

Herman and I alit in the parking lot with many of the rest of the passengers after the driver's cheery announcement. Still yawning as we waited for our baggage, I looked around for the talkative minister, suspicious that he would hop off to stretch his legs and have another go at us, but there remained no sign of him, thankfully. He had disappeared from the seat next to us whenever I cracked an eye open from my series of naps, probably to farther back in the bus where religious pickings might be better, and I figured he must be staying aboard to work on some poor Salt Lake City-bound soul who needed directions to the Lord.

Well, the Reverend Mac was now digested into the memory book, and that was enough of him for me. Herman was not too pleased when I insisted on stowing the cheap Bible in the duffel bag, tut-tutting at my attempted joke that it might as well be in there with the French Bible of playing cards, but conceded that we could leave carrying the good word around in a pocket to someone more fit to do it.

Quickly putting aside the churchy bus experience, we turned to our much-awaited surroundings. Smell that piney air, feel that high altitude! We had made it to glorious Yellowstone, free as knights and Apaches and other roaming spirits, and in silent agreement we grinned at each other and took a minute to marvel at it all. Some distance away, with black forest as a backdrop, stood a whitish mound of earth, which we divined must be where the famous geyser would make its appearance. Out and around in what looked like a geyser kitchen, steaming water bubbled out of the ground as if from gigantic boiling pots. Just as fabulous for our current purpose, overlooking all this was the Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like an elaborate fortress made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. By now it was suppertime, and a place as grand as that surely would have a menu fit for the gods or at least us. "Notcheral wonders and feathery beds for the night, hah, Donny?" Herman exulted as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase.

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"Yeah, finger-spit knew what it was doing, didn't it," I crowed happily as we started off after everybody else to check in to the fancy Inn and head for supper.

"Donny, wait."

What I heard in Herman's voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

"Herman!" In a stumbling panic, I rushed to him. "Y-you're not gonna die on me, are you?"

"No, not that. My wallet." He kept searching his coat pockets over and over. "Is gone."

"How can it be? Didn't you put it down the front of your pants when you were sleeping?"

"I didn't think."

I could barely squeak out the next. "Was all our money--?"

"Ja."

"Fuck and phooey, Herman!" my voice came back. "You mean we're skunk broke?"

"Hah?" He looked so anguished I was afraid he really might have a heart attack. "If that means all gone, ja again." He slapped his pants pocket, which did not jingle one bit. "Spent the chicken feed on candy bars, even," he moaned.

I still was in shock. This was a hundred times worse than the ex-convict trying to steal my suitcase at that Minnesota Palookaville. "Who--how--" We needed to do something, but what? "Let's ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--"

"Not just yet, hah-uh," he stopped me. He still looked stricken but in a different way. "Something is tickling my mind. Quick, your book. Let me see."



Blankly I handed over the autograph album, and peered along with him as he flipped pages to Reverend Mac's inscription. With some kind of swearing in German, he put his thumb next to the signature, *Isaac M. Dezmosz*.

"Should have seen. Dismas was thief crucified with Christ." It took me a moment to put together the initials with that pronunciation and come up with it: *I. M. Dismas*.

"Lying in his false teeth, he was," Herman bleakly summed up the so-called Reverend Mac.

I blew my top. "The smart-ass little sonofabitch of a thief! Distributing Bibles, my butt! C'mon, we'll show him troubled times."

I tore across the parking lot to where the bus was idling, ready to go, Herman galloping after me. I banged on the door, and Herman joined in as if he would tear it open with his bare hands.

The driver opened and considerately asked, "Forget something, boys?"

Without answering, I lunged up the steps and into the aisle, Herman right behind, both of us furiously searching for a distinctive gray head and silvery mustache.

Neither of which was in evidence on any of the remaining passengers, from front of the bus to the back as I careened up the aisle in search. "Where'd he go?" I demanded at the top of my voice, glaring at the rows of startled faces, none of them the right one.

"Who, the nice little minister?" the driver called down the aisle to us, perplexed by our invasion. "He got off at Livingston, a ways back. Said he had a train to catch."

"Sunk, we are," Herman said huskily, putting a hand on my shoulder to steady me, or maybe himself.

Retreating to the front of the bus, we laid out our situation to the driver, who could only shake his head as if now he had heard everything and offer the

commiseration, "Tough break, boys, better report it at park headquarters and they'll get the sheriff in on it."

I piled off the bus to do that very thing, my view of law enforcement having come around full circle in the past few minutes, with Herman more slowly following.

"Hurry up," I called over my shoulder, half frantic or maybe more, as he lagged, "let's get some kind of cops after the thieving bastard."

"Donny, hold back. Over here, please."

Disconcerted by the detour, I uncertainly trailed after as he veered off to the gigantic wooden deck fronting the Inn, where people could sit out to watch Old Faithful display itself.

He dropped his duffel bag in a corner away from where everyone else was sitting, so I set my suitcase there too until it would become clear what this was about. More and more unnerved, I whispered when I didn't have to, "Why're we wasting time here when he's getting away with--"

"Shhh, notcheral wonder is coming," he softly shut me up.

Unstrung as I was anyway by Herman behaving this way, now I was hearing what sounded like low thunder and heavy rain mixed together, although the sky remained cloudless. I thought I felt the earth tremble, but it may have been just me. We turned together toward the source of the sound, a boiling hiss coming out of the whitish mound, and as we watched, in its center what looked like a giant fountain started up, the cascades of steaming water billowing and falling, but steadily and incredibly billowing higher and higher, until the ghostly white column stood taller than the tallest trees. Magnificent as the sight was, it did little to change my anxious mood. Old Faithful was an eyeful, for sure, but so what? It faithfully would be blowing off steam again in an hour or so, after we'd had time to spill our

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story to whatever passed for cops under these circumstances, yet Herman was making no move whatsoever in that direction.

Rather, he motioned wordlessly for me to take a seat in the deck chair next to the one he claimed. Scratching a match on the arm of the chair, he lit a cigar and gazed fixedly at Old Faithful's rising and falling curtains of water as he puffed. Had he gone loco? This I could not understand at all, the two of us planting ourselves there sightseeing the geyser fading slowly back into the ground while the thief who'd left us skunk broke except for a cheap Bible was making a getaway free as the breeze. Half a dozen times I itchily started to say something of that sort, but could not quite bring myself to, with Herman locked on to the vanishing pillar of water as if it was the last thing he would ever see.

Finally he extinguished his cigar and murmured as if coming out of his deepest think yet, "Guess what, Donny. Not a good eye-dea, to go to police."

"Not a--? Sure it is. We've got to, they're the ones to chase down the sonofabitching phony religious--"

"Many questions, they will have."

"So what?"

"Donny, listen one minute."

Something in his voice warned me to prepare myself for what was coming. Not that I possibly could, because what he was leading up to saying was:

"I am not American on paper."

That took some digesting. At first, I didn't know what to make of it.

"Then what are you?"

"German."

"Well, yeah, sure, that's pretty obvious. But who cares about something like that any more?"



"*Citizen* of Germany, yet," he spelled out, his voice growing strained.  
 "Here I am what is called an alien."

Giving this news what I thought it deserved, the French salute, I asked what was wrong with being one of those, whatever they were.

"An enemy alien."

That hit me where it counted. It put things right back to when I learned he was Herman the German and feared he was one of the Hitler demons who shot my father's legs to pieces at Omaha Beach. Was I right the first time?

Fearfully I trembled out, "How--how are you an enemy?"

He threw up his hands. "By not showing my face when World War Zwei"--wincing, he corrected that to Two--"got America in. Some big danger I ever was, hah?"

I listened dumbstruck to the rest, how having had enough of war in the first one, the second time around he quietly shipped out on ore boats like the *Badger Voyager* where no questions were asked as long as you could shovel heaps of coal, keeping himself at sea or whatever it was on the Great Lakes, and, beyond that, essentially hiding out in plain sight. "Manitowoc is German sort of place, you maybe noticed," he said whimsically. "Government was not going to declare whole town an enemy."

The meaning was sinking in on me now, all right. "You're not supposed to be in this country at all? They'd throw you out?"

"Not at first," he said, raising my hopes. But then: "Put me in jail, they would."

"In the *stony lonesome*? You're that much of an--" I couldn't bring myself to say *enemy* "--alien?"

"By stupid law, ja," that came spat out. Given how law enforcers seemed to automatically side with Sparrowhead against me, I couldn't blame him for feeling

*hick*

picked on. "But if you're still stuck being a, a German," I was back to circling in confusion, "how'd you get here at all?"

He laughed, the hollow empty kind.

"Took French leave."

I unsteadily told him I didn't quite know what that meant.

"Long story, Donny."

"Hitler, pah. Too bad I did not break his neck when he was close as me to you, that night."

And so in the next unforgettable minutes there in an American national wonderland, I learned that French leave meant desertion, although in this case not from any army but an entire country. Germany, that is, when it was falling to pieces after losing World War One and the Nazis were coming out of the woodwork. As his searching words led me through, my imagination transformed the hunched figure clasping his hands between his legs into a young veteran like my own father coming home from combat. Aunt Kate may have thought Herman had an abbreviated intelligence, but it sounded to me as if he had been smart as an Einstein in his choice of livelihood after his term as a soldier on the losing side: making beer where they drank it like water. "In Munich were beer halls like you would not believe, big as this, almost," he pointed a thumb to the whopping Inn behind us. "And Oktoberfest there, two-week festival of foods and beers." He gave that hollow laugh again. "Crow Fair for drunkards. Good place to be a braumeister." From what he said, that was a vital role in the brewing of beer, and he had enough knack at it to work up to a job at a famous place, although I had never heard of it until his chilling telling.

