitler was born. Mind you, this is not to say that the abbot had anything to do with Nazism; in fact, he chose it because he had a particular devotion to cross." Father Ryan stopped, as if he was unsure, but a moment later, continued. "And

the words "Hagen's cross" in German is *Hagenkruez*, very similar to *Hakenkreuz*, which is German for "twisted cross" or the swastika." He added, hurriedly: "Remember, none of these issues implicate the church directly with Hitler or his regime, but they provide connections. And connections are dangerous because they are fertile ground for rumors and over time, rumors are often indistinguishable from facts."

"Well, but—"

"Wait. Let me give you an example from my own community of the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits," Father Ryan continued. "Hitler's confidante, Martin Bormann used to live close to one of our Jesuit seminaries in Pullach, near Munich. In the mid thirties, Bormann was quoted saying that he admired the method used by the Jesuits in training young men to be priests. The next thing you know, the SS newsletter, *Black Corps*, carries an article on the usefulness of the Jesuit method in training SS officers. That's not all. We know that Hitler has referred to the notorious Heinrich Himmler as 'our Ignatius of Loyola'—Ignatius being the founder of our Jesuit order. Why? I don't know, but as a consequence, some people speculate that there are Jesuits working together with Bormann and the Nazis. Obviously, such talk slights our Jesuit order. And as time passes it's difficult

to ferret out truth from rumor and fiction."

"So you think that the Vatican, by clamping down on all information on the Altar Boy Ploy is really attempting to protect its own?"

"Exactly."

"So we may never have access to any of the information at the Vatican?"

"Well, you could, if you wait seventy five years."

"Seventy five years? Why?"

"The type of information you are concerned with—correspondence between the parishes and the Pope regarding the Altar Boy Ploy—would likely be filed away in the Vatican's *Secret Archives*."

"Secret Archives?"

"The Vatican's Secret Archives contain all documents of an important or delicate nature—including the personal correspondence of the Popes over the centuries. They go a long way back—nearly two thousand years. But it's even more than that—it's an incredible collection of original documents covering many of the great events of the history of the world. Documents from the trials of Galileo, Napoleon's Treaty of Tolentino, and the Great Schism," Father Ryan paused. "The correspondence between the Popes

and Michelangelo. Even the letters of Joan of Arc to the Comte d'Armagnac—the letters that ultimately had her burned as a witch. I could go on and on! And as per Vatican policy, the documents from the most recent seventy-five years are inaccessible. Thus today, only documents from prior to 1870 are available to outsiders, including researchers and scholars."

"Why?"

There was an embarrassed laugh from Father Ryan.

Suddenly things were clear to Warren. "To help safeguard the reputations of *living* individuals? That any embarrassing information on a person will not be uncovered until possibly after his death?"

"That's right. Some of the documents might contain information that may be politically explosive. Of course, the seventy-five year policy can be changed any time by a sitting Pope. He may decide to remove the seventy five year rule tomorrow."

"Or increase it to one hundred years? Or close the archives permanently?"

"True. The Pope is all powerful," Father Ryan paused. "In fact, I won't be surprised if the present Pope closes the archives for good."

"Pope Pius XII?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

He sensed Father Ryan hesitating over the phone.

"Don't worry. I won't quote you."

"It doesn't matter. You can quote me. This is really nothing secret."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, first, most people think that this present Pope, Pius XII could have been more vocal in condemning Hitler."

"Yes." Warren was familiar with some reports in the media criticizing the lack of inaction on the part of the Pope with regards to Nazi atrocities.

"Some say that Pope Pius XII, disturbed by the growing criticism against him, may have little choice but to close the archives permanently—or risk a widening of the condemnation that he is already receiving. You see, the archives likely contain substantial material from the recent war years, including material that may not be very flattering to him."

"Fascinating!" Warren said.

"Yes," Father Ryan continued. "For example, details of the troubling deal that he struck with Hitler in 1933. *The*

Reich Concordat. He wasn't the Pope then, but he was Cardinal Pacelli, working at the Secretary of State's Office at the Vatican. Pacelli and Hitler signed the Reich Concordat in July 1933. It silenced the Catholic Church in Germany and forced it to comply with Nazi policies. Worse, the concordat seemed to say that there was the Pope's seal of approval for Hitler and Nazism." Father Ryan paused momentarily. "But that's just my perspective. I could be completely wrong. Pope Pius could surprise us all by opening up the Vatican Archives—all of it, up to the present time."

"If he does, can anybody go to the Vatican and get access to all the archives?"

"You may not have to go to the Vatican. There's a Vatican Library in St. Louis, Missouri. At DuBourg University. Different from a traditional library, it is a depository of microfilms of virtually all publicly available Vatican documents."

"Isn't that a Jesuit University, like your Georgetown University?"

"Indeed so. It has the largest collection of Vatican documents outside the Vatican—albeit in microfilm form. If and when new documents from the Vatican Archives are made

accessible to the public, I would expect to see microfilm copies made available at DuBourg University's Vatican Library."

