Len Deighton
Winter

MODERN CLASSICS

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Len Deighton was born in 1929 in London. He did his national service in the RAF, went to the Royal College of Art and designed many book jackets, including the original UK edition of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The enormous success of his first novel, *The IPCRESS File* (1962), was repeated in a remarkable sequence of books over the following thirty or so years. These varied from historical fiction (*Bomber*, perhaps his greatest novel) to dystopian alternative fiction (*SS-GB*) and a number of brilliant non-fiction books on the Second World War (*Fighter, Blitzkrieg* and *Blood, Tears and Folly*).

His spy novels chart the twists and turns of Britain and the Cold War in ways which now give them a unique flavour. They preserve a world in which Europe contains many dictatorships, in which the personal can be ruined by the ideological and where the horrors of the Second World War are buried under only a very thin layer of soil. Deighton's fascination with technology, his sense of humour and his brilliant evocation of time and place make him one of the key British espionage writers, alongside John Buchan, Eric Ambler, Ian Fleming and John Le Carré.

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Winter

The Bernard Samson novels

Winter covers 1900 until 1945.

Berlin Game, *Mexico Set* and *London Match* together cover the period from spring 1983 until spring 1984.

Spy Hook picks up the Bernard Samson story at the beginning of 1987 and *Spy Line* continues it into the summer of that same year.

Spy Sinker starts in September 1977 and ends in summer 1987.

Faith, *Hope* and *Charity* continue the story into the last years of the Cold War.

The stories can be read in any order and each one is complete in itself.

Prologue

Nuremberg 1945

Winter entered the prison cell unprepared for the change that the short period of imprisonment had brought to his friend. The prisoner was fifty-two years old and looked at least sixty. His hair had been thinning for years, but suddenly he'd become a baldheaded old man. He was sitting on the iron frame bed, sallow and shrunken. His elbows were resting on his knees and one hand was propped under his unshaven chin. The prison authorities had taken from him his belt, his braces, and his necktie, and the expensive custom-made suit from Berlin's most famous tailor was now stained and baggy. And yet the dark-underlined eyes were the same, and the pointed cleft chin made him immediately recognizable as a celebrity of the Third Reich, one of Hitler's most reliable associates.

'You sent for me, Herr Reichsminister?'

The prisoner looked up. 'The Reich is *kaputt*, Germany is *kaputt*, and I'm not a minister: I'm just a number.' Winter could think of no way to respond to the bitter old man. He'd become used to seeing him sitting behind the magnificent hand-carved desk in the tapestry-hung room in the ministry, surrounded by aides, secretaries, and assistants. 'Yes, I sent for you, Herr Doktor Winter. Sit down.'

He sat down. So it was all to be formal.

'I sent for you, Winter, and I'll tell you why. They told me you were in prison in London awaiting interrogation. They said that any of us on trial here could choose any German national we wanted for our defence counsel, and that if the one we chose was

being held in prison they'd release him to do it. It seemed to me that a man in prison might know what it's like for me in here.'

Winter wondered if he should offer the ex-Reichsminister a cigarette, but when – still undecided – he produced his precious cigarettes, the military policeman in the corridor shouted through the open door, 'No smoking, buddy!'

The ex-Reichsminister gave no sign of having heard the prison guard's voice. He carried on with his explanation. 'Two, you speak American . . . speak it fluently. Three, you're a damned good lawyer, as I know from working with you for many years. Four, and this is the most important, you are an Obersturmbannführer in the SS . . .' He saw Winter's face change and said, 'Is there something wrong, Winter?'

Winter leaned forward; it was a gesture of confidentiality and commitment. 'At this very moment, just a few hundred yards from here, there are a hundred or more American lawyers drafting the prosecution's case for declaring the SS an illegal organization. Such a verdict would mean prison, and perhaps death sentences, for everyone who was ever a member.'

'Very well,' said the prisoner testily. He'd always hated what he called 'unimportant pettifogging details'. 'But you're not going to suddenly claim you weren't a member of the SS, are you?'

For the first time since the message had come that the minister wanted him as junior defence counsel, Winter felt alarmed. He looked round the cell to see if there were microphones. There were bound to be. He remembered this building from the time when he'd been working with the Nuremberg Gestapo. Half the material used in the trial of the disgruntled brownshirts had come from shorthand clerks who had listened to the prisoners over hidden microphones. 'I can't answer that,' said Winter softly.

'Don't give me that yes-sir, no-sir, I-don't-know-sir. I don't want some woolly-minded, fainthearted, Jew-loving liberal trying to get my case thrown out of court on some obscure technicality. I sent for you because you got me into all this. I remembered your hard work for the party. I remembered the good times we had long before we dreamed of coming to power. I remembered the way

your father lent me money back when no one else would even let me into their office. Pull yourself together, Winter. Either put your guts into the effort for my defence or get out of here!'

Winter admired his old friend's courage. Appearances could be deceptive: he wasn't the broken-spirited shell that Winter had thought; he was still the same ruthless old bastard that he had worked for. He remembered that first political meeting in the Potsdamer Platz in the 1920s and the speech he'd given: 'Beneath the ashes fires still rage.' It had been a recurring theme in his speeches right up until 1945.

'We'll fight them,' said Winter. 'We'll grab those judges by the ankles and shake them until their loose change falls to the floor.'

'That's right,' he said. It was another one of his pet expressions. 'That's right.' He almost smiled.

'Time's up, buddy!'

Winter looked at his watch. There was another two minutes to go. The Americans were like that. They talked about justice and freedom, democracy and liberty, but they never gave an inch. There was no point in arguing: they were the victors. The whole damned Nuremberg trial was just a show trial, just an opportunity for the Americans and the British and the French and the Russians to make an elaborate pretence of legal rectitude before executing the vanquished. But it was better that the ex-Reichsminister didn't fully realize the inevitable verdict and sentence. Better to fight them all the way and go down fighting. At least that would keep his spirits alive. With this resolved, Winter felt better, too. It would be a chance to relive the old days, if only in memories.

When Winter got to the door, the old man called out to him, 'One last thing, Winter.' Winter turned to face him. 'I hear stories about some aggressive American colonel on the prosecution staff, a tall, thin one with a beautifully tailored uniform and manicured fingernails . . . a man who speaks perfect German with a Berlin accent. They say he hates all Germans and makes no allowances for anything . . . he treats everyone to a tongue-lashing every time he sends for them. Now they tell me he's been sent from Washington just to frame the prosecution's case against me . . .' He paused and

stared. He was working himself up into the sort of rage that had sent fear into every corner of his ministry and far beyond. 'Not for Göring, Speer, Hess, or any of the others, just for me. What do you know about that shit-face *Schweinehund*?'

'Yes, I know him. It's my brother.'

One of the Americans' lawyers, Bill Callaghan – a white-haired Bostonian who specialized in maritime law – said, after reading through Winter's file, that the story of the brothers read like fiction. But that was only because Callaghan was unacquainted with any fiction except the evidence that his shipowning clients provided for him to argue in court.

Fiction had unity and style, fiction had a beginning and a proper end, fiction showed evidence of planning and research and usually attempted to impose an orderly pattern upon the chaos of reality.

But the lives of the Winter brothers were not orderly and had no discernible pattern. Their lives had been a response to parental expectations, historical circumstances, and fleeting opportunities. Ambitions remained unfulfilled and prejudices had been disproved. Diversions, digressions, and disappointments had punctuated their lives. In fact, their lives had been fashioned in the same way as had the lives of so many of those born at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Callaghan, in that swift and effortless way that trial lawyers can so often command, gave an instant verdict on the lives of the Winter brothers. 'One of them is a success story,' said Callaghan, 'and the other is a goddamned horror story.' Actually, neither was a story at all. Like most people, they had lived through a series of episodes, most of which were frustrating and unsatisfactory.

1899

'A whole new century'

Everyone saw the imperious man standing under the lamppost in Vienna's Ringstrasse, and yet no one looked directly at him. He was very slim, about thirty years old, pale-faced, with quick, angry eyes and a neatly trimmed black moustache. His eyes were shadowed by the brim of his shiny silk top hat, and the gaslight picked out the diamond pin in his cravat. He wore a long black chesterfield overcoat with a fur collar. It was an especially fine-looking coat, the sort of overcoat that came from the exclusive tailors of Berlin. 'I can't wait a moment longer,' he said. And his German was spoken with the accent of Berlin. No one – except perhaps some of the immigrants from the Sudetenland who now made up such a large proportion of the city's population – could have mistaken Harald Winter for a native of Vienna.

The crowd that had gathered around the amazing horseless carriage – a Benz Viktoria – now studied the chauffeur who, having inspected its engine, stood up and wiped his hands. 'It's the fuel,' said the chauffeur, 'dirt in the pipe.'

'I'll walk to the club,' said the man. 'Stay here with the car. I'll send someone to help you.' Without waiting for a reply, the man pushed his way past a couple of onlookers who were in his way and marched off along the boulevard, jabbing at the pavement with his cane and scowling with anger.

Vienna was cold on that final evening of the 1800s; the temperature sank steadily through the day, until by evening it went below freezing point. Harald Winter felt cold but he also felt a fool. He

was mortified when one of his automobiles broke down. He enjoyed being the centre of attention when he was being driven past his friends and enemies in their carriages, or simply being pointed out as the owner of one of the first of the new, expensive mechanical vehicles. But when the thing gave trouble like this, he felt humiliated.

In Berlin it was different. In Berlin they knew about these things. In Berlin there was always someone available to attend to its fits and starts, its farts and coughs, its wheezes and relapses. He should never have brought the machine to Vienna. The Austrians knew nothing about such modern machinery. The only horseless carriage he'd seen here was electric-powered – and he hated electric vehicles. He should never have let his wife persuade him to come here for Christmas: he hated Vienna's rainy winters, hated the political strife that so often ended in riots, hated the food, and hated these lazy, good-for-nothing Viennese with their shrill accent, to say nothing of the wretched, ragged foreigners who were everywhere jabbering away in their incomprehensible languages. None of them could be bothered to learn a word of proper German.

He was chilled by the time he turned through big gates and into an entranceway. Like so many of the buildings in this preposterous town, the club looked like a palace, a heavy Baroque building writhing with nymphs and naiads, its portals supported by a quartet of Herculean pillars. The doorman signalled to the door porters so that he was admitted immediately to the brightly lit lobby. It was normally crowded at this time of evening, but tonight it was strangely quiet.

'Good evening, Herr Baron.'

Winter grunted. That was another thing he hated about Vienna: everyone had to have a title, and if, like Winter, a man had no title, the servants would invent one for him. While one servant took his cane and his silk hat, another slipped his overcoat from his shoulders.

Without hat and overcoat, it was revealed that Harald Winter had not yet changed for dinner. He wore a dark frock coat with light-grey trousers, a high stiff collar and a slim bow-tie. His pale

face was wide with a pointed chin, so that he looked rather satanic, an effect emphasized by his shiny black hair and centre parting.

'Winter! What a coincidence! I'm just off to see your wife now.' The speaker was Professor Doktor Franz Schneider, fifty years old, the best, or at least the richest and most successful, gynaecologist in Vienna. He was a small, white-faced man, plump in the way that babies are plump, his skin flawless and his eyes bright blue. Nervously he touched his white goatee beard before straightening his pince-nez. 'You heard, of course . . . Your wife: the first signs started an hour ago. I'm going to the hospital now. You'll come with me? My carriage is here, waiting.' He spoke hurriedly, his voice pitched higher than normal. He was always a little nervous with Harald Winter; there was no sign now of the much-feared professor who met his students' questions with dry and savage wit.