"The Buergerbraukeller, biggest in Munich." He paused, the night just before Armistice Day in 1923 coming back to him as it brought me to the edge of

my deck chair. "Not always a good idea to be where history gets made," he ducked his head as if dodging too late. "Packed hall that night, thousands drinking beer, government people there to say the country is not going to the dogs, if anybody would believe them. I am notcherly curious, so I come out from where brew vats are, to listen. Bring mug of beer for myself, why not, and sit at table near the back, where people have left." All of a sudden he flung an arm up as if firing a pistol at the moon, making me nearly jump out of my hide. "Right in time for Hitler to come through door and climb on table and shoot in the air, ja, like some cowboy. Close as me to you," he repeated, shaking his head at how history brushed past him. "But when I try to reach across table to grab him, pull the feet from under this crazy person up there shooting, make him fall on his face like fool he is, Hitler keeps dancing around like cat on a stove, he is so nervous, and I miss him this far." He held his fingers inches apart. "Before I can try again, whole bunch of brownshirts"--storm troopers--"with guns out jump on me and others around, goverment people and all." Drawing a breath, he husked out the rest of the recitation. "Hitler takes those to a room, the rest of us is held at point of guns, told shut up and drink beer. When myself and some others say what is happening is not right, we get knocked around and told we are now on list to be shot." Talk about spellbound; I was as much all ears as when he'd told about being swept up by the Witch of November, only this November rough weather was called Adolph Hitler.

"A putsch, it was," which he defined as a gamble at taking over everything. "Did not work that time, Nazi march on rest of Munich failed the next day, so putsch collapsed, good thing. But I had two eyes then," he made a wan face, "and did not like look of things in Germany. Beer hall bullies, Hitler bunch was, but maybe more than that if they ever got hold of government, hah? Being on list to be shot reminded me too much of Hohe Toter Mann"--the specter of Dead Man's Hill sent a real chill up my spine. "*Pthht*, to that," he rid himself of his homeland again.



Leaning toward me as if that would bring me nearer to understanding, he tapped his temple, where little thinks came from. "Listen, Donny, this is the how of it. Find a safe harbor, is good saying. In Germany then, that meant small ports on the Baltic, where Nazis was not thick on the ground yet. Always ships going out the Baltic Sea, all places of the world." This I could follow almost as though I were at his side escaping from the Nazis and that sonofabitch of all sonsofbitches, Hitler. "I give the <sup>guy</sup> engineer a little something," he went on, rubbing his fingers together in that familiar gesture meaning money. "He lets me hide in tool room, down where boilers are. Nobody topside comes ever, and I make friends with stokers by helping out. Learn to shovel coal. When we dock in America, jumped ship, I did."

In three paragraphs, there it was, not so long after all. One for Believe It Or Not!--the man who came within the length of his fingers of stopping Hitler. Not only that, the history that had made him an enemy of Germany for real and an enemy of America on paper, both at the same time.

Almost dizzy with the size of the fix he was in--we were in--one more thing I had to check on.

"Jumped ship. Is--is that against the law, too?"

"Could say so, ja," came the not unexpected reply. "Stowaway, is that word," he ruefully added it to the growing list of other names for Herman Schmidt.

"Aunt Kate," I whispered again, for no reason but the weight of the question, "was she in on this? You being an alien and all?"

He nodded slowly. "She knew, all the time. Had to. House in her name, car in her name. She is the Schmidt that counted, on paper." He shrugged, helplessly resigned to the one-sided situation. "No identification papers can I show for anything, as enemy alien."

For another twenty smackers, Louie Slewfoot's going rate for saving our skins or at least mine, he drove us to Billings, a safe distance from Crow Fair and its cops in braids, and dropped us at the Greyhound station there.

"You fellows sort of make a full day," he remarked as he handed down the wicker suitcase and duffel bag from the back of the camper, although incredibly enough it still was only around suppertime. "Take good care of that arrowhead, chiefie, so it'll take care of you," he advised me with a sly wink as he took his leave of us with a slam of the camper door.

But not before, big medicine or whatever doing its work, I coaxed him into an autograph and more.

*Say, do you remember the time*

*I slipped on a banana peeling*

*and hit the ceiling*

*while wondering why*

*I had a sty in my eye*

*and how in hell*

*my nose runs while my feet smell?*

*Oh, I was in tough condition*

*because life's a rough proposition--*

*but at least it makes a nice rhyme.*

*--Louie Slewfoot*

*Off the rez and on the go*

"Not Goethe, but not shabby," Herman approved, reading over the inscription from a genuine Indian that I had finally proudly attained. "More to him than meets an eye. Too bad he is not Apache."

Handing me back the autograph book, he switched his attention to the old standard, the red-webbed route map on the Greyhound depot wall grandly topped with COAST TO COAST--THE FLEET WAY. "Scenery everywhere, I betcha," he observed about the many roads trending west. "So, Donny, what does your fingers say?"

This was almost too easy. On tiptoes, I jabbed a finger to the most famous spot west of Crow Fair.

"Yallostone," Herman ratified, looking over my shoulder. "Old Faithful geezer is there?"

Fixing his pronunciation, I assured him that besides geysers there were bound to be natural wonders popping up all over the place in Yellowstone National Park.

"Not only that," it must have been the big medicine still working in the pouch around my neck that had me thinking so expansively. "See there, then we can go on through the park," my finger confidently traveled down the spine of the West, arriving in Arizona, "all the way to where the Apaches live, how about."

"Now you are speaking," he enthusiastically took up the prospect, only pausing to consider the mountain range neighboring the park, called the Tetons. "In French, don't that mean--?"

This was common knowledge in every schoolyard. "Titties, damn betcha."

He grinned man to man. "Sounds like worth looking, see if they match the ladies of French bible, you think?"



Until then I hadn't, but I sure would now. First thing was to get us on our way, and I drew Herman's attention to the schedule board, showing that the bus we wanted was about to go. "C'mon, or we're gonna miss it."

"Donny, wait," he held back, concerned. "No supper, have we had?"

"Never mind," I took care of that, seasoned bus hopper that I was, "we'll grab candy bars."

Scrambling onto the bus at the last minute with a handful of Mounds bars apiece, scanning the rows of mostly filled seats in that game of chance of where to sit, we even so were not the last to board. Just as the driver had shut the door with the departing *whoosh*, there was a polite tapping on it, and here came a wisp of a man, hardly enough of him to withstand being blown away by the wind; well-dressed in a mild way, his plain brown suit obviously far from new; gray-headed and with a silvery mustache sharp over his lip like a little awning. He thanked the driver kindly for letting him board, and evidently to make no more fuss deposited himself in the first seat available, which happened to be across from us.

As the bus pulled out, for once someone got the jump on Herman, with the latecomer leaning across the aisle and inquiring in a cultivated voice, "Where are you gentlemen headed, may I ask?"

"Yallostone Park, next on list," replied Herman, triggered into his usual spiel that he and I were out to see the West but perhaps in deference to the man's oh so polite demeanor, he left off the part about ending up somewhere south of the moon and north of Hell.

"Oh, good for you and the young man there," his visitor approved our intentions with an odd click of his mouth. "Endless things to see in the park," he went on in that same refined tone but clickety at the end of each string of words, "all the marvels of nature. I'm passing through there myself, on my way to visit

my daughter in Salt Lake City.” By now I had caught on that his false teeth clacked.

“Ah-huh,” Herman stalled, like me thinking over the prospect of several hours of clickety-clack conversation like this from across the aisle. “You got some big miles to go.”

“So I have, you put it so well.” The fine-boned man, on second look maybe not as elderly as he first appeared, smiled under the cookie-duster mustache. “But that’s the story of life, isn’t it. Keeping on across the unknowable distances that at the end of it all add up to that mystical figure of three score and ten,” click-click.

I had heard Herman’s gabs with strangers across the aisle so many times I was only half listening to this exchange, more interested in devouring a Mounds bar and catching my breath, mentally at least, after the narrow escape from Sparrowhead. But that sizable serving of heavy thought from the little gent drew my attention. By now Herman too was cocking a speculative look at him.

“Please forgive me,” this daintiest of passengers touched the area of the knot of his tie. “There I go again, with my preaching collar on. You see, I’m a minister. Answered the call all those years ago”—a smile peeped from under the mustache again--“those big miles ago, and even though I’m retired, the pulpit still beckons at odd moments.” He laughed at himself, ever so apologetically. “I suppose folks like you unlucky enough to listen to my ramblings are my congregation now. I didn’t mean to intrude, my heart was simply warmed by the sight of the pair of you traveling together.”

Back there at the word *minister*, I stiffened. Dearie dearie goddamn. Why this, why now, why why why? On one of the biggest days of my life, the question of my taking the arrowhead had attached itself to me like a telltale shirt tail that hung out no matter how I tried to tuck it. I mean, I still believed I in no way amounted to

a real thief, whatever grabbyguts Wendell Williamson thought, because discovering the arrowhead after it had lain there unclaimed since before Columbus amounted to my luck and his loss, didn't it? And I had put back the money in Aunt Kate's purse, hadn't I? Shouldn't old Hippo Butt and Sparrowhead both know when they were beat, and fold their cards like canasta losers? Yet if the situation was that clearcut, why did it keep bugging me? Now *whoosh*, and right here on the dog bus the latest stranger proved to be a man of the cloth, as I knew from something I'd read such people were called, whose occupation it was to provide answers to things like that, in church and out, from the looks of it.

Oldtimer on the dog bus that I was from sixteen hundred and one miles going back east to Wisconsin and now many hundreds more westward with Herman, I had the crawly feeling that this particular passenger across the aisle was too close for comfort. This was way worse than the nun in black several seats back eyeing me spookily at the start of my trip to Manitowoc or the attic plaque of the kid on his knees bargaining with death in the night, this was as if the big mystery called God was using the bus-hopping minister like siccing a sheepdog onto strays. "*Go get 'em, Shep, herd them close. Nip 'em good. Here, take this new set of teeth.*"

Maybe a limited dose of religion never hurt anyone, but I was spooked. For some reason, the wispy figure an arm's length away reminded me of the little sheriff who'd arrested Harvey of his same name. Trouble came in small sizes as well as large, I was learning.

"No, no, is okay," Herman was busy assuring the kindly minister he wasn't intruding on us, although he sure as hell was, pardon my French. I could tell Herman too was thrown by the religious wraith's sudden appearance. For if my conscience had a few uncomfortable things on it, the one in the seat next to



mine must have been considerably weighted down with the phony tale of going back to Germany and this entire disappearing act he had thought up for the two of us. *No tracks behind do we leave* did not sound so simple after Wendell Williamson and now this delver into people's souls.

"May I ask how you two are related?" the minister pressed on. "I see such a striking resemblance."