Zurich, Switzerland
5:15 PM

John Graetz had gathered the three key general partners of Graetz Bank to listen to Peter's proposal on the FP account. John hoped that the partners would offer support and approve implementation. He was confident that his two brothers-in-law, Arthur Willumsen and Emil Thomas would see the potential of the FP account. They were both accountants and if he and Peter could sell the idea using concrete numbers, they would buy into it. On the other hand, his old uncle James Graetz was going to be a challenge. James abhorred change; he revered Al Graetz and swore by traditional banking methods. Getting James' acceptance

would also depend on how the idea was presented, John decided. Only in his case, he would have to be convinced that their proposal was really not a change from the policies and ideas of Al Graetz, but rather one that builds on them.

John started by talking to the three men about the challenging times that lay ahead for small banks like Graetz Bank.

"Today our large competitors recognize that 75% of a bank's profits come from 25% of their largest clients. And for a small bank like ours, the proportion is even more severe: 90% of profits from 10% of our largest accounts." John noticed that Arthur and Emil were nodding their heads. "It is critical that we focus on attracting very large accounts. Our future profitability depends on it. And our present practices do little to attract large deposits. We have to become more innovative if we are to attract big money." He then called on Peter to explain his idea.

Peter stood up, and looked at the portrait of Al Graetz. "Remember what great-grandfather said. For many of our key clients, our role as bankers is secondary. We are psychologists first, bankers second." He paused. John noticed a spark of interest in James Graetz's eyes.

Peter continued, pacing the floor. "Those words ring true to this day, for all Swiss banks—particularly for the important clients. Take the so-called Gustloff accounts, for example. For these clients, it's not profit and return on their investment that's important, but secrecy and security."

James Graetz nodded.

Peter continued. "Although we Swiss bankers have a worldwide reputation for security and secrecy, I believe that for many of today's clients, we are not secure enough, or secret enough." Peter paused. "These are unique clients with unique needs. The traditional numbered account—one of Swiss banking's enduring innovations—is good, but it doesn't do enough for these clients."

The general partners stared at Peter, following his every step as he paced the room.

"Many of our clients recognize the risks and vulnerabilities of the numbered account. We all know there have been cases where secrecy has been compromised. Most of the world isn't aware of these lapses, but the clients who matter—the big depositors—are very aware of cases where bank executives have been forced—blackmailed or bribed—into divulging identities of numbered accounts. I expect that

many a client will be happy to shift his money from the numbered account to another type of account if it provides improvements in secrecy and security."

Peter stopped, and looked up to the portrait of Al Graetz. "What I am about to suggest is no different in principle from what great-grandfather proposed and implemented in the last century. My idea is to offer a new type of secret account that uniquely satisfies the needs of a select—and very important—group of clients. Just like great-grandfather did over eighty years ago, for the select clients of that time. If you recall, among the many innovations he offered was an uniquely customized banking service to clients for whom discretion was more important than interest rates. It meant specialized banking services, including meeting with clients in Gstaad and St. Moritz, or at their villas in London or Paris. Secrecy was so important that he insisted that our bankers travel incognito when going to meet clients in other countries. Their passports did not divulge their banking profession; rather, they traveled as lawyers, scientists, doctors, and professors."

John noticed that James Graetz was completely engrossed; probably he knew exactly what Peter was talking

about. In his younger days, James would have been among the Graetz bankers who traveled to meet clients in discreet places all over the world. John felt tears well in his eyes as he watched the three general partners listening in rapt attention to Peter. His heart swelled with pride for his son. Peter had come of age! The future of Graetz Bank was in good hands.

Peter continued to talk. "I propose a unique new banking service to adapt to the changing needs of our key customers. The FP account. The Fingerprint Account."

John couldn't decide if it was intrigue or amusement that reflected on the faces of the three men. Their eyes, however, were still fixed on Peter.

"In the FP account, there will be no need to divulge your name, or even provide a fictitious name—that could get you in trouble later. All that's required is your fingerprint. No names, no addresses, nothing. It ensures that you—*and only you*—have access to the account. No thief, no forger, no impostor, not even family members can touch it. Not even your banker will know who you are. In short, it is an infallible means of identification."

Peter walked over to James Graetz and gently touched his granduncle's wizened hand. "Each man's fingerprint is

unique. Most important, the print you have today is exactly the same as it was when you were born." He paused and turned to all three of the men. "All characteristics in a human being change—except fingerprints."

"Is it reliable?" James Graetz inquired.

"Of course! I wouldn't propose it if there were any risks," Peter said. "The science of fingerprinting is highly developed. Scotland Yard uses fingerprints as the definitive basis for identification. So too does the FBI in the U.S. The armed forces in the U.S. have used it for years; the Naval Bureau and the Army Bureau have millions of fingerprints on their files. The best proof of its infallibility is that about ten years ago in the U.S., the veterans of World War I were given a bonus by the War Department, based solely on fingerprints. Every war veteran's fingerprint was matched to his print taken years before, at the start of the war".

"And I assume you are an expert on this?" Emil Thomas asked.

"Yes, I am well versed in two of the most advanced methods of classifying and identifying fingerprints: the *Henry Classification System* and *Galton's Details*," Peter stopped and went to the desk at the far end of the room.

"In fact," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Let's do a simple experiment."