Winter's eyes went briefly to the door from which Professor Schneider had come. The bar. Professor Schneider flushed. Damn this arrogant swine Winter, he thought. He could make a man feel guilty without even saying a word. What business of Winter's was it that he'd had a mere half-bottle of champagne with his cold pheasant supper? It was Winter's wife whose pangs of labour had come on New Year's Eve, and so spoiled his chance of getting to the ball at anything like a decent time.

'I have a meeting,' said Winter.

'A meeting?' said Professor Schneider. Was it some sort of joke? On New Year's Eve, what man would be attending a meeting in a club emptied of almost everyone but servants? And how could a man concentrate his mind on business when his wife was about to give birth? He met Winter's eyes: there was no warmth there, no curiosity, no passion. Winter was said to be one of the shrewdest businessmen in Germany, but what use were his wealth and reputation when his soul was dead? 'Then I shall go along. I will send a message. Will you be here?'

Winter nodded almost imperceptibly. Only when Professor Schneider had departed did Winter go up the wide staircase to the mezzanine floor. Another member was there. Winter brightened. At last, a face he knew and liked.

'Foxy! I heard you were in this dreadful town.'

Erwin Fischer's red hair had long since gone grey – a great helmet of burnished steel – but his nickname remained. He was a short, slight, jovial man with dark eyes and sanguine complexion. His great-grandparents had been Jews from the Baltic city of Riga. His grandfather had changed the family name, and his father had converted to Roman Catholicism long before Erwin was born. Fischer was heir to a steel fortune, but at seventy-five his father was fit and well and – now forty-eight years old – Fuchs Fischer had expectations that remained no more than expectations. Erwin was a widower. He wasn't kept short of money, but he was easily bored, and money did not always assuage his boredom. His life had lately become a long, tedious round of social duties, big parties, and introductions to 'suitable marriage partners' who never proved quite suitable enough.

'You give Bubi Schneider a bad time, Harald. Is it wise? He has a lot of friends in this town.'

'He's a snivelling little parasite. I can't think why my wife consulted such a man.'

'He delivers the children of the most powerful men in the city. The wives confide in him, the children are taught to think of him as one of the family. Such a man wields influence.'

Winter smiled. 'Am I to beware of him?' he said icily.

'No, of course not. But he could cause you inconvenience. Is it worth it, when a smile and a handshake are all he really wants from you?'

'The wretch insisted that Veronica could not travel back to Berlin. My son will be born here. I don't want an Austrian son. You are a German, Foxy; you understand.'

'So it's to be a son. You've already decided that, have you?'

Winter smiled. 'Shall we crack a bottle of Burgundy?'

'You used to like Vienna, Harald. When you first bought the house here you were telling us all how much better it was than Berlin.'

'That was a long time ago. I was a different man then.'

'You'd discovered your wonderful wife in Berlin and Veronica here in Vienna. That's what you mean, isn't it.'

'Don't go too far, Foxy.'

The older man ignored the caution. He was close enough to Winter to risk such comments, and go even further. 'Surely you've taken into account the possibility that it was Veronica's idea to have the baby here.'

'Veronica?'

'Consider the facts, Harald. Veronica met you here when she was a student at the university. This is where she first learned about love and life and all the things she'd dreamed about when she was a little girl in America. She adores Vienna. No matter that you see it as a second-rate capital for a fifth-rate empire; for Veronica it's still the home of Strauss waltzes and parties where she meets dukes, duchesses, and princes of royal blood. No matter what you say, Harald, Kaiser Wilhelm's Berlin cannot match Vienna in the party season. Would you really be surprised to find that she had contrived to have the second child here?'

'I hope you haven't . . .'

'No, I haven't spoken with her, of course I haven't. I'm simply telling you to ease the reins on Bubi Schneider until you're quite sure it's all his fault.'

Winter stepped away and leaned over the gilt balcony. Resting his hand upon a cherub, he signalled to a club servant on the floor below. 'Send a bottle of the best Burgundy up to us. And three glasses.'

They went to a long, mirrored room, the chandeliers blazing from a thousand reflections. A fire was burning at the far end of the room. The open fireplace was a daring innovation for Vienna, a city warmed by stoves, but the committee had copied the room from a gentlemen's club in London.

Over the fireplace there was a huge painting of the monarch who combined the roles of emperor of Austria and king of Hungary and insisted upon being addressed as 'His Apostolic Majesty, our most gracious Emperor and Lord, Franz Joseph I'. The room was otherwise empty. Winter chose a table near the fire and sat down. Fischer stood with his hands in his pockets and stared out of the window. Winter followed his gaze. Across the dark street a wooden stand had been erected for a political meeting held that morning. Now no one was there except two uniformed policemen,

who stood amongst the torn slogans and broken chairs as if such impedimenta did not exist for them.

'I've never understood women,' said Winter finally.

'You've always understood women only too well,' said Fischer, still looking out of the window. 'It's Americans you don't understand. It's because Veronica is an American that your marriage is sometimes difficult.'

'You told me at the time, Foxy. I should have listened.'

'No European man in his right senses marries an American girl. You've been lucky with Veronica: she doesn't fuss too much about your other women or try to stop you drinking or going to those parties at Madame Reiner's mansion. For an American woman she's very understanding.' There was a note of humour in Fischer's voice, and now he turned his head to see how Winter was taking it. Noticing this, Winter permitted himself the ghost of a smile.

A waiter entered and took his time showing Winter the label and then pouring two glasses of wine with fastidious care.

Fischer sipped his wine, still looking down at the street. The plain speaking had divided the two men, so that now they were isolated in their thoughts. 'The wine steward found you something good, Harald,' said Fischer appreciatively, pursing his lips and then tasting a little more.

'I have my own bin,' said Winter. 'I no longer drink from the club's cellar.'

'How sensible.'

Winter made no reply. He drank the wine in silence. That was the difference between them. Fischer, the rich man's son, took everything for granted and left everything to chance. Harald Winter, self-made tycoon, trusted no one and left nothing to chance.

'I was here this morning,' said Fischer. He motioned down towards the street where the political demonstration had been held. 'Karl Lueger spoke. After he'd stepped down there was fighting. The police couldn't handle it; they brought in the cavalry to clear the street.'

'Lueger is a rogue,' said Winter quietly and without anger.

'He's the mayor.'

'The Emperor should never have ratified the appointment.'

'He blocked it over and over again. Finally he had to do as the voters wanted.'

'Voters? Riffraff. Look at the slogans down there – "Save the small businessman"; "Bring the family back into church"; "Down with Jewish big business" – the Christian Socials just pander to the worst prejudice, fears, and bitter jealousy. "Handsome Karl" is all things to all men. For those who want socialism he's a socialist; for churchgoers he's a man of piety; for anyone who wants to hang the Jews, or hound Hungarians back across the border, his party is the one to vote for. What a rascal.'

'You're a man of the world; you must realize that hating foreigners is a part of the Austrian psyche. How many votes would you get for telling those people down there that the Jew is brainier than they are, or that these immigrant Czechs and Hungarians are more hard-working?'

'I don't like it, Foxy. Lueger is becoming as popular as the Emperor. Sometimes I have the feeling that Lueger could become the Emperor. Suppose all this hatred, all this *Judenhass*, was organized on a national scale. Suppose someone came along who had Lueger's cunning with the crowd, the Emperor's sway with the army, and a touch of Bismarck's instinct for *Geopolitik*. What then, Foxy? What would you say to that?'

'I'd say you need a holiday, Harald.' He tried to make a joke of it, but Winter did not join in his forced laugh. 'Who is the third glass for, Harald? Am I allowed to know that?' He knew it wasn't a woman: no women were ever permitted on the club premises.

'The mysterious Count Kupka sent a messenger to my home today.'

'Kupka? Is he a personal friend?' There was a strained note in Fischer's normally very relaxed voice.

'Personal friend? Not at all. I have met him, of course, at parties and even at Madame Reiner's mansion, but I know nothing about him except that he is said to have the ear of the Emperor and to be some sort of consultant to the Foreign Ministry.'

'You have a lot to learn about this city, Harald. Count Kupka is

the head of the Emperor's secret police. He is responsible to the Foreign Ministry, and the minister answers only to His Majesty. Kupka's signature on a piece of paper is all that's needed to make a man disappear forever.'

'You make him sound interesting, Foxy. He always seemed such a desiccated and boring little man.'

Fischer looked at his friend. Harald Winter was clearly undaunted by Kupka. It was Winter's bravery that Fischer had always found attractive. He admired Winter's audacious, if not to say reckless, business ventures, and his brazen love affairs, and his indifference to the prospect of making enemies like Professor Schneider. Sometimes Fischer was tempted to think that Harald Winter's courage was the only attractive aspect of this ruthless, selfish man. 'We've known each other a long time, Harald. If you're in trouble, perhaps I can help.'

'Trouble? With Kupka? I can't think how I could be.'

'It's New Year's Eve, Harald. At midnight a whole new century begins: the twentieth century. Everyone we know will be celebrating. There is a State Ball where half the crowned heads of Europe will be seen. Why would Count Kupka have to see you tonight of all nights?'

'It is something that perhaps you should stay and ask him yourself, Foxy. He is already twenty minutes late.'

Fischer finished his glass of wine in one gulp. 'I won't stay. The man gives me the shudders.' He put the glass on the table alongside the polished one that was waiting for Count Kupka. 'But let me remind you that tonight the streets will be empty except for some drunken revellers. For someone who was going to bundle a man into a carriage, or throw someone into the Danube, tonight would provide a fine opportunity.'

Winter smiled broadly. 'How disappointed you will be tomorrow, Foxy, when it is revealed that Count Kupka wanted no more than a chance to ride in my horseless carriage.'

In fact, Kupka didn't want a ride in Winter's horseless carriage; or if he did, he made no mention of this desire. Nor was Count Kupka

the desiccated and boring little man that Winter remembered. Kupka was a broad-shouldered man with large, awkward hands that did not seem to go with his pale, lined face and delicate eyebrows, that had been plucked so that they didn't meet across the top of his thin, pointed nose. Kupka's head was large: like a balloon upon which a child had scrawled his simple, expressionless features. And, like paint upon a balloon, his hair – shiny with Macassar oil – was brushed flat against his head.

Kupka was still wearing his overcoat when he strode into the lounge. His silk hat was tilted slightly to the back of his head. He put his cane down and removed his gloves, holding his cigar between his teeth. Winter didn't move. Kupka tossed the gloves down. Winter continued to sip his Burgundy, watching Kupka with the amused and indulgent interest that he would give to an entertainer coming onto the stage of a variety theatre. Winter could recall only two other men who smoked large cigars while walking about in hat and overcoat, and both of those were menials in his country house. It amused him that Kupka should behave in such a way.

'I am greatly indebted to you, Winter. It is most kind of you to consent to seeing me at such short notice.' Kupka flicked ash from his cigar. 'Especially tonight of all nights.'

'I knew it would be something that couldn't wait,' said Winter with an edge in his voice that he did nothing to modify.

'Yes, yes, yes,' said Kupka in a voice that suggested that his mind had already passed on to the next thought. 'Was that Erwin Fischer I passed on the stairs?'

'He was taking a glass of Burgundy with me. Perhaps you'd do the same, Count Kupka?'

'There is nothing that would give me greater pleasure, Herr Winter . . .' Before Winter could reach for the bottle and pour, Kupka held up his hand so that gold rings, some inset with diamonds, sparkled in the light of the chandeliers. 'But, alas, I have an evening of work before me.' Winter poured wine for himself and Kupka said, 'And I will be as brief as I can.'

'I would appreciate that,' said Winter. 'Won't you sit down?'

'Sometimes I need to stand. They say that, at the Opera, Mahler

stands up to conduct his orchestra. Stands up! Most extraordinary, and yet I sympathize with the fellow. Sometimes I can think better on my feet. Yes . . . your wife. I saw Professor Doktor Schneider earlier this evening. Women are such frail creatures, aren't they? The problem concerning which I must consult you comes about only because of my dear wife's maternal affection for a distant cousin.' Kupka paused a moment to study the burning end of his cigar. 'He is rather a foolish young man. But no more foolish than I was when young, and no more foolish than you were, Winter.'

