

Hitler's Dog Fuchsi

A Novel
By
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Dedicated to
all Bull Terriers everywhere

“A man can fail many times, but he isn't a failure until he gives up.”
— Anonymous

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Chapter One

“Too much detail doesn’t pay,” he thought for the thousandth time, licking the tip of his thinnest brush to create a sharper point, then began adding in more unnecessary detail. This was a postcard-sized painting of the Hofburg Palace, residence of the Emperor Franz Joseph. This postcard always sold well, whether he added all of the feathers to the statue of the eagle on the roof or not. People didn’t buy postcards for detail; they bought them to prove they had been somewhere. Still . . .

He added the feathers anyway. “It may not matter to the average postcard-buyer, but it matters to me.”

And though he could have added more details all day, instead he grabbed the postcard by its corner and waved it in the air to dry it while simultaneously blowing on it. Today he had no time for unnecessary details; today, unlike most days, he had somewhere to go.

In the poorest section of Vienna, the XXth District called Brigittenau, located among the rows of squalid, overcrowded tenement buildings

housing tens of thousands of destitute, struggling families, reposed the block long, dark brick, four story Mannerheim Hostel for the Destitute and Homeless. The building housed five hundred men and was full.

In the cavernous “writing room” — a dirty, white-washed room full of creaky, broken chairs and tables—more than a hundred worn-out, bedraggled men of all ages, most with unkempt beards and hair, played cards, read newspapers, smoked, rolled and traded cigarettes, boiled and drank coffee, and loudly argued about politics, their conversations so loud that they echoed off the brick walls and ceiling creating a cacophony of deafening noise.

Seated quietly at an easel in the corner all by himself was a gaunt, sad-faced, long-haired man with a droopy mustache and wide, pale blue eyes. The postcard of the Hofburg Palace was dry.

The subjects of all of his watercolor paintings were the buildings of Vienna: extremely detailed and accurate depictions, and mostly copied from black and white photographs he found in newspapers and magazines, thus sparing him the trouble of wandering around outside and

actually going there—but he'd been to all of these places many times. He alternated between full-sized, three-foot by four-foot paintings, and postcard-sized paintings. As each painting was finished he would stack it against the wall behind him, then immediately start another one. All day and evening he painted, stopping only at mealtimes for a bowl of soup and a piece of bread, or for an occasional cup of coffee when he could afford to buy one from a fellow resident. If one of the men simply offered him a cup of coffee for free, though, he would never accept it without paying, either with a coin or a painted postcard.

He collected up all of his paintings and meticulously arranged them in a scuffed black leather portfolio. Putting on his threadbare jacket—with holes in both elbows—and a battered fedora, he picked up his portfolio, looked around, sighed, then determinedly left the room.

As he walked along the street passing the other poor denizens of the neighborhood, he winced from the cold wind whipping his face that stole through his flimsy coat, and he thought, "It's going to be another miserably

cold winter. Thank God I've found a place to live. I couldn't face living on the street another winter. I'd surely die."

This was Vienna in 1910: the glittering, waltz-filled capital of Austria, the seat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled by the aging Hapsburg Dynasty, and a city widely considered to be the artistic, intellectual, political, and cultural capital of not only Europe, but the world. With two million inhabitants, Vienna was the largest German-speaking city in the world, and home of many of the greatest musicians, composers and artists, as well as Sigmund Freud and his new school of psychoanalysis. It was also the vortex of many radical communist, socialist and revolutionary political groups.

But none of this particularly interested the gaunt, sad-looking man in the fedora, tightly clutching his portfolio, as he entered a nearby outdoor bazaar filled with street vendors. He navigated past the many stalls selling a multitude of items: books, trinkets, housewares, pottery, anything that might bring a krona, then stepped up to the stall of Josef Neumann, a short, balding, big-nosed, middle-aged, Jewish postcard dealer. Postcards

depicting the famous buildings of Vienna, as well as pastoral scenes from all over Austria, were on display.

“Good day to you, Adolf,” Neumann said brightly.

“Good day to you, Josef,” Hitler replied in a flat tone. “How is business?”

“Not bad. Could be worse. Have you more postcards for me?”

“I do.” Hitler opened his portfolio, withdrew ten of his small paintings, and handed them to Neumann.

Inspecting each painting individually, Neumann nodded his head and proclaimed, “As always, fine work. The details are perfect.”

“Thank you, Josef, I appreciate your encouragement.”

“Not to mention the ten kroner you’ve just earned.”

“And that, too. Please wish me luck.”

“Certainly,” Neumann said, handing Hitler a stack of coins, “for what?”

“Today I am attempting to enroll at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts for the third time in the past three years. I believe that my technique has

vastly improved over that time, but we'll have to see what Professor Ritschel has to say."

"And who," Neumann inquired, "is Professor Ritschel?"

"He is a professor there, as well as the man in charge of the care and restoration of the paintings at the Academy. He is to pass judgement regarding my abilities. Honestly, though, if I'm not accepted this time I don't think I have it in me to try again."

"Well, I believe in you, Adolf. I've never met anyone as dedicated to art as you are."

"Thank you, Josef. And were it not for the support that you give me I think that I would have given up and gone back to Linz years ago."

"I only pay only one kroner per postcard so you don't get a lot of support from me."

"It's not the money so much," Hitler confessed, "it's your belief in my talents. I have no one else who believes in me."

"I only wish," Neumann smiled, "that I could paint as well as you."

"Thank you."

"It's been my lifelong dream to paint, but I haven't the ability."

"Mainly," Hitler stated, "it takes fortitude."

"Which I've never displayed," Neumann admitted.

"And a good eye for detail, of course."

"Of course. You do intend to clean up and get a haircut and a shave before your interview, don't you?"

"Yes, of course, that's where I'm going now."

"Do you need more money?"

"No, thank you, Josef, this is fine," Hitler clenched his fist full of coins. "I have enough."

"Wait," Neumann said, reaching below his table, then coming up with a fairly new long black coat. "Here. Take this. Your coat is too worn out to wear to such an important interview with such an important man."

Pausing, Hitler stood there staring at the coat with a deathly serious expression on his face. He finally stated, "I don't accept charity."

Neumann shook his head. "You are the most headstrong person I've ever met. Don't look at this as charity, my friend, look at it as an

investment in the future of the arts. Besides, someone just traded it to me for postcards, so I didn't even pay for it."

Hesitantly, with an expression of dismay on his face, Hitler reached out and took the coat. "You're a decent man, Josef."

"Thank you, Adolf. So are you. Good luck."

"Thank you." Clutching the coat in one hand and his portfolio in the other, Hitler straightened up, put out his chest and marched away.

With his hair closely shorn at the sides, his face shaved except for a trim mustache the length of his entire upper lip, and now attired in his new long black coat, Hitler looked very respectable as he handed his stack of paintings to Professor Ritschel. The professor was a white-bearded gentleman in his sixties, with a pronounced squint, and pince-nez spectacles clipped awkwardly to his nose.

"I pay great attention to detail," Hitler explained.

“Yes, I can see that right away,” Professor Ritschel replied, quickly thumbing through each painting one by one, “and they seem extremely accurate.”

“They are.”

“You like buildings?”

“Very much.”

“But there are no people,” the professor observed.

“No. I’m only interested in architecture. I’m an architectural painter.”

“Why is that?” the professor asked, looking up at Hitler and straightening his glasses.

“People are tall or short, skinny or fat, male or female. Architecture, on the other hand, can be a million different things. Anything that the human mind can conceive.”

“But you must learn to paint the human form.”

“All right, if you insist.”

“And what of expressionism? What is it you feel?”

Hitler appeared confused. "Feel?"

"Yes, deep inside your soul."

"I feel . . . that I don't like expressionism."

"Why not?" the professor inquired.

"Because it's not accurate. It's just shapes and forms and colors."

"But that's art, too," the professor stated. "Accuracy isn't the point of art; how you feel about your subject and how you express it is art."

"Well," Hitler appeared unconvinced, "I'm sure I'll learn all of that and more once you admit me into the Academy."

"No," Ritschel stated, "you must learn that *first*. The expression of your feelings is everything in art; not buildings. If, by your age, you haven't spent years already learning to express yourself in your drawings and paintings, I'm afraid it's too late."

"Too late? But I'm only twenty-one years old."

"Really?" the professor said, looking surprised. "You look older."

"Life can be harsh as a street artist," Hitler confessed.

"No doubt. That's how you support yourself?"

“Entirely.”

The professor shook his head in amazement. “Impressive. With just paintings of buildings?”

“Yes.”

Professor Ritschel sighed. “In any event, I believe you’ve waited too long.” The professor handed Hitler back his paintings. “But thank you for inquiring.”

Very slowly, Hitler reached out and took his paintings. He put them in his portfolio, then rose to his feet. “That’s it?”

“Yes, Herr Hitler, that’s it.”

“This is my third time applying to the Academy.”

“Then you probably shouldn’t bother applying again,” the professor informed him. “Art isn’t for everybody. Perhaps you ought to look into another profession or trade.”

“Art is my life.”

“That’s fine. Art is very important. But appreciating art does not make you an artist. You take my word for it, I know what I’m talking about. Find something else. Good day.”

“Thank you, Herr professor.”

“My pleasure,” the professor said, picking up a pen and looking down at some paperwork in front of him.

Putting his portfolio under his arm, Hitler just stood there for a moment. When the professor didn’t look up, Hitler finally turned and left the office.

As he slowly made his way back across Vienna, returning to the blight and poverty of the Brigittenau District, Hitler felt devastated.

“I will still be a great artist,” he mumbled to himself, “and I don’t care what you or anyone else has to say about it. I’m going to move to Munich; the Fatherland, where they will appreciate my talents. Austria is a second-rate country, full of silly waltzes and weak ideas. Expressionism,

Cubism, psychoanalysis. *Nonsense!* My destiny will not be thwarted for second-rate people."

Chapter Two

Drizzly and cold, the outskirts of Manchester, England, were particularly grimy on that autumn evening in 1910. Manchester was one of the major manufacturing cities in the world, and by 1835 it was said, "Manchester was without challenge the first and greatest industrial city in the world." But times had been tough since then and Manchester was no longer the greatest industrial city in the world, although it was certainly still one of them. Now much of Manchester was an example of post-industrial blight, with many overcrowded tenements and homeless citizens.

In the outskirts of town, the dirty, trash-strewn streets were crammed with people walking to and fro: heading home for supper, stopping in to one of the multitude of pubs for an after-work drink, attending the many music halls or cinemas, buskers on every street corner performing ditties, dances, and magic tricks for coins. The drunk, ill or starving men, women

and children who littered the sidewalks and gutters were politely stepped over or around by their fellow residents.

An unlikely sight greeted the bustling slum dwellers – a brand-new 1910 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost, piloted by a middle-aged gentleman and a fourteen-year-old boy, both attired in white duster coats, racing caps, and goggles.

“So, Charlie, how do you like the new automobile?” Sir Ian McKnight asked, his red beard streaked with gray.

“It’s capital!” his son exclaimed.

“Yes, it’s the finest automobile manufactured in the world. At thirty horsepower and six cylinders it’s also the fastest and most powerful car in the world. I grew up with the owner of the company, Henry Royce, right here in Manchester. Fine chap, that. Sadly, he’s recently moved his factory to Derby.”

“Why did he do that?” Charles asked.

Sir Ian sighed, “The Derby Town Council offered him a substantial discount on electricity, and it was an offer he simply couldn’t refuse. His

partner, Charles Rolls, a fine young chap, just died last month in aeroplane accident. First man to die in an aeroplane accident in England, from what I read."

"Can I have an aeroplane, father?" Charles asked excitedly.

"And why," his father replied grimly, "would I buy you *anything* when you've just been ejected from school?"

Charles lowered his head, "I was hoping you'd forgotten about that."

"It just happened last week! A mere month into the first semester. Do you consider me daft, boy?"

"No, father."

"Then please do me the courtesy of not treating me that way. Buy you an aeroplane indeed. You're extremely lucky that I'm taking you to the dog fights. You ought to be confined to your bedroom until some new, unwitting prep school will take the likes of you in."

Charles looked up, grinning, "Tell me about the dog fights."

"I've already told you everything, many, many times."

"Tell me again."

“Well,” Sir Ian said patiently, obviously enjoying the subject, “they only fight two breeds of dog: Pit Bulls and Bull Terriers, which were developed and bred right here in Manchester by a chap named James Hinks about sixty years ago. I met Mr. Hinks at the first dog fight my father ever took me to, just as I’m doing with you now. By the way, we’ll be watching all Bull Terriers fight this evening; no Pit Bulls. So, Hinks began breeding what were referred to then as ‘Bull and Terriers’ — that’s not two dogs; it’s one kind of dog — with English White Terriers, searching for a cleaner appearance with stronger legs and a prettier head. Hinks entered his bitch *Puss*, sired by his white Bulldog named *Madman*, in a fight, which was no easy match, from what I’ve heard and read, but from which *Puss* prevailed. The very next day Hinks entered *Puss* into the new ‘Bull Terrier Class’ at the dog show in Cremorne Gardens in Chelsea and won; the very first Bull Terrier to win a dog show. Back then none of the Bull Terriers had that funny ‘egg face’ you see sometimes now. Anyway, my dear son, we are thankfully nearing our destination. This side of town stinks of defecation.”

It was bustling outside a ratty old warehouse: automobiles, carriages, horses, and several hundred people, both men and women, of every shape, size, and economic stratum, laughing, drinking, smoking, and waiting patiently to pay a shilling to go inside (two shillings for front row seats). Although dog fighting was officially declared illegal in England in 1835 (along with bear-baiting and bull-baiting), the law was absolutely and flagrantly not enforced. In fact, three constables wandered among the giddy, pleasant, eager crowd, idly swinging their batons.

Sir Ian paid the four shillings for he and Charles' front row seats. Charles held a wicker picnic basket as they entered the huge, smoky warehouse. Sir Ian was given a piece of paper with that evening's roster of fights listed which he handed to Charles. In the center of the room was a 12-foot by 12-foot steel mesh fenced square—the pit. Surrounding that was tier upon tier of wooden bleachers, nearly filled to capacity with a thousand people, and soon to be completely filled when the next several hundred people entered and took their seats, plus two or three hundred more people would end up standing.

As Sir Ian led Charles down to the front row and they walked past the pit, he pointed up at a small metal sign affixed to the top of the six-foot-tall fence.

“What does that sign say?”

Charles looked up, smiled and said, “McKnight Steel. That’s your company.”

Sir Ian nodded, “It is. In a few years, Charlie, it will be *our* company. We’ll make steel together.”

“Then can I have an aeroplane?”

“Then you can buy anything your heart desires, including an aeroplane, although I don’t recommend it. Look what happened to poor Charles Rolls with his silly Wright Brothers Flyer. Pity, that.”

Charles’ eyes scanned the room. “Where are the dogs?”

“I’ll show you in a moment. First let’s claim our seats.”

As they walked along the front row a man with long dark sideburns waved at them and hollered, “Ian, over here.”

Sir Ian smiled and led Charles to the two vacant seats being held by the man with the sideburns. Stepping up, Sir Ian heartily shook the man's hand.

"Well, if it isn't dear old triple-A. Do you know my son, Charles?"

The man said, "No, I haven't had the pleasure," and put out his hand, which Charles shook as heartily as he could. "Pleased to make your acquaintance, Charles. My name is Arthur Allan Arlington, or Triple-A to my friends, of which you are now one."

"Pleased to meet you, too, sir," Charles said.

"Ah, a polite young man," Arlington commented, "not something one sees all that often anymore. So, Ian, who are you putting your money on?"

Sir Ian and Charles took their seats. "I haven't even had time to look at the roster yet, Arthur." He turned to Charles, "May I have the roster?" Charles handed his father the roster and Sir Ian asked Arlington, "And who have you got your money on this fine evening?"

"The first match is *Albacore* versus *Beezneeze*, and my money is on *Albacore*."

"Then my money is on *Beezneeze*," Sir Ian grinned, marking it on his roster with a gold pen.

"How does one hundred guineas sound?" Arlington asked.

"Delicious. And the second match?"

"*Beefcake* versus *Casanova*. I'm for *Casanova*."

"Then I'm for *Beefcake*," which he marked down.

"Done."

Charles watched in silence, mesmerized.

"The third match?"

"*Quicksand* versus *Labyrinth*."

"And?"

"I'm for *Quicksand*."

"Then it's *Labyrinth* for me," Sir Ian said, marking that down, then folding the roster and putting it in his coat pocket.

"Done, done and done."

The two men shook hands.

“With the three hundred pounds that I will win from you this evening,” Arlington mused, “I believe I shall buy my greensman a Ford truck to haul around dirt and shovels and whatnot.”