John looked on as his son assembled on the desk a tube of printer's ink, a rubber roller, a slab of polished brass and two small bottles with liquid inside. John noticed that the three general partners were watching Peter intently. Peter first coated the slab of brass with a thin layer of printer's ink and then spread the ink across its surface evenly with the rubber roller. The three men were now completely absorbed with the experiment. His uncle in particular seemed like an excited child, as if waiting to see how a new toy worked. Peter requested each of the men to come forward.

James Graetz stepped up first. Peter helped place Mr. Graetz's thumb on the inked slab and gently rolled it, moving from right to left. Then, he placed it on a blank sheet of paper and rolled it again, right to left. He did this for all of the four men present. Peter then announced that he was leaving the room, and they were all to wash their hands and do the same procedure on their own this time, on separate sheets of paper. He also asked them to identify their papers with a coded name or number.

Peter came back into the room and in seconds—much to

the amazement of all present—he matched the prints of each man.

The men needed little persuasion after that and it was unanimously decided that Graetz Bank would offer the Finger Print account. Immediately they began to work on the details of the new account. All agreed that the FP account should be made available as soon as possible and they had to get the word out to the targeted clients. John got to his telephone and began to make calls to his contacts in Germany.

As John dialed various numbers, he felt a sense of expectancy and excitement about the future of the bank. He knew in his heart that the FP Account would be a success, and he expected to draw a large number of Gustloff accounts. He also knew that in the future, his grandchildren and great grandchildren would look back at 1945 as the year Peter Graetz started the first of many innovations at Graetz Bank. Innovations that he hoped would ultimately help Graetz Bank to become one of the premier banks, not only in Switzerland, but the world. Pride welled inside him as he watched Peter holding court, explaining to the bank's three general partners the differences between ridges, depressions, arches, loops, and whorls. The three men were obviously

enthralled by Peter and his knowledge of the art of fingerprinting.

Berlin, Germany
5:45 PM

Erich gazed intently at his hand-drawn map—it was now pockmarked with times, distances, and names. Satisfied, he nodded to Günter.

“Well, that’s final then. We leave tomorrow evening.”

Günter had a distant look in his eyes. “So this is how it ends. It seems like it was just yesterday that it all started.” He smiled. “Remember our first meeting with Heydrich? You were just a boy.”

Erich didn’t say anything. Of course he did! Every bit of it. It was one of the most vivid and memorable days of his life. He remembered how awestruck he was as he was led into Heydrich’s office with Günter. Even today he could close his eyes and feel the plush carpet and inhale the

sweet smell of rich tobacco laced with alcohol. Although it was a completely foreign world, he felt a curious sense of belonging to the surroundings. It was as if he had finally arrived home, after being shuttled from one orphanage to another. He knew immediately that someday in his future, his life would be filled with the kind of trappings he saw and experienced that day.

As he walked into Heydrich's office, he was struck by the seeming contradictions all around him. The imposing and striking figure of Heydrich and his polite, soft voice. The iron clasp of his handshake followed by his gentle pat on the back. The broad, expansive black marble table on one side of the room, and a slender brown violin stand, right next to it. The war maps marked with miniature flags lying on the table, and the printed music sitting on the stand. A richly polished violin resting next to a dull gray pistol. Years later, his curiosity helped him determine that the violin was most certainly a Stradivarius, and the pistol, a 25 Caliber Walther Automatic.

As if reading his thoughts, Günter said, "I still recall the violin on the stand near his desk. Weren't you surprised to see it there? I mean this was the office of the *Obergruppenfuhrer*! Guns, yes! But a violin?" He

paused. "And there was some printed music on his desk."

"A choral composition. It was Mozart." Erich remembered it distinctly because it was one of the first Mozart pieces that Father Damien had introduced him to.

Günter turned to him surprised. "Really? You remember?" Suddenly, his face broke into a smile. "And I'm sure you remember that your initial comments upset Heydrich!"

Upset Heydrich? Hardly, Erich chuckled to himself, as he remembered telling Heydrich why he disliked the Mozart cantatas. Günter may have thought that it upset Heydrich because Heydrich was taken aback by his words. Obviously Heydrich wasn't used to hearing his subordinates being so blunt, let alone a ten year-old voicing his opinions. But Erich's forthrightness struck a chord in Heydrich and immediately his tone changed, and there was a sliver of respect in his voice.

"You come highly recommended," Heydrich looked straight into his eyes. "Martin Bormann and Father Damien say you are a precocious child. That you have a brilliant mind. You know, we need the best and the brightest."

Erich had no recollection of what his response had been. He was struck by Heydrich's blue eyes and the soft,

yet crisp tone of his voice. The aura of authority that seemed to envelope Heydrich was mesmerizing—the way he paced the floor, and how he periodically answered the phone, barking orders. He recalled thinking that this was where he wanted his future to be. He had to do everything to impress Heydrich. So when Heydrich talked about the noble cause of the Third Reich, and the failures of the First and Second Reichs, he jumped in with his comments, recollecting all the history he had learnt listening to Father Damien talk about Europe's past and its glorious Nazi future.

"You know what they say about the First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire?" Erich volunteered. "That it was neither Holy, nor Roman. Voltaire himself said that."