'Was I foolish, Count Kupka?'

Kupka looked at him and raised his eyebrows to feign surprise. 'More than most, Herr Winter. Have you already forgotten those hotheads you mixed with when you were a student? The Silver Eagle Society you called yourselves, as I remember. And you a student of law, too!'

Despite doing everything he could to remain composed, Winter was visibly shaken. When he spoke his voice croaked: 'That was no more than a childish game.' He drank some wine to clear his throat.

'For you perhaps, but not for everyone who joined it. Suppose I told you that the anarchist who killed our Empress last year could also be connected to an organization calling itself the Silver Eagle?' Kupka glanced up at the portrait of the Emperor and then warmed his hands at the fire.

'If you told me that, then I would know that you are playing a childish game.'

'And if I persisted?' Kupka smiled. There was no perceptible cruelty in his face. He was enjoying this little exchange and seemed to expect Winter to enjoy it also. But for Winter the stakes were too high. No matter how unfounded such accusations might be, it would need only a few well-distributed rumours to damage Winter and his family forever.

'Then I would call you out,' said Winter with all the self-assurance he could muster.

Kupka laughed. 'A duel? Save that sort of nonsense for the Officer Corps. I am no more than an *Einjährig-Freiwilliger,* and one-year volunteers don't learn how to duel.' Kupka sat down opposite Winter

and carelessly tapped ash into the fireplace. 'Now that I see the label on that bottle of wine, perhaps I could change my mind about a glass of it.'

Winter poured a glass. The work of the picador was done, the temper and the weaknesses of the bull discovered: now Kupka the matador would enter the ring.

'About this lad,' said Kupka after sipping the wine. 'He borrowed money from your bank.'

'Hardly my bank,' said Winter. He'd come prepared. Kupka's message had mentioned this client of the bank.

'The one in which some unnamed discreet person holds eighteen thousand nominee shares. The one in which you have an office and a secretary. The one in which the manager refers all transactions above a prescribed amount to you for approval. My wife's distant cousin borrowed money from that bank.'

'You want details?'

'I have all the necessary details, thank you. I simply want to give you the money.'

'Buy the debt?' said Winter.

'Plus an appropriate fee to the bank.'

'The name was Petzval; he said his family was from Budapest. The manager was doubtful, but he seemed a sensible lad.'

'Petzval, yes. My wife worries about him.'

'A distant cousin, you say?'

'My wife's family is a labyrinth of distant cousins and so on. A fine wine, Winter. I have not seen it on the wine list,' said Kupka, and poured himself some more. 'She worries about the debt.'

'What does she think I will do to him?' Winter asked.

'Not you, my dear friend. My goodness, no. She worries that he will get behind in his payments to you and go to a moneylender. You know what that can lead to. I see so many lives ruined,' said Kupka without any sign of being downcast. 'He wants to write a book. His family have nothing. Believe me, Winter, it's a debt you will be better without.'

'I will inquire into the facts,' said Winter.

'The payment can be made in any way that you wish it – paper

money, gold, a certified cheque – and anywhere – New York, London, Paris, or Berlin.'

'Your concern about this young man touches me,' said Winter.

'I am a sentimental fool, Winter, and now you have discovered the truth of it.' Ash went down Kupka's overcoat, but he didn't notice.

A club servant entered the lounge looking for Winter. 'There is a telephone call for you, Herr Baron.'

'It will be the hospital,' explained Winter.

'I have detained you far too long,' said Kupka. He stood up to say goodbye. 'Please give my compliments and sincere apologies to your beautiful wife.' He didn't press for an answer; men such as Kupka know that their requests are never refused.

'Auf Wiedersehen, Count Kupka.'

'Auf Wiedersehen, my dear Winter.' He clicked his heels and bowed.

Winter followed the servant downstairs. The club had only recently been connected to the telephone. Even now it was not possible for a caller to speak to the staff at the entrance desk; the facility whereby wives could inquire about their husbands' presence in the club would not be a welcome innovation. The instrument was enshrined upon a large mahogany table in a room on the first floor. A servant was permanently assigned to answer it.

'Winter here.' He wanted to show both the caller and the servant that telephones were not such rarities in Berlin.

'Winter? Professor Schneider speaking. A false alarm. These things happen. It could be two or three days.'

'How is my wife?'

'Fit and well. I have given her a mild sedative, and she will be asleep by now. I suggest you get a good night's sleep and see her tomorrow morning.'

'I think I will do that.'

'Your baby will be born in 1900: a child of the new century.'

'The new century will not begin until 1901. I would have thought an educated man like you would know that,' said Winter, and replaced the earpiece on the hook. Already the bells were ringing. Every

church in the city was showing the skills of its bellringers to welcome the new year. But in the kitchen a dog was whining loudly: the bells were hurting its ears. Dogs hate bells. So did Harald Winter.

'What good jokes you make, *Liebchen*'

Martha Somló was beautiful. This petite, dark-haired, large-eyed daughter of a Jewish tailor was one of twelve children. The family had originally come from a small town in Rumania. Martha grew up in Hungary, but she arrived in Vienna alone, a sixteen-year-old orphan. She was working in a cigar shop when she first met Harald Winter. Within three weeks of that meeting he had installed her in an apartment near the Votivkirche. Now she was eighteen. She had a much grander place to live. She also had a lady's maid, a hairdresser who came in every day, an account with a court dressmaker, some fine jewellery, and a small dog. But Harald Winter's visits to Vienna were not frequent enough for her, and when he wasn't with her she was dispirited and lonely.

Harald Winter's mistress was no more than a small part of his curious and complex relationship with Vienna. He'd spent a lot of time in finding this wonderful apartment with its view of the Opera House and the Wiener Boulevard. From here she could watch 'Sirk-Ecke', a sacred meeting place for Vienna's high society, who paraded up and down in their finest clothes every day except Sunday.

Once found, the apartment had been transformed into a showplace for Vienna's newly formed 'Secession' art movement. A Klimt frieze went completely round the otherwise shiny black dining room, where the table and chairs were by Josef Hoffmann. The study, from writing desk to notepaper, was completely the work of Koloman Moser. Everywhere in the apartment there were examples of Art Nouveau. Martha Somló felt, with reason, that she was little more than a curator for an art museum. She hated everything about the apartment that Harald Winter had so painstakingly put together, but she was too astute to say so. Winter's American wife, Veronica, had made no secret of her dislike for modern art, and the

end result of that was the apartment in Kärntnerstrasse and Martha. If Martha made her true feelings known, there was little chance that Winter would get rid of his treasures; he'd get rid of her. It would be easier, quicker, and cheaper.

'I love you, Harry,' she said suddenly and without premeditation.

'What was that?' said Winter. He was in his red silk dressing gown, the one she'd chosen for him for his thirtieth birthday. It had been a wonderful day of shopping, followed by an extravagant party at Sachers. That was six months ago: now they hardly ever went anywhere together. Since his wife had become pregnant with this second child, he'd become more distant, and she worried that he was trying to find some way to tell her he didn't want her any more. 'I think I must be getting deaf; my father went deaf when very young.'

She went to him and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. 'Harry, you fool. You're not going deaf; you're the strongest, fittest man I ever met. I say I love you, Harry. Smile, Harry. Say you love me.'

'Of course I love you, Martha.' He kissed her.

'A proper kiss, Harry. A kiss like the one you gave me when you arrived this afternoon hungering for me.'

'Dear Martha, you're a sweet girl.'

'What's wrong, Harry? You're not yourself today. Is it something to do with the bank?'

He shook his head. Things were not too good at the bank, but he never discussed his business troubles with Martha and he never would. Women and business didn't mix. Winter wasn't entirely sure about women being admitted to universities. On that account he sometimes felt more at ease with women like Martha than with his own wife. Martha understood him so well.

'Do you know who Count Kupka is?'

'My God, Harry. You're not in trouble with the secret police? Oh, dear God, no.'

'He wants a favour from me, that's all.'

She sat down and pulled him so that he sat with her on the sofa. He told her something about the conversation he'd had with Kupka.

'And you found out what he wanted to know?' She stroked his face tenderly. Then she looked at the leather document case that Winter had brought with him to the apartment. He rarely carried anything. Many times he'd told her that carrying cases, boxes, parcels, or packages was a task only for servants.

'It's not so easy,' said Winter. She could see he wanted to talk about it. 'My manager asked for collateral. This fellow owns land on the Obersalzberg. All the paperwork has been done to make the land the property of the bank if he defaults on the loan. I have now changed matters so that the loan has come from my personal account. Luckily the land deed is already made over to a nominee, so I get it in case of a default.'

'Salzburg, Harry? Austria?'

'Not Salzburg; the Obersalzberg. It's a mountain a thousand metres high. It's not in Austria: it's just across the border, in Bavaria.'

'In Germany?'

'And that's going to be another problem. I'm not sure it's possible to turn everything over to Kupka.'

'He'll say you're not cooperating,' she said. She had heard of Kupka. What Jew in the whole of the empire had not heard of him. She was sick with fear at the mention of his name.

'Kupka is a lawyer,' said Winter confidently.

'That's like saying Attila the Hun was a cavalry officer,' she said.

Winter laughed loudly and embraced her. 'What good jokes you make, *Liebchen*. I'm tempted to tell Kupka that one.'

'Don't, Harry.'

'You mustn't be frightened, my darling. I am simply a means to an end in this matter.'

'Just do what he says, Harry.'

'But not yet, I think. Tonight I'm meeting this mysterious fellow Petzval at the Café Stoessl in Gumpendorfer Strasse. Damn him – I'll get from him everything that Kupka won't tell me.'

'Remember he's a relative of Kupka's, and close to his wife.'

'Rubbish,' said Winter. 'That was just a smokescreen to hide the true facts of the matter.'

'Send someone,' she suggested.

He smiled and went to the leather case he'd brought with him. From it he brought a small revolver and a soft leather holster with a strap that would fit under his coat.

'If Kupka has his men there, a pistol won't save you.'

'Little worrier,' he said affectionately and kissed her.

She held him very tight. How desperately she envied his wife; the children would always bind Harry to her in a way that nothing else could. If only Martha could give him a wonderful son.

1900

A plot of land on the Obersalzberg

It was dark by the time that Winter pushed through the revolving door of the Café Stoessl in the Gumpendorfer Strasse and looked around. The café was long and gloomy, lit by gaslights that hissed and popped. There were tables with pink marble tops and bent-wood chairs and plants everywhere. He recognized some of the customers but gave no sign of it. They were not people that Winter would acknowledge: the usual crowd of would-be intellectuals, has-been politicians, and self-styled writers.

Petzval was waiting. 'A small Jew with a black beard,' the bank manager had told Winter. Well, that was easy. Petzval sat at the very end table facing towards the door. He was a white-faced man in his late twenties, with bushy black hair and a full beard so that his small eyes and pointed nose were all you noticed of his face.

Winter put his hat on a seat and then sat down opposite the man and ordered a coffee, and brandy to go with it. Then he apologized vaguely for being late.

'I said you'd go back on your word,' said Petzval.

It wasn't a good beginning, and Winter was about to deny any such intention, but then he realized that such an opening would leave him little or no room for discussion. 'Why did you think that?' asked Winter.

'Count Kupka, is it?' Petzval leaned forward and rested an elbow on the table.

Winter hesitated but, after looking at Petzval, decided to admit

it. Kupka had claimed Petzval as a relative and had not asked Winter to keep his name out of it. 'Yes, Count Kupka.'

'He wants to buy my debt?'

'Something along those lines.'