“And with the three hundred pounds that I win from you this evening, I shall attempt to purchase this dunderhead child of mine an education.”

Sir Ian stood and so did Charles, his head shamefully lowered as he stared down at the floor. Sir Ian pointed at the picnic basket, “It’s loaded with goodies, Arthur, please help yourself.”

Arlington nodded, “Very kind of you, sir. Any libations in there?”

“Brandy, soda, fruit juice, and a Coca-Cola soda for Charley, so don’t touch that.”

“I’ll take that now,” Charles said reaching into the basket and removing a brown, long-necked bottle with a white label and black script. He also removed a bottle opener, opened the bottle, then replaced the opener in the basket.

“Come,” Sir Ian said, “let us peruse the dog flesh.”

Father and son walked the length of the warehouse to the area where the handlers were bathing the dogs in tin tubs.

Opening a gold case, Sir Ian took out a cigarette, put it in his mouth, then lit it with a gold lighter.

“Why are they washing the dogs?” asked Charles, sipping his Coca-Cola.

“Each handler washes the dog of their opponent.”

“Why?”

“To make sure that there hasn’t been any hanky-panky.”

“Like what?”

“Like putting poison on the dog, so that the opposing dog gets it in their mouth and grows ill.”

“Oh, dear. That’s terrible. Have people actually done that?”

“Indeed, they have.”

Removing the folded roster from his pocket, Sir Ian unfolded it, gave it a glance, then loudly announced, “Which of these beasts is *Beezneeze*?”

A thin blond fellow of perhaps twenty wearing an apron looked up from the soapy dog in the tin tub in front of him. "This here is *Beezneeze*, sir."

"Is it a boy or a girl?"

"It's a bitch, sir."

"And what do you think of her?"

"She ain't my dog."

"Exactly. That's why I'm asking you."

Nodding, the young man said, "Looks like a fine dog t' me, sir. Good muscles, good spirit, good-lookin'."

"If one could tell under all that soap," said Sir Ian as he looked at his roster. "And what of your dog, *Albacore*?"

A wave of love lit up the young man's face. "Aye, now there's a dog for ya. Twenty-five fights and she ain't lost yet."

"Also a bitch," nodded Sir Ian. "Has *Beezneeze* lost?"

"Aye," the young man nodded, "Twice, but she's fought fifty-seven times."

“And what is the weight of these dogs?”

“Forty pounds even, sir.”

“Thank you for the information, young man,” Sir Ian said handing him a shilling.

“Aye, many thanks, your Lordship.”

“May it be a fine fight, although, since I have bet against you, I don’t wish you luck.”

“I un’erstan’” said the boy returning to his chore.

“Can I pet her?” Charles asked.

“No,” intoned his father. “No one touches the dog during or after the time it’s washed except its handler.”

The young handler glanced up, “Aye, that’s the truth, sir.”

Holding the roster up near his nose, Sir Ian bellowed, “Where may I find *Beefcake*?”

A bent old man with very few teeth and wearing an apron waved a soapy hand and said with a thick Scottish burr, “*Over here.*”

Sir Ian and Charles stepped up and inspected the soap-covered dog in the midst of being scrubbed. "And what do you think of this dog, sir?"

"Aye, he's a fine boy, m'lord, all ya could ask for in a fightin' pup. My *Casanova* is going to have a time of it tonight, I can assure you of that."

"What's his record?"

"It says so on the roster, father," interjected Charles.

Sir Ian gave his son a stern look, then turned back to the old handler, "You will have to pardon my son for he does not know when to speak and when to listen, nor does he know how to remain in school, either. Pray continue."

"*Beefcake* here has a thirty-three and three record. Quite an impressive animal."

"Thank you, sir," said Sir Ian, handing the man a shilling, then promptly announcing, "Where is *Labyrinth*!"

The thinnest man on earth, also with very few teeth, and with a thick Irish brogue, waved his hand, "*Labyrinth* be right here."

Looking perplexed, Charles asked, "Why aren't we seeing *Casanova*?"

Sir Ian waved his hand dismissively, "His handler has no metal, therefore the dog has undoubtedly been infected by this late date."

Approaching the thinnest man on earth, Sir Ian asked, "And what do you think of this dog?"

"Well, sir," said the thin man, "I've been fightin' dogs for nay unto forty-five years and *Labyrinth* here may well be the finest dog I've ever laid me eyes on."

"That's a tremendous recommendation, considering it's not your dog."

"I know, sir, of what I speak. I fear for my dog *Quicksand* this night."

"And what of *Labyrinth's* record?"

"Fifty fights, fifty wins. Unbeaten, he is."

Sir Ian and Charles exchanged a look, then both stooped down to look the dog in the face. *Labyrinth*, covered in soap, looked straight at Charlie with an expression that clearly conveyed to both of them, "I love kids."

Sir Ian and Charles looked at each other in amusement.

"He likes you, Charley."

Charles nodded, "I know. Can I have him?"

"Certainly not. Consider yourself blessed by God that you have that Coca-Cola, instead of the whipping you ought to have gotten." Sir Ian and Charles rose back to their feet and Sir Ian handed the thinnest man on earth a shilling.

"Bless you, sir."

Sir Ian loudly announced, "*Quicksand!* Can I see *Quicksand?*"

A strong, chiseled, serious, broad-shouldered man in his mid-forties with a square jaw and long waxed mustaches waved his hand, "I have *Quicksand* right here."

Father and son stepped up.

"Tell me, sir," said Sir Ian, "what sort of accent do you have?"

"American."

"You see, Charles, you never know who you'll meet at the dog fights."

The American asked, "Shall I tell you about *Quicksand?*"

“Please.”

“He’s a good dog, well-muscled, handsome, undoubtedly a game fighter, and with a seventy-five and five record, he’s proven it.”

Father and son both shrugged.

“What of your dog, *Labyrinth*?” asked Sir Ian.

Like a child, the warm, sunny, giddy expression of love spread across this square-jawed American’s serious face. “*Labyrinth* is the best dog in the whole world!”

“Have you had others?”

“Many. And many different breeds, most of which I never fought, mind you, but *Labyrinth* is the best, by far.”

“And what makes him so special?”

“Aside from the fact that he’s an unbeaten fighter with a fifty and O record, my five kids love him. So does my wife, and the neighbor’s kids, and the mailman, and on and on . . .”

Charles looked at his father, “Now can I have him?”

Before Sir Ian could reply, the American stated emphatically, "He's not for sale, boy! I wouldn't sell him for a million dollars!"

Sir Ian sighed deeply. "Once again my congenital idiot of a child speaks when he should listen.

"I just asked," Charles mumbled abashedly.

"You just ask too much."

The American bent down and shoved his square, mustached face right into Charles', "Listen here, you spoiled little brat, you can't always have everything you want, even if you are stinking rich!"

Charles looked horrified, clutching his empty Coca-Cola bottle for dear life.

His father said, "Go ahead, Yank, tell him. Tell him good."

"*Labyrinth* is my dog! He'll *never* be your dog! Got it?"

"Yes, sir," squeaked Charles. "I've got it."

"Good. Now get lost, I've got work to do."

Sir Ian nodded, "Thank you, sir," and handed the American a shilling.

With daggers in his eyes, the American glared directly into Sir Ian's face.

Sir Ian coughed, put the coin back in his pocket, turned and said, "Come on, Charley, we have fights to watch," and walked away. Charles hastily followed.

In the first fight *Albacore* easily beat *Beezneeze*; score one for Triple-A. In the second fight *Beefcake* triumphed over the far-less-than-game *Casanova*; score one for Sir Ian. Both of the first two fights lasted mere minutes, and the audience quickly grew restless and irritable. If the third fight now ran short, everyone would feel gypped and throw whatever was in their hands—beer (in the mugs), peanuts, cigars, cigarettes, you name it—at the folks and the dogs in the pit, even if it was a good fight. They demanded an entire evening's worth of entertainment and would stand for nothing less.

In the pit the two opposite corners had what were known as "scratch lines"—a line three feet from the corner dividing it into a triangle within

each of which presently stood the two handlers and their dogs. In one corner stood the thin Irishman with *Quicksand*; in the other stood the muscular American with *Labyrinth*. Since collars were forbidden, both dogs were held around the neck. A referee stood at the center of the pit.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” announced the referee, “in our third match of the evening we have *Quicksand* with a record of seventy-five and five.” The audience applauded and the referee continued, “And we have *Labyrinth* with a record of fifty and O; unbeaten.” The audience applauded again. “Both dogs came in at exactly forty pounds. Gentlemen, are your dogs prepared to fight?” Both handlers nodded. “Proceed.”

It was exactly 8:45 PM. Both handlers let their eager dogs go. *Quicksand* and *Labyrinth* both crossed their respective scratch lines, met at the center of the pit and began fighting. They went up on their hind legs, their forelegs on the other dog, and while barking and snarling they both attempted to get a hold on the other dog with their teeth and bring it down. Should that occur, the handlers each held a “breaking stick,” a triangular, foot-long stick that narrowed down at one end. Since Bull Terriers, once

they've clamped their jaws down on something, will *never* let go, the handler was then inclined put their dog between their legs, grab it firmly by the scruff of the neck, shove the breaking stick into the back of the dog's mouth and twist it forcing the dog to open its jaws and break the hold. By the end of the first round there was no clear advantage between either dog, but there was an obvious difference in styles.

"Quicksand is a leg-dog," observed Sir Ian.

"Yes," Arlington agreed, "and *Labyrinth* is cheek dog. We may have a fight on our hands here."

"What's a cheek dog and a leg dog?" Charles asked.

Sir Ian sighed deeply, removing a bottle of brandy and a glass from the basket and poured himself a drink. "What do you think they are?"

"One dog likes to go for the legs and the other one likes to go for the cheeks?" Charles offered hesitantly.

"Ah," said Sir Ian, "you've finally answered a question correctly. Perhaps you'll make something of yourself yet."

Charles grinned and nodded, thinking, "I sure will."

At the end of a round, once the dogs had been separated from whatever hold they'd gotten into, each dog was taken back to its corner. The referee immediately called, "Proceed," and the dogs were let loose for the next round. This continued until one of the dogs either died, gave up and wouldn't cross the scratch line (meaning it wouldn't come out of the corner), the handler threw in the towel, or the dog somehow managed to jump out of the pit, which was unlikely with a six-foot steel mesh fence, though certainly possible since Bull Terriers can easily jump six feet.

Forty-five minutes later, at 9:30, the fight had just kept heating up and becoming more and more ferocious until it was true barn-burner. Both dogs were getting solid holds on their opponents and, as the men had noted, *Quicksand* went for *Labyrinth's* legs and furiously clamped onto them, then *Labyrinth* lunged for *Quicksand's* cheeks or ears, clamping his iron jaws onto them. Then the handler of the biting dog would run out

with his breaking stick, pull the dogs apart, they would each take their dogs back to their respective corners, then the fight continued.

Finally, the audience was getting their money's worth and going crazy in response, cheering, screaming, hooting and hollering. Just like any other sporting event, when the opponents are well-matched, highly-trained and spirited, it was extremely exciting.

Sir Ian and Triple-A both watched Charles losing his mind with enthusiastic delight, then the two men looked at each other with a grin that said, "I remember my first dog fight, too," and then they quickly turned back to watch the fight.

Just then *Quicksand* made a turn, or at least what appeared to be a turn. People all over the arena began shouting.

"He made a bloody turn!"

"Bloody right 'e did!"

"That was no turn," yelled someone else.

"It bloody well was!"

"What's a turn?" Charles asked.

“A turn,” explained Sir Ian, “which that wasn’t, is when a dog turns away from the fight indicating it no longer wants to fight.”

“I didn’t see that,” said Charles.

“That’s because it didn’t happen. The dog merely veered slightly to its side. Definitely not a turn.”

Then, at 9:35, with *Labyrinth* well in command of the fight, *Quicksand* got his teeth into *Labyrinth*’s shoulder, obviously severing an important artery. Blood began pouring out of *Labyrinth* by way of *Quicksand*’s mouth. Once they were separated it was clear to see that *Labyrinth* was losing a lot of blood fast.

“My dog,” Sir Ian quipped, “appears a bit peppier than yours.”

“Your dog,” retorted Arlington, “looks like it was hit by a streetcar.”

Charles was so mesmerized by the fight that he was no longer in reality—his senses and imagination were completely overwhelmed; this was by far the most intense, exciting thing he’d ever laid eyes on.

“This is one of the best bloody dog fights I’ve seen in years,”
Arlington stated.

“I’m quite agree,” said Sir Ian. “A damn fine show.”

Eyes wide, mouth agape, Charles sat immobile, a piece of cake
halfway to his mouth.

By 9:55 *Labyrinth* was still very much in control of the fight, but his
blood loss had been severe and his pace was slowing down. The pit, both
dogs and both handlers were covered in blood. And even though
Quicksand might well have been losing the fight, he certainly was nowhere
near to giving up, either.

This had become as furious and ferocious of a fight as anyone present
had ever seen. Both dogs continued to get solid holds on the other and
constantly had to be broken up. And even though *Labyrinth* was quite a bit
bloodier than *Quicksand*, it was becoming clear to one and all that *Labyrinth*
was the more dominant fighter.

By 10:00 there was absolutely no doubt that *Labyrinth* was the better fighter, but *Quicksand* was beginning to take the advantage entirely due to *Labyrinth's* ebbing strength from blood loss. The deadpan American handler took a curved sewing needle threaded with thick black thread from his pocket and put it between his teeth.

At the next break, the referee asked the American, "Do you and your dog care to continue?"

"Yes," the American emphatically stated, holding *Labyrinth* by the scruff of his blood-soaked neck preventing him from leaving the corner.

"Then proceed."

Both handlers let their dogs go. *Quicksand* dashed to the center of the ring while *Labyrinth* slowly crossed the scratch line. Meeting at the center, the two dogs went at it with all of their might. Even though *Labyrinth* was terribly injured, he fought with all of the grit and zeal imaginable.

Quicksand caught *Labyrinth* in that exact same spot on the shoulder, and though it didn't seem possible, *Labyrinth* began to bleed even more. Blood

was pulsing out of his shoulder and neck in a geyser. The handlers ran to the center of the ring. Using his breaking stick, the thin Irishman broke the hold and escorted *Quicksand* back to his corner. The American, looking like he was about to cry, had to carry *Labyrinth* back to his corner.

The referee asked the American, "Do you care to continue?"

Tears running out of his eyes, the burly American said, "We concede."

The referee announced, "*Labyrinth* concedes."

The audience went berserk—hats flew into the air, people cheered, hooted, hollered, slapped each other on the back, threw fish and chips at one another, expressing every other form of excitement and joy humanly possible.

Charles sat there utterly stunned, the piece of cake still halfway to his mouth. Sir Ian and Arlington were on their feet cheering.

Raising his hairy muscular arm, his other arm securely and tenderly around his injured dog's neck, the American removed the needle and thread from his teeth and bellowed, "We call for a Curtesy Scratch."

All at once the whole audience went silent and sat back down in their seats, their eyes glued to the pit. Everybody leaned forward in extreme anticipation.

Charles looked all around in confusion. "What's going on? What's a Curtesy Scratch?"

Sir Ian placed his hand on his son's shoulder and squeezed firmly.

"This is the greatest thing that can occur in a dog fight. Clearly, *Labyrinth* is so severely injured that he can no longer fight, but . . . has he got enough fight left in him to cross the scratch line and *attempt* to keep fighting, in which case he is *Dead Game*, meaning he'll fight to the death."

"And then they fight to the death?" Charles asked looking horrified.

"No," said his father. "All *Labyrinth* has to do is cross the scratch line indicating that he *wants* to fight. That he still has the fighting spirit. The fight itself is over."

Petting *Labyrinth* behind his bloody ears, the American pulled his arm away and let the dog go. Unhesitatingly, though very slowly, *Labyrinth* staggered forward and went directly across the scratch line.

Although it seemed impossible, the audience went even wilder than it already had. So tumultuous was the roar that it seemed like the roof of the warehouse might blow off.

As the American lovingly picked up his dog, the referee announced, "In a courtesy scratch, *Labyrinth* crossed the scratch line proving himself to be *Dead Game*, the highest honor a fighting dog can achieve. A hearty *Bravo* to *Labyrinth* and his handler!"

Although still crying, the American held *Labyrinth* up above his head in triumph. With his tongue hanging out, *Labyrinth* thought, "I'm hungry."

Charles, Sir Ian and Triple-A were all on their feet cheering.

"Well," asked Sir Ian, "what did you think of that, Charley boy?"

"I loved it!" Charles proclaimed. "It's the greatest thing I ever saw!"