"Yes. Yes. Good," Heydrich said, a smile breaking at the corners of his mouth. "What else do you know of the First Reich?"

Erich felt immensely confident. "Calling it the Holy Roman Empire is not really appropriate. It comprised largely of the Germanic states. And its inception can be traced to Charlemagne in the year 800. But it was in 962 that Emperor Otto 1 and Pope John XII helped raise it to its glory. It included a teenage Emperor, Otto III."

"Ah yes! Otto III. We could learn a thing or two

about revenge from that boy emperor."

Erich nodded, before continuing. "It ultimately collapsed in 1806." He paused. "Spanned nearly a thousand years."

Heydrich's eyes turned serious. He looked at Erich squarely. A teacher challenging the student. "What was the secret of its longevity?"

Erich stared blankly. He wished he had an impressive answer. *Any answer.* But he had no idea.

"The relationship between the emperors with the Popes," Heydrich said. "What do you know of the role of the Popes—the papacy—during the Holy Roman Empire?"

Again he had no clue. It was an intriguing question. After all, it was the *Holy* Roman Empire. Why did the emperors want the papacy to be part of the empire? Or was it vice-versa? Did the Popes want to have a piece of the empire? It seemed that Heydrich didn't expect him to have an answer, for he continued.

"The Popes and the emperors. It was an unusual relationship. Sometimes, an uneasy relationship. They were partners in power, to the mutual benefit of both. You see, the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire understood that religion was not just a path to salvation, as the common

folks believed. It was a social force, a force that had the power to change society more easily than any political or economic power could." He looked at Erich in the eye. "It was so important, that some emperors like the teenage Emperor Otto III you mentioned, waged wars to install their friends or relatives as Popes. Controlling the papacy was crucial to controlling the people. Think about it! It was no easy task holding together hundreds of principalities, provinces and towns each with its own culture, language, and customs. But what the emperor found difficult to accomplish through his policies, he could often accomplish under the guise of religion—"

"With the help of his partner in power, the Pope," Erich concluded, fascinated.

Heydrich nodded, and then added slowly, more as an afterthought. "The Fuhrer doesn't understand the importance of this issue. I believe that the future of our Reich will also depend on how we use the religious convictions of our people. Just like the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire did. After all, the challenge we face is no different from that of the times of the First Reich; we have to unite a variety of peoples from all across Europe, with their different languages, cultures, and customs." His eyes took

a distant look. "I'm afraid our Fuhrer is overlooking one of the most important lessons of history. He's got to understand that one cannot become the master of Europe by the sword alone, but by the sword *and the cross*. I think he made a mistake in signing the Reich Concordat with the Vatican in 1933. That meant that German Catholic community had to, by law, comply with his policies and views. It would have been so much easier to work *with* the Church, and package the Fuhrer's policies through the Church and the papacy. The people would have embraced the Fuhrer *through* the church. Just like the emperors of the First Reich." He paused and then said very deliberately: "I think the Popes' relationship with the emperors was critical in holding the empire together. It gave the emperors a "divine right" to institute rules and policies. The Fuhrer must realize that the cross can be as powerful as the sword. After all, a *sharpened cross is a sword.*"

Erich didn't really comprehend everything that Heydrich said but it all sounded fascinating. A thought struck him. He blurted it out, "And in the same vein, you could say a *blunted sword is a cross.*" Erich wasn't sure what it meant but it seemed to follow naturally from Heydrich's comment.

Heydrich looked at him for a moment, as if taken by

surprise. Then he nodded gravely, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "Apt metaphors. And if I may add, a *twisted* cross is our symbol—the swastika. Any way you look at it, we need to exploit religion to our advantage, not remove it."

Erich felt heady with pride. He wanted to learn more from this brilliant man. He wanted to become like him.

Heydrich shifted to other topics. He talked about the difficulties of managing the different divisions of the SS under him. "Sometimes it is very confusing."

Erich, now buoyed with confidence, let his thoughts flow. "Confusion can be good, as long as everyone knows who is in charge." He was surprised at the authority in his voice.

Heydrich looked at Erich curiously.

Erich continued, "Keep them guessing and you will keep your power."

"What do you mean?" Heydrich sat down at his desk.

Erich said that he had captained the football team at the orphanage and explained how he wielded power by refusing to divulge the position each boy would play for the team, until just before the game started. That way, during the days between games, the boys were obliged to him, for there

was no guarantee that they would get their favorite positions at the next game.

"But did your team ever win?" Heydrich asked

"Oh yes! They were so scared that they would lose their position in the next game, they played their hearts out."

Heydrich stared at him for a full five seconds before slowly nodding. "Father Damien was right. You are a natural leader. Trust your instincts. You are destined for greatness."

Erich felt flushed, a warm glow seemed to envelope him. Nobody had ever complimented him like that. The only words of approval he received in the past were from Father Damien. But that didn't count; after all, Father Damien was interested not in his mind, but his body. But here was one of the most powerful men in the Nazi party telling him that he was *destined for greatness*. All of a sudden he felt special, sure that fate had chosen him for great things.

The days after the meeting was a blur, as the Direktor, Günter and Erich were whisked from one Nazi office to another, briefed and trained for their first project, to break up the underground efforts of Catholic parishes to hide Jews. Erich and Günter visited Catholic churches and

attended services, learning what it took to be a good parishioner and the duties of an "altar boy".