Petzval pushed his empty coffee cup aside so that he could lean both arms on the table. His face was close to Winter, closer than Winter welcomed, but he didn't shrink away. 'Secret police,' said Petzval. 'His spies are everywhere.'

'Are you related to Kupka?' said Winter.

'Related? To Kupka?' Petzval made a short throaty noise that might have been a laugh. 'I'm a Jew, Herr Winter. Didn't you know that when you made the loan to me?'

'It would have made no difference one way or the other,' said Winter. The coffee came, and Winter was glad of the chance to sit back, away from the man's glaring eyes. This was a man at the end of his tether, a desperate man. He studied the angry Jew as he sipped his coffee. Petzval was a ridiculous fellow with his frayed shirt and gravy-spattered suit, but Winter found him rather frightening. How could that be, when everyone knew that Winter wasn't frightened of any living soul?

'I'm a good risk, am I?'

'The manager obviously thought so. What do you do, Herr Petzval?'

'For a living, you mean? I'm a scientist. Ever heard of Ernst Mach?'

He waited. It was not a rhetorical question; he wanted to know whether Winter was intelligent enough to understand.

'Of course: Professor Mach is a physicist at the university.'

'Mach is the greatest scientific genius of modern times.' He paused to let that judgement sink in before adding, 'A couple of years ago he suffered a stroke, and I've been privileged to work for him while pursuing my own special subject.'

'And what is your subject?' said Winter, realizing that this inquiry, or something like it, was expected of him.

'Airflow. Mach did the most important early work in Prague before I was born. He pioneered techniques of photographing bullets in

flight. It was Mach who discovered that a bullet exceeding the speed of sound creates two shock waves: a headwave of compressed gas at the front and a tail wave created by a vacuum at the back. My work has merit, but it's only a continuation of what poor old Professor Mach has abandoned.'

'Poor old Professor Mach?'

'He's too sick. He'll have to resign from the university; his right side is paralysed. It's terrible to see him trying to carry on.'

'And what will you do when he resigns?' He sipped some of the bitter black coffee flavoured with fig in the Viennese style. Then he tasted the brandy: it was rough but he needed it.

Petzval stared at Winter pityingly. 'You don't understand any of it, do you?'

'I'm not sure I do,' admitted Winter. He dabbed brandy from his lips with the silk handkerchief he kept in his top pocket, and looked round. There was a noisy group playing cards in the corner, and two or three strange-looking fellows bent over their work. Perhaps they were poets or novelists, but perhaps they were Kupka's men keeping an eye on things.

'Don't you realize the difference between a high-velocity artillery piece and a low-muzzle-velocity gun?'

Winter almost laughed. He'd met evangelists in his time, but this man was the very limit. He talked about the airflow over missiles as other men spoke of the second coming of our Lord. 'I don't think I do,' admitted Winter good-naturedly.

'Well, Krupps know the difference,' said Petzval. 'They have offered me a job at nearly three times the salary that Mach gets from his professorship.'

'Have they?' said Winter. He was impressed, and his voice revealed it.

Petzval smiled. 'Now you're beginning to see what it's all about, are you? Krupp are determined to build the finest guns in the world. And they'll do it.'

Winter nodded soberly and remembered how the Austrian army had been defeated not so long ago by Prussians using better guns. It was natural that the Austrians would want to know what

the German armament companies were doing. 'Count Kupka is interested in your job at Krupp? Is that it?'

'He wants me to report everything that's happening in their research department. By taking over the debt he can put pressure on me. That's why I want the bank to fulfil its obligations.' Petzval kept his voice to a whisper, but his eyes and his flailing hands demonstrated his passion.

'It's not so easy as that.'

'You have the land on the Obersalzberg. It's valuable.'

'Even so, it might be better to do things the way Count Kupka wants them done.'

'You, a German, tell me that?'

Warning bells rang in Winter's head. Was Petzval an agent provocateur, sent to test Winter's attitude towards Austria? It seemed possible. Wouldn't such military espionage against Krupp be arranged by Colonel Redl, the chief of Austria's army intelligence? Or was Count Kupka just trying to steal a march on his military rival? 'It might be best for everyone,' said Winter.

'Not best for me,' said Petzval. 'I'm not suited to spying. I leave that sort of dirty work to the people who like it. Can you imagine what it would be like to spend every minute of the day and night worrying that you'd be discovered?'

'You could make sure you're not discovered,' said Winter.

'How could I?' said Petzval, dismissing the idea immediately. 'They'd want me to photograph the prototypes and steal blueprints and sketch breech mechanisms and so on.' He'd obviously thought about it a lot, or was this all part of Count Kupka's schooling?

'It would be for your country,' said Winter, now convinced that it was an attempt to subvert him.

'Have you ever been in an armaments factory?' said Petzval. 'Or, more to the point, have you ever gone out through the gate? At some of those places they search every third worker. Now and again they search everyone. Police raid the homes of employees. I'd be working in the research laboratory and I am a Jew. What chance would I have of remaining undetected?'

Winter glanced round the café. Despite their lowered voices,

this fellow's emotional speeches would soon be attracting attention to them. 'I'm sorry, Herr Petzval,' Winter said, 'but I can't help you further.'

'You'll pass it to him?' Was it fear or contempt that Winter saw in those dark, deep-set eyes?

'You read the agreement and signed it. There was nothing to say it couldn't be passed on to a third party.'

'A third party? The secret police?'

'Raise money from another source,' said Winter. It seemed such a lot of fuss about nothing.

'I'm deeply in debt, Herr Winter. I beg you to take the land in full payment for the debt.'

'I couldn't agree to that. Your prospects . . .'

'What prospects do I have if Kupka prevents me from leaving the country?'

'If Kupka prevents you from leaving Austria . . .' For a moment Winter was puzzled. Then he realized what the proposal really was. 'Do you mean that you came here hoping that I would refuse to do as Kupka demands but not tell him so until you were across the border?'

'You're a German.'

'So you keep reminding me,' said Winter. He gulped the rest of his brandy. 'But I have business interests here, and a house. How can you expect me to defy the authorities for a stranger?'

'For a client,' said Petzval. 'I'm not a stranger; I'm a client of the bank.'

'But you ask too much,' said Winter. He got up, reached for his hat, and tossed some coins onto the table. It was more than enough to pay for his coffee and the brandy, as well as any coffees and brandies that Petzval might have consumed while waiting for him. *'Auf Wiedersehen*, Herr Petzval.' As Winter walked down the café he heard some sort of commotion, but he didn't turn until he heard Petzval shouting.

Petzval was standing and shaking his fist. Then he grabbed the coins and with all his might threw them at Winter. At least two of the coins hit the glass of the revolving doors. Winter flinched.

There was a demon in this fellow Petzval. Two waiters grabbed him, but still he struggled to free himself, so that a third waiter had to clamp his arms around Petzval's neck.

'Damn you, Winter! And damn your money! I curse you, do you hear me?'

Winter was trembling as he pushed his way through the revolving doors and out into the darkness of Gumpendorfer Strasse. Of course the fellow was quite mad, but his curses were still ringing in Winter's head as he climbed into his horseless carriage. He couldn't help thinking it was a bad omen: especially with his second child about to be born at almost any moment.

Winter woke up and wondered where he was for a moment before remembering that he was in his Vienna residence. It seemed so different without his wife. Usually a good night's sleep was all that Harald Winter needed to recuperate from the stresses and anxieties of his business. But next morning, sitting in his dressing room with a hot towel wrapped across his face, he had still not forgotten his encounter with the violent young man.

Winter removed the hot towel and tossed it onto the marble washstand. 'Will there be a war, Hauser?' Winter asked while his valet poured hot water from the big floral-patterned jug and made a lather in the shaving cup.

The valet lathered Winter's chin. He was an intelligent young man from a village near Rostock. He treasured his job as Winter's valet; he was the only member of Winter's domestic household who unfailingly travelled with his master. 'Between these Austrians and the Serbs, sir? Yes, people say it's sure to come.' The razors, combs and scissors were sterilized, polished bright, and laid out precisely on a starched white cloth. Everything was always arranged in this same pattern.

'Soon, Hauser?'

The valet stopped the razor. He was too bright to imagine that his master was consulting him about the likelihood of war. Such predictions were better left to the generals and the politicians, the sort of men whom Winter rubbed shoulders with every day. Hauser

was being asked what people said in the streets. The sort of people who lived in the huge tenement blocks near the factories; workers who lived ten to a room, with all of them paying a quarter of their wages to the landlords. Men who worked twelve- and even fourteen-hour days, with only Sunday afternoons for themselves. What were these men saying? What were they saying in Berlin, in Vienna, Budapest and London? Winter always wanted to know such things and Hauser made it his job to have answers. 'These Austrians like no one, sir. They are jealous of us Germans, hate the Czechs and despise the Hungarians. But the Serbs are the ones they want to fight. Sooner or later everyone says they'll finish them off. And Serbia is not much; even the Austrians should be able to beat them.' He spoke of them all with condescension, as a German has always spoken of the Balkan people and the Austrians, who seemed little different.

Winter smiled to himself. Hauser had all the pride – arrogance was perhaps the better word – of the Prussian. That's why he liked him. Hauser steadied his master's chin with finger and thumb as he drew the sharpened razor through the lather and left pink, shiny skin. As Hauser wiped the long razor on a cloth draped over his arm, Winter said, 'The terrorists and the anarchists with their guns and bombs . . . murdering innocent people here in the streets. They are all from Serbia. Trained and encouraged by the Serbs. Wouldn't you be angry, Hauser?'

'But I wouldn't join the army and march off to war, Herr Winter.' He lifted Winter's chin so that he could bring the razor up the throat. 'There are lots of people I don't like, but I can see no point in marching off to fight a war about it.'

'You're a sensible fellow, Hauser.'

'Yes, Herr Winter,' said Hauser, twisting Winter's head as he continued his task.

'We are fortunate to live in an age when wars are a thing of the past, Hauser. No need for you to have fears of riding off to war.'

'I hope not,' said Hauser, who had no fears about *riding* off to war: only gentlemen like Herr Winter went off to war on chargers; Hauser's class marched.

'Battles, yes,' said Winter. 'The Kaiser will have to teach the Chinese a lesson, the English send men into the Sudan or to fight the Boers – but these are just police actions, Hauser. For us Europeans, war is a thing of the past.'

Hauser turned his master's head a little more and started to trim the sideburns. He cut them a fraction shorter each time. Side whiskers were fast going out of fashion and, like most domestic servants, Hauser was an unrepentant snob about fashions. He always left Winter's moustache to the end. Trimming the blunt-ended moustache was the most difficult part. He kept another razor solely for that job. 'So the Austrians won't fight the Serbs?' said Hauser as if Winter's decision would be final.

'The Balkans are not Europe,' said Winter, turning to face the wardrobe so that Hauser could trim the other sideburn. 'Those fellows down in that part of the world are quite mad. They'll never stop fighting each other. But I'm talking about real Europeans, who have finally learned how to live together, and settle differences by negotiation: Germans, Austrians, Englishmen . . . even the French have at last reconciled themselves to the fact that Alsace and Lorraine are German. That's why I say you'll never ride off to war, Hauser.'

'No, Herr Winter, I'm sure I won't.'

There was a light tap at the door. Hauser lifted his razor away in case his master should make a sudden move. 'Come in,' said Winter.

It was one of the chambermaids; little more than fourteen years old, she had a Carinthian accent so strong that Winter had her repeat her message three times before he was sure he had it right. It was the senior manager from the Vienna branch of the bank. What could have got into the man, that he should come disturbing Winter at nine-thirty in the morning at his residence? And yet he was usually a sensible and restrained old man. 'Very urgent,' said the little chambermaid. Her face was bright red with excitement at such unusual goings-on. She'd seen the master being shaved; that would be something to brag about to the parlourmaid. 'Very, very urgent.'