"Yes," his father agreed, "it was indeed."

Finally lowering *Labyrinth*, tears still streaming down his cheeks, the American quickly began stitching up his dog's wounds right there in the pit. *Labyrinth* licked the American's face, thinking, "I want steak."

"Gad! What an astounding fight!" declared Arlington.

“I’ve seen a thousand dog fights,” said Sir Ian, “but none so good as this.”

“This was one for the books.”

Still immobile, Charles just sat there in his seat looking stunned. This was the greatest, most exciting, exhilarating experience of his entire life; it could never possibly get any better than this.

Having stopped crying, the American carried *Labyrinth* out of the pit and set him on a table where he could more easily administer aid. A crowd quickly built up around the dog and the busy American, congratulating them, roaring hip-hip-hurrah! One unsuspecting reveler slapped the American on the back as he tenderly ministered to his dog’s wounds and was given so deathly of a dirty look that that the man backed away in shame.

Once the crowd around *Labyrinth* had thinned out and the American had finished his surgery, Sir Ian and Charles stepped up.

“How is he?” Sir Ian asked.

Without looking up, the American said, "He'll live. But his fighting days are over."

"Indeed. That was the finest dog fight I've ever seen."

"Thank you."

"Has he sired any pups?"

"Yes, sir. Six of the cutest little pups you've ever seen. The mother, *Bazaar*, is also a beauty."

"Now, sir," Sir Ian queried, "I mean no disrespect, but would you sell me one of the pups?"

Finally, the American looked up. "It will cost you dearly."

"I suspected as much. As you've already surmised, I'm quite a wealthy man, although I certainly don't care to pay more than I have to."

Charles watched the negotiation intently.

"I won't haggle with you," the American flatly stated. "One thousand pounds sterling. Take it or leave it."

Without hesitation, Sir Ian said, "I'll take it."

Reaching into his leather valise, the American removed a business card and handed it to Sir Ian. "Ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

"We will be there. Once again, a brilliant fight."

"Yes, it was," said the American, and with that went back to tending to his injured dog.

Sir Ian and Charles walked away.

"Well, boy, you just got a dog."

Charles couldn't believe it, "I did?"

"Yes, you have. It's your birthday present."

"But my birthday isn't until December."

"It's an early birthday present, although why I'm buying anything for an imbecile like you is entirely beyond me. Perhaps this gift will inspire you to apply yourself from now on."

"I will, father, I swear I will."

"Then it will have been worth it."

At ten the next morning Sir Ian, Charles, and the American, were at the American's small farm outside of town staring down into a pen full of Bull Terrier puppies, perhaps the dopest creatures in the animal kingdom, all rolling, clowning, barking and biting each other. In the pen with them was a big, eighty-pound Pit Bull that was presently dozing and being crawled all over by the puppies.

"Why do you have that big dog in there with the pups?" asked Charles.

"To teach the pups how to be good, upstanding citizens," explained the American.

"I don't understand."

Once again, Sir Ian grew weary. "What you don't understand would fill the Royal Museum. Dogs learn by example; if you put a good, obedient dog in with puppies, they learn to be good obedient dogs. Now get in there and choose a pup. And make sure you choose one with a game, fighting spirit."

"How will I know?" Charles asked in confusion.

“Would you like some help?” the American offered.

Shaking his head, Sir Ian said, “It’s his decision, sir. It will be his dog.”

The American nodded, “Right.”

Charles climbed into the pen and the big Pit Bull opened one suspicious eye. When it saw that the intruder was a child it closed its eye and returned to dozing. Charles began playing with the puppies which were so cute he could die. He got down on the ground in his spotless clothes and rolled around with the puppies that were all extremely pleased to be playing with a human child. These antics went on for several minutes.

Suddenly, Sir Ian’s weariness overwhelmed him. “Damn your eyes, boy. Choose a bloody dog and let us depart. I have work to do.”

“May I make a suggestion to the boy?” asked the American.

“If you’d like.”

The American said to Charles, “Get out from in the middle of them and let one choose you.”

Charles considered the suggestion, nodded and moved away from all of the puppies into a far corner of the pen and sat down. The dopy puppies didn't even realize he was gone and went back to annoying the Pit Bull. All except one puppy, that is, that was very much aware of Charles' absence. This puppy was white with a black left ear and a black circle around it's left eye, and it proudly marched over to Charles, climbed into his lap, curled up and went to sleep.

"You see what I mean?" said the American.

"Yes," said Sir Ian with a nod.

"I want this one," said Charles.

"Then," his father said, "you shall have it," and handed the American one thousand pounds in cash.

The American counted out the bills, nodded and said, "It was a pleasure doing business with you, sir. I hope your boy enjoys the pup."

"I have no doubt he will. Charles, come out of there right now, take the dog and let's go home."

Charles looked up with the warm joy of newfound love beaming from his face. "Yes, sir."

Wending its way through the grimy streets of Manchester, the Rolls Royce honked at anything in its path: pedestrians, horses, cows, pigs, you name it.

"Blighters!" hollered Sir Ian, "Remove yourself from my path."

Sir Ian and Charles were in their motoring outfits, but Charles had his goggles up to he could see the puppy on his lap even better. "Isn't he cute, father?"

"Yes, Charles, he's very cute. What will you name him?"

"Well," said Charles with deep consideration, "he reminds me of Uncle Edward."

Furrowing his brow, Sir Ian glanced over at the puppy. "By god, he does. It's almost alarming."

"Then his name will be Edward," Charles stated with conviction.

“Most fighting dogs,” Sir Ian informed his son, “have names like those we saw tonight, often starting with a B, like *Beefcake* and *Beezneeze*, although they certainly don’t have to start with B, but they rarely have Christian names.”

“If the name doesn’t *have* to be silly,” said Charles, “then I choose Edward.”

Sir Ian sighed, “Then Edward it is.”

Once they were back at their palatial estate of Green Grove, Edward was let loose, and Charles with him. They were now in heaven: there were a million squirrels to chase, far more rats to be caught than Charles ever imagined, swans to be fought with, baby chicks to be played with, and of course, there were Charles’ five sisters, although the eldest had married and moved away, and the next sister, who was extremely intelligent, had gone off to Oxford. But the three other sisters loved Edward as much as Charles. Everyone agreed that Edward was a wonderful addition to the family.

One day soon thereafter, Sir Ian arrived home with a box of items. He wrangled Charles and Edward together and showed them what was in the box.

“This,” said Sir Ian holding up a triangular, pointy stick, “is a Breaking Stick, as you saw at the fights. Since Bull Terriers won’t let go of another dog once they’ve got it, you have to use this stick to break them apart. When Edward is a bit older I’ll show you how it’s done.”

“I’ll never use it,” Charles stated definitively.

“What do you mean?” his father asked in confusion. “When you fight a dog you *have* to use it.”

“I’ll never fight Edward, and I’ll never teach him to fight,” said the boy clutching his puppy.

“But Edward is a fighting dog.”

“Only if we teach him to fight, and we’re not going to.”

“Why not?”

“Because,” Charles explained, “I love him and I will not have him hurting other dogs or being hurt by other dogs.”

Sir Ian couldn't believe his ears. "Are you defying me, Charles?"

"If not teaching Edward to fight is defying you, then I'm defying you," said Charles with infinite clarity.

"But he's a fighting dog."

"No he's not."

Sir Ian thought about this for a long moment, tapping the Breaking Stick against his leg. Meanwhile, Charles set Edward down and scratched his little pink belly which made him crazy with happiness.

Finally, Sir Ian tossed the Breaking Stick back in the box, picked up the box and walked away.

Watching his father go, Charles said, "Score one for me, Edward."

Edward, on the other hand, thought, "Squirrels? Let's catch 'em."

And so Edward never did become a fighting dog, and just remained a plain old loving dog.

Chapter Four

At 3:30 PM on Sunday, January 18th, 1914, there came a knock on the door of a furnished room above the Popp Tailor Shop at 34 Schleissheimerstrasse in Munich. The door was opened by the twenty-five-year-old Adolf Hitler, who, after four years of living the life of a starving street artist in Germany had now become even more gaunt than before, with stringy black hair, a drooping black mustache, shabby clothes, and perhaps the most pathetic hangdog expression in all of Bavaria. Hitler had been beaten down into the dirt and was teetering on the edge of defeat.

And now, standing at his door was a uniformed policeman with a hard, mean look on his face. The policeman held some sort of official document and spoke in a loud voice.

“Are you Adolf Hitler?”

“Yes.”

“I am Officer Herle and I am putting you under arrest for failing to present yourself for military duty back in Austria where you are from. Here.” He handed Hitler the piece of paper.

Hitler read, “You are to present yourself for military service in Linz at Kaiserin Quay 30 on January 20, 1914. If you fail to comply you are liable to be fined heavily and imprisoned up to a year if you are found guilty of having left Austria with the object of evading military service.”

Officer Herle handed him a notebook and a pen, “Please sign the receipt for the summons.” Hitler signed the receipt. Herle said, “I will now escort you to the Munich police headquarters where you will be placed in jail.”

“But I did request permission to report for service in Vienna three years ago,” Hitler pleaded, “and I never heard back from them.”

“That is not how I understand it,” Officer Herle stated. “Get your hat and coat. We will be leaving immediately.”

Hitler did as he was told and the two men departed.

At the police headquarters, Hitler pleaded his case, was completely ignored at first, then transferred under guard to the Austrian Consulate. The Consul General, a rotund, middle-aged man with long gray mustaches, immediately took to the gaunt, shabby young man, showing him pity, and gave him a cup of tea.

“So,” the Consul General said, “you requested permission to report for military service three years ago in Vienna and never heard back from them, eh?”

“Yes,” Hitler said, sipping his tea. “Why would that be?”

The Consul General shrugged, "They undoubtedly lost the paperwork. Not an uncommon occurrence in the government. So, you are ordered to report to police headquarters in Linz, eh?"

"Yes," Hitler said. "Today."

"It's one-hundred and twenty miles; I don't believe that's possible anymore today?"

"So, what do I do?"

"What do you say I send them a telegram and postpone it until, say, early February?"

Hitler sighed deeply, "I would be most appreciative, Consul General."

"Not to worry," he decreed with a wave of his hand, then called out the open door, "Albrecht, please come in here."

A smart-looking young man in a suit and tie entered the office and came to attention, "Yes, sir?"

"Send a telegram to police headquarters in Linz and request a postponement to early February for Herr Hitler, would you please?"

"Immediately, sir," the young man replied, then quickly turned and left.

With a smile, the Consul General said, "It's as easy as that. Now, tell me of your career as an architectural artist."

"Well," Hitler shrugged, "I make ends meet, but just barely."

"Why is that, do you think?"

"The art world is changing before our very eyes. Classical art is being overshadowed by surrealist, cubist, impressionistic claptrap. I am of the classical school."

"As am I," the Consul General agreed.

"I believe in accuracy and detail. Form and content. Just throwing paint at a canvas means nothing."

"If I give you a pencil and paper, could you sketch, say, that church across the street?" asked the Consul General, pointing out the window.

"Of course," Hitler replied eagerly. "Have you paper and a pencil?"

"I do," the Consul General said reaching into his desk drawer, then handing them to Hitler.

Hitler took the paper and pencil, saying, "Thank you, Herr Consul General," and began to draw under the interested, watchful eye of the elder man.

An hour later, with the sketch of the church nearly complete, Albrecht reappeared holding a telegram. "The response from Linz has arrived, sir."

Hitler looked up from the pad expectantly.

"What does it say?" the Consul General asked.

"It says, 'Request for postponement denied. Adolf Hitler must report today.'"

Setting down the pencil, Hitler dejectedly lowered his head. "I now fear that I will be put in jail for a year."

"Not so fast, my artistic friend. You forget, I am the Consul General. Use the pencil and paper, write a letter of explanation, and I will have Albrecht here telegraph it to them. Do not fret. At least, not right away."

Turning the page of the pad, Hitler set to work on his explanation.

He wrote:

“Dear Sirs,

I have been given an impossibly short interval to settle this affair.

Not even time enough to take a bath. I am described in the summons as an artist. This title is mine by right, but only in a limited sense is it correct. I do earn a living as a free-lance artist, since I am completely without private means (my father was a civil servant), I do so only to be able to continue my studies. I can devote only a portion of my time to earning a living as I am not yet past the training stage as an architectural painter. Therefore my income is very small, in fact only sufficient to make both ends meet. The art market in Munich is in its winter sleep and nearly 3 thousand artists live or at least try to live here. I applied for permission to report for service in Vienna.”

Blindly cleaning his pipe, the Consul General intently studied Hitler’s insanelly serious expression as he wrote his letter. It looked like it was painful for him to form each letter. There was so much intensity in his face

that it seemed like his glare would set the pad on fire, which would then disappear into nothingness like flash paper and the problem would then be solved. The Consul General thought to himself, "This is the most serious young man I've ever laid eyes on in my entire life."

But Hitler wasn't nearly done painting his pathetic picture.

"I was a young, inexperienced person, without financial help, and also too proud to seek assistance from anyone or beg. Without any support, depending only on myself, the Kronen and Heller [German money] received for my work were often enough to provide a place to sleep. For two years my only girlfriend was Sorrow and Need, and I had no other companion except constant unsatisfied hunger. I never learned to know the beautiful word 'youth.' Today, after 5 years, my memories are still in the form of frost-bitten fingers, hands and feet. And yet I cannot recall those days without a certain joy, now that I have come out of the worst of it. Despite great need, amidst my often very questionable surroundings, I kept my name clean, and am not guilty in the face of the law and have a clear conscience except for the omitted military report, of

which I did not even know at the time. That is the only thing about which I feel responsible. And for that a modest fine should be sufficient, and I would not protest the payment of same.

Sincerely,

Adolf Hitler"

As the Consul General watched, Hitler read his own letter, nodded, then handed it to him.

"Thank you," the Consul General said and read the letter. He nodded as he went along, occasionally knocking the stem of his pipe against his stained yellow teeth. Upon reaching the end, he nodded again and said, "Very good. You write well," then added at the bottom, reading aloud as he wrote, "I am convinced of this man, Adolf Hitler's, honesty, and I believe that he is deserving of considerate treatment. Please grant him an extension, Yours, Alfred von Leichtgläubig, Austrian Consul

General." He looked up hoping to see Hitler smile, but instead he appeared as glum as ever. The Consul General called out the open door, "Albrecht, please come in here." Albrecht immediately appeared and the Consul General handed him the letter. "Please dispatch this to Linz right away."

"Yes, sir," Albrecht said and promptly left.

Lighting his pipe, the Consul General asked Hitler, "So, you've had a hard go of it, have you?"

"Yes," Hitler nodded, "but I believe it's improving."

"Of course it is," the Consul General smiled, "you met me. You had a problem; now you don't have a problem. *Voila.*"

Hitler did not smile, but only nodded, "Yes, sir."

"Calm yourself, Hitler, all will be well."

"Yes, sir. May I return to my sketch?"

"By all means. Would you care for a cup of coffee?"

"Very much, sir."

"It will be done. Albrecht, please come here."

Albrecht immediately appeared, "Yes, sir."

"Please bring this young man a cup of coffee."

"Right away, sir."

"Thank you, sir," Hitler said.

"My pleasure," the Consul General replied.

Hitler furrowed his brow and returned to his sketch.

Fifteen minutes later, Albrecht handed the Consul General a telegram, "From Linz, sir."

"Thank you," the Consul General said taking the telegram, which he then read aloud, "'Applicant Adolf Hitler's appointment postponed until February 5. Must report to Salzburg military headquarters.' There you go, and Salzburg is closer than Linz."

With a deep, deep sigh of relief, Hitler nodded and said, "I am forever in your debt, Herr Consul General. Unfortunately, I have no money, sir, and can't afford the train fare."

“You have a problem,” the Consul General said, snapping his fingers,
“Now you have no problem. Albrecht, please come in here.”

Magically, there was Albrecht again, “Yes, sir.”

“Issue this man a bank draft for fifty marks.”

“Yes, sir,” and he was gone. Moments later he returned with the
bank draft which the Consul General signed.

“There you go, Hitler. You now have enough money for train fare
and good meal or two.” He handed the bank draft to Hitler, who stood,
took it, read it, didn’t smile, but bowed instead.

“My indebtedness to you increases. How shall I pay you back?”

Rising to his feet, the Consul General proclaimed, “Why, that’s
simple. In payment I will take your sketch.”

“But I was going to give that to you anyway.”

“May I see it?”

“Of course,” Hitler said, handing him the pad.

With an exceptionally impressed expression, the Consul General nodded, "Why, this is very good. You are an extremely talented artist, Herr Hitler."