During this time, they were taken to a reception at the Reich Chancellery for their first meeting with the Fuhrer. It was another experience that was etched in Erich's mind, starting with the drive in the magnificent Mercedes, as part of a large convoy of cars carrying Nazi officials to the newly built Reich Chancellery. His mouth was dry and his heart pounded as he watched the thronging crowds in the streets; some waved at the cars, while others had their right hands outstretched, mouthing *Heil Hitler!* He recalled watching the red swastika banners on the streets and thinking that they didn't just flutter in the wind, they had a majestic swirl about them. The Reich Chancellery was magnificent, stretching the length of Vossstrasse, from the Wilhelmplatz to the Hermann-Goring Strasse.

Inside the Chancellery, Erich drank in the grandeur: the huge square pillars, the high ceilings, the lush carpeting, the oak doors, the milling SS guards in black and silver, some stoic and statue-like, while others with muted smiles on their faces ushered in the foreign attaches, dignitaries, and leaders of the Nazi party.

Within minutes of entering the Chancellery, it was

Heydrich's turn to introduce them to the Fuhrer. Erich felt his temples throb and his palms turn sweaty as he watched Heydrich bend obsequiously towards the Fuhrer, saying "Mein Fuhrer". Erich heard nothing beyond that. He felt paralyzed as he watched the Fuhrer's eyes pass quickly over the Direktor and Günter, and then, come to rest on him. Their eyes locked for a fleeting second as Heydrich reached to the Fuhrer and whispered something in his ear. The Fuhrer smiled and Erich saw his mouth move, but again, he heard nothing. Erich desperately wanted to say something, but the Fuhrer's hypnotic gaze had him completely tongue-tied. Within moments, it was over—the strong arms of an SS officer nudged him and the rest gently, guiding them away from the Fuhrer to a table that was overflowing with food and wine.

A couple of years later, after their altar boy act successfully broke the underground system that hid and smuggled the Jews, they were the toast of the Nazi high command and they got to meet the Fuhrer often. But it was their success with the Zyklon pen and other killing gadgets that made them a regular invitee to many of the Fuhrer's functions. Often they were invited to the Fuhrer's home for breakfast or lunch. The Fuhrer enjoyed the demonstrations of the many innovative gadgets that the Direktor produced and

he asked to be apprised of the different experiments that Erich and Günter performed to perfect the tools.

Erich recollected the breakfast meeting with the Fuhrer when they first displayed the working of the deadly Zyklon pen. It was the most lethal gadget they had perfected and they had looked forward to showing it off to the Fuhrer.

As usual, it was an early breakfast, and there were a variety of fruit juice and milk served. Erich followed the lead of the Fuhrer and Heydrich and sipped a tall glass of milk, while the rest opted for the fruit juice. After the Direktor explained the working of the Zyklon pen, the Fuhrer nodded to Heydrich, who smiled knowingly and left the breakfast table. After a few minutes, as they were about to start on their toast, an officer came by with a message. Breakfast was interrupted as they were all led to a landing that overlooked an enclosed room. Inside the room, a man sat on a desk, with a sheet of paper in front of him. The man looked like an orthodox rabbi, with a long flowing beard. Heydrich appeared next to the rabbi; they shook hands and exchanged a few words. Then Heydrich offered him the Zyklon pen. Erich's heart sped with expectation as he realized what was going to happen. As they watched, Heydrich left the room. Within moments, the man removed the

cap off the pen and began to write.

The Fuhrer gave a high-pitched squeal of delight as the rabbi slumped forward and collapsed on the desk. The Fuhrer grabbed the Direktor's hand and pumped it, beaming at everyone present. He was obviously very pleased. Erich didn't know what made him say it, but he blurted out: "Like the teachers say in school, bad grammar can kill you!"

The Fuhrer roared with laughter and slapped Erich on his back. And when they went back to finish their interrupted breakfast, the Fuhrer took a piece of toast, spread marmalade on it, and offered it to Erich, repeating "Bad grammar can kill you" and breaking into laughter over and over again. Everyone at the table laughed politely, and Erich felt flushed with importance. The Fuhrer serving him toast and marmalade! It was unthinkable! It was a memorable breakfast, and they lingered longer than usual at the table. The Fuhrer, normally a poor eater, seemed to have a hearty appetite that morning.