'That's quite enough, girl,' said Hauser. 'Your master understands.'

'Show him up,' said Winter.

Hauser coughed. Show him up to see Winter when he was not even shaved? And this was the tricky part: shaving round the master's moustache. Hauser didn't want to be doing that with an audience, and there was the chance that Winter would start talking; then anything could happen. Suppose his hand slipped and he made a cut? Then what would happen to his good job?

'I'm deeply sorry to disturb you, Herr Winter,' said the senior manager as he was shown into the room. This time the butler was with the visitor, instead of that scatterbrained little chambermaid. Hauser noticed that the butler's fingers were marked with silver polish. That job should have been completed last night. These damned Austrians, thought Hauser, are all slackers. He wondered if Winter would notice.

'It's this business with Petzval,' said the senior manager. He had big old-fashioned muttonchop whiskers in the style of the Emperor.

Winter nodded and tried not to show any particular concern.

'I wouldn't have disturbed you, but the messenger from Count Kupka said you should be told immediately . . . I felt I should come myself.'

'Yes, but what *is* it?' said Winter testily.

'He died by his own hand,' said the senior manager. 'The messenger emphasized that there is no question of foul play. He made that point most strongly.'

'Suicide. Well, I'm damned,' said Winter. 'Did he leave a note?' He held his breath.

'A note, Herr Direktor?' said the old man anxiously, wondering if Winter was referring to a promissory note or some other such valuable or negotiable certificate. And then, understanding what Winter meant, he said brightly, 'Oh, a suicide note. No, Herr Direktor, nothing of that sort.'

Winter tried not to show his relief. 'You did right,' he said. He felt sick, and his face was flushed. He knew only too well what could happen when things like this went wrong.

'Thank you, Herr Direktor. Of course I went immediately to the records to make sure the bank's funds were not in jeopardy.'

'And what is the position?' asked Winter, wiping the last traces of soap from his face while looking in the mirror. He was relieved to notice that he looked as cool and calm as he always contrived when with his employees.

'It is my understanding, Herr Winter, that, while the death of the debtor irrevocably puts the surety wholly into the possession of the nominated beneficiary, the bank's obligation ends on the death of the other party.'

'And how much of the loan has been paid to Petzval so far?'

'He had a twenty-crown gold piece on signature, Herr Direktor. As is the usual custom at the bank.'

'So this small tract of land on the Obersalzberg has cost us no more than twenty crowns?'

'The money was to be paid in ten instalments . . .'

'Never mind that,' said Winter. 'There was no message from Count Kupka?'

'He said I was to give you his congratulations, Herr Winter. I imagine that . . .'

'The baby,' supplied Winter, although he knew that Count Kupka did not send congratulations about the birth of babies. Count Kupka obviously knew everything that happened in Vienna. Sometimes perhaps he knew before it happened.

'My darling!' said Winter. 'Forgive me for not being here earlier.' He kissed her and glanced round the room. He hated hospitals, with their pungent smells of ether and disinfectant. Insisting that his wife go into a hospital instead of having the baby at home was another grudge he had against Professor Schneider. 'It's been the most difficult of days for me,' said Winter.

'Harry! You poor darling!' his wife cooed mockingly. She looked lovely when she laughed. Even in hospital, with her long fair hair on her shoulders instead of arranged high upon her head the way her personal maid did it, she was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Her determined jaw and high cheekbones and her tall elegance seemed so American to him that he never got used to the idea that this energetic creature was his wife.

Winter flushed. 'I'm sorry, darling. I didn't mean that. Obviously you've had a terrible time, too.'

She smiled at his discomfort. It was not easy to disconcert him. 'I have not had a terrible time, Harry. I've had a son.'

Winter glanced at the baby in the cot. 'I wanted to be here sooner, but there was a complication at the bank this morning. The senior manager came to talk to me while I was shaving. At home, while I was shaving! One of our clients died . . . It was suicide.'

'Oh, how terrible, Harry. Is it someone I know?'

'A Jew named Petzval. To tell you the truth, I think the fellow was up to no good. The secret police have been interested in him for some time. He might have been a member of one of these terrorist groups.'

'How do you come to have dealings with such people, darling?' She lolled her head back and was glaze-eyed. It was, of course, the after effects of the anaesthetic. The nurse had said she was still weak.

'It was one of the junior managers who dealt with him. Some of them have no judgement at all.'

'Suicide. Poor tormented soul,' said Veronica.

Winter watched her cross herself and then glance at the carved crucifix above her bed. He hoped that she was not about to become a Roman Catholic or some sort of religious fanatic. Winter had quite enough to contend with already without a wife going to Mass at the crack of dawn each day. He dismissed the idea. Veronica was not the type; if Veronica became a convert, she was more likely to be a convert to Freud and his absurd psychology. She'd already been to some of Freud's lectures and refused to laugh at Winter's jokes about the man's ideas. 'It's a good thing you're not running the bank, my dearest Veronica. You'd be giving the cash away to any bare-arsed beggar who arrived with a hard-luck story.' He moved a basket of flowers from a chair – the room was filled with flowers – and noticed from the card that the employees of the Berlin bank had sent them. He sat down.

'I want to call him Paul,' said his wife. 'Do you hate the name Paul?'

'No, it's a fine name. But I thought you'd want to name him after your father.'

'Peter and Paul, darling. Don't you see how lovely it will be to have two sons named Peter and Paul?'

'Have you been saving up this idea ever since our son Peter Harald was born, more than three years ago?'

She smiled and stretched her long legs down in the bedclothes. She'd chosen two names her American parents would find equally acceptable. She wondered if Harry realized that. He probably did; Harry Winter was very sharp when it came to people and their motives.

'All that time?' said Winter. He laughed. 'What a mad Yankee wife I have.'

'You are pleased, Harry? Say you're pleased.'

'Of course I am.'

'Then go and look at him, Harry. Pick him up and bring him to me.'

Winter looked over his shoulder hoping that the nun would return, but there was no sign of her. She was obviously giving them a chance for privacy. Awkwardly he picked up his newly born son. 'Hello, Paul,' he said. 'I have a present for you, child of the new century.' He was a pudgy little fellow with a screwed-up face that seemed to scowl. But the baby's eyes were Veronica's: smoky-grey eyes that never did reveal her innermost thoughts. Winter put the baby back into the cot.

'Do you really, Harry? How wonderful you are. What is it, darling? Let me see what it is.'

'It's a plot of land,' said Winter. 'A small piece of hillside on the Obersalzberg.'

'A plot of land? Where's Obersalzberg?'

'Bavaria, Germany, the very south. It's the sort of place where a man could build himself a comfortable shooting lodge. A place a man could go when he wants to get away from the world.'

'A plot of land on the Obersalzberg. Harry! You still surprise me, after all this time we've been married.' Through the haze of the ether that was still making her mind reel, she wondered if that

represented some deep-felt desire of her husband. Did he yearn to go somewhere and get away from the world? He already had that beastly girl Martha to go to. What else did he want?

'What's wrong?' said Winter.

'Nothing, darling. But it's a strange present to give a newborn baby, isn't it?'

'It's good land: a fine place with a view of the mountains. A place for a man to think his own thoughts and be his own master.' He looked at the baby. It was happier now and managed a smile.

1906

'The sort of thing they're told at school'

'You have two delightful little boys, Veronica,' said her father. He watched through the window of the morning room as the solemn ten-year-old Peter pushed his radiantly joyful little blond brother across the lawn on a toy horse. The children were in the private gardens of a big house in London's Belgravia. It was a glorious summer's day, and London was at its shining best. An old gardener scythed the bright-green grass to make scallop patterns across the lawn. The scent of newly cut grass hung heavily in the still air and made little Pauli's eyes red and weepy. Cyrus sniffed contentedly. Their English friends urged them to come to London in 'the season', but the Rensselaers preferred to cross the Atlantic at this time of year, when the seas were calmer. 'No matter what I'm inclined to say about that rascally husband of yours, at least he's given you two fine boys.'

'Now, now, Papa,' said Veronica mildly, 'let's not go through all that again.' She was wearing a long 'tea gown' of blue chiffon with net over darker-blue satin. Such afternoon gowns gave her a few hours' escape from the tight corsets that fashion forced her into for most of the day. It was a lovely, loose, flouncy creation that made her feel young and beautiful and able even to take on her parents. She pulled the trailing hem of it close and admired it.

'She's given Harry two fine boys,' Mrs Rensselaer scoffed. 'Isn't it just like a man to put it the wrong way around? Who endured that dreadful hospital in Vienna, when there was a bedroom and our own doctor waiting for her in New York City?' They were getting at her again, but she was used to it by now. She noticed how

much stronger her mother's high-pitched Yankee twang sounded compared with her father's softly accented low voice. She noticed all the accents much more now that her life was spent amongst Germans. She wondered if her spoken English had now acquired some sort of German edge to it. Her parents had never mentioned it, and she knew better than to ask them.

'I couldn't have come home to have the baby, Mother. You know I couldn't.' She suppressed a sigh. For six years they'd nursed this resentment, and still it persisted.

Her father watched the children cross the road hand in hand with their nanny and heard the front door as they came in time to have a wash before tea. He said, 'I travel across the Atlantic regularly, Veronica, and your mother usually accompanies me. It's ridiculous for you to go on pretending that you can't come home for a visit when we come here to London every year without fail.' He thrust his hands into his pockets. 'By golly, when I first came to Europe, I sailed on a four-masted barque, now your mother and I sleep in state rooms with running water, and eat dinners that wouldn't disgrace the Ritz.'

Cyrus G. Rensselaer was a distinguished-looking man in his mid-fifties. He had a shock of black hair combed straight back, pale-blue eyes, and a large moustache. He made no concessions to the warm weather: he wore a black barathea morning suit with a fancy brocaded waistcoat, and a loose tie with a silver pin through the knot. Yet there was a certain unconventional look to him – his hair was longer than was fashionable – so that sometimes, on the steamship coming over, fellow passengers thought he might be a famous musician or a successful painter. This always pleased Cyrus Rensselaer because he often said that he would have become a painter had his father not thrashed him every time he wanted to stop studying engineering.

'I know, Father. You've told me all that in your letters. But Harry is a German; the boys are German. I think of Germany as my home now.' The difficulty was that her parents spoke no foreign languages, and their one visit to Berlin for the wedding in 1892 seemed to have deterred both of them from ever going to the continent of Europe again.

'You were able to go to Vienna and have the baby, darling,' explained her mother. 'Papa feels that coming back to New York wouldn't have been all that much more of a strain.'

'The baby was early, Mother. We were in Vienna and the doctor said I shouldn't travel.' She looked at her parents; they were unconvinced. 'Harry was furious about it. He'd made all the arrangements in Berlin. Poor little Paul – Harry used to call him "the little Austrian dumpling" until I made him stop saying it.'

Her father pulled a gold hunter from his waistcoat pocket and looked at it. 'Didn't your Harry say he'd be back for tea?'

'He's lunching at the club.'

'He likes clubs,' said her father.

'It's some mining deal . . .' explained Veronica. 'Someone has discovered a cure for malaria. They think it's something to do with mosquitoes. Harry says that if it works it will really open up the darkest part of Central Africa.'

'It's not a woman, is it?' whispered her mother.

'No, it's not a woman, Mother.'

'How can you be so sure?' her mother asked.

'I'm sure, Mother. Harry's not so smart about women as he is about money.'

Mr Rensselaer did not like hearing Harald Winter praised, and he certainly didn't like to hear him praised about his investing and banking skills, at which he considered himself pre-eminent. 'I'm surprised your Harry isn't investing in flying machines,' he said sardonically.

Veronica looked up at him sharply. 'You underestimate Harry, Papa. You think he'll invest money into any crazy scheme put up to him. But Harry is clever with money; he would never put it into the hands of people like that.'