"Thank you, sir," Hitler replied humbly, "I do try."

"And I predict that you will succeed. You may leave now, and I wish you all the luck in the world."

"You have been very kind," Hitler said with a bow. "I thank you again."

"Think nothing of it. Good day to you, Herr Hitler."

With that, Hitler turned and left.

On February 5th Hitler traveled to Salzburg and reported to the Salzburg military headquarters. He was given a physical exam and was promptly turned down. They found him, "Unfit for combatant and auxiliary duties, too weak. Unable to bear arms."

Utterly dejected, Hitler returned to his room above the tailor shop in Munich and continued painting.

“They won’t have me at the Academy, and I’m too weak for military duty. But even still, I *will* succeed.”

Chapter Five

On June 28th, 1914, Adolf Hitler started down the three flights of stairs above the tailor’s shop holding his canvas, easel, paints and brushes, when he encountered the plump, middle-aged, Frau Popp, who was excitedly coming up.

“The Austrian heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, has been assassinated!”

“What?” Hitler said in shock.

“It’s true,” Frau Popp exclaimed, “I just read it in the newspaper.”

Stepping past the woman, Hitler made his way out to the street where he found a crowd of agitated people huddled around a placard that read, “Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated by Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, Serbia, yesterday.”

Hitler snarled. When he had lived in Vienna he had grown to dislike the Serbs. Now his dislike instantly transformed into hatred.

“I hate all things Serbian!” he declared to no one and everyone. But the snarl soon disappeared from Hitler’s face as he realized what was to come. Suddenly, and to the surprise of those around him, Hitler dropped to his knees, put his hands together in loving prayer, looked heavenward and prayed, “I thank heaven for granting me the good fortune to live at this time.”

The assassination of the Archduke set off a diplomatic crisis when the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled by the Hapsburgs, was informed by Kaiser Wilhelm that Germany was ready for war and Russia, who would be the first country to aid Serbia, was not. The Kaiser then strong-armed Austria into delivering an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Serbia. International alliances formed over the previous decades were invoked, and on July 28th Austria declared war on Serbia. Within weeks all of the major European powers were at war. Soon, the conflict spread around the world.

World War I, also known as the Great War, had begun.

All of Germany was overjoyed by the news of war. It was time to achieve the dream of the “Greater Germany” that had been stewing since Otto Von Bismark had united the five states of Germany into one empire in 1871. Now the time was here and all Germans knew in their hearts that

Germany, with its mighty army and glorious new navy, would reign victorious.

On August 3rd Germany declared war on France. That same day Hitler wrote personally to the Bavarian Emperor, Ludwig III, petitioning him that he be allowed to enlist. That afternoon, outside the Emperor's Wittelsbach Palace, crowds cheered when the old monarch made his appearance. Hitler thought to himself, "If only the King has already read my application and approved it!"

On the following day Hitler received a response. With trembling hands he opened it and read that he was accepted as a volunteer in what was his first choice, the Bavarian King's Own Regiment. A broad smile swept across Hitler's face as he whooped with joy, throwing the letter into the air. "And the Austrians wouldn't have me in their army. Who needs the Austrians; I have Germany."

On August 16th Hitler reported to the barracks of the Bavarian King's Own Regiment only to find that all positions were filled. Looking like he would cry, Hitler was informed that he was now accepted to his second

choice, the 1st Bavarian Infantry Regiment. Once again, he hollered with joy.

Hordes of young men in both England and Germany, as well as most every other European nation, clamored to join the military. Ultimately, more than seventy million military personnel, including sixty million Europeans, were mobilized and soon fighting on the battlefields in France and Belgium. Both sides immediately excavated trenches that zig-zagged thousands of miles north and south, climbed into them, then everything ground to an infuriating halt. There were constant assaults back and forth, daily artillery barrages, and attacks from the air by rickety airplanes and chubby zeppelins, but there was almost no movement in the battle lines.

Chapter Six

In Manchester, Sir Ian and Charles rode through the streets in Sir Ian's brand-new 1914 Rolls Royce. Sir Ian was attired in a suit and tie, Charles was in the British military uniform of a second lieutenant,

commissioned into the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Edward was snuggled up on his lap.

“I do not believe,” Sir Ian said, “that you ought to take Edward with you.”

“Father,” the eighteen-year-old boy replied, “it’s been common practice in the British military for over a hundred years for British officers to bring along their Bull Terriers. All of the officers in India have them. A lot of time is spent sitting around, and the dogs are used for amusement, and companionship, of course.”

“The amusement,” his father informed him, “is fighting. Edward is not a fighter.”

Charles scratched Edward’s neck. “No, but he’s a superb ratter, and there will be many rattling competitions, I daresay. Did you read that a Bull Terrier named *Billy* recently caught one hundred rats in five minutes! Isn’t it profound?”

“Profound isn’t the correct word,” Sir Ian sighed.

"I think it's profound," Charles insisted.

"All right then," his father surrendered, "it's profound."

The Rolls pulled up to the Manchester train station which was a hubbub of activity. Soldiers, sailors, marines and their families crowded the street and platform saying their final goodbyes.

Stepping onto the platform, Sir Ian, carrying Charles' valise, and Charles, carrying Edward, who now had a collar with a leash attached, stopped and faced each other.

"Well, Charles, this is it. Show courage and bring your family honor."

"I will, father," Charles said, setting Edward down. "Have you noticed the other officers with their Bull Terriers?"

Sir Ian looked around and indeed many officers had Bull Terriers on leashes. "Yes, now I do. Take care of yourself, Charles."

"I intend to."

"Write home."

"I will."

“All right then,” Sir Ian said putting out his hand.

Charles took his father’s hand and shook it firmly. “I love you, father.”

“I love you, too, Charles.” And with that Sir Ian turned and left.

Picking up his valise, Charles said to Edward, “Come on, boy, we’re off to war,” and as they waited their turn to board the train, Edward saw a working class family with three little kids all tearfully waving goodbye to their uniformed son. Edward pulled at the leash attempting to go to the children.

With a smile, Charles gently pulled Edward back. “I know that you love kids, Edward, but for now you’ll have to stay with me.”

Chapter Seven

Within the week Hitler was transferred to the 2nd Bavarian Infantry regiment and began basic training. He had never been happier in his life,

and now all of his problems were solved: three meals a day, a brand-new uniform, and a reason to get up in the morning.

A few days later, Hitler was permanently transferred to the 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment. When Hitler was handed his first rifle, a Mauser Gewehr 98, his new buddy, Hans Mead, chuckled and said to him, "You look at your new rifle with the delight of a woman looking at her jewelry, which, I must admit, makes me laugh."

Fondly petting his new rifle, Hitler said, "Go ahead and laugh. I have now found my new best friend. I intend to sleep with this rifle."

"Careful you don't shoot yourself in your sleep," Mead grinned.

"If I should," Hitler replied, "it will be a fine way to go."

Hitler and his comrades of the 16th Bavarian (now amalgamated into the 12th) trained for a mere five days, then were shipped out to the front.

Hitler told Mead, "I'm terribly happy. I hope we get to England because I'd like to see Big Ben."

"Then," Mead replied, "you'd know what time it is."

"I do know what time it is. It's time to kill the British and the French and bring glory to the Fatherland."

"But you're Austrian," Mead pointed out.

"No," Hitler said, shaking his head. "From the moment I arrived in Munich, on May twenty-fifth of last year, I became a German."

"If you say so."

"I do say so."

"But, Adolf," Mead inquired seriously, "what of the truth?"

"The truth," Hitler stated, pointing at his own head, "is in here."

The soldiers of the 12th Bavarian had very few machine guns and no iron helmets, only oil cloth caps, just like the German soldiers of 1812. But as the soldiers boarded the train they couldn't be happier, singing and laughing, utterly oblivious to the danger that lay ahead.

Mead told Hitler, "There will just be a few weeks of gallant and exciting battle, then victory by the New Year."

"I hope not," Hitler muttered. "I hope it lasts for years."



The Niederwalddenkmal,
or Statue of Germania,
located in the Niederwald
Landscape park, near
Rüdesheim am Rhein
in Hesse, Germany.

At dawn as the train followed the Rhine River through Hesse, suddenly, rising from the river's mist, illuminated in golden morning sunlight, there was the gigantic Statue of Germania looking down on them. Up and down the train the soldiers spontaneously burst into singing a rousing version of, *Die Wacht am Rhein (The Watch on the Rhine)*, an extremely patriotic German anthem, as well as the most popular beer hall song for the previous 100 years (based on a 300-year-old poem).

The cry resounds like thunder's peal,

Like crashing waves and clang of steel:

The Rhine, the Rhine, our German Rhine,

Who will defend our stream, divine?

Dear fatherland, no fear be thine,

Dear fatherland, no fear be thine,

Firm and True stands the Watch, the Watch at the Rhine!

Firm and True stands the Watch, the Watch at the Rhine!

In a state of Teutonic elation, Hitler, his blue eyes glowing in the red light of dawn, turned to Hans Mead and crooned, "I feel as though my heart will burst with joy."

Eight days later the 12th Bavarian Regiment was sent into battle at Ypres, Belgium, located in the Flemish Province of West Flanders, right near the French border. As the raw recruits waited in the morning fog, British and Belgian shells began exploding in the woods ahead of them

splintering the trees like straws. Then shrapnel started hissing over their heads. Watching with looks of curiosity, the recruits seemed to have no idea that their lives were threatened. None of them appeared to be afraid as they awaited the command, "Forward."

Breathing deeply, Hitler exultantly thought, "I'm exactly where I ought to be. If I'm to die today, so be it." He and the others lay on their stomachs waiting at the edge of the forest with bullets and shrapnel whizzing over their heads with increasing intensity, splintered branches and trees cascading down on top of their heads, shells exploding and hurling clouds of stones, earth and sand into the air, tearing the heaviest trees right out of the ground by their roots, choking everything in a disgusting acrid yellow-green steam.

Finally, the command, "Forward!" was hollered and the Germans rose to their feet and attacked. As Hitler moved forward in a crouch, his Mauser gripped tightly in his hands, within minutes every single man around him was hit with bullets and went down. Now, all by himself, he was finally forced to retreat. He quickly connected up with other men of

his squad, then attacked again, and once again, every single man around was shot, and once again Hitler was forced to retreat alone. This process was repeated four times, and each time all the men around him were killed. Finally, everyone in Hitler's squad was dead except him and one other man, and then the other man was killed too. A bullet tore off Hitler's right coat sleeve, yet miraculously, he not only remained alive, but unharmed. At 2:00 PM what was left of the entire regiment attacked for the fifth time and somehow this time they managed to occupy and hold the very edge of the forest.

For three days and nights the battle in this small piece of forest continued unabated and none of the Germans had a clue what was going on. The regimental commander was killed and the second-in-command, a lieutenant colonel, was seriously wounded. Hitler, who had now been made a regimental dispatch carrier, located a medic, then he and the medic dragged the lieutenant colonel back to a dressing station. By mid-November the 16th Regiment had only thirty out of one-hundred and fifty officers left, and less than seven hundred out of thirty-five hundred

recruits. Nevertheless, the order came to attack again. The new commander, Lieutenant Colonel Engelhardt, along with another soldier and Hitler, hazarded far into the front lines to view the enemy's position. They were quickly spotted and sprayed with machine-gun fire. Hitler and the other man threw themselves on top of Engelhardt to protect him. Saying nothing, Engelhardt stood, brushed himself off and shook both of the men's hands.

The next afternoon in his tent, Engelhardt had Hitler and the other man brought before him. They both snapped to attention.

"At ease," Engelhardt said, two aides standing on either side of him. "I intend to recommend both of you for the Iron Cross, will that be all right with you?"

"Yes, sir," both men replied.

"Excellent. I'll advise you of the outcome. And thank you for your assistance on the battlefield. Dismissed."

Both men turned smartly and left. They exited through the flap of the tent just as four officers entered.

Hitler and the other man crossed the compound in a daze.

“Think of it. An Iron Cross for our very first battle,” the other man said in amazement.

“Yes,” Hitler agreed, “it boggles the imagination.

At that exact moment a British shell crashed into Englehardt’s tent, killing Englehardt, his two aides, and the four officers who had just entered.

Hitler and the other man were knocked down to the ground by the concussion. In horror, they both turned and watched the tent burn.

“Oh, dear God,” Hitler exclaimed, “this is the worst moment of my life. I worshipped Englehardt.”

Spitting out a mouthful of dirt, the other man said, “There goes our Iron Crosses.”

As early in the war as it was, it quickly appeared to everyone who knew Hitler that he must be blessed by God—everyone around him got killed but him. Nor had it happened only once or twice, but at least a half

dozen times already. Soldiers began to buddy up with him because they thought it would increase their own life spans.

Failing to capture Ypres, the Germans dug in and the unyielding, unmoving trench warfare began. Since Hitler had been assigned to regimental headquarters as a messenger, located in a rest area near the village of Messines, he now found himself with a lot of quiet, restful time on his hands. He was able to purchase an easel, paints, canvases and a sketch book and continued to paint and sketch as he had before the war. And even though his messenger responsibilities were very dangerous, he liked the job and appreciated all of his spare time; for the first time in years, Hitler was a happy, contented man.

Most officers in the Imperial German Army had received their commissions due to family influence, not military training. These were aristocrats with the attitudes and tastes of noblemen. So, in their infinite wisdom, the German officers at regimental headquarters paid no attention

to their extremely high casualty rates, made no effort to train their raw recruits, but instead went into a serious quandary regarding the color of the walls of the dining room located in an occupied villa. They did not believe that color coordinated with a painting they had just put on the wall of a dying soldier stuck in barbed wire. After a lengthy meeting to discuss this critical situation, with no clear results except a lot of shouting, the matter was dropped on Lieutenant Wiedemann, the adjutant of the new regimental commander, who immediately handed it off to Sergeant Max Amann, who immediately handed it off to Hitler, the known painter in the regiment.

As Hitler entered the dining room of the villa he was immediately approached by the agitated Lieutenant Wiedemann, who asked, "Do you think the walls should be blue or pink? Don't answer hastily, private, think about it."

Hitler did indeed think about it, scrupulously studying the painting, the room and the windows. Wiedemann watched him with great interest.

"So?" Wiedeman asked, "what do you think?"

"I observe," Hitler replied thoughtfully, "that the way the sunlight falls upon the painting gives it a violet glow, therefore I recommend blue for the walls."

"By God, private, that's incredible! That's just what I was thinking."

He then turned to Sergeant Amann, "What do you think, sergeant?"

"The sergeant agrees with the private," Amann stated flatly. "Blue is definitely the color."

"I knew it was," Wiedeman said excitedly, "I just couldn't make those other *dummkopfs* see it. Private, you're a genius. What's your name?"

"Private Adolf Hitler, sir."

"Well, by God, Hitler, I love being proven right."

"Shall I get on with it, then?"

"What?"

"Painting the walls, sir."

Slapping his leg, Wiedemann burst out laughing. "I'd already forgotten why we were here. Downright silly of me. Yes, Hitler, get on it immediately."

"Yes, sir," Hitler said, turning and leaving.

Shaking his head, Wiedemann said to Amann, "Odd fellow, that. Quite an unmilitary manner, if I do say so, and with his slight Austrian accent and his overly-serious manner, I feel like I've never met anyone quite like him."

"He's been through a lot," Amann informed him. "He was as poor as a church mouse most of his life, struggling to be an artist on the cold streets of Munich."

Wiedemann nodded, "I see. Well, that would do it all right."

"I'll put my reputation and rank on the line that he does a good job."

"I just bet he does."

And he did, too. As Hitler expertly painted the room blue, Lieutenant Wiedemann stayed there the entire time talking to him. Soon, they were fast friends.

"Blue certainly is the right color," Wiedemann stated.

"Yes, sir," Hitler said, meticulously painting along the edge of the molding.

"This last battle we had was rather dicey, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir. Three-quarters of the regiment was killed or wounded."

"Well," Wiedemann remarked offhandedly, "replacements are being sent."

"Yes, sir."

"This war won't last much longer. The British and French have no spines."

"No, sir."

"So, what do you think the problem was?"

Hitler stopped painting and turned to the lieutenant. "Well, sir, we only had five days of training. And more machine guns and steel helmets would be very helpful."

"Yes," Wiedemann shrugged, "I'm sure they would. We'll get them, sooner or later. Everything in its time. But right now I think the problem of these walls has been solved. Blue is definitely the right color."

"Yes, sir," Hitler said, returning to the painting. "It certainly is."