He did? Was I growing to be like Herman that much? Oh man, there was another weighty question--good or bad, to take on the homely yet compelling characteristics of somebody one-eyed, horse-toothed, and, well, Hermanic? "Great-uncle only, I am," he postponed the matter as best he could, with a glassy glance at me. "Donny is best grandnephew ever made. A good boy."

"How fortunate you are, sir," a click and a chuckle from across the aisle. "Great by dint of the fruit of the family tree."

"Ja, I guess."

"By the way, my parishioners called me Reverend Mac," came next, with an extended hand of introduction. "It's from my middle name, Macintosh," which had quite a clack to it as he said it.

Seeing no way out of it, Herman and I shook hands with him and introduced ourselves back, and the Reverend Mac promptly followed up with just what we did not want to deal with.

Smiling to the fullest under the rim of mustache, he made the modest gesture toward his collar again. "A contribution I can still make to the good cause is to distribute Bibles into hotel rooms," he confided. "I have been doing so in Billings, which needs all the salvation it can get. You know the saying, I'm sure, that the Lord made the countryside but the Devil made the city." He gave another clickety chuckle, Herman and I trying to politely match it with heh-hehs. I think we both were a little afraid of what was coming, rightfully so. Slick as a carnival

barker, he pulled out a black book with gilt lettering, unmistakably a Bible, saying, "I happen to have an extra, and would be gratified if you gentlemen would accept it as a gift from a fellow traveler."

With it practically deposited in his lap, Herman had to take the offer, mumbling a thanks and shoveling the Bible along to me as if I were its natural audience. I gave him a look, but he wouldn't meet my eye, attending instead to the minister's rambling about the inevitable good that the Good Book would do in those dens of sin, hotel rooms. What he gave us proved to be a flimsy paperback version with typeface about the size of flyspecks, but it still unnerved me enough that I didn't want it paired with the autograph book, and quick as I could, stuck it in my opposite coat pocket.

"It does provide its rewards, spreading the good word," the minister still was holding forth to us as if we were in a church on wheels. "And that brings me to a question, if I may"--Herman and I both braced, now really knowing what was coming--"are you followers of the Lord, in your own way?"

The bus saved us, barely, gearing down into the town of Laurel at that moment, followed by the driver's announcement of a ten-minute stop to pick up passengers. As the Greyhound pulled over at the hotel serving as depot, I pleaded to Herman, "I need to go," although the urge wasn't really about using the convenience. "Real bad."

"Me too," he was out of his seat as if his pants were on fire, with me right after.

"I'll mind your seats for you," Reverend Mac obligingly called after us.

Making use of the rest room since we were there anyway, we spraddled side by side to discuss the minister matter. Escaping a preacher may not sound like the worst problem there is, but you have to admit it is among the trickier ones.

"Sky pilot, Old Shatterhand would call him," said Herman, buttoning up.

"Nosy old Holy Joe, Gram would call him," I said, doing the same.

"Ja, he is sniffing awful close to us."

"Guess what. I've got an idea."

Hearing me out as we headed back to the bus, Herman brightened up and paid me the ultimate compliment, saying I had a good think.

"You do it first, then I do same," he whispered before we stepped on. As we took our seats, Reverend Mac, his hands peacefully folded, welcomed us back.

He looked as if he'd been jolted in his prayer bones when, first thing, I leaned across Herman and thrust the autograph book at him, asking him ever so nicely to contribute some words of wisdom.

"My goodness, this is quite an honor," he recovered quickly enough, "and I had better make the most of it, hadn't I." He stroked his mustache as he studied the opened album, apparently sorting through holy thoughts. Then he began to write, surprisingly like a schoolboy toiling away at a handwriting exercise.

*The Good Book is a stay against the darkness*

*a source of wisdom*

*and a comfort in troubled times.*

*Yours in the fellowship of man*

*Isaac M. Dezmosz*

"Written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. That's biblical," he said, handing me back the Kwik Klik with that click of his own. It seemed to me sort of a preachy inscription and didn't even rhyme, but what else could I expect, I figured.

"I see you wondering about the last name," he provided next, noticing Herman's puzzlement as he studied the inscription over my shoulder. No wonder

"Wait, your room number is--?"

Herman threw over his shoulder some incomprehensible number in German and a farewell wave. "Auf weidersehn."

With that, we were outside in the fresh Yellowstone morning, fresh enough to make my teeth chatter.

"Lived through the night, hah, Donny?" I could see Herman's breath as he made this pronouncement.

I simply looked the real question to him: Now what?

A growing *whoosh* out across the flat, Old Faithful starting to percolate out of the mound again, spared him from answering that for the moment. "Notcheral wonders we are not short of, anyways," he dodged to. Yeah, right. Stranded and broke in a natural wonderland was still stranded and broke. I was feeling out of sorts, to put it mildly. Even beyond our predicament, something about the whole Yellowstone experience kept tickling my mind, as Herman had said. One of those nagging leavings in the back of the head that a person can't quite get to again. Some amazing fact from a *National Geographic*, maybe? Something digested way too deep from a Condensed Book? I hoped it was not anything one of the canasta witches came up with, because I was trying to forget their yackety-yack. Whatever the elusive think was, to put it in Herman's terms, it was lost to the immediate matter of being the next thing to hoboes.

As if to rub it in, the tourist world was comfortably coming to life, people moseying out onto the deck from breakfast--breakfast!--to gawk at Old Faithful gushing away like a hundred fire hydrants, tour busses pulling up in front of the Inn and baggage wranglers piling suitcases into the luggage compartments. I watched the busses with a pang, longing for a Greyhound to take us somewhere, anywhere.

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Herman read my mind. Trying to appear like travelers actually able to buy tickets, we hefted our luggage over to the loading area where in routes of red on a map sheeted over with weatherproof plastic, THE FLEET WAY once again was promised.

"Guess what, Donny," Herman began, waggling his fingers piano-player fashion to encourage mine, "time for you to--"

"Nothing doing." I tucked my hands in my armpits. "You choose. My finger-spitting got us into this."

He pursed up at that, but did not wish to really argue the point. Taking off his glasses to clean them with his hanky, he blinked as if to clear his eyes too, especially the artificial one. Then, glasses back on, very deliberate, visibly thinking, he leaned so close to the map it looked as if he would touch it with his nose--how this fit with *fingerspitzengefühl* eludes me--but he didn't, quite. Close study was necessary in more ways than one, because it went without saying that our world of the West had shrunk drastically, with the diminishment of our money and prospects. The land of the Apaches, say, was far, far out of reach until our fortune and fortunes improved. At the moment, looking nervously around at the park rangers starting to appear at various gathering spots around the geyser and hot pools, all the getaway I wanted was an escape from Yellowstone and Herman's lack of legal existence.

"Maybe go other way from notcheral wonders," he mused, still nose to nose with Greyhound possibilities. "Turn our luck around, whole circle."

So saying, he put his thumb smack dab on the place I least expected.

I sucked in my breath, as much from apprehension as from surprise. "Holy crap, Herman, I know I told you to pick, this time. But do you know anything about--?"

*change*  
*Abelard*

"Sunk, we are," Herman said huskily, putting a hand on my shoulder to steady me, or maybe himself.

Retreating to the front of the bus, we laid out our situation to the driver, who could only shake his head as if now he had heard everything and offer the commiseration, "Tough break, boys, better report it at park headquarters and they'll get the sheriff in on it."

I piled off the bus to do that very thing, my view of law enforcement having come around full circle in the past few minutes, with Herman more slowly following. "Hurry up," I called over my shoulder, half frantic or maybe more, as he lagged, "let's get some kind of cops after the thieving bastard."

"Donny, hold back. Over here, please."

Disconcerted by the detour, I uncertainly trailed after as he veered off to the gigantic wooden deck fronting the Inn, where people could sit out to watch Old Faithful display itself, although at that time of night we were the only ones anywhere around. He dropped his duffel bag at a vantage spot near the railing, so I set my suitcase there too until it would become clear what this was about. More and more unnerved, I whispered when I didn't have to, "Why're we wasting time here when he's getting away with--"

"Shhh, notcheral wonder is coming," he softly shut me up.

Spooked as I was anyway by Herman behaving this way, now I was hearing what sounded like low thunder and heavy rain mixed together, although the night remained cloudless. I thought I felt the earth tremble, but it may have been just me. We turned together toward the source of the sound, a boiling hiss coming out of the floodlit mound, and as we watched, in its center what looked like a giant fountain started up, the cascades of steaming water billowing and falling, but steadily and incredibly billowing higher and higher, until the ghostly white column

11

9

change  
spooned  
7

in the night stood taller than the tallest trees, almost touching that single bright star, it looked like. Magnificent as the sight was, it did little to change my anxious mood. Old Faithful was an eyeful, for sure, but so what? It faithfully would be blowing off steam again in an hour or so, after we'd had time to spill our story to whatever passed for cops under these circumstances, yet Herman was making no move whatsoever in that direction.

Rather, he motioned wordlessly for me to take a seat in the deck chair next to the one he claimed. Scratching a match on the arm of the chair, he lit a cigar and gazed fixedly at Old Faithful's rising and falling curtains of water as he puffed. Had he gone loco? This I could not understand at all, the two of us planting ourselves there sightseeing the starlit geyser fading slowly back into the ground while the thief who'd left us skunk broke except for a cheap Bible was making a getaway free as the breeze. Half a dozen times I itchily started to say something of that sort, but could not quite bring myself to, with Herman locked on to the vanishing pillar of water as if it was the last thing he would ever see.

Finally he extinguished the red dot of his cigar and murmured as if coming out of his deepest think yet, "Guess what, Donny. Not a good eye-dea, to go to police."

"Not a--? Sure it is. We've got to, they're the ones to chase down the sonofabitching phony religious--"

"Many questions, they will have."

"So what?"

"Donny, listen one minute. I am not American on paper."

That took some digesting. At first, I didn't know what to make of it.

"Then what are you?"

"German."

9

phony  
donny  
9 H



"Well, yeah, sure, that's pretty obvious. But who cares about something like that any more?"

"*Citizen* of Germany, yet," he spelled out, his voice growing strained. "Here I am what is called an alien."

Giving this news what I thought deserved, the French salute, I asked what was wrong with being one of those, whatever they were.

"An enemy alien."