'I'm darned if I ever know what to make of your Harry,' said her father. 'He spends money on such toys as this Daimler Mercedes and then takes you down to a cabin on the Obersalzberg and makes you manage with only a couple of local servants. I didn't pay for your education so that you could wash dishes and sweep the house.'

'It's not a cabin, Papa, more like a hunting lodge. The land passed

to Harry because of a bad debt. He gave it to Pauli as a christening present. Now he's built the house there. I love going there. It's the only time I have Harry all to myself. And we take two maids from the Berlin house, as well as the cook, Harry's valet and the chauffeur.'

'It sounds like a lot of work for you, darling,' said her mother. 'And walking for five miles! We could hardly believe it when we read your letter. We couldn't picture you walking so far. Don't you get lonely?'

Veronica smiled. 'I have Harry and the children; how could I ever be lonely? And, anyway, we have plenty of neighbours.'

'What sort of neighbours? Peasants? Woodcutters?'

'No, Papa. Some fine families have houses there. It's become very fashionable; musicians and writers . . . some of them live there all year round.'

'It sounds like an odd kind of christening present. Harry should have sold it and put the money into some investments for your Pauli.'

'I want Pauli to have it, Papa. Last year the woodcarver in the village carved a big sign –"Haus Pauli" – that will be fixed over the gate. It's the most beautiful place in the whole world: meadows, pine trees, and mountains. Behind us there is the Hoher Göll and the Kehlstein mountain. From the window of the breakfast room we can see for miles, right across Berchtesgaden or into Austria.'

'It's southernmost Bavaria. I looked on the atlas. That's too far for us to travel,' said Rensselaer in a voice that precluded any further discussion.

The Scots nanny brought the boys in promptly at four. Their hands and faces were polished bright pink, and a brown circle of iodine had been painted on Paul's newly grazed arm. It was always blond Pauli who fell: he was the unlucky one. Or was he careless or clumsy – either way he was always cheery and smiling. Peter was quite different; he was dark, sober, and composed, a thoughtful little boy who'd never been babyish like his young brother. They kissed their mother and Granny and Grandpa dutifully and then, in response to the bellpull, the maids brought high tea, with the best china teacups and silver pots. And there was Cook's homemade

strawberry jam, which went onto the freshly cooked scones together with a spoonful of pale-yellow Cornish cream.

Tea was poured, plates distributed, cakes cut, and sugar spooned out. Throughout the hubbub of the afternoon tea, Rensselaer remained standing by the window; his teacup and saucer and a plate with scones and cream were on the table untouched. He had started his engineering career out west, working in places where a man soon learned how to handle hard liquor, his two fists, and sometimes a gun. The way in which he'd gained admittance to New York's toughest business circles, and then to its snobby society families, was as much due to Rensselaer's clumsy honesty, disarming directness, and awkward charm as to his luck and mining skills. But he'd never acquired the social grace that his wife expected of him, and this sort of fancy English tea was a ceremony he didn't enjoy.

'Are you keeping up the Latin?' Rensselaer asked Peter. He was a thin, wiry child, dressed, like his little brother, in cotton knickerbocker trousers with a sailor-suit top. He had the same dark hair that his grandfather had, and the same pale-blue eyes. There was no other noticeable resemblance, but it was enough to make them recognizably kin.

'Yes, sir.' Peter was a graceful little boy, slim and upright, standing face to face with his grandpa and answering in clear and excellent English.

'Good boy. You must keep up the Latin and the mathematics. Your mother always got top grades in mathematics when she was at school in Springtown. Did she tell you that?'

'No, sir. She didn't tell me that.' There was an awkward relationship between Veronica's parents and her sons. The Rensselaers were unbending, not understanding that children were no longer treated in the formal and distant way that they had treated their daughter.

'And what are you going to be when you grow up, young Peter?' Rensselaer asked him. How he wished the children hadn't had these very short Prussian haircuts. He was used to children having longer hair. These 'bullet heads' were unbecoming for his grandchildren, and he resented Veronica's allowing it.

'I'm going to fly in the airship with Count Zeppelin,' said Peter.

His little brother looked at him with respect bordering on awe, but Mr Rensselaer laughed. 'Airship! That's rich!' he said and laughed again.

Pauli laughed, too, but Peter went red. To help cover his embarrassment, Mary Rensselaer said, 'Would you like to come and see us in America, Peter? We'd love to have you visit with us.'

'Next year I go to my new school,' said Peter.

'You're boarding them, Veronica?' she asked her daughter.

'No, Mother. It's a day school. Harry doesn't like boarding schools except well-supervised military schools. He says there are always bullies. Harry says it makes the English the way they are.'

'No harm those Germans of yours becoming more like the English,' said Mr Rensselaer. 'A little bullying at boarding school might have done that bellicose little Kaiser Wilhelm a power of good.' He marked this observation with a sound that might have been a chuckle or a snort, then wiped his nose on a very big red cotton handkerchief.

Veronica glanced nervously at the boys, then said, 'Harry says the Kaiser has done wonders for Germany. He's brought us closer to Austria, and that's a good thing.'

'It's a good thing for Harry, because of his business interests in Austria, but the Dual Alliance, as they call it, has frightened Russia and France into closer ties, and whatever France does, Britain does too. The Kaiser's heading himself into a lot of trouble, Veronica. I want you to remember that when you are reading your newspapers.'

'Harry says all that war talk is just nonsense the newspaper writers invent to sell their papers.'

Mr Rensselaer leaned down to talk to Peter. 'You remember that your mother is an American, young man. And that makes you half American, too. Never mind about flying in airships with Count Zeppelin; you come to New York City and you'll see things that will make your eyes pop. America is the only country for a young man like you: farmlands that stretch to the horizon and beyond, and railroads crisscrossing the whole continent. You come to America and discover what it's like to breathe the air of free men.' He reached out to put his hand on the child's shoulder.

Peter pushed his grandfather's hand away and turned on him. 'I don't want to go with you. I hate you. You're a bad man to say nasty things about His Majesty. He's my Emperor. Germany has to be strong, to fight the French and the English and the Russians. Then the world will respect the Kaiser. I'll never go to America – never, never.'

The smile froze on Pauli's face. For a moment the four grown-ups were too embarrassed to react. They watched this ten-year-old's outburst without knowing what to do about it. Cyrus Rensselaer felt a sudden sense of isolation. He'd spent a lot of time looking forward to this meeting with his daughter and his grandsons. They were his only heirs. But instead of the two amiable, tousled, freckle-faced kids he was expecting to see, he was suddenly faced with two militant Teutons. Rensselaer was shocked and speechless. No one moved until six-year-old Paul – sensing that something awful had happened – let out a howl and began to cry more loudly than he'd ever cried before. Then the nanny grabbed the hand of little Paul and tried to grasp Peter's hand, too, but he ran from the room and slammed the door behind him with all his might.

Veronica said, 'Take them both up to their room, Nanny. You can tell Peter that his father will hear about this when he gets home.'

'Yes, madam,' said the nurse. 'I really don't know . . . It's not like Peter . . .'

'That will be all, Nanny,' said Grandpa Rensselaer. When the children and nanny had gone, he went to the sidetable and poured himself a whisky. He downed it in one gulp.

'It's the journey . . . and the excitement,' said Veronica when her father turned back to face her. 'Peter is usually the quiet one. Peter is polite and thoughtful. It's Pauli who gets over-excited.' She spoiled the little one, and she knew it. Did this sudden outburst mean that Peter felt neglected and was demonstrating his discontent?

'It's that husband of yours,' said Rensselaer. 'You can see what sort of ideas he puts into the children's heads . . . Count Zeppelin . . . airships, and all this nonsense about Kaiser Wilhelm, "my Emperor". It's time I had a word with your Harald.'

'Please don't, Father. It's none of Harald's doing. He spends little enough time with the children.' She smoothed her satin dress nervously.

'Someone's been filling the boy's head with mischievous twaddle,' said Rensselaer.

'It's the school, Father. It's the sort of thing they're told at school.'

Cyrus Rensselaer's influence and popularity were evident that evening. His twenty-two dinner guests provided a cross section of Britain at the height of its power. On Mary Rensselaer's right sat an Indian prince, a delicate old man with an Eton accent so pronounced that sometimes even the other English guests had trouble understanding him. Facing her there was a weatherbeaten infantry colonel who'd soldiered through the empire. In Transvaal he'd won his Queen's newly founded Victoria Cross, and in Afghanistan he'd left an arm.

Dominating the table with his anecdotes there was a plain-speaking Yorkshireman, sole owner of a steel works from which had come enough metal to build a complete Royal Naval Battle Squadron. And listening with delight there was a Peer of the Realm: a handsome, bearded youth who'd inherited half a million acres of northern England. He was rich on coal from a couple of mines he'd never seen, and on rents from a dozen villages that he couldn't, when asked, name.

The women were as formidable as the men, and just as surprising. The Indian princess could speak a dozen languages, and her German was faultless. The wife of the steelmaster had been painted by Degas, and the bank official's wife had been a lady-in-waiting to the late Queen. A buxom woman with a glittering diamond collar had run a hospital in the Sudan before marrying a man who owned several thousand miles of Latin American railways.

The dining room was designed to complement such eminent company: fine paintings, carpets, linen, crystal and silver. And the food and wines were memorable.

Harald Winter was overwhelmed. Even his Berlin-tailored evening dress felt wrong, especially when he found all the other men

wearing white waistcoats instead of the black ones that were still fashionable in Berlin. In Berlin he was treated as a wealthy and influential – not to say powerful – man. But he felt diffident in the presence of these people. They were relaxed and courteous, but Winter was not such a fool that he didn't see their arrogant self-confidence. Though they complimented him on his excellent English, he knew the way they ridiculed any sort of foreign accent. Their exaggerated politeness and modest disclaimers were the veneer that overlaid their rough contempt for foreigners such as Winter, and for his banking house, of which they all told him they'd never heard.

'I'm completely out of touch nowadays,' one of the guests – a financial expert – told him apologetically. 'The only bankers I remember are the really big ones . . . Getting old, you see.' He tapped his head and turned away to speak with someone else. Winter felt humiliated.

Rensselaer was just as bad. He'd spent most of the meal talking to the Indian princess. Winter wondered if his father-in-law guessed that he urgently wanted to put a financial proposition to him. He'd been trying to have a private word with his host since arriving back from a disappointing business lunch. Was he avoiding him? Surely not. Rensselaer was as keen on a profitable deal as any other man in the financial world. It was just as well they were house guests. Perhaps he could have a word with Rensselaer after these dinner guests had gone.

'You look pensive, darling,' Veronica told her husband when the men joined the ladies in the drawing room. 'Is everything all right?'

'Everything is fine,' said Winter. It was no good telling his wife how much he disliked these people. Veronica and her family were the same as the rest of them, so he simply told her she was looking wonderful in her long pale-green silk dress. She'd never perceive the way in which these rich and powerful guests of her father's despised the little German banker and the nation from which he came.

'I'm not a pork butcher,' he peevishly responded when the woman with the diamond collar asked him what he did for a living in Berlin. It was a silly remark and simply revealed his nervous exasperation.

'My grandfather was a butcher in Leeds,' she cheerfully told

him. 'Even now I can remember the wonderful roast beef we always had at his house.'

Winter was embarrassed at her response. He desperately tried to make amends for his gratuitous rudeness. 'I have a bank,' he said and, in keeping with this English obsession for modesty, added, 'a very small bank.' She laughed. No matter what one did, somehow the English always knew how to make a foreigner feel a fool.