Erich snapped back to the present. He smiled, looking at the leftover toast and marmalade on the plate. Toast and marmalade had become a habit ever since that breakfast with the Fuhrer. He folded the map, suddenly feeling a surge of confidence. The impending fall of Germany was a shame, but

it just meant that his destiny lay somewhere else. He was supremely confident that if he followed his instincts, he would not be disappointed. He had a starting point: the power of the papacy, at the Vatican. He was certain that it would take little to make Father Damien acquiesce to his demands. He looked forward to confronting Father Damien, and squeezing all his power to track the Direktor, to get his share of the money, and possibly, even find a way to silence Benjamin Weinmann. And with his share of the money, there'd be no stopping him! Heydrich's words came back to him: *Trust your instincts. You are destined for greatness.*

Later that night as Erich went to sleep he wondered about the dejected boy he had seen walking on the street that morning. Was there someone to kiss him goodnight? Or was he twisting and turning on a damp, uncomfortable, and smelly mattress, crying himself to sleep? He forced his mind away; that boy represented his past. That was all over now. Tomorrow he'd be on his way to the Vatican, and then, the future—a limitless future—awaited him! An ominous thought struck him: For nearly a thousand years of the First Reich, many an emperor attempted to use the authority of the papacy to enhance their power. Most were successful in garnering a papal partnership, thus helping them wield

power with a divine hand. Just as the emperors of old would have traveled to the Vatican to gain access to the papal authority, he was setting out tomorrow to the Vatican to put the power of the papacy to work in his favor. As he fell asleep, he felt an odd kinship with some of the most powerful men who had roamed the expanse of Europe since the beginning of civilization.

Chapter 2

Friday, April 13, 1945

The Vatican
10:20 AM

A furious rage exploded inside Erich. He caught Father Damien by the collar and slammed his knee into his crotch. Father Damien screamed, his hands reaching between his legs. Then, in one quick motion, Erich grabbed the Father's scrotum, twisted and yanked hard.

"What do you need your balls for?" Erich's voice quivered with anger. "After all, you are a priest!"

Father Damien passed out, falling to the richly carpeted floor, with scarcely a thud.

Erich felt a deep sense of satisfaction course through him. The meeting with Father Damien, in his opulent office in the Apostolic Palace was all that he had hoped for. It was gratifying to watch the transformation of the proud and stately Associate Secretary of State of the Vatican into a whimpering, groveling man, and now, to a motionless heap on

the floor.

They had arrived that morning at the Vatican, from Docci, about fifty miles northeast of Rome, after seven tiring days following the so-called "monastery route" from Germany to Italy, via Switzerland. Although it was an exhausting trip, it was surprisingly uneventful and much faster than Erich had expected. What helped immensely was their chance meeting with a Nazi officer having trouble fixing a flat tire on what must have been a stolen Red Cross truck, near the German-Swiss border. In return for their help, the officer offered to let them ride with him into Switzerland and then on to northern Italy. Along the way, they rested nightly at a variety of "safe houses", mainly ski-lodges, chalets, and country-inns in Switzerland, and monasteries and churches near and inside Italy, where any traveler was welcome, no questions asked. Moreover, as they crossed from one country to another, Erich realized that their timing couldn't have been better. A few days later and they might not even have been able to leave Germany. It was apparent that the Allies were preparing to begin a more vigorous patrolling of country borders; but at this time things were not completely organized and they were able to talk their way through, helped no doubt, by the Red Cross

truck they were traveling in.

Their final stop was the previous night at a monastery in Dozzi, in the beautiful Umbria region of Italy, where they happened to arrive on the religious feast day of the monastery's elder monk. They were invited to partake of a veritable banquet that included fine wine and some of the most delicious food Erich had ever eaten, all specialties of the regions of Umbria and Tuscany: *Minestrone Toscano*, *Pollo alla Umbria*, and *Fett'unta al Pomodoro*. It was a befitting meal from a personal standpoint too, Erich thought as he finished the last crumbs of *Torta di Noce* for dessert; it was a celebration of the closing of one chapter of his life and the opening of another.

This morning they had found a reasonably priced *pensione* in the heart of Rome, off the bustling Piazza Venezia, about a dozen blocks from the Vatican.

When they arrived inside the Vatican, they went directly to the Apostolic Palace, adjacent to St. Peter's Basilica. They ran into their first Vatican Swiss Guard at about hundred feet in front of the doors of the Apostolic Palace. Dressed in a flashy blue, yellow, and orange costume, along with an armor and plume, the guard made a curious spectacle. Erich talked him into believing that the

Associate Secretary of State was expecting them.

"Bormann," Erich lied. "Tell Father Damien that Martin Bormann and a colleague have arrived."

The guard gave them a long hard look before walking up to another Swiss Guard who stood motionless at the entrance of the Apostolic Palace, clutching a halberd. They talked, and then both turned to eye them distastefully. Finally the first one disappeared inside.

"Why Swiss guards?" Günter queried. "Aren't the Italians good enough to guard the Pope?"

Erich wasn't paying attention. His mind was racing, trying to find ways to handle the situation if their lie was discovered. Even if they managed to get to Father Damien's office, what then? He had to keep his wits about him.

"Why Swiss?" Günter repeated.

"Oh! Something about Swiss mercenaries saving a Pope from certain death—I believe it was Pope Clement VII—in the sixteenth century. It's been a papal tradition ever since." Erich stopped, his heart accelerating seeing the guard return. It occurred to him that the Swiss were suddenly playing an unusually large role in his life. They had his share of the money—in a bank in Zurich. And now, they were standing between him and Father Damien. *Between him and his*

future.

The guard nodded to them curtly, his eyes cold and emotionless. Erich whistled out his breath loudly, and nudging Günter, followed the guard passed the bronze doors, into the Apostolic Palace. They walked up a carpeted flight of stairs to a corridor and then turned a couple of times before reaching one of many doors. They had barely knocked on a door when it was opened by a hawkish looking lady. Behind her, sitting at a large desk, was Father Damien.