That hit me where it counted. It put things right back to when I learned he was Herman the German and feared he was one of the Hitler demons who shot my father's legs to pieces at Omaha Beach. Was I right the first time? Fearfully I trembled out, "How--how are you an enemy?"

He threw up his hands. "By not showing my face when World War Zwei"--wincing, he corrected that to Two--"got America in. Some big danger I ever was, hah?"

I listened dumbstruck to the rest, how having had enough of war in the first one, this time he quietly shipped out on ore boats like the *Badger Voyager* where no questions were asked as long as you could shovel heaps of coal, keeping himself at sea or whatever it was on the Great Lakes, and, beyond that, essentially hiding out in plain sight. "Manitowoc is German sort of place, you maybe noticed," he said whimsically. "Government was not going to declare whole town an enemy."

The meaning was sinking in on me now, all right. "You're not supposed to be in this country at all? They'd throw you out?"

"Not at first," he said, raising my hopes. But then: "Put me in jail, they would."

"In the *clink*? You're that much of an--" I couldn't bring myself to say *enemy* "--alien?"

"By stupid law, ja," that came spat out. Given how law enforcers seemed to side with Sparrowhead against me, I couldn't blame him for feeling picked on.

91  
Killerby?

1, 2nd  
time  
around

story 1



my deck chair. "Not always a good idea to be where history gets made," he ducked his head as if dodging too late. "Packed hall that night, thousands drinking beer, government people there to say the country is not going to the dogs, if anybody would believe them. I am notcherly curious, so I come out from where brew vats are, to listen. Bring mug of beer for myself, why not, and sit at table near the back, where people have left." All of a sudden he flung an arm up as if firing a pistol at the moon, making me nearly jump out of my hide. "Right in time for Hitler to come through door and climb on table and shoot in the air, ja, like some cowboy. Close as you to me," he repeated, shaking his head at how history brushed past him. "But before I could reach across table, pull the feet from under this crazy person up there shooting, make him fall on his face like fool he is, whole bunch of brownshirts"--storm troopers--"with guns out grab me and others around, goverment people and all." Drawing a breath, he husked out the rest of the recitation. "Hitler takes those to a room, the rest of us is held at point of guns, told shut up and drink beer. When myself and some others say what is happening is not right, we get knocked around and told we are now on list to be shot." Talk about spellbound; I was as much all ears as when he'd told about being swept up by the Witch of November, only this November rough weather was called Adolph Hitler.

"A putsch, it was," which he defined as a gamble at taking over everything. "Did not work that time, Nazi march on rest of Munich failed the next day, so putsch collapsed, good thing. But I had two eyes then," he made a face wan as the partial moonlight, "and did not like look of things in Germany. Beer hall bullies, Hitler bunch was, but maybe more than that if they ever got hold of government, hah? Being on list to be shot reminded me too much of Hohe Toter Mann"--the specter of Dead Man's Hill sent a real chill up my spine. "*Pthht*, to that," he rid himself of his homeland again. Leaning toward me as if that would bring me nearer to understanding, he tapped his temple, where little thinks came from. "Listen,

72  
missing

heel

Donny, this is the how of it. Find a safe harbor, is good saying. In Germany then, that meant small ports on the Baltic, where Nazis was not thick on the ground yet. Always ships going out the Baltic Sea, all places of the world.” This I could follow almost as though I were at his side escaping from the Nazis and that sonofabitch of all sonsofbitches, Hitler. “I give the engineer a little something,” he went on, rubbing his fingers together in that familiar gesture meaning money. “He lets me hide in tool room, down where boilers are. Nobody topside comes ever, and I make friends with stokers by helping out. Learn to shovel coal. When we dock in America, jumped ship, I did.”

In three paragraphs, there it was, not so long after all. One for Believe It Or Not!--the man who came within an arm's length of stopping Hitler. Not only that, the history that had made him an enemy of Germany for real and an enemy of America on paper, both at the same time. Almost dizzy with the size of the fix he was in--*we* were in--one more thing I had to check on.

“Jumped ship. Is--is that against the law, too?”

“Could say so, ja,” came the not unexpected reply. “Stowaway, is that word,” he ruefully added it to the growing list of other names for Herman Schmidt.

“Aunt Kate,” I whispered again, for no reason but the weight of the question, “was she in on this? You being an alien and all?”

He nodded slowly. “She knew, all the time. Had to. House in her name, car in her name. She is the Schmidt that counted, on paper.” He shrugged, helplessly resigned to the one-sided situation. “No identification papers can I show for anything, as enemy alien.”

And she had called *me* a storer? What about living under false pretenses with a husband who was not anything he appeared to be? Busy piling that up against her, it took a few moments for that last part to fully register on me.

lead

9

our direction. Wasn't there an old jukebox song, something about "Hellhound on my trail"? I distinctly was feeling like a Heavenhound was on mine.

Herman squinted at the sunset a few moments and luckily, yawned a canyon's worth again. "Pretty, hah, Donny?"

"Yeah. Almost like a dream."

"Speaking of the Land of Nod," Reverend Mac soothed as if we were Sunday schoolers, "I'm sorry to have taken you away from that. But a Jesus sky doesn't appear simply any old time, does it," he said gently. "Now I will leave you to your relaxation."

For a while I kept one eye open to see if he meant it this time. Herman was immediately asleep, his head lopped to one side. The dainty minister sat back, arms folded in contentment, smiling to himself insofar as I could tell in the descending dark. The last thing I knew before sleep claimed me, he was humming to himself a little, probably a hymn.

"Old Faithful Inn, the Waldorf Astoria of Yellowstone National Park. You may disembark if you so wish--"

The driver's out-of-the-dark announcement served to rouse those of us getting off, although not many did at that time of night, most passengers likely traveling on through to Salt Lake City or somewhere like the talkative minister. Herman and I alit in the parking lot with the scattering of others, claimed our duffel bag and the wicker suitcase, and took a minute to deeply breathe in the piny air and take in our surroundings. Some distance away, with black forest as a backdrop, floodlights picked out a whitish mound of earth, which we assumed must be where the famous geyser would make its appearance. Over us loomed the Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like a castle made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. A crescent moon bright as



polished silver had the cloudless Wyoming heavens to itself. Not even a Jesus sky could compete with this, as far as I was concerned, nor Herman either. "Yallostone is already some place, hah, Donny?" Herman exulted, as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase. "Yeah, finger-spit knew what it was doing this time, didn't it," I crowed happily, now that we were there and free of Reverend Mac. He wasn't even in evidence as we left the bus, and I figured he must have moved to some other seat farther back where religious pickings were better, after my idea of us conking off to sleep shut him off. Good-bye and good riddance, I wished him with relief as we started off toward the western-as-all-get-out Inn with its log-set windows aglow.

"Donny, wait."

What I heard in Herman's voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

"Herman!" In a stumbling panic, I rushed to him. "Y-you're not gonna die on me, are you?"

"No, not that. My wallet." He kept searching his coat pockets over and over. "Is gone."

"How can it be? Didn't you put it down the front of your pants when you were sleeping?"

"I didn't think."

I could barely squeak out the next. "Was all our money--?"

"Ja."

"Fuck and phooey, Herman!" my voice came back. "You mean we're skunk broke?"



“Hah?” He looked so anguished I was afraid he really might have a heart attack. “If that means all gone, ja again.” He slapped his pants pocket, which did not jingle one bit. “Spent the chicken feed on candy bars, even,” he moaned.

I still was in shock. “Who--how--” We needed to do something, but what? “Let’s ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--”

“Not just yet, hah-uh,” he stopped me. There in the parking lot dimly lit from the Inn, he still looked stricken but in a different way. “Something is tickling my mind. Quick, your book. Let me look.”

Blankly I handed over the autograph album, and peered along with him as he flipped pages to Reverend Mac’s inscription. With some kind of swearing in German, he put his thumb next to the signature, *Isaac M. Dezmosz*. “Should have seen. Dismas was the thief crucified with Christ.” It took me a moment to put together the initials with that pronunciation and come up with it: *I. M. Dismas*.

”Lying in his false teeth, he was,” Herman bleakly summed up the so-called Reverend Mac.

I blew my top. “The smart-ass little sonofabitch of a thief! Distributing Bibles, my butt! C’mon, we’ll show him troubled times.”

I tore across the parking lot to where the bus was idling, ready to go, Herman galloping after me. I banged on the door, and Herman joined in as if he would tear it open with his bare hands.

The driver opened and considerately asked, “Forget something, boys?”

Without answering, I lunged up the steps and into the aisle, Herman right behind, both of us furiously searching for a distinctive gray head and silvery mustache.

The seat was empty. “Where’d he go?” I demanded at the top of my voice, glaring at the rows of startled faces, none of them the right one.

“Who, the minister?” the driver called down the aisle to us, perplexed by our invasion. “He got off at Livingston, couple of hours ago. Said he had a train to catch.”

“Sunk, we are,” Herman said softly, putting a hand on my shoulder to steady me, or maybe himself.

Retreating to the front of the bus, we laid out our situation to the driver, who could only shake his head as if he had heard everything now and tell us, “Tough break, boys, better report it at park headquarters and they’ll get the sheriff in on it.”

I piled off the bus to do that very thing, my view of law enforcement having come around full circle in the past few minutes, with Herman more slowly following. “Hurry up,” I called over my shoulder, half frantic or maybe more, as he lagged, “let’s get some kind of cops after the thieving bastard.”

“Donny, hold back. Over here, please.” Disconcerted by the detour, I uncertainly trailed after as he veered off to the long wooden deck outside the Inn, where people sat to watch Old Faithful display itself, although at that time of night we were the only ones anywhere around.

Spooked as I was anyway by Herman behaving this way, now I was hearing what sounded like low thunder and heavy rain mixed together, although the night was cloudless. I thought I felt the ground tremble, but maybe it was me. Some distance away, floodlights picked out a grayish mound of earth, and as we watched, in its center what looked like a fountain started up, the cascades of white water billowing up and falling, but steadily and incredibly billowing higher and higher, until

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was he  
crazy?

“Not a--? Sure it is. We’ve got to, they’re the ones to chase down the sonofabitching phony religious--”

“Many questions, they will have.”

“So what?”

“Donny, listen one minute. I am not American on paper.”

That took some digesting. At first, I still didn’t know what to make of it.