The two boys, in the nursery bedroom at the very top of the house, heard the clatter of carriages and the sounds of the guests leaving soon after midnight. Peter, lost in a dream about airships, went back to sleep almost immediately, but little Pauli was still worried about his brother's outburst that afternoon. Paul had none of the cleverness that distinguished his elder brother but, perhaps in compensation for this, the little blond child had an instinct about what went on in other people's minds. He knew that his grandfather was deeply hurt by what his brother had said. Peter was like that: he had the capacity for cruelty that comes so easily to the self-righteous.

Now Pauli stayed awake worrying about what would happen to Peter. Perhaps he'd be sent away. He'd heard of children being sent away. They were sent away to jobs, and to schools, and sometimes sent away to the army or the navy. Pauli had no idea of what happened to those who were 'sent away', but now it was dark, and the flickering nightlight made strange shadows on the ceiling and on the wall, and all sorts of frightening ideas about being sent away occurred to him.

He called to his brother, but Pauli's voice was faint and Peter's sleep was not interrupted. Pauli got out of bed and decided to wake up Nanny; she'd be angry, of course, but he knew she'd pick him up and cuddle him and put him back to bed with reassuring words that sometimes little boys like Pauli want to hear in the middle of the dark night.

Pauli was halfway down the top flight of the back stairs by the time he fully realized that he wasn't in his home in Berlin. He walked up and down the line of closed bedroom doors trying to decide which one to try. It was then that he heard voices from

somewhere below. He continued down the servants' stairs until he got to the ground floor. The voices were coming from a room at the back of the house. It was Grandpa's study – a small back room where Cyrus Rensselaer went to smoke. Here he kept a comfortable old leather chair, a desk where he could write, and a locked cabinet that contained his very finest French brandy and his favourite sourmash bourbon, which he brought with him because the London wine merchants had never heard of it.

From his position on the landing, Pauli could squeeze into a space where empty steamer trunks were stored, and from there he could look through an open fanlight and see into the room.

Grandpa was sitting in the big leather chair, alongside the coal fire that was now only red embers and grey ash. Pauli's father was perched on the edge of the writing desk. His father looked uncomfortable. Both men had cut-glass tumblers in their hands. Grandpa was smoking a big cigar and Daddy was lighting one too. Pauli could smell the smoke as it curled up into his hiding place. Grandpa took the cigar from his mouth and said, 'Never mind all the stories about a cure for malaria, Harry. If you are trying to raise capital for your bank, it means your bank is in trouble.'

'It's not in trouble,' said Winter. He tugged at the hem of his black waistcoat and silently cursed his Berlin tailor for not knowing that in England it was passé.

'When people start saying a bank is in trouble, it's in trouble.'

Harald Winter said, 'It's a chance to expand.'

Rensselaer interrupted him. 'Never mind the bullshit, Harry; save that for the suckers. My friends in the City tell me you're not sound.'

Winter stiffened. 'Of course it's sound. Half the money still remains in German government bonds.'

'Damnit, Harry, don't be so naive. It's not sound because your aluminium factory may not be a success. Suppose the aluminium market doesn't come up to your expectations? How are you going to pay back the money? Your investors think all their money is in government bonds. It's bordering on the dishonest, Harry.'

Winter sipped his drink. 'The electrolytic process has changed

aluminium production. The metal is light and very strong; they're experimenting with all kinds of mixtures, and these alloys will revolutionize building and automobiles, and they'll find other industrial uses for it.'

'Sure, sure, sure,' said Rensselaer. 'I've heard all these snake-oil stories . . . There's always a claim where some guy will strike gold or oil . . . and it's always next week. I grew up on all that stuff.'

'I'm not talking about something that might never happen,' said Winter. 'I'm talking about using aluminium alloys.'

'Aluminium: okay. I made a few inquiries. In 1855 it cost a thousand Reichsmarks per kilo; in 1880, twenty Reichsmarks; now I can buy it for two Reichsmarks a kilo. What price will it be by the time your factory comes into full-scale production?'

'I'm not selling aluminium, Mr Rensselaer.' He always addressed his father-in-law as 'Mr Rensselaer', always expecting him to suggest he called him Cyrus or Cy as his friends did; but Cyrus Rensselaer never did suggest it, even though he called his son-in-law Harry. It was another example of the way Harald Winter was deliberately humbled. Or that was how it seemed to him. 'I'll be selling manufactured components that bolt together to make the rigid framework for airships.'

'Then why the aluminium factory? Buy your materials on the open market.'

'I have to have an assured supply. Otherwise I could sign a contract and then be held to ransom by the aluminium manufacturers.'

'It's my daughter I'm thinking of, Harry. You haven't told her that you are going to put every penny you can raise into producing metal components for flying machines. I sounded her out this afternoon: she thinks you're cautious with money. She trusts you to look after the family.'

Winter drew on his cigar. 'These zeppelins are going to change the world, Mr Rensselaer. A year ago I would have shared your scepticism. But I've seen Zeppelin's first airship flying – as big as a city block and as smooth as silk.'

'And as dangerous as hell. Don't you know those ships are full of hydrogen, Harry? Have you ever seen hydrogen burn?'

'I know all the problems and the dangers,' said Winter, 'but, just as you have your contacts here in London, I have friends in the Berlin War Office. At present the General Staff is showing strong opposition to all forms of airship; the soldiers don't like new ideas. But the Kaiser has personally ordered the setting up of a Motorluftschiff-Studien-Gesellschaft: a technical society for the study of airships. It's still very secret, but it's just a matter of time until the army orders some big rigids from Count Zeppelin.'

'That's all moonshine, Harry. I hear that Zeppelin's second ship, which flew in January, turned out to be a big flop. They say its first flight is going to be its one and only flight.'

'But Count Zeppelin is already building LZ3, and it will fly in about twelve weeks from now. Make no mistake: he'll go on building them.'

'Maybe that just shows he doesn't know when he's licked. And who can say how the airships will shape up when the army tests them?'

'Do you realize how much aluminium goes into one of those airships? They weigh almost three tons. Thousands of girders and formers go into each ring. I've done some sums. Using Count Zeppelin's first airship as a yardstick, I'd need only six-point-seven-three per cent of an airship's aluminium requirement to break even and pay back the interest.'

Even Rensselaer was visibly impressed. 'But we're talking about every red cent you possess, Harry. Why not a smaller investment?'

'I could have a smaller investment; I could do without the aluminium factory and be at the mercy of my suppliers. I could have half an interest and have only non-voting shares, but that would mean someone else was making the decisions about who, what, why and where we sell. That's not my way, Mr Rensselaer: and it's not your way, either.'

Rensselaer scratched his chin. 'I've spent half my working life trying to talk people out of these kinds of blue-sky investments. But I can see I'd be wasting my time trying to talk you out of it.' Rensselaer got up from his chair for enough time to flick ash into the fire. 'J. P. Morgan bought up steel companies to make U.S. Steel, and he's made himself one of the most powerful men in the U.S.,

maybe one of the most powerful men in the whole damned world. It looks easy, but don't think that you can corner the market in aluminium and become the J. P. Morgan of Germany. The European market just doesn't work that way.'

'I know that, Mr Rensselaer.'

'Do you?' He slumped back into his chair. 'That's good, because I meet a whole lot of people who try to get me involved in financing crackpot schemes like that.'

'It's just bridging.'

'It's *not* bridging, Harry!' Suddenly Rensselaer's voice was louder. Then, as if determined to control his temper, he lowered it again to say, 'We're talking about guarantees that will go on until 1916. Ten years! A hell of a lot of things could happen between now and then.'

'I have most of it, Mr Rensselaer.'

'You need nearly a million pounds sterling, Harry, and that's a hell of a lot of dough when you've got no collateral that I'd want to try and realize on.'

Winter knew that his father-in-law had decided to let him have the money. He smiled. 'It's a great opportunity, Mr Rensselaer. You'll never regret it.'

'I'm regretting it already,' said Rensselaer. 'I've always tried to stay clear of government agencies in all shapes and forms. Especially I've avoided armies and navies. Now I'm going to find myself with a million pounds sterling invested in the army of the Kaiser: a man I wouldn't trust to look after my horses. What's worse, I'm going to have the security of my investment depending upon his bellicose ambitions.'

Rensselaer knew his words would offend his son-in-law but he was angry and frustrated at the trap he found himself in. When Winter wisely made no reply, Rensselaer said, 'It's for Veronica's sake – you know that, of course – and I'll want proper safeguards built into the paperwork. I'll want your life insured with a U.S. company for the full amount of the loan.'

'It's the Kaiser's life you should insure,' said Winter. 'My death would make no difference to the investment.'

'Here's to the Kaiser's health,' said Rensselaer sardonically. He raised his glass and drank the rest of his whisky.

Winter smiled and decided not to drink to the Kaiser's health. In the circumstances it would seem like lese-majesty.

Little Pauli crawled out of his hiding place and went slowly upstairs, trying to figure out what the two grownups had been talking about. By the time he found his bedroom again, only one part of the scene he'd witnessed was clear to him. He shook Peter awake and said, 'I saw Daddy and Grandpa. They were smoking cigars and talking. Daddy made Grandpa drink to the health of His Majesty the Emperor. He made him do it, Peter.'

Peter came awake slowly, and when he heard Pauli's story he was sceptical. Little Pauli hero-worshipped his father in a way that Peter would never do. 'Go to sleep, Pauli, you've been dreaming again.' He turned over and snuggled deep into the soft down pillow.

'I haven't been dreaming,' said Pauli. He wanted Peter to believe him; he wanted his big brother to treat him as an equal. 'I saw them.' But by the time morning came, he was no longer quite certain.

1908

'Conqueror of the air – hurrah!'

In Friedrichshafen it was cold, damned cold. There was very little wind – the zeppelins could not take off in a wind – but November is not a time of year when anyone goes to the shores of the grim, grey Bodensee unless he has business there. Across the calm water of the lake, the Swiss side was clearly visible and the Alps were shining in the watery winter sunlight.

Harald Winter had persuaded his wife to stay in the car. It was Winter's pride and joy. A huge seven-and-a-half litre Italian car, just like the one that had won the Peking-to-Paris Road Race with twenty days' lead! And yet, with its four-speed gearbox, so reliable and easy to use that Winter sometimes took the wheel himself. He'd had it parked down by the waterfront under the trees near the Schlosskirche, so that Veronica would have a good view of the airship and the shed that floated on the lake. She was well wrapped up, and under her feet was a copper foot-warmer that could be refilled with boiling water. And if she got too cold, the chauffeur would drive her back to the Kurgarten Hotel in Friedrichshafen, where the Zeppelin people had provided for the Winter family a comfortable suite of rooms.

But Harald Winter was at the lakeside, nearer to the activity. He was excited; he would not have missed this occasion for all the world. Together with his two boys – Peter twelve and Pauli eight – he'd been given a place from which he could see everything. He would have been flying in the zeppelin but for the stringent terms of the life insurance that his father-in-law had made a condition of the loan.

They'd seen the floating shed being revolved to eliminate any chance of a crosswind damaging the airship as it came from out of its tight-fitting hangar. Now they watched as the white motor-boat took its distinguished guests out to LZ4; the new modifications made her the finest of the airships. The crowd cheered spontaneously. After the tragic destruction of LZ4 last year – in a gesture that no foreigner would ever understand – the spontaneous generosity of the whole nation brought Count Zeppelin six million marks in donations. Much of the money had been sent within hours of the disaster. So these cheers were not just for the airship. There was something exhilarating in the atmosphere here today. The zeppelin was fast becoming a symbol of a new, exciting Germany, whose scientific inventions, paintings, music, and, more importantly, growing naval strength had made a real nation from a collection of small states. And not just a nation, but an international power of the first rank.

'That's the Kaiser,' whispered Winter to his sons. 'He's wearing that long cloak or you'd see all his medals. Next to him is Prince Fürstenberg and then Admiral Müller and General von Plessen. The thin one is the Crown Prince.'