Lieutenant Wiedemann and Sergeant Amann wrote up a list of who was to be decorated. Since Hitler was now on the regimental staff, and they were not held in high regard by command, he was put at the bottom of the list of recommendations for the Iron Cross 1st Class, and for this and only this reason, he was instead given an Iron Cross 2nd Class. When Wiedemann presented the Iron Cross to Hitler his eyes bugged out in ecstasy as he proclaimed, "This is the happiest day of my life. Unfortunately, my comrades who also earned it are mostly all dead."

"Don't think about them today, private. Think about yourself, and the courage and the honor you've paid to the Fatherland. That's enough."

"Yes, sir."

"I apologize for it being an Iron Cross 2nd Class. I put you in for 1st Class, but the higher-ups look down on us lowly staff soldiers."

"I don't care," Hitler said.

“Good,” Wiedemann replied, “so let me tell you something you *will* care about. I’ve put you in for corporal.”

“Dear Lord,” Hitler said in a daze of joy, “I didn’t think this could get any better, but it just did.”

“Congratulations, Corporal Hitler,” Wiedemann said, saluting, “you’ve earned the respect of your fellow comrades and the officers as well. And now they’ll no longer refer to you by the insulting term, ‘Comrade Laced Boots,’ as all privates are. You’re a fine fellow Hitler, and I don’t mind saying that I like you. Dismissed.”

Wiedemann and Amann watched as Hitler nearly floated out of the room on a rapturous cloud of delight. The two soldiers turned and looked at each other.

“He may be the oddest fellow I’ve ever met,” Wiedeman commented.

“Yes, sir,” Amann agreed.

Walking through the trench, Hitler encountered Hans Mead, whom he hadn't seen since they were recruits. Hitler would have simply passed him by in this moment of triumph if Mead hadn't spoken up.

"Adolf. It's Hans. Remember me?"

Blinking, Hitler did of course remember Mead and soundly shook his hand. "Of course I do, Hans, how are you?"

"Still alive and kicking," Hans shrugged. "And you?"

"Ah, me," Hitler said, foolishly grinning.

Looking closer into Hitler's face, Hans commented, "My, my, but you have a lively glow in your eyes. What's happened to you?"

"I can barely speak of it, however I will." He reached into his pocket and removed the Iron Cross, which he handed to Hans.

"Yes," Hans smiled, "I'd heard you were to be awarded an Iron Cross 2nd Class, and that it really ought to have been 1st Class. Congratulations, Adolf," and shook Hitler's hand again.

"And do you know what else?"

"No, what?"

"I've been promoted to corporal."

"You don't say. Well, congratulations yet again."

"Thank you, Hans, thank you. A great pleasure seeing you, but now I must be off," and with that Hitler walked away in a daze.

Another private standing nearby commented to Mead, "All of us messengers respect Hitler's fearlessness, but why should he take such risks when he's not even German?"

"He's just an strange character. He lives in his own world, but otherwise, he's a nice fellow."

Back in his barracks, located in a perfectly decent farmhouse, Hitler received congratulations from his eight bunkmates, all of whom had a caricature of themselves drawn by Hitler posted over their bunks. Thanking everyone, Hitler sat down on his bunk and immediately began sketching on a blank postcard. His bunkmate, Ernst Schmidt, presently seated across from him on his own bunk reading a book, had told Hitler an amusing story a few days earlier: he had shot a rabbit and intended to take

it home with him when he went on leave the next day. However, just before he left, he stepped outside and his wily bunkmates surreptitiously switched out the cloth-wrapped rabbit in his suitcase with a brick. When he left, everybody, including Hitler, howled with laughter at the thought of him arriving home and instead of a rabbit, finding a brick. In a wonderfully hilarious cartoon style, Hitler now sketched in ink the two scenes: he and his bunkmates eating roast rabbit and Schmidt opening his suitcase and finding a brick with his eyes bugging out with question marks floating over his head.

Hitler said to Schmidt, "Here, Schmidt, this is for you," and handed him the postcard. "Send it home, let your family know what you're doing."

Schmidt took the postcard, looked at it and once again burst out laughing. All of the other guys looked up from whatever they were doing and asked, "What? What's so funny?"

In hysterical laughter, literally holding his sides, Schmidt passed around the postcard. Immediately, everybody was in hysterical laughter

again; the entire barracks was roaring, except Hitler who merely grinned, then returned to his sketching.

At Christmas time everybody got packages from home except Hitler. Most of his comrades offered to share their food with him, knowing that he was starving (and obviously the thinnest man in the barracks, humorously nicknamed, "Glutton"), but he always refused, saying, "I can never repay you. I don't mind working for extra food, it keeps my mind off things." So he worked for the kitchen hauling garbage to the dump, and they paid him in food.

A private stuck his head into the doorway of the barracks and called out, "Hitler, Lieutenant Wiedemann wants to see you."

Hitler set down his pad and pencil and hustled out the door.

Standing in front of Lieutenant Wiedemann, with Sergeant Amann standing at his side, Hitler saluted smartly. "Corporal Hitler reporting, sir." Wiedemann touched his riding crop to his hat brim causing Hitler's arm to snap back down to his side.

“At ease, Corporal.” Hitler did as he was instructed, clasping his hands behind his back, although remaining at full attention.

Shaking his head in exasperation, Wiedemann sighed, “Oh, for goodness sake, Hitler, relax.” Hitler shrugged—this was the best he could do. “As a Christmas present,” Wiedemann continued, “I, standing in for the entire regiment, have decided to give you ten marks from the mess hall funds, what do you think of that?”

“I’m sorry, sir, but I can’t accept. I have no present for you or anyone else. My apologies.”

Wiedemann couldn’t believe his ears and glanced up at Amann who now had the same expression as he. Wiedemann said, “It’s a bloody present from the regiment, Hitler, just accept it!”

“I can’t,” Hitler firmly replied.

Growing red with anger, since never before had a corporal refused him *anything*, Wiedemann hissed, “Damn you, Hitler, I could order you to take the ten marks!”

“I will never refuse an order, sir, *ever*.”

"But unless I make it an order you won't take the money?"

"No."

Wiedemann shook his head again, sighed deeply, waved his hand and wearily said, "Dismissed."

Hitler turned smartly and departed.

Wiedemann glanced up at Amann, "Can you believe this man?"

Amann shook his head, "No."

The next day Lieutenant Wiedemann had Hitler brought before him again.

"Hitler, what are your interests? Boxing? Beer-drinking? Dog fighting?"

"I don't do any of those things, and I would *never* watch dogs fight. It's brutal and inhuman. I love dogs."

"Ah!" Wiedeman said, smiling and holding up his index finger, "An interest. You're a dog lover. Good. What sort of dogs do you prefer?"

"I don't know," Hitler answered flatly. "I've never had a dog."

The smile faded from Wiedemann's face, "Not even as a child?"

"No."

"Do you *want* a dog?"

"When I can afford one, yes."

"All right. That's good. Do you like sports?"

"No."

"Do you like women?"

"I don't know, I've never had one."

"*Never?*" he asked incredulously.

"No. Never."

"Do you like *looking* at pretty women?"

"Yes," Hitler nodded.

"Well, that's good," Wiedemann sighed, looking like he was quickly running out of ideas. "Well, then, other than painting and drawing, what *are* you interested in?"

"Politics."

Wiedemann's face lit up, "*Ah-ha!* Now we're getting down to issues.

And what sort of politics are you interested in?"

"Marxism."

With an expression of horror, Wiedemann asked, "For God's sake why?"

"Well," Hitler replied thoughtfully, "I believe that Marxism is a doctrine of destruction. I have immersed myself in the theoretical literature of this new world, attempting to achieve clarity concerning its possible effects, and then compare it with the actual phenomena and events it brings about in political, cultural, and economic life. Now, for the first time, I have turned my attention to the attempts to master this world plague."

Lieutenant Wiedemann and Sergeant Amann looked at Hitler with utterly blank expressions. Wiedeman said, "What on earth are you talking about?"

"Marxism," Hitler said tonelessly, "Weren't we talking about politics?"

"Yes, I suppose we were. And who, in your opinion, is the worst perpetrator of this 'world plague,' as you called it?"

"Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov."

"Who's that?"

"His underground name is Lenin."

"*Lenin?*" Wiedemann blurted, "you mean the Prime Minister of Russia?"

"Not to be argumentative, sir, but Lenin is presently the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Russia."

Wiedemann shut his eyes and rubbed his aching eyebrows; he was developing a headache.

"Thank you, Corporal Hitler, it was a pleasure chatting with you."

"And you, sir."

"Dismissed."

Hitler turned and left.

Exchanging a bewildered look, both Wiedemann and Amann shook their heads.

“Of all the people on earth,” Wiedemann wondered, “he respects *Lenin* the most? Good God! He is the strangest man I’ve ever met.”

“Yes, sir,” agreed Amann.

Chapter Eight

A few days after the holidays, Hitler’s regiment returned to the battle lines, but Hitler was quickly bored due to insufficient action. As he sat on an ammunition box to stay above the two feet of water filling the trench, leisurely sketching the trench while eating a can of beans, he complained to Schmidt, who was seated beside him on an ammo box, also eating a can of beans.

“We’re still in our old position. There must be a general offensive along the whole front. It can’t go on like this forever.”

“I understand what you’re saying, but as for me, I’d rather go back to the rest area.”

“Not me.”

“I know.”

“I need action.”

“Well, I don’t.”

Meanwhile, in the British Trench just opposite the German trench, across the twisted barbed-wire and the multitude of shell holes comprising “No Man’s Land,” Charles McKnight and his dog Edward were in a dugout watching a dog fight. Unlike a real dog fight, however, the British soldiers simply let the dogs fight until one clearly had an advantage over the other and were then broken up with a breaking stick that many officers with Bull Terriers had thoughtfully remembered to bring along. Charles found this sort of dog fighting a terrible bore; Edward on the other hand was intently watching a fly buzz around the dugout. Every time the fly landed, Edward would quiver as if hypnotized, wrinkle his face like an old

man, then suddenly leap forward and bark in irritation. Charles watched Edward with great amusement.

“Don’t you like that fly?” Charles asked.

The dog fight ended, money was exchanged, and all of the young British officers, entirely composed of lieutenants, felt sanguine and happy. Nothing got these young officers’ blood up like a good dog fight, even if it’s staged incorrectly.

With a dull glaze in his eyes, Charles turned and left the dugout with Edward right behind him. They strolled languidly through the soupy trench and Charles jammed his hands in his pockets.

“When, do you suppose,” Charles asked of Edward, “will there be a bloody general offensive?”

Edward just trotted along, his eyes peeled for rats. He loved catching rats.

Fulfilling Edward’s wildest dream, a rat scurried by. Edward went after the rat as though his life depended on it.

“*Get him!*” Charles commanded, now grinning. “Now *this* is sport!”

Charles took off running up the trench to watch Edward catch the rat, which he undoubtedly would since he never failed.

But this was an exceptionally fast rat that was doing an excellent job staying ahead of Edward, which only made it a better chase as far as Edward was concerned. Charles, however, was having to leap over soldiers, equipment and ammo boxes, and was quickly falling behind as well as losing steam. Finally, when he was totally winded, he just began to walk, his hands back in his pockets. Sooner or later he'd find Edward with a dead rat in his mouth, that was a certainty. However, as far as he walked, no Edward. Charles began asking fellow soldiers, "Have you seen a dog go by?" but they all shook their heads and said no. Perhaps a mile from his dugout, Charles began getting concerned.

Edward, meanwhile, chased this fast rat with all of his might, but the damned rodent kept staying just an inch ahead of him. Finally, the rat leapt from an ammo box to two ammo boxes stacked on top of each other, then out of the trench and into No Man's Land. Hot on his heels, Edward was an inch behind. Still, all the way across No Man's Land, the rat

retained the lead. The two creatures zigged and zagged past shell holes, barbed wire, dead bodies and bloody body parts, neither one gaining any ground.

In the German trench Hitler was still sketching the his surroundings, eating beans and complaining to Schmidt. Suddenly, a rat landed on his sketch pad scaring the hell out of him. The rat was quickly gone, but then a forty-pound Bull Terrier crashed down on his sketch pad, really and truly frightening him, but not enough that Hitler didn't have the foresight to grab the dog by its collar stopping him in his tracks.

"Hund," Hitler commanded, *"settle down!"*

Edward pulled at his collar, desperate to catch the rat that was quickly getting away.

Hitler, uncaring of the rat, held him tight. Glancing down, Edward spied the open can of beans, stuck his nose in it and began gobbling them up.

Hitler looked at Edward's dog tag and read, "Edward? What a ridiculous name for a dog." He tore off the dog tag and threw it away.

"Your new name is Fuchsl."

As Fuchsl busily inhaled the beans, Schmidt said, "Well, look at that, you've got a dog. It dropped from heaven."

Petting Fuchsl, Hitler said to the dog, "Fuchsl means Little Fox."

Fuchsl was too busy eating the beans to pay attention.

"Look at him," said Schmidt with a big grin. "You should have named him beans."

Scratching the dog's neck, Hitler said, "From now on, Fuchsl, you are *my* dog. You will do as I say, do you understand?"

Finishing the can of beans, Fuchsl looked up with bean sauce all over his nose, looked around, then licked Hitler's face.

Hitler smiled, "He understands me."

Schmidt nodded, "I think he does."

Having eaten all of Hitler's beans, Fuschel spotted Schmidt's beans and stuck his nose into that can and began inhaling.

"That dog sure likes beans," Schmidt said.

"Yes," Hitler agreed, "he certainly does."

"It must have come from the British side, those fellows love these kinds of dogs."

"Yes," Hitler replied, "Bull Terriers. Excellent ratters."

"And fighters."

"This dog," Hitler declared, "will *never* fight."

"Too bad," Schmidt remarked, "I love dog fights."

"But *I* had hate them."

"Then I suppose he'll never fight."

"Indeed."

Back in the British trench, Charles was becoming concerned.

"*Edward! Edward!*" but no Edward. Shaking his head, Charles said, "This is certainly odd behavior. *Edward!*"

Well over a mile from his own position, Charles began to believe that Edward might have jumped out of the trench. In desperation, Charles

climbed on top of an ammo box, then onto two boxes stacked on top of each other, peered out into No Man's Land and called, "*Edward!*"

A dozing German sniper heard, "*Edward!*," looked up and saw Charles' forehead and eyes poking up over the edge of the trench. The sniper sighted in through his scope and pulled the trigger.

A bullet slammed into Charles' forehead, blowing his brains out the back of his head. Sailing backward against the muddy back wall of the trench, Charles slid down to a sitting position, his head slumped forward, and he was dead.

Chapter Nine



The two extant photographs of Hitler (with the mustache) and his dog Fuchsl.

In Hitler's dugout, his bunkmates immediately came to love Fuchsl, constantly feeding him bits of their precious food. At first Fuchsl kept attempting to escape, however, with exemplary patience, Hitler taught the dog to stay. Having learned this, Fuchsl now stayed with his master always, unless commanded otherwise. He also slept with Hitler every night. For his part, Hitler taught Fuchsl circus tricks, like how to flip over backward and climb ladders. Hitler and Fuchsl's love was obvious and true and everyone who saw them together smiled.

One night as Hitler, Schmidt and Fuchsl were moving rapidly through the trenches delivering a message, they came around a corner to find a short, stocky, flat-faced private with a large black German Shepherd blocking their path.

"Excuse us," Hitler said, but the man wouldn't move.

"Hold on a minute," the man said. "What's your dog's name?"

"I told you," Hitler repeated, "we're on a mission and we haven't got time to chat."

"I don't want to chat, I want to fight our dogs."

"My dog," Hitler stated, "does not fight."

The flat-faced man raised his eyebrows. "He looks like a fighter."

"But he isn't."

"My dog here, *Butcher*, is one helluva fighter. Eighty pounds of pure fury."

"Congratulations," Hitler said, "now please let us pass."

Shaking his square head, the man said, "These dogs will fight."

"They will not. Please don't force us to move you out of our way."

"Oh, really?" the man said skeptically, "I don't think that's possible."

Hitler stared straight into the man's eyes with the steeliest glare the man had ever received in his entire life. Fuchsl, meanwhile, didn't even recognize *Butcher* as a dog. The private and his dog stepped aside, but as he did so he mumbled, "Coward."

Hitler stopped in his tracks, turned and stated softly, "Do these corporal stripes and this Iron Cross indicate cowardliness to you, *private*?"

"No," the private admitted, "but your dog is a coward."

"So be it," Hitler said with finality and kept moving.

When they got a few steps away, the man suddenly yelled, "*Sic 'em!*" to his dog.

Butcher bolted after Fuchsl, who wasn't paying the slightest bit of attention, but Hitler most certainly was. In one lithe movement Hitler swung his rifle down butt first directly on *Butcher's* head, cracking his skull open and killing him. Schmidt's eyes bugged out in astonishment.