“Then what are you?”

“German.”

“Well, yeah, sure, that’s pretty obvious. But who cares about something like that any more?”

”*Citizen* of Germany, yet,” he spelled out, his voice growing strained.

“Here I am what is called an alien.”

“Yeah? So?”

“An enemy alien.”

That hit me between the eyes. It put things right back to when I learned he was Herman the German and feared he was one of those who shot my father’s legs to pieces at Omaha Beach. Was I right the first time? “How--how are you an enemy?”

He threw up his hands. “By not showing my face and signing stupid piece of paper when World War Zwei”--he winced and corrected that to Two--“got America in. Some big danger I was, hah?” I listened dumbstruck to the rest, how throughout the war he quietly shipped out on ore boats like the *Badger Voyager* where no questions were asked as long as you could shovel heaps of coal, keeping himself at sea or whatever it was on the Great Lakes, and, beyond that, essentially hiding out in plain sight. “Manitowoc is German sort of place, you maybe noticed. Government was not going to declare whole town an enemy.”



The meaning was sinking in on me now, all right. "You're not supposed to be in this country? They'd kick you out?"

"Not at first," he said, raising my hopes. But then: "Put me in jail, they would."

"In the *clink*? You're that much of an--" I couldn't bring myself to say *enemy* "--alien?"

"By stupid law, ja."

"But if you're still German," I was back to circling in confusion, "how'd you get here at all?"

"I took French leave."

"I don't quite know what that means."

"Long story, Donny. I did not like look of Nazis when Hitler took power. Beer hall bullies, but maybe real stinkers more than that, hah? Reminded me of Dead Man's Hill, the way Germany was going. *Pthht*, to that," he rid himself of his homeland again. "Watched for chance and jumped ship, I did."

"Is--is that against the law, too?"

"Could say so, ja. Stowaway, is that word," he ruefully added it to the growing list of other names for Herman Schmidt. Leaning toward me as if that would bring me nearer to understanding, he tapped his temple, where little thinks came from. "Find a safe harbor, is good saying. In Germany then, that meant small ports on the Baltic, where Nazis were not thick on the ground yet. Always ships going out the Baltic Sea, all places of the world," this I could follow almost as though I were at his side escaping from the Nazis, "I pay the engineer a little something, he lets me hide in tool room, down where boilers are. Nobody topside comes ever, and I make friends with stokers by helping out. Learn to shovel coal."

"Aunt Kate. Was she in on this? You being an alien and all?"

. writer  
Now

our direction. Wasn't there an old jukebox song, something about "Hellhound on my trail"? I distinctly was feeling like a Heavenhound was on mine.

Herman squinted at the sunset a few moments and luckily, yawned a canyon's worth again. "Pretty, hah, Donny?"

"Yeah. Almost like a dream."

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"Donny, wait."

What I heard in Herman's voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

"Herman!" I rushed to him. "Y-you're not gonna die, are you?"

"No, not that. My wallet." He kept searching his coat pockets over and over. "Is gone."

"How can it be? Didn't you put it down the front of your pants when you were sleeping?"

"I didn't think."

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"Ja."

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I still was in shock. "Who--how--" We needed to do something, but what? "Let's ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--"

*breathing in  
didn't find  
it, just*

*got a  
new bag of  
money*

*in a  
stumbling  
panic*

*transcript*



"Sky pilot, Old Shatterhand would call him," said Herman, buttoning up.

"Nosy old Holy Joe, Gram would call him," I said, doing the same.

"Ja, he is sniffing awful close to us."

"Guess what. I've got an idea."

Hearing me out as we headed back to the bus, Herman brightened up and paid me the ultimate compliment, saying I had a good think.

"You do it first, then I do same," he whispered before we stepped on. As we took our seats, Reverend Mac, his hands peacefully folded, welcomed us back.

He looked as if he'd been jolted in his prayer bones when, first thing, I leaned across Herman and thrust the autograph book at him, asking him ever so nicely to contribute some words of wisdom.

"My goodness, this is quite an honor," he recovered quickly enough, "and I had better make the most of it, hadn't I." He stroked his mustache as he studied the opened album, apparently sorting through holy thoughts. Then he began to write, surprisingly like a schoolboy toiling away at a handwriting exercise.

*The Good Book is a stay against the darkness*

*a source of wisdom*

*and a comfort in troubled times.*

*Yours in the fellowship of man*

*Isaac M. Dezmosz*

"Written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond. That's biblical," he said, handing me back the Kwik Klik with that click of his own.

"Hallelujah, brother, I thank you for the chance to get those words down." It seemed to me sort of a preachy inscription and didn't even rhyme, but what else could I expect, I figured.

"I see you wondering about the last name," he provided next, noticing Herman's puzzlement as he studied the inscription over my shoulder. No wonder

Jesus  
sky  
versions



the man went by Reverend Mac, was my own reaction to what looked like a line from an eyechart.

"A touch of Poland in the family, way back," he smiled as if we all knew what a tangle the family could be. "Mankind is such a mixture sometimes."

"Slumgullion, like Donny says," Herman could readily agree to that, yawning prodigiously some more as he had made sure to do while the reverend wrote.

Yawns are of course catching, and following his, mine were absolutely epidemic, according to my plan. "You know what," I stretched drowsily, which did not take much pretending, "I'm all in but my shoelaces."

"Ja, we are feeling it," Herman did his part, patting away another yawn as if doing a war whoop. "South Dakota is a long ride," he borrowed the jackrabbit territory of the day before.

If the Reverend Mac was disappointed in not pinning us down about whether we were with the Lord, he did not show it. "By all means, go to your rest," he could not have been more gracious about excusing us to slumber. "Bus travel takes it out of a person."

He said a mouthful there. Naturally Herman was asleep almost the instant he shut his eyelids, and I was more than ready to doze off as well, genuinely pooped out from all that had happened at Crow Fair. The dainty minister sat back, smiling to himself, one more Bible inflicted on potential sinners or proven ones, to his evident satisfaction. The last thing I remember before sleep claimed me, he was humming to himself a little, probably a hymn.

"Old Faithful Inn, the Waldorf Astoria of Yellowstone National Park. You may disembark if you so wish--"

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Jesus Sky  
in this

Then  
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to next morn

Herman and I alit in the parking lot after the driver's done-it-a-hundred-times announcement with a cluster of tourists already oohing and ahing. Still yawning as we waited for our baggage to be dug from their mountain of suitcases, I looked around for the talkative minister, suspicious that he would hop off to stretch his legs and have another go at us. But there remained no sign of the soul-hunting demon, to mix terms in an unholy way. The little Bible-pusher had disappeared from the seat across from us whenever I cracked an eye open from my series of naps, probably to farther back in the bus where religious pickings might be better, and I figured he must be staying aboard to work on some poor Salt Lake City-bound soul who needed directions to the Lord.

Hallelujah, brother, now the Reverend Mac was digested into the memory book, and that was enough of him for me. Herman was not too pleased when I insisted on stowing the cheap Bible in the duffel bag, tut-tutting at my attempted joke that it might as well be in there with the French Bible of playing cards, but conceded that we could leave carrying the good word around in a pocket to someone more fit to do it.

Quickly putting aside the churchy bus experience, we turned to our much-awaited surroundings. Smell that piney air, feel that high altitude! We had made it to glorious Yellowstone, free as knights and Apaches and other roaming spirits, and in silent agreement we grinned at each other and took a minute to marvel at it all. Some distance away, with black forest as a backdrop, lay a prominent mound of earth, almost as white as salt, which we divined must be where the famous geyser would make its appearance. Out and around in what looked like a geyser kitchen, steaming water bubbled out of the ground as if from gigantic boiling pots. Oh man, nature was really cooking here, in all senses of the phrase. And just as fabulous for our current purpose, overlooking all this was the colossal Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like an elaborate fortress made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. By now it was

suppertime and a long way from the last of the candy bars, and a place as grand as that surely would have a menu fit for the gods or at least us.

“Notcheral wonders and feathery beds for the night, hah, Donny?” Herman exulted as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase.

“Yeah, finger-spit knew what it was doing, didn’t it,” I crowed happily as we started off after everybody else to check in to the fancy Inn and head for supper.

“Donny, wait.”

What I heard in Herman’s voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

“Herman!” In a stumbling panic, I rushed to him. “Y-you’re not gonna die on me, are you?”

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“How can it be? Didn’t you put it down the front of your pants when you were sleeping?”

“I didn’t think.”

I could barely squeak out the next. “Was all our money--?”

“Ja.”

“Fuck and phooey, Herman!” my voice came back. “You mean we’re skunk broke?”

“Hah?” He looked so anguished I was afraid he really might have a heart attack. “If that means all gone, ja again.” He slapped his pants pocket, which did not jingle one bit. “Spent the chicken feed on candy bars, even,” he moaned.

I still was in shock. This was a hundred times worse than the ex-convict trying to steal my suitcase at that Minnesota Palookaville. “Who--how--” We

needed to do something, but what? “Let’s ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--”

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”Lying in his false teeth, he was,” Herman bleakly summed up the so-called Reverend Macintosh.

I blew my top. “The smart-ass little sonofabitch of a thief! Distributing Bibles, my butt! C’mon, we’ll show him troubled times.”

I tore across the parking lot to where the bus was idling, ready to go, Herman galloping after me. I banged on the door, and Herman joined in as if he would tear it open with his bare hands.

The driver opened and considerately asked, “Forget something, boys?”

Without answering, I lunged up the steps and into the aisle, Herman right behind, both of us furiously searching for a distinctive gray head and silvery mustache.

Neither of which was in evidence on any of the remaining passengers, from front of the bus to the back as I careened up the aisle in search, Herman blocking the way in back of me in case the little Bible-spouting weasel tried to make a break for it. “Where’d that goddamned preacher go?” I demanded at the top of my voice, glaring at the rows of startled faces, none of them the right one.



“Who, the nice little minister?” the driver called down the aisle to us, perplexed by our invasion. “He got off at Livingston, a ways back. Said he had a train to catch.”

“Sinked, we are,” Herman said huskily, putting a hand on my shoulder to steady me, or maybe himself.