Erich smiled, saying nothing. Father Damien looked at them quizzically, his eyes moving from Erich to Günter and back to Erich again. Then, the Father's jaw dropped. The next thing Erich knew, the lady—a secretary, it seemed—was being ushered out of the office by a visibly nervous Father Damien.

At first, Father Damien pretended that he knew nothing of what Erich had to say about Munich and the orphanage. But his eyes popped out in shock when Erich showed him two tattered letters.

Letters that years ago made Erich feel loved and wanted. Letters he had treasured because it came from somebody who actually seemed to care about him. For days he would be on a high when a letter arrived from Father Damien.

He would carry it with him everywhere he went and at night, sleep with it under the pillow. For a ten-year-old boy, the contents of the letters were less important than the fact that it symbolized that someone actually thought of him. But it was the contents that mattered now. Sexually explicit language, lurid details, and even graphic drawings.

It had been heart wrenching when the letters stopped and Father Damien said that he wouldn't be visiting him any more. He cried for nights on end. The only adult who cared for him was going away. Then he found out that that Father Damien wasn't going away, but that he, Erich had been replaced by another boy. Not just any other boy, but his best friend in the orphanage. In the space of a week he not only lost Father Damien, but also his closest friend.

Then one day, as he re-read those letters, it struck him that he could take advantage of them. The next time Father Damien came by to pick up his friend for their weekly walk, he showed one of the letters to the Father. From then on, for every letter returned, Father Damien gave him a variety of gifts. Toys, books, food.

When he was finally left with two letters he realized that he had to save them for more important things. And thankfully, he hadn't found a need to use them—until now.

Today they were priceless. Father Damien visibly shook as Erich asked him to imagine the newspaper headlines when news leaked that the Pope's Associate Secretary of State was a pervert, a pedophile who had molested orphans. As he read the letter out loud, the blood drained from Father Damien's face, and his lips turned white. Erich stared at those lips—lips that had once explored his body. It was at that point that Erich had snapped and rage took over.

When Father Damien finally came to, he moaned softly. Erich picked up the glass of water sitting on the desk and splashed it on the Father's face.

Father Damien sputtered and sat up. As soon as he saw Erich, fear leapt into his eyes. He blinked twice and then whispered, pleading. "What do you want?"

"New identities for me and Günter. Safe and secure passage to where the Direktor is headed," Erich said.

"The Direktor? I..I..don't know."

Erich thrust his knee outward, to the Father's genitals. He shrieked, springing backward. "Yes. Yes. It can be arranged."

Washington D.C.
9:15 AM

Questions. There were many questions on Warren Terrell's mind. The shocking and untimely death of President Roosevelt yesterday was not only a blow to America; it was very untimely as far as the war in Europe was concerned. Would the Axis powers see the demise of Roosevelt as a sign of the reversal of their misfortunes? After all, President Roosevelt had been a driving force in bringing Germany to her knees. Surrender had been talked about. But now with Roosevelt's death, would Germany see a new lease on life? It might depend on how seamless the transition to the new Presidency would be. Harry Truman had big shoes to fill.

Warren looked at the files on his desk, and picked up his newly completed summary on the Heydrich Three. He thumbed the pages, but his mind was far away. He knew that even if there were no change in Allied strategy under President Truman, there were likely to be major changes

within the U.S.A. His organization—the OSS, for example. It was no secret that unlike Roosevelt, Truman had little regard for his boss, the Director of the OSS, General William A. Donovan, and was inclined to fire him and completely re-vamp the agency. A new and different agency, possibly.

If the war ended soon, it was very probable that they would see an Executive Order from the president to dismantle the OSS. And then what? What would happen to his job? What about all the work that had yet to be done? All the pending cases, all the detailed research, all the undercover reports that were housed in the OSS? The many Nazi criminals who had yet to be brought to justice? He looked at the file on the Heydrich Three. He figured that if anybody was going to get a new lease of life with Truman's presidency, it wasn't Germany or the Axis powers, but individuals like the Heydrich Three.

The Vatican, Italy
1:50 PM

Erich and Günter sat with a more composed Father Damien at his office in the Apostolic Palace, discussing the various alternatives available to pursue the Direktor. It would be easy, as Erich had guessed, using the diplomatic cover of the Vatican. But before Father Damien could arrange for passports and papers, they had to choose their identities for the future.

Erich recognized the importance of the moment. Whatever identities they chose, they were committing to roles and lifestyles that they may have to adhere to permanently in the future. In many ways they would be prisoners to the choices they were going to make that day. On one hand, Erich found it a stifling thought, but on the other, it was exhilarating to have the power to choose a major aspect of one's future. All of a sudden, the gravity of the moment hit him. He needed some time to himself before he made his choice. He excused himself, asking Günter not to leave Father Damien's office until he returned.