The flat-faced private ran up, saw his dead dog and exploded in insane fury, running straight at Hitler, ready to strangle him. Without hesitation, Hitler rammed the barrel of his rifle into the man's throat, shoving him back against the trench wall. To make sure the man was paying attention, Hitler cocked the bolt ejecting a perfectly good shell.

Hitler asked quietly, "Have you got something to say, *private*?"

"No," the man said.

“Good.”

Hitler picked up his good shell from the mud, put it in his pocket, said, “Schmidt, Fuchsl, let’s go,” and started off with Schmidt and Fuchsl following closely behind.

In a letter to his former landlady, Frau Popp, Hitler wrote, “I think so often of Munich and each of us has but one wish, that it may soon come to a settling of accounts with the gang [the Marxists], that we’ll come to blows, no matter what the cost, and that those among us who have the luck to see our homeland again will find it purer and cleansed from foreign influence, so that by sacrifice and agony which so many hundreds of thousands of us endure every day, that by the river of blood which flows here daily, against an international world of enemies, not only will Germany’s enemies from the outside be smashed, but also our domestic internationalism will be broken up.”

Frau Popp wrote back, “I hope you are well, Sincerely, Frau Popp,” and included a pair of wool socks that she had knitted for Hitler.

Hitler's new chum was a thin, gangly fellow with a big nose named Eli Schwartz. He was a private who absolutely loved Hitler's drawings. Hitler obliged him by drawing his caricature, just like he'd done for everybody else, giving him an even bigger nose than he already had, which brought forth gales of laughter from one and all. Schwartz immediately pinned it up above his bunk, just like everybody else.

At some point, Hitler opened a can of pork and beans and began to eat, with Fuchsl staring straight him, his tongue dangling out. Petting his dog, Hitler said soothingly, "You'll get your portion, have no worries, Fuchsl." Hitler scooped out a goodly portion and put it in Fuchsl's bowl, which Fuschel immediately attacked.

With a third of the can still remaining, Hitler turned and offered it to Schwartz, saying, "Would you care for some pork and beans?"

"Thank you, no," Schwartz replied, "I don't eat pork."

"Why not?" Hitler asked, looking confused.

"I'm Jewish."

"Really?" Hitler said, now appearing surprised.

"You couldn't tell by my nose?" Schwartz laughed.

"I just thought you were a German with a big nose."

"I am a German with a big nose."

"How can you be both Jewish and German?" Hitler innocently inquired.

"What religion are you?"

Hitler shook his head, "I have no religion."

"Well, how about your parents?"

"Lutheran."

"There," Schwartz said, raising his hands. "Your parents are both Lutheran and German."

"No," Hitler corrected, "they were both Lutheran and Austrian."

"But you see what I'm saying. One does not negate the other."

Rubbing his chin, Hitler considered the concept, then finally asked, "What's it like being Jewish?"

"It's great. I love all of the holidays, the food, the family get-togethers, going to synagogue, all of it," Schwartz announced joyously.

"Is it like church?"

"Sure, but I'd say it's more like Catholic church, because that's all in Latin."

"What language do you use in this synagogue of yours?"

"Hebrew."

"Ah," Hitler said lighting up with recognition, "the language of the ancient Hebrews."

"Yes," Schwartz nodded. "Exactly."

"Is it a difficult language to master?"

"Sort of," Schwartz hesitantly replied, "but all Jewish men learn it by the time they're thirteen so they can perform their Bar Mitzvahs."

"What's that?"

"It's the ceremony when a Jewish boy becomes a man."

"Is that when they circumcise you?"

Bursting out laughing, Schwartz said, "No, that happens right after you're born so you don't remember it, thank God. At the Bar Mitzvah you just read a portion of the Torah."

"What's that?"

"The first five books of the Old Testament Bible."

"Ah-ha," Hitler nodded, "I understand."

"Have you never met a Jew before?"

"Yes," Hitler answered. "One that I know of. His name was Josef Neumann and he used to buy my small paintings and sell them. He once gave a me a coat. He was a very decent man."

"Well, there are Jews all over Europe. Millions of them."

"Really?" Hitler said incredulously. "Then why haven't I seen them?"

"Because," Schwartz explained, "we generally stay in our own part of town. Many, many people don't like Jews."

"Really? And why is that?"

“Because they falsely believe that Jews control all of the money in the world, but let me tell you, there are plenty of poor Jews. Most of them, actually. My father is a civil servant and we barely had enough money for food and clothing. I wore nothing but my older brother’s clothes until I got my first suit for my Bar Mitzvah, which my mother and father scrimped and saved for.”

In one of his rare moments, Hitler smiled. “My father was also a civil servant, he worked as a customs official at the border, and we also had very little money. I completely understand.”

Schwartz smiled back, “So, we have much in common, beside both being soldiers.”

“Yes, it seems we do.”

“You’re a good man, Hitler, I can tell. I’m particularly adept at judging men’s characters.”

“Me as well, and I know that you too are good man, Schwartz.”

“Why thank you,” Schwartz said, bowing his head. “We good men must stick together, don’t you think?”

“Absolutely.”

Another time when Hitler, Fuchsl, and Schwartz were sitting in the barracks, Schwartz said, “My Uncle Dave is a real jokester. He’s eighty years old and funny as hell. Here’s one: three old Jewish men are sitting in a doctor’s office waiting room. One of them says, ‘Oy, as hard as I try I can’t urinate.’ The second man says, ‘That’s nothing. As hard as I try, I can’t defecate.’ The third man says, ‘Ah, that’s nothing. Five times a night I urinate, and five times a night I defecate.’ The other two ask, ‘So what’s the problem?’ He says, ‘I can’t get out of bed.’”

Hitler burst out laughing, slapping his knee, frightening Fuchsl.

“Here’s another one from good old Uncle Dave: two old Jewish men are talking. One says to the other, ‘So, *nu*, how’s your sex life?’ The other guy looks amazed, ‘Sex life. I haven’t got any sex life.’ The other guy says, ‘Then obviously you don’t know the secret.’ ‘Secret, what secret?’ And the guy says, ‘The secret is rye bread. Take my word for it.’ So the old man

goes to the bakery and says to the girl, 'Give me five loaves of rye bread.'

The girl says, 'Five loaves? It'll get hard.' He says, 'Give me ten'."

Holding his sides, Hitler screamed with laughter. Schwartz grinned in satisfaction; Uncle Dave's material was always sure-fire.

Yet another time, as Hitler and Schwartz hung around the barracks killing time between message deliveries, Schwartz asked, "So, where's your home?"

"My home is the 16th Regiment," Hitler replied proudly.

"Yes," Schwartz said, "but where are you from?"

"After the war, should I be alive, I'll return to Munich, where I was living."

Schwartz was becoming exasperated, "That's well and good, but where are you *from*?"

"Austria," Hitler relented. "I was born in Branau am Ill, and I grew up in Lambach, near Linz."

"Ah yes, I detected your Austrian accent."

"I don't like to bring it up," Hitler confessed. "People poke fun at me."

"What's wrong with Austria?" Schwartz asked.

"It's not Germany."

"But it was part of Germany before Bismark gave it away."

"I know."

"But now you live in Munich, eh? That's where I'm from."

"And you say," Hitler inquired, "that there's a Jewish part of town?"

"Of course. There are thousands of Jews there, including most of my relatives. The rest are in Russia."

His eyes lighting up, Hitler asked, "What do you think of Lenin?"

"I don't think of Lenin," Schwartz stated. "I'm apolitical."

Hitler blinked in astonishment, "How can you possibly be apolitical?"

"Easy. I don't pay any attention to politics."

"But you must. Look what's going on the world."

"It's not my concern. I like reading books."

"About what?"

"The American west. Cowboys and Indians."

Hitler nodded, "That's important, too, I suppose. America is quite a powerful nation, with a very large army and navy."

"If you say so. I just like cowboys and Indians fighting each other."

"Yes. I loved cowboys and Indians as a child."

"Ah, Munich," Schwartz sighed. "I do love that city."

"Me, too," Hitler said. "Look, another connection between us. It certainly will be nice to go home, once we've won the war."

"If we win the war," Schwartz corrected.

Rising to his feet, a peculiar light emanating from his eyes, Hitler declared, "England's coming defeat is as certain as the Amen in a prayer!"

"As my grandmother used to say, bless her soul, 'From your mouth to God's ears'."

Hitler shook his head, "God has nothing to do with it."

Aside from painting and drawing, Hitler was always reading, generally with Fuchsl on his lap. His favorite author at that time was the philosopher, Arnold Schopenhauer. Schwartz pointed at the book and asked, "What's it about?"

"The strength of blind will; the triumph of the will."

"Heavy reading," Schwartz commented.

"I've learned a great deal from this book. I'll lend it to you if you'd like."

Schwartz waved his hand dismissively, "I'll stick to cowboys and Indians, thank you very much."

By August of 1915, Hitler was clearly recognized as not only the best messenger, but truly indispensable. The constant artillery barrages regularly knocked out the telephone and telegraph lines, so the only way to dispatch messages was by runners, of which Hitler was king. Lieutenant Wiedemann, along with the entire regimental staff, grew to like and admire

Hitler more each day. He was so eager to get to the front that he often delivered other runner's messages.

"I love crawling up right under the enemy's noses," Hitler told Schwartz.

"Just like an Indian," Schwartz observed.

"Exactly! It's more important to bring our messages to their destinations than it is to satisfy personal ambition or curiosity."

Schwartz looked around, "Where's Fuchsl?"

"He must spend part of everyday killing rats. It's his purpose in life."

"And your purpose in life is delivering messages."

"Correct."

"Well, it's good to have a purpose in life."

"What's yours?" Hitler queried.

Without hesitation Schwartz replied, "Eating chicken."

Hitler burst out laughing. Schwartz grinned, thinking, "Lordy, but isn't this fellow a sucker for my jokes, and, of course, my Uncle Dave's."

As the war intensified, delivering messages became more and more dangerous, which meant nothing to Hitler whom everybody agreed “led a charmed life.”

“So, nothing can kill you, eh?” Schwartz said while petting Fuchsl.

“Evidently not,” Hitler said. “Last night I was eating my dinner in the trench somewhere along the way and several other soldiers seated themselves beside me to eat their dinner. Suddenly, a voice seemed to be saying to me, ‘Get up and go over there.’ It was so clear and insistent that I obeyed mechanically, as if it had been a military order. I rose at once to my feet and walked twenty yards along the trench, carrying my dinner in its tin-can with me. Then I sat down to go on eating, my mind being once more at rest. Hardly had I done so when a flash and a deafening report came from the part of the trench I had just left. A stray shell had burst over the group in which I had been sitting, and every member of it was killed.”

Shaking his head, Schwartz said, “Amazing. And you didn’t even feel that it was worth telling the story until now?”

“No. But then again, it happens so often, why mention it?”

Schwartz grinned, “Indeed. Why bother?”

Flipping back several pages in his pad, Hitler asked, “Would you care to hear a poem that I wrote the other night?”

“You write poetry, too?”

“Sometimes. When the mood strikes me. Here:

I often go on bitter nights

To Wotan’s oak in the quiet glade

With dark powers to weave a union —

The runic letters the moon makes with its magic spell

And all who are full of impudence during the day

Are made small by the magic formula!

They draw shining steel — but instead of going into combat

They solidify into stalagmites.

So the false ones part from the real ones —

I reach into a nest of words

And then give to the good and just

With my formula blessings and prosperity."

Setting the pad aside, Hitler picked up Fuchsl and put him on his lap.

Meanwhile, Schwartz looked severely impressed. "That poem moved me. I see exactly what you're saying.

"Good."

"You're a Renaissance man, Hitler."

"Perhaps I am," Hitler sighed, scratching Fuschel behind the ears, causing his eyes to roll back and his tongue to come dangling out.

Hitler stepped up in front of Lieutenant Wiedemann's desk and saluted. Touching his riding crop to his hat brim, Wiedemann glanced up. Sergeant Amann stood at his side with his arms crossed. Both of them had sneaky little grins on their faces as though they were up to something.

"So, Hitler," Wiedemann said, "how's the messenger business these days?"

"Excellent, sir."

"You're our top messenger."

"Thank you, sir."

"But maybe things will be changing for you soon."

Hitler frowned, "Like what?"

Wiedemann and Amann exchanged a knowing glance.

"How would you like me to put in a request to have you promoted to sergeant?"

His eyes widening in horror, Hitler blurted, "*I'd hate it!*"

As always when dealing with Hitler, Wiedemann and Amann looked stupefied.

"And why would that be?" Wiedemann asked.

"Then I could no longer be a messenger."

"That's true," Wiedemann nodded. "You'd be safe back here at Regimental Headquarters."

"I don't want to be safe back here at Regimental Headquarters," Hitler said desperately, "I want to be a messenger."

"But it's the most dangerous job in the army."

"That's why I like it."

“So then I shouldn’t put in a request for your promotion?”

“Please, God, no.”

Wiedemann deflated like a balloon. “Hitler, you are the most baffling, intriguing character I’ve ever met.”

“Then you won’t put in the request?”

“Not if you don’t want me to.”

“Thank you, sir,” Hitler sighed, greatly relieved. “Thank you very much.”

“All right then, you can go. Dismissed.”

Hitler turned and left.

Wiedemann turned to Amann, “Can you even believe this fellow?”

“No, sir, I can’t.”

“Well,” Wiedemann shrugged, “it appears that he has no leadership qualities at all, poor fellow. I think he’ll be better off as a messenger.”

Every one of his bunkmates looked at Hitler in astonishment.

Schmidt spoke for all of them, "Did we all hear you correctly? You turned down a promotion to sergeant!?"

"I did," Hitler said, returning to his bunk and putting Fuchsl on his lap.

"But *nobody* turns down a promotion."

"Except me."

"Why?"

"Because," Hitler explained, "if I'm a sergeant I can't be a messenger."

"But being a messenger is the most dangerous job in the army."

"That's why I like it."

"Hitler," Schwartz said, "you will never cease to amaze me. I wonder what sort of job you'll get after the war?"

"Well," Hitler mused, "should I live through this war, I daresay you will hear much about me. Just wait until my time comes."

All his bunkmates believed him, too.

Hitler scratched Fuchsl's belly, causing one of his back legs to begin jerking spasmodically.

That dog loves you," Schmidt observed.

"And I love him," Hitler replied.

As Hitler approached his most dreaded day of the year, Christmas, now worse than ever because when he previously lived alone in Munich, the only person from whom he ever had to turn down presents or meals was Frau Popp. Now it was everybody! So therefore, Hitler went into a trance at some point in mid-December and pretty much stopped talking to everyone, including his best buddy, Eli Schwartz, who didn't know what to do about it, but attempted to be as helpful as he could. Nevertheless, Hitler did very little else but sit on his bunk staring off into space while petting Fuchsl, which was perfectly all right with Fuchsl.

Once the holidays were over Hitler became ecstatically happy, smiling at damn near everything, and he even began waxing the ends of

his mustaches. His bunkmates were gob-smacked; this fellow Hitler got stranger every single day. As Schwartz had said to him earlier during his trance, "Spending the holidays quietly, eh?"

Now, holding a can of corned beef, Schwartz sat down next to Hitler on his bunk and asked, "What the hell are you so happy about?"

"The war's over," Hitler stated, as though he was in a wonderful dream.

"No, it's not," Schwartz informed him. "It's going on right on our doorstep."

"Not for me. For me, the war is over."

"Please explain," Schwartz inquired patiently.

"Christmas is my enemy and Christmas is over. I've won."

"Ah," Schwartz said in complete comprehension, "you are the victor."

"Yes," Hitler nodded, "I am."

"Congratulations."

"Thank you."

“May I offer you some—” as Schwartz went to offer Hitler some of his corned beef, to his surprise he found Fuschel with his nose shoved into the can having already consumed most of the contents. “I was going to offer you some corned beef, but . . .”

“It’s the thought that counts,” Hitler joked, bursting out laughing. Schwartz gave up the can to the dog and laughed along, as did several others nearby.

In early July of 1916, Hitler’s regiment marched south to fight the crucial Battle of the Somme. Right from the beginning of the first day, the British attack was so intense that they themselves incurred 20,000 casualties. On July 14th in the Fromelles sector, the British artillery barrage was so overwhelming that every telephone and telegraph line was cut.

Lieutenant Wiedemann ordered Hitler and Schwartz to deliver a message in what he considered was “the face of almost certain death.”

As Hitler and Schwartz left Wiedemann’s dugout, Schwartz was pale and trembling, saying, “OK, now I’m scared.”