Retreating to the front of the bus, we laid out our situation to the driver, who could only shake his head as if now he had heard everything and offer the commiseration, “Tough break, boys, better report it at park headquarters and they’ll get the sheriff in on it.”

all knew what a tangle the family could be. "Mankind is such a mixture sometimes."

"Slumgullion, like Donny says," Herman could readily agree to that, yawning prodigiously some more as he had made sure to do while the reverend wrote.

Yawns are of course catching, and following his, mine were practically epidemic, according to my plan. "You know what," I stretched drowsily, which did not take much pretending, "I'm all in but my shoelaces."

"Ja, we are feeling it," Herman did his part, patting away another yawn as if doing a war whoop. "South Dakota is a long ride," he borrowed the jackrabbit territory of the day before.

If the Reverend Mac was disappointed in not pinning us down about whether we were with the Lord, he did not show it. "By all means, go to your rest," he could not have been more gracious about excusing us to slumber. "Bus travel takes it out of a person."

He said a mouthful there. I was genuinely pooped out, nestling against the window seat with my coat for a pillow, the long day itself heading for the barn, I could hear Gram say. This stretch of highway stayed with the big river flowing out of Yellowstone, hours ahead yet, that gave it its name, and dusk was settling in on the riverbank groves of shimmering cottonwoods and the irrigated fields of hay, still green as green could be, lining the road. In that lulling scenery, I dozed off in almost no time. Only to be jerked awake by the exclamation across the aisle.

"The Master Painter has done it again!"

"Huh, whuh--" Waking even more groggily than I did, Herman lurched up in his seat, looking around in confusion. I still was blinking and wondering if I was dreaming, but couldn't help seeing what caused Reverend Mac's pious outburst, face on as the spectacle was to us. Heading west straight into the last of

sunset--the driver had pulled down the windshield visor and even so had a hand up shielding his eyes--the bus was driving smack into a stunning picture of the heavens glowing crimson and gold with shafts of light pouring through the clouds. With a rimrock butte beneath catching the light, it did look a helluva lot, pardon my French, like a picture the painter Charlie Russell would come up with. But I grasped all too well that the minister meant a different type of painter and painting, like you would see--well, let him tell it.

"Will you look at that, gentlemen," he leaned our direction and said dreamily as if he had been the one just awakened, "a Jesus sky at twilight. Makes you feel the wonder of existence, doesn't it."

It made me have goosebumps but not for the right reason. At least Jesus wasn't perched there on a sunbeam and drawing sinners to him like a magnet, as in the churchy kind of painting Reverend Mac had in mind. But the reverend himself was too much in the picture, so to speak, with all this attention he was paying in our direction. Wasn't there an old jukebox song, something about "Hellhound On My Trail"? I distinctly was feeling like a Heavenhound was on mine.

Herman squinted at the sunset a moment or two and luckily, yawned a canyon's worth again. "Pretty, hah, Donny?"

"Yeah. Almost like a dream."

"Speaking of the Land of Nod," Reverend Mac soothed as if we were Sunday schoolers, "I'm sorry to have wakened you from that. But a Jesus sky doesn't appear simply any old time, does it," he said gently. "Now I will leave you to your relaxation."

For a while I kept one eye open to see if he meant it this time. Herman was immediately asleep, his head lopped to one side. The dainty minister sat back, arms folded in contentment, smiling to himself insofar as I could tell in the descending

again  
?

dark. The last thing I knew before sleep claimed me, he was humming to himself a little, probably a hymn.

“Old Faithful Inn, the Waldorf Astoria of Yellowstone National Park. You may disembark if you so wish--”

Herman and I alit in the parking lot with most of the rest of the passengers after the driver's out-of-the-dark announcement. Sleepily I looked around for the talkative minister, suspicious that he would hop off the bus up to stretch his legs and have another go at us, but there remained no sign of him, thankfully. I figured he must have moved to some other seat farther back where religious pickings were better, after my idea of us conking off to sleep successfully shut him off, and was staying aboard to work on some poor Salt Lake City-bound soul who needed directions to the Lord.

Well, the Reverend Mac was now digested into the memory book, and that was enough of him for me. Herman was not too pleased when I insisted on stowing the cheap Bible in the duffel bag, tut-tutting at my attempted joke that it might as well be in there with the French Bible of playing cards, but conceded that we could leave carrying the good word around in a pocket to someone more fit to do it.

Quickly putting aside the churchy bus experience, we turned to our much-awaited surroundings. Smell that piney air, feel that high altitude! We had made it to glorious Yellowstone, free as knights and Apaches and other roaming spirits, and in silent agreement we grinned at each other and took a minute to marvel at it all. Some distance away, with black forest as a backdrop, floodlights picked out a whitish mound of earth, which we divined must be where the famous geyser would make its appearance. In back of us loomed the Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like an elaborate fortress made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. Magically, a star brighter than all the others in



the cloudless Wyoming heavens--probably the planet Venus, I now realize--stood out right over the geyser site. Not even a Jesus sky at twilight could compete with this, as far as I was concerned, or Herman either. "Must be your lucky star, hah, Donny?" he exulted, as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase. "Yeah, finger-spit knew what it was doing this time, didn't it," I crowed happily as we started off after everybody else to the fancy Inn for the night.

"Donny, wait."

What I heard in Herman's voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

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needed to do something, but what? “Let’s ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--”

“Not just yet, hah-uh,” he stopped me. There in the parking lot dimly lit from the Inn, he still looked stricken but in a different way. “Something is tickling my mind. Quick, your book. Let me look.”

Blankly I handed over the autograph album, and peered along with him as he flipped pages to Reverend Mac’s inscription. With some kind of swearing in German, he put his thumb next to the signature, *Isaac M. Dezmosz*.

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The driver opened and considerately asked, “Forget something, boys?”

Without answering, I lunged up the steps and into the aisle, Herman right behind, both of us furiously searching for a distinctive gray head and silvery mustache.

The seat was empty. “Where’d he go?” I demanded at the top of my voice, glaring at the rows of startled faces, none of them the right one.

“Who, the nice little minister?” the driver called down the aisle to us, perplexed by our invasion. “He got off at Livingston, couple of hours ago. Said he had a train to catch.”

Still as mad as could be, I piled off the bus to do that very thing, my view of law enforcement having come around full circle in the past few minutes, with Herman more slowly following.

“Hurry up,” I called over my shoulder, half frantic or maybe more, as he lagged on the way across the parking lot, “let’s get some kind of cops after the thieving bastard.”

“Donny, hold back. Over here, please.”

Disconcerted by the detour, I uncertainly trailed after as he veered off to the gigantic wooden deck fronting the Inn, where people could sit out to watch Old Faithful display itself.

He dropped his duffel bag in a corner away from where everyone else was sitting, so I set my suitcase there too until it would become clear what this was about. More and more unnerved, I whispered when I didn’t have to, “Why’re we wasting time here when he’s getting away with--”

“Shhh, notcheral wonder is coming,” he gently shut me up.

Unstrung as I was anyway by Herman behaving this way, now I was hearing what sounded like low thunder and heavy rain mixed together, although the sky remained cloudless. I thought I felt the earth tremble, but it may have been just me. We turned together toward the source of the sound, a boiling hiss coming out of the whitish mound, and as we watched, in its center what looked like a giant fountain started up, the cascades of steaming water billowing and falling, but steadily and incredibly billowing higher and higher, until the ghostly white column stood taller than the tallest trees. Oh man, nature was really cooking here, in all meanings of that phrase. Yet magnificent as the sight was, it did little to change my anxious mood. Old Faithful was an eyeful, for sure, but so what? It faithfully would be blowing off steam again in an hour or so, after we’d had time to spill our story to whatever passed for cops under these circumstances, but Herman was making no move whatsoever in that direction.

Instead, he motioned wordlessly for me to take a seat in the deck chair next to the one he claimed. Scratching a match on the arm of the chair, he lit a cigar and gazed fixedly at Old Faithful’s rising and falling curtains of water as he puffed. Had he gone loco? This I could not understand at all, the two of us planting ourselves there sightseeing the geyser fading slowly back into the ground while the thief who’d left us skunk broke except for a cheap Bible was making a getaway free as the breeze. Half a dozen times I itchily started to say something of that sort, but could not quite bring myself to, with Herman locked on to the vanishing pillar of water as if it was the last thing he would ever see.

Finally he extinguished his cigar and murmured as if coming out of his deepest think yet, “Guess what, Donny. Not a good eye-dea, to go to police.”

“Not a--? Sure it is. We’ve got to, they’re the ones to chase down the sonofabitching phony religious--”



"Many questions, they will have."

"So what?"

"Donny, listen one minute."

Something in his voice warned me to prepare myself for what was coming.

Not that I possibly could, because what he was leading up to saying was:

"I am not American on paper."

That took some digesting. At first, I didn't know what to make of it.

"Then what are you?"

"German."

"Well, yeah, sure, that's pretty obvious. But who cares about something like that any more?"

"*Citizen* of Germany, yet," he spelled out, his voice growing strained.

"Here I am what is called an alien."

Giving this news what I thought it deserved, the French salute, I asked what was wrong with being one of those, whatever they were.

"An enemy alien."

That hit me where it counted. It put things right back to when I learned he was Herman the German and feared he was one of the Hitler demons who shot my father's legs to pieces at Omaha Beach. Was I right the first time?

Fearfully I trembled out, "How--how are you an enemy?"

He threw up his hands. "By not showing my face when World War Zwei"--wincing, he corrected that to Two--"got America in. Some big danger I ever was, hah?"

I listened dumbstruck to the rest, how having had enough of war in the first one, the second time around he quietly shipped out on ore boats like the *Badger Voyager* where no questions were asked as long as you could shovel heaps of coal, keeping himself at sea or whatever it was on the Great Lakes, and, beyond that,

essentially hiding out in plain sight. “Manitowoc is German sort of place, you maybe noticed,” he said whimsically. “Government was not going to declare whole town an enemy.”

The meaning was sinking in on me now, all right. “You’re not supposed to be in this country at all? They’d kick you out?”

“Not at first,” he raised my hopes. But then: “Put me in prison, they would.”

I was horrified, as Herman’s word best said such a thing. “You’re that much of an--” I couldn’t bring myself to say *enemy* “--alien?”