'Why isn't Count Zeppelin with them?' Peter asked. The boys were wearing grey flannel suits, specially tailored for the occasion, and large cloth caps that their mother thought were 'too grownup-looking' for them.

'He is,' said Winter. He was wearing a tight-fitting chesterfield and top hat, a formal outfit suited to someone who would be presented to the Kaiser. 'He's facing His Majesty, but he's not wearing his old white cap today; he's dressed up for the occasion.'

They watched the airship come out on the surface of the lake, and then there was an interminable delay while the royal party inspected the airship, and another while it was given the final adjustments for the flight. After the Prince and Princess of Fürstenberg were safely aboard, the ballast was offloaded piece by piece, until the moment came when the great silver machine shuddered and floated free.

The roar of the engines echoed across the cold still water of the Bodensee, and then the nose tilted up and the airship climbed slowly

into the grey sky and, rolling slightly as it went, headed down the lake. The airship's silver fabric was shining in the pale sunlight as it came steadily back to where the shore was black with onlookers. There were more loud, uncoordinated cheers as it passed over the boat from which the Kaiser and his entourage watched.

But it was after the landing of *LZ3* that the boys were proudest of their father. For Harald Winter was invited to take his two sons out to the floating shed to watch Kaiser Wilhelm making his speech.

Every available inch of space was used. Illustrious generals, spiked helmets on their heads and chests crammed with medals, and admirals with high, stiff collars and arms garlanded with gold, were all crowded shoulder to shoulder. Standing behind von Zeppelin – the seventy-one-year-old ex-cavalry officer whose single-minded endeavour was today celebrated – they saw Dr Hugo Eckener, whose conversion to the zeppelin cause had made him even more zealous than his master. Next came Dürr, the engineer, Winter with the two children, and then senior design staff and an official from the engine factory.

'In my name,' began the Kaiser suddenly, his voice unexpectedly shrill, 'and in the name of our entire German people, I heartily congratulate Your Excellency on this magnificent work which you have so wonderfully displayed before me today. Our Fatherland can be proud to possess such a son – the greatest German of the twentieth century – who through his invention has brought us to a new point in the development of the human race.' At this, one or two of the generals and admirals nodded. One of the design staff edged aside to give little Pauli a better view.

The Kaiser looked round his audience, drew himself up into an even more erect posture, and continued: 'It is not too much to say that we have today lived through one of the greatest moments in the evolution of human culture. I thank God, with all Germans, that He has considered our people worthy to name you as one of us. Might it be permitted to us all, as it has been to you, to be able to say with pride in the evening of our life, that we had been successful in serving our dear Fatherland so fruitfully. As a token of my

admiring recognition, which certainly all your guests gathered here share with the entire German people, I bestow upon you herewith my high Order of the Black Eagle.'

Count Zeppelin stepped one pace forward. Over his head the Kaiser put the sash, and then embraced him three times and called, 'His Excellency Count Zeppelin, the conqueror of the air – hurrah!'

From the crowd in the distance, cheers could be heard. For Winter and his two sons it was a day they would never forget.

It was already getting dark by the time Winter and the boys got back to the hotel in Friedrichshafen. Nanny was sent to have dinner alone in the restaurant so that the boys could have theirs served in the sitting room of their suite. Harald Winter was excited by the events of the day, and at times like this he liked to have a few extra moments with his sons.

A solicitous waiter in a white jacket brought the meal and served it to the children course by course. There was turtle soup and breaded schnitzels with rösti potatoes, which the Swiss, across the lake, did so perfectly. When no one was looking, Peter took forkfuls of Pauli's cabbage – Pauli hated cabbage – so that he wouldn't get into trouble for leaving it on his plate. And after that the waiter flamed crêpes for them. It was the first time that their father had permitted them to have a dish containing alcohol and, despite the strong flavour, the boys devoured their pancakes with great joy, slowing their eating to prolong this happy day forever.

After Nanny had taken the boys off to bed, Harald had a chance to express his happiness to his wife. They were in the bedroom; Veronica's maid had gone. Harry was fully dressed in his evening clothes and his wife was making a final selection of jewellery. She had already put three different diamond brooches on her low-cut ballgown and rejected each one. She was wearing a wonderful new Poiret dress from Paris, a simple tubular design with a high waist. She knew the new Paris look would create a sensation at the ball tonight. But on such a neoclassical design the jewellery would be all-important. She didn't want to get it wrong. 'What do you think,

Harry?' She turned away from the mirror enough for him to see her hold the diamond-studded gold rose against her.

'You're very beautiful, my darling,' he told her.

'I'm thirty-four, Harry, and I feel every year of it. My shoes hurt already, and the evening has not even started.'

'Change them,' said Harry.

'The pink silk shoes would look absurd,' she said.

He smiled. That was the way women were: the pink shoes looked absurd, the white ones hurt; there was really no answer. Perhaps women liked always to have some problem or other: perhaps it was the way they accounted for their disappointments. 'Did you see His Majesty?'

'I got so cold, Harry. I just waited until the airship lifted away. Then I came back for a hot bath.'

'The boys saw him. He looked magnificent. He's a great man.'

'I'll just have to slip them off at dinner.'

'The LZ3 is to be delivered to the army right away. And as soon as the LZ5 is completed – and has done a twenty-four-hour endurance flight – they want that, too.'

'I know. You told me. It's wonderful.'

'You realize what it means, don't you?'

'No,' she said vaguely. She'd heard it all before. She wasn't listening to him; she was looking at her shoes.

'It means we'll be rich, darling.'

'We're already rich, Harry.'

'*I* mean really rich: tens of millions . . . perhaps a hundred million before I'm finished.' He sat down, reaching behind him to flip his coat tails high in the air like a blackbird alighting. You could tell a lot about a man by the way he sat down, she decided. Her father always lifted his coat tails aside carefully, making sure they'd not be creased.

'We're happy, Harry. That's the important thing.'

'Dollars, I'm talking about, not Reichsmarks.'

'What does it matter, Harry? We're happy, aren't we?' She looked up at him. Somewhere deep inside her there arose a desperate hope that he would embrace her and tell her that he would give up his

other women. But she knew he would not do that. He needed the women, the way he needed the money. He had to be reassured, just as little Pauli needed so much reassurance all the time.

'It doesn't matter to you,' he said, and she was surprised at the bitterness in his voice. He was like that; his mood could change suddenly for no accountable reason. 'You were born into wealth. You have your own bank account and your father's allowance every year. But now I'll have as much money as he's got. I won't have to kowtow to him all the time.'

'I haven't noticed you displaying servile deference to Papa,' she said. She gave him all her attention.

He ignored her remark. 'The army will buy more and more airships, and the navy will buy them, too. I had a word with the admiral today. They're already planning where the bases should be. Nordholz in Schleswig-Holstein will be the biggest one; then others nearby. Revolving sheds built on turntables – the North Sea is too rough for floating the hangars.'

'Schleswig-Holstein? Why would they want them so far north? The weather there is not suited to airships. You said they'd need calm weather today.'

'Use your brains, Veronica. Germany has the only practical flying machine in the world. The experimental little contraptions that the Wright brothers have made can scarcely lift the weight of a man. What use would those things be for bombing?'

'Bombing? Bombing England?'

'This has been Count Zeppelin's idea right from the start. I thought everyone knew that. He conceived these huge rigid airships as a war-winning weapon.'

'How ghastly!'

'It's how progress comes. Leonardo da Vinci developed his great ideas only to help his masters fight wars.'

'But bombing England, Harry? For God's sake. What are you saying?'

'Don't get excited, Veronica. I wish I hadn't started talking about it.'

'War? War with England? But Harry, it is no time at all since the King of England went to Berlin. The children saw them both going

through Pariser Platz in the state coach. The Kaiser is King Edward's nephew. It's unthinkable. It's madness!' This came in a gabble. It was as if she thought that she had only her husband to persuade and everything would be all right.

It was not an appropriate time to remind her that Kaiser Wilhelm made no secret of his hatred for his uncle the English King. Only the previous year, Winter had been one of three hundred dinner guests to whom the Kaiser had confided that King Edward was 'a Satan'. But his wife needed assurance, so he went to her and put his arms tightly round her. By God, she was beautiful. Even at thirty-four she outshone some of the younger ones he bedded. He hated to see her distressed. 'There will be no war, my darling. I guarantee that. England will see sense. When the time comes, England will see sense. The English are a nation of compromisers.'

'I pray to God you're right.'

'They say the mustard manufacturers get rich from the dabs of mustard people leave on their plates. And we'll get rich in the same way, darling. From selling the soldiers weapons they'll never use.'

1910

The end of Valhalla

Both boys liked to visit Omi. Harald Winter's widowed mother, Effi, lived in a comfortable little house on the coast, near Travemünde. They went each summer, with Nanny, Mama and Mama's personal maid. From Berlin they always got a sleeping compartment in the train that left from Lehrter Bahnhof late at night and arrived at Lübeck next morning. They alighted from the train and watched the porters pile the luggage onto carts. The children were taken to see the locomotive, a huge hissing brute that smelled of steam and oil and of the burned specks of coal that floated in the sunlit air. Omi always met them at the station in Lübeck. But this time she wasn't there – only the taxi. It was a big one – a Benz sixty-horsepower Phaeton, more like a delivery van than a car – and it could seat sixteen people if they all crammed together. The driver was a white-haired old fellow named Hugo who would laboriously clamber up onto the roof. There, on its huge rack, he'd strap a dozen suitcases, Mama's ten hat boxes, a travelling rug inside which were rolled a selection of umbrellas and walking sticks and four black tin trunks so heavy that he'd almost overbalance with the weight of them.

The house itself was a gloomy old place with lace curtains through which the northern sunlight struggled to make pale-grey shadows on the carpet. Even in the dusty conservatory that ran the length of the house, the warmth of the summer sun was hardly enough to stir the wasps from their winter torpor.

Omi always wore black, the same sort of clothes she'd worn

back in 1891, when Grandfather died. She spent most of the day in the room on the first floor: she read, she sewed, and for a lot of the time she just remembered. The room was furnished with her treasures and mementoes. There were two large jade dragons and a whole elephant tusk engraved with hunting scenes. There was a big photo of her with Opa on their wedding day, and portraits of other members of the family, and there were stuffed birds in glass cases and green plants that never bore flowers. She called the little room her salon and she received her visitors there – although visitors were few – and looked out of the window across the Lübeck Bight to the coast and the water that became the Baltic Sea.

Peter and Paul wouldn't have looked forward so much to their visits had it not been for the *Valhalla*. The *Valhalla* was a small sailing boat that had once belonged to Opa. In his will Opa had bequeathed the little boat to a neighbour. But whenever the two Winter boys arrived, the *Valhalla* was theirs. The neighbour didn't know his sailing boat was called the *Valhalla*. On its bow was painted the same name that had been there when Winter bought it from a boat builder in Travemünde: *Domino*. But for the boys it was always called *Valhalla*: the hall in which slain warriors were received by Odin.

The *Valhalla* gave the boys a unique chance to be away from any kind of supervision. They took little advantage of this cherished freedom except to laze and, more important, to talk and argue in that spirited and curiously intimate way that children only do when no adults are within earshot.

'You'll change your mind again before you are fourteen,' Peter told his ten-year-old brother with all the mature authority of a fourteen-year-old. 'I wouldn't go to cadet school; I'd hate it. I'm going to be an explorer.' He trailed his hand in the water. The wind had been swinging round for the last hour or more, so that Peter had had to adjust the sail constantly. Now the boat was moving fast through the choppy water of the bight. The sun was a white disc seen fitfully behind hazy clouds. There was little heat in the sun. Visitors did not come to this northern coastline to bask in the sunshine; it was a brisk climate, for active holidaymakers.