“Don’t worry about it, my friend,” Hitler declared with a sunny smile, “you’re with me, and therefore you will return alive. I guarantee it.”

“But quite often, Hitler” Schwartz said, “everyone but *you* gets killed.”

“In this case God will make an exception. I’ll speak to him personally.”

With a deep sigh of relief, Schwartz nodded, “Very well. If I’ve got you as my advocate to God then I now believe I actually will return alive.”

“Depend on it,” Hitler exclaimed, clapping his friend on the back.

Wiedemann had not underestimated the ferocity of the situation. The two runners were peppered with shot and shells every step of the way. Every other minute they found themselves cowering in watery shell holes covering their heads.

“Remember your promise,” Schwartz hollered above the noise.

“I haven’t,” Hitler replied with a grin. “Let’s keep moving.”

And keep moving they did. And even though it took half the night, they delivered their message and were still in one piece.

Glancing at the message, the Regimental Commander in this section hastily scribbled a reply and handed it back to them, saying, "I don't envy your job."

With a smile, Hitler took the message folded it up and put it in his pouch. "Fear not," Hitler grinned, "I am impervious to death. I have an invisible shield around me that guards me at all times, and so does my friend."

"Well, thank God for that. Good luck."

"Luck," Hitler stated, "has nothing to do with it. *Auf Wiedersehen.*"

Hitler and Schwartz turned and left.

The Regimental Commander turned to his sergeant and said, "That man's insane."

"It's a very good thing he's on our side."

"I'll second that."

As Hitler and Schwartz dashed from shell hole to shell hole, bullets whizzing all around them, shells exploding everywhere, Schwartz collapsed from exhaustion.

"I can't go on," he panted. "Just leave me."

"*Nonsense!*" Hitler cried. "Rest for a moment and you'll be fine."

Trembling terribly, Schwartz attempted to light a cigarette and failed.

Hitler reached for the cigarette and matches. "Here, let me do that for you." He took the cigarette like it was some sort of alien object, placed it between his lips, lit it, did not inhale, blew out the smoke, stated, "That's terrible," and handed it to the grateful Schwartz.

Inhaling deeply, Schwartz mumbled, "Thank you, my friend."

"My pleasure, sir."

When Schwartz had finished his cigarette, they continued their perilous journey. About halfway back, a bullet struck Schwartz directly in the spine, knocking him face down into the mud where he began to scream bloody murder.

Covering Schwartz's mouth with his hand, Hitler commanded,
"Accept the pain!"

After a moment Hitler uncovered Schwartz's mouth and he was no longer screaming, but mumbled. "You said I'd be OK."

"No," Hitler corrected, "I said I'd get you back alive, and I will do just that."

Hoisting Schwartz up over his shoulder, Hitler carried him all the way back to the 16th Regiment's position where nobody could believe that the two runners had actually made it there and back. Once Hitler had delivered Schwartz to the aid station (where, within two days, he died), he then delivered the message. Wiedemann looked at Hitler with pure, unadulterated awe.

"Hitler, your life is enchanted."

"Yes," Hitler nodded, "it is."

"And you carried that other man all the way back?"

"No, just half the way. No more than a few miles."

Wiedemann and Amann both shook their heads in wonderment.

"I'm going to put you in for another Iron Cross, and this time I promise you it will be 1st Class."

"If you must," Hitler shrugged.

"I must."

"Do whatever you'd like."

"Dismissed."

Hitler turned and left.

Wiedemann and Amann looked at each other with completely flabbergasted expressions.

Having washed up, Hitler, still looking like he was in cloud cuckoo-land, returned to his barracks, sat down on his bunk, got Fuchsl on his lap and opened a can of beef stew.

"You want some beef stew, Fuchsl?"

Hitler scooped out half the can of beef stew and plopped it in Fuchsl's tin plate. Fuchsl obliged him by jumping off his lap and wolfing down the stew in three bites.

Hitler, on the other hand, languidly ate his stew, lost in his own personal reverie. He was in the midst of transcending to a new, higher plane of existence and he knew it.

The Battle of Fromelles, which had already cost over a hundred thousand lives, now disintegrated into dull but deadly trench warfare, with almost no gains or losses in the battle lines. The Battle of the Somme, of which Fromelles was just a small part, ground to halt. There were attacks by both sides every single day, but they achieved almost nothing.

Three months later the Allies alone had 614,000 casualties, but the German lines would not budge.

A charmed life and transcendence, it turned out, at least under these circumstances, could still be very dangerous. On October 7th, Hitler and four other messengers were sitting and waiting for their next assignments in a narrow tunnel leading to Regimental Headquarters when a shell exploded overhead. All of the waiting messengers were buried. Help arrived quickly, but, as usual, all of the other messengers were dead, but

this time Hitler was seriously wounded in the thigh, blood pouring out in gushing waves.

As he was being loaded into a truck to be transferred to the hospital, Hitler begged Lieutenant Wiedemann, "It isn't so bad, Lieutenant, right? I can stay with you, I mean, stay with the regiment! Can't I?"

"You'll be back, Hitler," Wiedemann said, "I have no doubt of it."

Schmidt and Fuchsl watched as the truck drove away.

Chapter Ten

At the field hospital, Hitler's very first wound was treated. He nearly collapsed from fright the first time he heard a female nurse's voice.

Turning to the wounded soldier in the bed beside him, Hitler said, "For the first time in two years to hear such a sound! I barely recognize it."

Grinning, the fellow beside him with a bandaged head quipped, "Well, I certainly do. That's called a *woman*, and I know just what to do with a woman."

Hitler looked confused, "What?"

The soldier looked at Hitler like he was from Mars. "What do you mean, 'what'?"

"You said you know just what to do with a woman. What?"

"Make love to them," the soldier patiently explained.

"Ah," Hitler replied, finally understanding. "I've never had a woman. Is it good?"

With an expression of utter disbelief, the soldier said, "It's OK."

Hitler was then put on a train headed for an army hospital in Berlin. As the train neared the German border, the more restless the wounded soldiers became. When they finally saw the first German house, obvious by its high gable and beautiful shutters, Hitler proclaimed, "*The Fatherland!*"

Everyone on board immediately began joyously singing *Die Wacht am Rhein*, including Hitler.

At the army hospital southwest of Berlin, the comfortable beds were so different than trench life that none of the soldiers hardly dared to lie on them properly for fear they would mess them up.

One wounded soldier in a bed nearby said to another wounded soldier, "The war does not go well for us."

"No," the other soldier agreed, "I see no good coming from it."

Hitler was aghast. "'No good'? *We will conquer the world!*"

Both soldiers looked at him like he was a lunatic. “‘Conquer the world?’ We can’t even conquer Belgium, and it’s one of the smallest countries in Europe.”

“Nay-sayers!” Hitler hollered. “If you have no faith in the Fatherland, you have nothing!”

When he was well enough, Hitler took a stroll through Berlin. Everywhere he turned there was dire misery and radical groups protesting for peace. Once more Hitler was aghast.

He said to a protester, “There can be no peace without victory.”

The protester, a young man with thick glasses holding a sign that said, “Peace Now!” turned to Hitler and explained, “‘Victory?’ Everyone is against us.”

“That doesn’t matter. We have no need for anyone else’s help. We will prevail all on our own.”

“You, sir, are a moron,” the protester stated, turning away.

“A moron, am I? I am a corporal with the 16th Bavarian Regiment and I have an Iron Cross, albeit 2nd Class, and I assure you that I am anything but a moron.”

“If you’re risking your life for a lost cause you are indeed a moron.”

Unable to believe his own ears and clenching his fists, Hitler declared, “*Scoundrel!*”

Several protesters who had just heard this exchange stepped forward in a menacing fashion, so Hitler hastily departed.

In January of 1917, Hitler wrote to Lieutenant Wiedemann, “I am again fit for service and wish to return to my old regiment and old comrades.” And even though he could have remained on sick leave longer, he was allowed to return to the front.

On March 1st, Hitler was back with his regiment and comrades. Upon entering the barracks, Fuchsl went into paroxysms of ecstasy, hurling himself at Hitler head-first and nearly knocking him down.

“*Fuchsl!*” Hitler proclaimed in pure joy.

Hitler grabbed the dog, turned him over and petted his pink belly. Fuchsl's eyes rolled back and his tongue rolled out onto the floor. Hitler's comrades all grinned at the sight of pure love between a man and his dog.

That night for supper, the company cook prepared an extra special treat for Hitler and his comrades: bread with jam, cake, and *Kartoffelpuffers*, German potato pancakes.

Later that night Hitler and Fuschel, celebrating their reunion, went out rapping with a flashlight. Fuschel would hunt them down, then Hitler would skewer them with his bayonet. A fine time was had by all until a soldier threw a boot at them, hollering, "Shut up you lunatics!" so they finally went to bed.

Discipline in the 16th had noticeably declined to the extent that Lieutenant Wiedemann, who was considered "too soft" was replaced. As a going-away present, Hitler beautifully painted Easter eggs and placed them in Wiedemann's garden spelling out "Happy Easter 1917."

Theirs was a tearful farewell.

“The one and only thing I’ll miss about this regiment is you, Hitler,” Wiedemann stated flatly. “Your strength and courage have inspired me to be a better man.”

“So has yours inspired me, Lieutenant,” Hitler said, firmly shaking Wiedemann’s hand, a practice Hitler loathed. “I will miss you, too.”

As Wiedemann was driven away, a tear came to Hitler’s eye, who looked down to Fuchsl. “He’s a fine man.”

Wiedemann’s replacement was Major Freiherr von Tubeuf, a serious young man who brooked no interference or backtalk, quickly restoring discipline to the unit. With an angry temperament, even to his superiors, Tubeuf was immediately attracted to the even-more-serious-than-he, Hitler, and the two became fast friends. Given their deteriorating situation, to relieve his ever-mounting tension, Tubeuf took up hunting and invited Hitler and Fuchsl to be his beaters, scarring the wildlife out of the forests and thickets so that he could shoot them. Even though they were

extremely close the front lines, and an occasional shell would explode nearby, everybody had a grand old time, particularly Fuschel.

Over and over, Fuchsl would chase grouse out into the open which Tubeuf would promptly shoot.

“That’s a fine dog you have there, Hitler,” said Tubeuf picking up a dead grouse and adding it to Hitler’s bulging sack of dead fowl.

“Yes,” Hitler nodded, petting Fuchsl. “I love him dearly.”

“And clearly,” Tubeuf smiled, reloading his rifle, “he loves you, too.”

Chapter Eleven

When World War I began in 1914, the United States pursued a policy of isolationism, avoiding conflict while trying to broker a peace. When a German U-boat sank the British liner *RMS Lusitania* on May 7th, 1915, killing 128 Americans, President Woodrow Wilson declared that "America is too proud to fight" but still demanded an end to attacks on passenger ships. Germany reticently agreed. Wilson repeatedly warned Germany that the United States would not tolerate any more unrestricted submarine warfare, which was in direct violation of international law. Former president Theodore Roosevelt denounced German acts as "piracy." Wilson eked out his reelection in 1916 with the slogan, "He kept us out of war".

In January of 1917, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, intentionally forcing America's entry into the war. With the sinking of seven more U.S. merchant ships by German submarines,

President Wilson demanded that America go to war with Germany, which the U.S. Congress declared on April 6th, 1917.

This was Germany's fatal mistake.

In the summer of 1917 Hitler's regiment returned to its first battlefield in Fromelles, Belgium, and fought in the Third Battle for Ypres, which was every bit as horrible as the first two. In the middle of July they were bombarded constantly for ten days and nights, then the British began to noisily tunnel underneath them. Deadly mustard gas, which paralyzed your lungs causing quick though severely painful death, was in constant use by both sides, and at one point Hitler and his comrades had to keep their ill-fitting, extremely uncomfortable, not to mention only occasionally functional, gas masks on for twenty-four hours straight. And finally, on July 31st, the Germans had to face a brand-new nightmare of modern warfare—the tank. Luckily for Germans, the weather was so inclement that the tanks could barely be put to use because they kept getting stuck in the mud.

Finally, the 16th Bavarian was relieved and given R&R in Alsace. In the train station in Ypres, as Hitler and his comrades awaited their train, a fat, mustachioed train official approached Hitler and Fuchsl, who was busily performing his circus tricks to the amusement of everybody.

“Fuchsl,” Hitler ordered, “do a backflip.”

Fuchsl happily obliged.

“Now roll over,” and Fuchsl dutifully rolled over.

Delighted, the train official said to Hitler, “I’ll give you two hundred marks for that dog, corporal.”

Hitler looked at the man like he was insane, replying indignantly, “You could give me two hundred thousand, and you wouldn’t get him!”

When the troops were leaving and boarding the train, Hitler looked everywhere, but couldn’t find Fuchsl. He became panicked, hollering, “*Fuchsl! Fuchsl!*” but there was no trace of Fuchsl anywhere. Ultimately, Hitler, who was as angry and disgusted as he had ever been in his life, had to board the moving train, which then slowly chugged out of the station.

“I am desperate,” Hitler groaned to no one in particular. “The swine who stole my dog doesn’t realize what he did to me.”

What Hitler didn’t know yet was that some other “swine” had also stolen all of his paintings, sketches and paints from his knapsack, which caused Hitler to immediately give up painting and sketching for the duration of the war.

Once the train was out of sight, the fat train official, whose name was Ernst Arschloch, stepped out of his office holding Fuchsl, whom he was feeding a sausage. The fat man grinned deviously and said, “I just saved two hundred marks.”

Fuchsl happily gobbled the sausages.

Ernst Arschloch took Fuchsl to his home outside Ypres and presented him to his two fat sons, aged nine and eleven, who were completely overjoyed. His fat wife kissed him on his fat cheek and said, “You are a fine father, Ernst.”

“Thank you, Hündin. Find nice china bowls for his food and water.”

“Of course. Supper will be ready soon.”

“What are we having?”

“An entire roast pig, with an apple in its mouth,” Hündin smiled.

“My favorite,” Arschloch slavered hungrily.

Meanwhile, the two boys were playing with Fuchsl, the elder, Scheisekopf, pulled hard on Fuchsl’s head while the other, Scheisegesicht, pulled hard on his tail, and were both clearly hurting him.

“What will you name him?” their father asked, snacking on a big handful of nuts.

We will name him *Schwein*,” said the elder child.

“*Schwein* means pain,” Fuchsl thought, “I don’t like it.”

“*Schwein*,” their father informed them, “is a fighting name.”

“Can we fight him, father?” the younger child asked.

“Of course!” Arschloch declared. “But first we must eat our supper.”

In early October, Schmidt convinced Hitler to finally take his first furlough of the entire war. First they visited Dresden, where Schmidt's sister resided, and toured the city viewing the famous buildings and visiting as many art galleries as humanly possible, particularly the renowned Zwinger Museum. They then visited Brussels, Cologne and Leipzig, which immediately became Hitler's favorite. Leipzig was where Martin Luther preached his first sermon in St. Thomas Church, coincidentally the same church where Bach was the organ master for twenty-seven years and was also buried, and it was also where Richard Wagner, Hitler's favorite composer, had been baptized.

Mouth agape, Hitler gazed up at the 300-foot behemoth of a monument commemorating the *Battle of Nations* honoring the dead soldiers of 1813. "This has nothing to do with art," Hitler stated, "but it is enormous and beautiful."

Chapter Twelve

Back at the barracks in Ypres, Hitler sat on his bed forlornly staring at Fuchsl's empty tin plate.

"Why aren't you drawing or painting?" Schmidt asked.

"Don't you recall, some *schweinhund* stole all of my paintings and art supplies at the train station."

"You could easily get more. I'll chip in if that's the issue."

"Never mind," Hitler said with a sigh, staring back down at Fuchsl's plate. "I don't feel like drawing or painting anymore."

With a look of despair on his face, Hitler mused, "I've always believed deep in my soul that I was destined to be a great artist. But now something has changed inside of me. I feel that God is sending me a message, but I don't know what it is."

Placing his hand on Hitler's shoulder, Schmidt said, "Adolf, my friend, I have no doubt that sooner or later you'll figure it out."

The 16th Bavarian Regiment saw almost no action for the remainder of 1917. Since Hitler had given up painting and drawing, he now did little else but read library books. As far as he was concerned, novels and magazines were a frivolous waste of time, so he read only history and philosophy.

With a folded magazine under his arm, Schmidt asked Hitler, "What are you reading?"

"*Schopenhauer's Selected Works*, the only book I actually own." He showed Schmidt his worn, dog-eared book. "I've read it many times."

"I have a subscription to *Field & Stream Magazine* if you'd ever like to borrow one. You know, a bit of light reading to take a break from the heavy stuff," and he offered Hitler the magazine.