“By stupid law, ja,” that came spat out. Given how law enforcers seemed to automatically side with Sparrowhead against me, I couldn’t blame him for feeling picked on. “But if you’re still stuck being a, a German,” I was back to circling in confusion, “how’d you get here at all?”

He laughed, the hollow empty kind.

“Took French leave.”

I unsteadily told him I didn’t quite know what that meant.

“Long story, Donny.”

“Hitler, pah. Too bad I did not break his neck when he was close as me to you, that night.”

And so in the next unforgettable minutes there in an American national wonderland, I learned that French leave meant desertion, although in this case not from any army but an entire country. Germany, that is, when it was falling to pieces after losing World War One and the Nazis were coming out of the woodwork. As his searching words led me through, my imagination transformed the hunched figure clasping his hands between his legs into a young veteran like my own father coming home from combat. Aunt Kate may have thought Herman had an abbreviated intelligence, but it sounded to me as if he had been smart as an

Einstein in his choice of livelihood after his term as a soldier on the losing side: making beer where they drank it like water. "In Munich were beer halls like you would not believe, big as this, almost," he pointed a thumb to the whopping Inn behind us. "And Oktoberfest there, two-week festival of foods and beers." He gave that hollow laugh again. "Crow Fair for drunkards. Good place to be a braumeister." From what he said, that was a vital task in the brewing of beer, sampling and comparing to the competition, and he had enough knack at it to work up to a job at a famous place, although I had never heard of it until his chilling telling.

"The Buergerbraukeller, biggest in Munich." He paused, the night just before Armistice Day in 1923 coming back to him as it brought me to the edge of my deck chair. "Not always a good idea to be where history gets made," he ducked his head as if dodging too late. "Packed hall that night, thousands drinking beer, government people there to say the country is not going to the dogs, if anybody would believe them. I am notcherly curious, so I come out from where brew vats are, to listen. Bring mug of beer for myself, why not, and sit at table near the back, where people have left." All of a sudden he flung an arm up as if firing a pistol at the sky, making me nearly jump out of my hide. "Right in time for Hitler to come through door and climb on table and shoot in the air, ja, like some cowboy. Close as me to you," he repeated, shaking his head at how history brushed past him. "But when I try to reach across table to grab him, pull the feet from under this crazy person up there shooting, make him fall on his face like fool he is, Hitler keeps dancing around like cat on a stove, he is so nervous, and I miss him this far." He held his fingers inches apart. "Before I can try again, whole bunch of brownshirts"--storm troopers--"with guns out jump on me and others around, goverment people and all." Drawing a breath, he husked out the rest of the recitation. "Hitler takes those to a room, the rest of us is held at point of guns, told

shut up and drink beer. When myself and some others say what is happening is not right, we get knocked around and told we are now on list to be shot.” Talk about spellbound; I was as much all ears as when he’d told about being swept up by the Witch of November, only this November rough weather was called Adolph Hitler.

“A putsch, it was,” which he defined as a gamble at taking over everything. “Did not work that time, Nazi march on rest of Munich failed the next day, so putsch collapsed, good thing. But I had two eyes then,” he made a wan face, “and did not like look of things in Germany. Beer hall bullies, Hitler bunch was, but maybe more than that if they ever got hold of government, hah? Being on list to be shot reminded me too much of Hohe Toter Mann”--the specter of Dead Man’s Hill sent a real chill up my spine. “*Pthht*, to that,” he rid himself of his homeland. Leaning toward me as if that would bring me nearer to understanding, he tapped his temple, where little thinks came from. “Listen, Donny, this is the how of it. Find a safe harbor, is good saying. In Germany then, that meant small ports on the Baltic, where Nazis was not thick on the ground yet. Always ships going out the Baltic Sea, all places of the world.” This I could follow almost as though I were at his side escaping from the Nazis and that sonofabitch of all sonsofbitches, Hitler. “I give the ship engineer a little something,” he went on, rubbing his fingers together in that familiar gesture meaning money. “He lets me hide in tool room, down where boilers are. Nobody topside comes ever, and I make friends with stokers by helping out. Learn to shovel coal. When we dock in America, jumped ship, I did.”

In three paragraphs, there it was, not so long after all. One for Believe It Or Not!--the man who came within the length of his fingers of stopping Hitler. Not only that, the history that had made him an enemy of Germany for real and an enemy of America on paper, both at the same time.



Almost dizzy with the size of the fix he was in--*we* were in--one more thing I had to check on.

"Jumped ship. Is--is that against the law, too?"

"Could say so, ja," came the not unexpected reply. "Stowaway, is that word," he ruefully added it to the growing list of other names for Herman Schmidt.

"Aunt Kate," I whispered again, for no reason but the weight of the question, "was she in on this? You being an alien and all?"

He nodded slowly. "She knew, all the time. Had to. House in her name, car in her name. She is the Schmidt that counted, on paper." He shrugged, helplessly resigned to the one-sided situation. "No identification papers can I show for anything, as enemy alien."

And she had called *me* a storier? What about living under false pretenses with a husband who was not anything he appeared to be? Busy piling that up against her, it took a few moments for that last part to fully register on me.

"You mean you don't even...*exist*?"

Herman rubbed his jaw as if stroking an answer. Eventually, "A little more than Manitou, some ways," he wagged a hand in the so-so motion, "but you are right, I cannot be a me."

Talk about circumstances changing in a hurry. I thought we were bad off when we simply didn't have any money. Now we didn't even have a real Herman.

He turned to me, his expression the most serious yet. This next, I will never forget.

"Donny, I am so much sorry"--if spoken words ever shed tears, it happened now in his broken apology-- "for what is happened. Miles from anywheres, we are, and money gone, trip kaput." In that moment he looked so much older, the way people do when they are terribly sad. I felt as awful as he looked.

“Hey, it wasn’t just you,” I felt compelled to take my share of the blame, “it was my bright idea for us to go to sleep to get rid of the goddamn minister. If I hadn’t thought that up--”

“*If* is biggest word there is,” he saved me from myself. Or maybe himself along with it. As I watched, he drywashed his face, holding his head in his hands while trying to think. For some moments I held my breath, until he came up with, “No sense beating ourselves like dead horse, hah?”

Just like that, he straightened up, unhunching his shoulders for the first time since the words *enemy* and *alien*, and tipped his cowboy hat back, if not the Herman of the dog bus again a pretty good imitation of it. “We got to git in for the night,” cocking his good eye toward the fancy Inn, “into the Waldorfer, someways, Donny.”

“But what are we gonna do after that?” I spread my arms helplessly. “About everything.”

He gazed off into the distance, as he must have gazed countless miles that way since that night in a Munich beer hall. “We take a leap of fate.”

Believe me, I have looked this up, and the roots of fate and faith are not the same. Nonetheless, I picked up my wicker suitcase to follow Herman the German into the Old Faithful Inn.

To my surprise, he did not go in at first, instead veering off to a blackboard alongside the mansion-like entrance showing PARK EVENTS OF THE DAY.

“Herman, hey,” I started to whisper to him that we didn’t have time for the ranger talk on wildflowers or the nature walk through the steaming pools, when my stomach rumbled enough to deliver the message. Herman heaved a sigh, acknowledging how hungry he was, too. Still peering at the chalked list while I was growing wildly impatient for us to do something, anything, he poked a finger

at what I thought was the most peculiar of the Events. "Look who else has appetite." SUNDOWN SUPPER FOR BRUIN--VIEW THE GRIZZLIES AT THE BEAR-FEEDING GROUNDS. The mind can play the damndest tricks at a time like that; my immediate thought was supper instead of dinner out here in the West, what would Hippo Butt think of that?

"Old Shatterhand fought grizzly once," the posting reminded Herman, not that it took much to send him off into the pages of Karl May. "Guess who wonned." He couldn't wait to wink me the answer. "Bear rug, not Old Shatterhand rug."

"Whoopy-doo for him," I let out in exasperation. "But goddamn-it-to-hell-anyway, what are we gonna--"

He tapped the blackboard beside SUNDOWN SUPPER FOR BRUIN as if it was my own suggestion. "We have time, too early to bed down in Waldorfer," although didn't see why. "Let's go see broons. Take our heads off our stomachs."

When it was put that way, I couldn't really object, although I was not a big fan of bruins by any name, particularly that of grizzly bear, which Yellowstone National Park was famous for. But at the same time a little hope stirred in me, the leap of fate-or-was-it-faith kind, that possibly one of the tourist couples Herman had gabbed across the aisle with on our trip west, like the retired Mayo Clinic doctor and his nice wife, might show up at the bear-feeding and we could pour out our hearts about the Bible-pushing phony minister, the bastard, and they would help us out. Possibly.

The bear-feeding area was a ways out back of the Inn, a pit dump, really, littered with tin cans and bread wrappers and other kitchen trash. A park service truck had pulled in with a green elephant bin to be emptied, and shiny metal garbage

cans hauled from the Inn's no doubt prodigious kitchen were lined up on the lip of the pit, where a couple of rangers stood guard with shotguns while other employees made ready to dump the refuse over the edge. Off to one side for safety's sake, supposedly anyway, were rows of bench seats up the rise of the embankment, where we could all sit and watch the bears at their meal almost directly below.

For me, this was bruin at pretty close quarters, but of course that was the point, and like the rest of the crowd, at the moment I was a complete tourist ready to gape open-mouthed at this spectacle no less than at Old Faithful blowing its top regularly. And since this was his idea, Herman was taking in everything with that cocked look as if his glasses were magnifying it all. While he was occupied at that, I was busy scanning the ranks of onlookers seated around us, hoping for any familiar face to turn to for help in our broke and hungry condition. But no such luck. I had to accept that the bears were better off than we were.

Meanwhile the ranger in charge checked with the shotgun sentinels and the garbage handlers, and welcomed the audience, more or less, with the stern message that bears ordinarily were not the best guests at mealtime. "Folks, we do this to make the point that *you* are not to feed the bears," he reeled off through his bullhorn, "they receive this snack from us in order that you can safely view them as they eat."

And with that, garbage can lids were clattered off and the crew began dumping kitchen leavings into the pit, and out of the timber beyond it emerged the bears, startling as apparitions in the suddenness of their furry forms against the dusky forest.