Erich walked out of the building, taking deep breaths, forcing himself to relax. He strolled slowly and very determinedly to St. Peter's Square, located adjacent to the Apostolic Palace. He scanned the statuary on the magnificent stone colonnade that hugged the piazza, recognizing that he was walking on what was, at one time, the center of all Christianity—the heart of Christendom. He reached the eighty-two foot Egyptian obelisk at the center of the square, and he stood there for a moment, closing his eyes. Suddenly the anxiety was gone. He was filled with a sense of expectancy, knowing that he was at the threshold of a limitless future, a future where he hoped to achieve the power and prestige he had tasted and savored in the company of Reinhard Heydrich and the Fuhrer. He didn't know when, where, or how he would realize his dream, but he knew it would happen. Of course he would have to get his share of the money first; *that* was the passport to his dream. Once he tracked down the Direktor and received his share, there would be no stopping him. Heydrich's words echoed in his head: *Trust your instincts. You are destined for greatness.* It was not going to be easy; he was sure Father Damien would find a way to warn the Direktor about them. Then there were people like Benjamin Weinmann who had to be silenced. But

it would happen, of that he was sure. Fate didn't pluck from his orphanage in Munich for nothing. He would not be denied his calling.

Energized, he joined the crowd walking past the obelisk to St. Peter's Basilica, the largest and most famous church in the world. About fifty feet before the massive bronze doors of the basilica, Erich stopped. He took a few steps to the left of the bronze doors and bent to touch the ground. Somewhere there, he knew, was where the center of the old basilica—*Old St. Peter's*—once stood, before it was razed to the ground in 1506 to make way for the present basilica. But it was the old St. Peter's Basilica that fascinated him. Built by Emperor Constantine in AD 312, it had, over the centuries been the place where numerous leaders were bestowed with supreme power by the Popes. He felt giddy thinking that somewhere near where he was standing was the exact spot where Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III. It happened on Christmas day in the year 800, and with that crowning, the First Reich—the Holy Roman Empire—was born. He pictured the bowed head of the Charlemagne as he accepted the crown, marking the start of the thousand-year Reich. It was an empire like no other in the history of the world. The secret of its longevity,

according to Heydrich, was the unique marriage of church and state. Of Popes and emperors. *Of the human and the divine.*

Erich stood there for many minutes recollecting the history of the First Reich, and the stories that Father Damien had told him about kings, emperors, and Popes. It didn't escape him that in many ways it was Father Damien who had brought him here, and it was Father Damien, through the power of the Vatican, who was leading him out to his future. He sighed, and then, followed the tourists and the religious into the massive basilica.

Erich walked past numerous gilded altars and statues, chandeliers and massive columns, paintings of sunbursts, clouds, angels, and cherubs—the work of various artists and sculptors spanning over one hundred and seventy years. He stood for a moment at the papal altar and the *baldachino*, the bronze canopy that rose on twisted columns towards the dome designed by Michelangelo. The grandeur of the basilica, although impressive, didn't move him. He felt compelled to get out, back to front of the brass doors, back to where the old St. Peter's Basilica once stood. He walked back there, and at once felt at home. *He belonged.*

Erich recollected the many men after Charlemagne who had been crowned emperors by their partners in power, the

Popes. He imagined the walls of Old St. Peter's reverberating with cheers as the faithful throng stood and applauded at each emperor's crowning. Today, more than a thousand years later, the faithful were still there. Only now they were not standing and cheering; they were walking briskly past Erich into the basilica, whispering to each other in hushed tones. He noticed many were clutching rosaries and crucifixes; others were making the sign of the cross as they entered the building. He felt a little sorry for all of them. He knew their kind: the diehard, gullible faithful who filled the parish churches every Sunday. The kind he and Günter got to know and found so easy to dupe, as they traveled from town to town, exposing the underground system that hid and smuggled Jews out of Germany. He was reminded of the different churches that they encountered, from the huge cathedrals to small chapels. All with the requisite sacristy behind the altar, where, before church services began, he and other boys donned the cassock and surplices of the altar boy. He could suddenly smell the pungent aroma of the incense as it was prepared for mass, and he could taste the cheap wine stored in the sacristy—the wine that the altar boys gulped behind the backs of the parish priests. He recollected the packed pews for Sunday

service, when he had an impressive view of the gathered faithful from his perch as an altar boy. Row upon row of people knelt, rose, or sat in unison, at the behest of the priest. It was almost military-like, disciplined and unquestioning. Not unlike the phalanxes of rigidly standing *Wehrmacht* soldiers or the goose-stepping SS men moving in perfect unison at the directive of their commander.

Erich walked away from the basilica, wondering at the curious similarities between a priest and his faithful, and a commander and his soldiers. As the multitudes walked passed him in St. Peter's Square, looking up in awe at the basilica with wide-eyed religious fervor, he began to understand why the great emperors like Charlemagne needed the Pope to complete, and sometimes enhance, their power over their subjects. Heydrich was right; one of the mistakes the Fuhrer made was not to recognize that power over the masses did not come by the sword alone, but the sword *and the cross*. The next truly global leader would understand that the cross and sword can work together, and would take advantage of them, just like the emperors of the First Reich did.

A sharpened cross is a sword. A blunted sword, a cross. The metaphors were starkly clear now.

Erich retraced his steps to the Apostolic Palace, back to Father Damien's office feeling a sense of exhilaration. He was ready for his new identity. No doubt, it was going to be a long road before he would realize his dreams. But he was ready to start.