Hitler furrowed his brow and frowned. "War forces one to think deeply about human nature. Four years of war are equivalent to thirty years of university training in regard to life's problems. I hate nothing more than trash literature. When we are concerned with the fate of mankind then one can only read Homer and evangelical works. However,

I have quit reading evangelism—even if Christ was a true fighter. But the turning of both cheeks is not a very good recipe for the front.”

With the magazine still held out, Schmidt said, “Of course you’re right, what was I thinking.”

Schmidt returned to his bunk and Hitler returned to Schopenhauer.

Soon thereafter, Schmidt rushed into the barracks holding a newspaper. “Riots are breaking out all over Germany and Eastern Europe! The starving workers are demanding peace! And they’re demanding that Germany make peace with the Bolsheviks! 400,000 workers went on strike in Berlin alone! Here, read it.”

None of the bored soldiers cared to read the newspaper, but instead returned to their card playing, reading and snoozing. Hitler, on the other hand, was incensed.

“This is the biggest piece of chicanery in the whole war. These rioters are nothing but slackers and reds. What is the army fighting for if the homeland itself no longer wants victory? For whom the immense sacrifices

and privations? The soldier is expected to fight for victory and the homeland goes on strike against it?! This is insanity!”

On March 3rd, 1918, Berlin finally made peace with the Soviets, signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The terms the Germans imposed on the Soviets were so harsh that Germany’s leftists felt that the treaty’s real purpose was to destroy the Russian Revolution. News of the Soviet’s capitulation brought joy to the frontline soldiers who still believed that Germany could win the war and that victory was well within their grasp.

As the German military commander, Erich von Ludendorff, ordered more and more offensives, the Allies ordered more and more counter-offensives. During the next four months Hitler’s regiment participated in all of the offensives in France: on the Somme River, on the Aisne River, and finally on the Marne River. Hitler’s spirit soared. As he delivered a message Hitler saw what looked like a French helmet poking out the top of

a shell hole. Pulling his Lugar, Hitler shouted loud orders pretending he had a company of soldiers behind him.

“Disarm and surrender or me and my squad will be forced to kill you!”

Suddenly, four French soldiers stood with their hands raised and surrendered. When they realized that they had been tricked and it was merely one man to whom they had surrendered, there was a moment when they looked like they were going to attack Hitler. Laughing in their faces, Hitler fired several shots into the ground around their feet making them dance.

“Whoever of you wants to die first, please step forward and I will accommodate you.”

Apparently, none of the French soldiers wanted to die first and they all gave in.

Grinning from ear to ear, Hitler personally delivered his four prisoners to Major von Tubeuf, who shook his head in disbelief.

“Hitler,” von Tubeuf said, “you never cease to amaze me. There appears to be no circumstance or situation that will prevent you from volunteering for the most difficult, arduous tasks and you are always ready to sacrifice your life and tranquility for the Fatherland and for others.”

“That is exactly true, Herr Major.”

Guards arrived, relieving Hitler of his four prisoners.

“I’m putting you in for a citation,” said von Tubeuf.

“If you must.”

Von Tubeuf could not help but smile and shake his head, saying, “Dismissed.”

In August Hitler was awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class by the battalion adjutant, First Lieutenant Hugo Guttmann, a handsome, curly-haired Jew with a big nose. As he placed the ribbon holding the Iron Cross around Hitler’s neck, he stated simply, “This is for personal bravery and general merit.”

“Thank you, sir, this is the proudest day of my life.”

"I can see you have a second Iron Cross, but do you mind me asking what other decorations you have?"

"You make me blush, sir," Hitler grinned, looking down and indeed blushing.

"I doubt," Guttman noted, "that there are many soldiers here at the front who would blush like a schoolgirl at being asked to name their decorations. But please, I would like to know."

With a sigh, Hitler recited, "In addition to my two Iron Crosses, I received the Military Cross, 3rd Class with swords on September 17th, 1917, the *Regimentsdiplom* for outstanding bravery on May 9th of this year, the *Verwundeterabrechnen* for being wounded in battle on May 9th, as well as *Dienstauszeichnung* service medal, 3rd Class on August 25th, just yesterday."

Blinking his dark eyes in astonishment, Guttman said, "You are obviously an extremely brave man, Corporal Hitler."

"Thank you, sir, I do my best."

"Yes you do. You're a brave fellow, Hitler. It's been my pleasure meeting you." He put out his hand to shake.

Hesitantly, Hitler limply shook the man's hand.

"Dismissed," Guttman said.

Saluting, then turning smartly, Hitler departed.

With a sigh, Guttman remarked to no one in particular, "If only we had more men like him this war would be won in a week."

Chapter Thirteen

Fuchsl, meanwhile, sat in the corner of a dog pit behind the scratch line in front of fat Mr. Arschloch. His new, obese family sat watching in the front row eating popcorn, peanuts, sausages, and drinking Coca-Cola.

A curly-headed referee declared, "Commence fighting!"

Fuchsl's opponent, *Balthazar*, dashed to the center of the pit; Fuchsl just sat behind the scratch line wagging his tail, his tongue dangling out.

Mr. Arschloch became furious, "Fight, *Schwein*, fight!"

But Fuchsl didn't move.

"The winner," the referee declared, "is *Balthazar*!"

The audience booed — what a lousy fight.

Saddened by the loss, the Arschloch family continued to stuff their faces.

Back at the Arschloch house, Mr. Arschloch took Fuchsl out into the backyard, and with his two boys watching, gave Fuchsl a sound thrashing with a belt.

“When I order you to fight, you will fight, do you hear me, *Schwein!*?”

Fuchsl had never been beaten before and didn't like it. He turned and sunk his teeth into Mr. Arschloch's hand that held the belt.

With a horrifying shriek of pain, and to the amusement of his sons, Mr. Arschloch dropped the belt and let go of Fuchsl's collar.

Fuchsl thought as he took off running as fast as he possibly could.

Tenderly cradling his injured and bleeding hand, Mr. Arschloch hollered, “If I ever see you around here again *Schweinhund*, I'll get my pistol and shoot you!”

Scheisekopf and Scheisegesicht, with ice cream all over the chubby cheeks demanded, “We need more ice cream!”

“Of course,” Mr. Arschloch said, “but I must get my hand bandaged first. That disgusting mutt probably gave me rabies.”

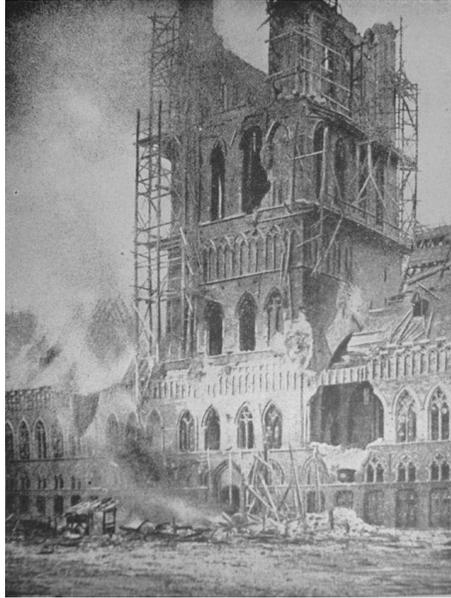
"Rabies are Jewish priests," Scheisegesicht offered.



Ruin of Ypres, photo by William Lester King

Fuchsl wandered through the ruins of Ypres looking for the nice man with the mustache, but he was nowhere in sight. Soon, he was so worn out that he took a nap in the destroyed doorway of the famous Cloth Hall built in the thirteenth century.

What Fuchsl neither knew nor suspected, the civilians in Ypres were so near starvation that they were forced to eat dogs and cats, which they referred to as “roof rabbits.” Bread was made of sawdust and potato peelings, and they had no milk at all. Should an Yprite spot Fuchsl, then be lucky enough to catch him, they would most certainly kill and eat him. Fuchsl cared not, but instead dreamed of the man with the mustache.



Ypres's Shell-Blasted Cloth Hall, 1918.

Back in the barracks, Hitler and his comrades were experiencing their most difficult winter yet. Rations were nearly exhausted, and the men were also forced to eat dogs and “roof rabbits.” Due to the memory of Fuchsl, Hitler would not eat dog; only cat. Although entirely against his nature, Hitler began stealing food from the mess, mainly zwieback crackers, which he shared with his mates.



A British tank stuck in a German trench at Cambrai, France.

Back on the trail, Fuchsl scampered past all sorts of odd sights, like a new-fangled British tank stuck upright in a trench . . .



The Ypres Salient, meaning "Bulge."

. . . Farm fields that no longer grew anything but dead humans, dead horses, broken equipment and mud . . .



The Battle of Passchendaele, outside Ypres.

. . . Forests with nothing but the trunks of trees that no longer had leaves or branches . . .



British soldier with homemade gas masks.

... Soldiers wearing funny masks, goofy goggles, and silly
beanies ...



British dugouts at the front line.

... Men living in holes like rabbits ...



A burial service at Ypres.

. . . Men standing around holes talking to themselves . . . but no kindly man with a funny mustache who fed Fuchsl beans. Fuchsl was beginning to find the whole experience disheartening, but nevertheless he marched on . . .

Even though the Germans were within eyesight of the Eiffel Tower, their numerous offenses had hopelessly failed. German morale was at an all-time low, with soldiers disappearing at every train station, fights constantly breaking out on the trains and shots being fired from train windows at God knows what? If an officer dared to attempt maintaining order, if he was lucky he was pelted with stones; if he was unlucky he was pelted with grenades. Revolutionary slogans were scrawled on the sides of trains with chalk, such as, "We're not fighting for Germany's honor but for the millionaires."

As the end loomed near and everyone knew it, disgruntled replacements continued to arrive at the front, all complaining loudly about

the pointlessness of it all. When a new sergeant quipped to Hitler, “It’s just plain old idiocy to keep fighting,” Hitler punched him in the nose—a sergeant! Not only his superior, but a non-commissioned officer to boot! A brutal fight ensued—the first of Hitler’s entire adult life—and after taking a severe beating for a while, Hitler finally turned the tables, and due to sheer intensity and perseverance, ultimately prevailed to the loud cheers of his comrades.

Grinning, Schmidt turned to a frowning new guy standing there and informed him, “The new ones despise Hitler, but we old comrades like him more than ever. As far as we’re concerned he ought to beat the shit out of every single one of you pacifists and shirkers who are stabbing the Fatherland in the back.”

Wearing an expression of sheer horror, the new guy slunk away, disappearing into the crowd.

Slapping Hitler on the back, Schmidt offered him his ragged handkerchief. Hitler gratefully accepted it wiping blood from his nose, face and knuckles, half of which wasn’t his.

“You, Corporal Hitler,” Schmidt declared, “are a patriot. You have fought for Germany and are truly a German. Bravo!”

“Thank you,” Hitler said quietly, handing back the bloody rag. “I’m certainly not the dewy-eyed youth who entered the 16th in 1914, I can assure you of that.”

“Indeed you are not. Now you’re a hero of the Fatherland.”

Chapter Fifteen

In early October, the 16th Bavarian Regiment returned to Ypres for the fourth time. Once again they dug trenches into the hills and fields near Comines, just south of Ypres.

On October 15th, as Hitler and a new guy were delivering a message across the utter hell of No Man's Land, bullets whizzing over their heads, bombs exploding all around them, the new guy, Private Wiesel, quit. Throwing his rifle down into the mud, he proclaimed, "That's it. I'm through. Just leave me here."

Hitler was so disgusted that he spit. "I should, you slacker. You pacifist pig. You and all your kind should die terrible deaths. But if you accompany me, it's *my* responsibility to return you to the regiment in one piece. Now, on your feet, coward! That's an order."

Wiesel forlornly shook his head. "No."

"You defy a direct order?"

"Yes."

“Do you want me to carry you? I’ve done it before.”

“No.”

“Would you like me to shoot you? I’ve done that before, too.”

“To one of your own men?”

“No,” Hitler admitted, “but nearly. Now choose! Walk or be carried?”

Sparing Private Wiesel from making a choice, a mustard gas bomb exploded right next to them blowing them both into a muddy shell hole. Wiesel asphyxiated within minutes. Hitler, however, having fallen directly on his face in the mud was now buried up to his ears and was not quickly asphyxiating from the gas, but slowly asphyxiating from lack of oxygen. His inert body just lay there as the bitter end of World War I raged all around him.



No Man's Land,
outside Comines, Belgium.

Wandering aimlessly among the shell holes and the dead and dying British, German, French, Belgian and American soldiers, Fuchsl searched for the man with the mustache, but to no avail. He looked in shell hole after shell hole, but Fuchsl could not find the man. A few starving, live soldiers attempted to grab Fuchsl, however without a collar to hang onto, that was an impossible task. Fuchsl quickly dashed away.

Sitting down to take a rest, his stomach growling from lack of food and water, his dry tongue dangling out, Fuchsl scanned the vicinity. Finally, he rose to his aching feet and kept searching.

Still buried up to his ears in mud, Hitler lay there at the bottom of the shell hole, unmoving. Oddly, though, he was still breathing, although how any oxygen at all was making it to his lungs was a miracle.

Just then who should appear at the lip of the hole but Fuchsl. He peered down into the hole at the inert body below. Barking as loud as he could, Fuchsl finally climbed into the hole, grabbed a hold of the back of Hitler's jacket and began yanking at him, but Hitler was really stuck in the mud. Luckily, Fuchsl was an extremely strong, 40-pound Bull Terrier; as strong as a dog could possibly be for his size. Also, Fuchsl was bred to be a fighter that never gave up under any circumstances, and he was not about to give up now. Growling and pulling with all of his might, and after many, many tries and an enormous amount of strain, Fuchsl managed to pull Hitler out of the mud with a loud *Thoop!* Hitler flopped over onto his

back, unmoving and, to all appearances, dead. Fuchsl just stood there staring at Hitler, then suddenly jumped on Hitler's stomach with all his weight. Hitler suddenly began to cough and a puff of yellow smoke emitted from his mouth. Soon, Hitler was coughing like he was going to die, saliva drooling down his chin, mucus streaming from his nose, tears pouring from his eyes, until finally all of the mustard gas was out of his lungs. Fuchsl watched as Hitler slowly came to his sense, blinking furiously, gasping for breath. As Hitler slowly sat up, he rubbed his eyes, turned his head in all directions, then hollered, "*I'm blind! God help me, I'm blind!*"

Fuchsl ecstatically licked Hitler's face. Blindly reaching out, Hitler took hold of the dog, pulled him close and hugged him, exclaiming, "*Fuchsl! You've come back to me.*" Fuchsl just kept licking Hitler's face until it was entirely cleaned off. Hitler held Fuchsl tight, then said, "Fuchsl, help me. I'm blind. I can't find my way back."

So Hitler and his dog Fuchsl set off across No Man's Land heading toward the German lines. Fuchsl led the way with Hitler clinging to his

tail. Soldiers in shell holes from both sides watched this odd sight of a blind soldier clinging to the tail of a dog, weaving his way between holes heading back to his own line and they all shook their heads in wonderment. And perhaps because it was such an odd, incredible sight, nobody shot at them.

When they arrived at the German trench, Hitler bumbled his way in and fell down. Several of Hitler's comrades dashed up immediately offering assistance, which he gratefully accepted. A soldier began dousing Hitler's eyes with cold water.

"Ah, that feels fine. Thank you," Hitler sighed.

With his mouth as dry as it had ever been, Fuchsl quickly found a puddle at the bottom of the trench and began to lap up water as fast as he could. When he'd had his fill, he scanned the area for a likely place to urinate. Gingerly hopping out of the trench, he found his way into a nearby shell hole. Fuchsl then stepped on a land mine and was blown to pieces. In the space of a second Fuchsl was gone forever.

Jerking his head upward, Hitler looked all around with his sightless eyes, asking, "What was that?"

"It's nothing," a soldier said, "just some dumb English mutt mistakenly stepping on a land mine. Serves him right."

Tears began running down his cheeks from of his sightless eyes, and Hitler whispered, "Goodbye, my dear friend, Fuchsl. I loved you. But at least you died in battle." He wiped the tears away, making sure not to touch his horribly itchy eyes.

World War I ended on November 11th, 1918. By then Hitler had regained his sight, but never attempted to return to being a painter; he no longer had it in him. Besides, the art world in Germany had changed forever. Folks no longer desired realistic paintings of buildings; they wanted impressionism, expressionism, surrealism, cubism; everything Hitler hated. So Hitler quit the arts and went into politics.

By accepting a full-time paid position with the National Socialist Party, otherwise known as "Nazis," Hitler gave up on the arts forever and

officially became a “failed artist.” His new career as a politician went splendidly, right up to the moment it didn’t.