Not one, not two, but ten or a dozen grizzlies padded swiftly out of the stand of trees. And oh sure, a set of cubs cuter than words can say, tumbling like dice in the steps of their mother. Yellowstone National Park in that moment became all bears, to the entire crowd of us watching like children at a magic show. I mean,



I almost could not believe my eyes at this many of the king of bears, with that distinctive hump of muscle and the round head low to the ground moving back and forth in constant scrutiny, prowling like burglars who had hit it rich, the entire pack of wild creatures not that far away at all.

I was not the only one thrown for a loop by the experience, Herman drawing a whistling breath that fit with the appreciative gasp of the crowd. What's even more, besides the thrill of being there--Herman's eye-dea of westward adventuring definitely had its ups and downs, but this was a peak moment--I felt a tingle new to me, not real fright exactly but a sharpened sense of danger in the vicinity, even guarded as we were by the rangers with their shotguns. Instinctively I clasped my hand to the arrowhead in my pocket, I suppose in the same search for trust as the hunter who carried it in bear country centuries before.

As the garbage was served, so to speak, the grizzes tore into the food scraps, growling warnings at one another to keep away from their meal, when not snuffling into the fresh trash for better morsels. One particular griz, an immediate crowd favorite, would pick up a two-gallon can that bulk vegetables came in and sit back on its haunches with its head in the can like a trained bear in a circus. "Clown in every crowd, broons or peoples," Herman nudged me with that bit of wisdom.

The cubs were another popular feature, of course, barely dodging trouble as their mother kept their antics out of range of the big male bears, delivering a swat to one offspring or another when needed. If laughter is good for the soul, the bear babies in their cute clumsiness raised our spirits along with that of the crowd generally, spectators that we were into something otherwise forbidden. The whole thing was fascinating in a kind of spying way, as if peeking into a zoo where the cages had vanished. Meanwhile the garbage feed kept on, course after course, the green elephant bin down at one end now disgorging its own plentiful load, likely from picnic grounds.

Enthralling as the bear show was, I was surprised when Herman murmured in my ear, "Nature call," and slipped away from where we were sitting. I worried some about that, him going back into the Inn to use the convenience so soon after we had bluffed our way out. But with tour groups checking in and out as they were, he'd simply blend with the crowd, I reasoned. Besides, he had been squirming restlessly on the edge of his seat much of the while, so it obviously was time, to sum the matter up, that he went and went.

Right away I lost myself again in watching the bear-feeding at its fullest, the ranger in charge doing almost as good a job as a rodeo announcer in keeping up a line of talk about how grizzlies, aptly named *ursus horribilis* biologically, could weigh up to a third of a ton, eat anything from ants and berries to bull elk, hibernate for six months at a time, and similar facts of the Believe It Or Not! sort, while the bears roamed the dump, sparring with each other over trash tidbits and generally behaving like the monarchs of the wild they were. The audience continued to ooh and ah and more than that, in other languages even. Someone sang out in a comical falsetto accent "Incroyable! C'est magnifique!"--I figured it must be French--and I could hear yet other foreign talk that sounded like Herman at his most German, although probably these speakers of it were not enemy aliens. All in all, it felt like quite an assortment of us, sort of like busloads of souls from many places, meeting a little adventurously at the edge of the bears' world.

Then it all blew up, in a way far different from Old Faithful.

Quicker than it takes to tell, one of the main grizzlies, a huge old silvertip that had been crowding the others away from chosen scraps with menacing growls, suddenly reared up on its hind legs, let out a woof, dropped to all fours and in the bat of an eye bolted at full speed toward something out of sight, the other side of the green elephant bin. As it gave chase, threatening to charge right up out of the

pit, the nearest ranger hollered "Idiot tourist! and ran toward what was happening, firing his shotgun in the air.

That brought us all to our feet, did it ever. This was not the kind of bear-feeding event you'd expect, seeing somebody get eaten by a grizzly. I craned my neck as much as anyone, the entire audience straining to see what was going on at the green elephant. Until, that is, the ranger who had been delivering the talk switched to a much louder and more urgent bullhorn message.

"FOLKS, PLEASE DISPERSE BACK TOWARD THE INN! THERE'S NO REASON TO PANIC, JUST GO IN ORDERLY FASHION. LEAVE NOW, PLEASE!"

Of course, hearing that, the whole bunch of us rushed out of there pellmell, as the standoff between the rangers and the aggravated grizzly continued with more hollering and gunshots and audible snarls issuing from the pit. I won't say I panicked, but I lost no time leaving the vicinity along with the rest of the fleeing tourists.

Even though it was all I could do to handle the duffel and wicker suitcase both, I managed to scramble off to the largest stand of trees in back of the Inn, in the probably futile hope that I could shinny up a tree if the grizzly broke loose in that direction. Thank goodness there was no sign of that, the commotion confined to the dump--so far, anyway--and Herman came puffing up instead.

"Where you been?" I let out, so glad to see him it poured out of me, as he dropped down beside me. "You missed the excitement! Some dumb guy was behind the green elephant there, taking a leak or something, I guess, and a griz took out after him and the rangers went loco. Did you hear the shooting?"

He clucked his tongue, that he sure had registered it. "Sounded like cowboys going to town, hah."

Both of us kept a cautious eye back toward the dump and the interrupted event, but there was no sign of an oncoming grizzly, rangers the only ones



prowling around, shotguns at the ready and firecrackers being thrown into the pit to drive the bears away. While I can't say we really relaxed, we did soon enough turn our attention from being eaten by a bear to what we were going to eat, ever. In desperation I was about to say maybe we could sell something, my moccasins even, to buy some food, when Herman half whispered, although there was no one around but us, "Lots of surprises in Yellowstone, ja, Donny? Another one for you, I have."

"Yeah, what?" All I needed was another revelation that he was some kind of desperado that made him, or both of us, eligible to be locked up and the key thrown away.

"Supper. Have some white toast." From under his jacket, he pulled out a half loaf of leftover bread, still in the wrapper. So stale it was all hard as crusts, nonetheless a stomach as empty as mine didn't care, appetite and gratitude agreeing this was a surprise feast.

"Aw, gee, Herman." I choked up to think he'd been reduced to begging bread scraps from the kitchen staff while he was in the Inn to take a leak. Begging, in my mind, was right down there next to the poorhouse at the bottom of life. On the other hand, hunger is not interested in the finer points of existence like that, and I started wolfing down dry old slices as if they were sacher torte.

Herman was chewing mightily too, urging me through a mouthful, "Eat up, Donny. Bears don't need it, they got plenty else."

I choked again, for an entirely different reason. "This is from the *garbage*?"

"Got to be from somewheres, don't it," he said as if retrieving thrown-away food from a garbage can was the most natural thing in the world. Which was nothing to what he said next.

"Dog robber, bear robber," he munched on that a moment as if comparing the two. "You know what, Donny? Not so much difference like you might think."



Now my jaw would have dropped to my shoetops, if that were possible.  
 “That was *you*, the griz was after?”

“If you will imagine, ja. No reason bear-feeding can’t be Donny-and-Herman-feeding a little, too, but bear didn’t want to share,” he frowned disapproval of such manners. Before taking a tearing bite off a corner of stiff bread, he paused to reflect on the dump experience. “Fast runner, broon was, for so big. Old Shatterhand was lucky to skin the bear, not the bear skin him.”

Not to mention the luck or fate or faith or whatever it qualified as that kept himself alive and breathing, unmauled and uneaten, right there at my side as usual, Herman the German surviving one more danger in a life packed with them. For a long moment I simply looked at him in amazement, counting up. Hohe Toter Mann otherwise known as Dead Man’s Hill, the Hitler putsch, Witch of November, *ursus horribilis*, his narrow escapes were mounting up into a fresh language I had to scramble to learn. Still spellbound over his current feat of robbing the bears and living to tell the tale, I caught up a little late with his next pronouncement.

“Guess what, Donny,” he sounded as cheerful as a preacher at a picnic, “a treat, we have. Right there top of the elephant trash, it was. I picked it up just before bear got excited.” With a glass-eyed wink, he produced from his coat pocket a half full jar labeled PERKINS GHERKINS--THE COOK’S BEST CUKES!  
 “Throwed this away, can you imagine.”

Yes I could, because people did not come to Yellowstone Park to fill up on sour pickles, as we were about to.

Making a meal of the so-called white toast and gherkins required considerable puckered effort on my part, while Herman chowed away in apparent contentment. With both of us concentrating on getting belly timber, as he and Karl May fancied it was called by cowboys, into ourselves, neither one went near the

unspoken question, namely how in the name of Manitou or Winnitou or any other leading spirit were we going to get out of this geyser-blowing grizzly-thick wonderland?

Herman appeared to be thinking of nothing beyond enjoying what passed for supper served up by the green elephant, while I was on the edge of frustration. When I noticed him start to nibble a slice of bread a certain way, I couldn't take any more Hermanic high jinks. "Not now, huh?" I groaned.

Giving me a guilty look, he apologized. "Save Australia, I will." Casting aside the start of the next-thing-to-toast map, he laid back on his duffel in what I supposed was soldierly comfort and had a pickle. Between bites he said, "Now we wait for dark, good and plenty."

"Hey, we're not gonna spend the night out here in grizzly territory, are we?" Dark was coming on slowly in the long summer evening, and I already was jumpy as a Mexican bean about the bear clan that had padded out of the forest to dine on garbage tidbits. What if they wanted some white meat next, in the form of us?

"Nothing to worry, Donny," he told me as he pulled his hat down over his eyes to catch a few winks. "Waldorfer is in your future."

Ever stepped into an aircraft hangar? The lobby of the elaborate old Inn was like that, only roomier, largely higher. In the big open area I had to tip my head way back to count balcony after balcony held suspended by beams thick as trees, the supports all the way to the towering roof peak positioned each on top of the one below like those circus acrobats standing on one another's shoulders. Except for a mountainous stone fireplace, every single thing in the Inn was wood--walls, floor, balcony railings, chairs, benches, ashtray stands, light fixtures. It must have taken a forest to build it all. In the best of circumstances, I would have felt like I didn't

belong in such rarefied lodgings. Penniless as we were in this parlor of tourist heaven, I more than half expected someone in authority to spot us instantly as we made our appearance suspiciously late that night and thunder out an order, "Throw them out. And into the stony lonesome, while you're at it."

Herman seemed unperturbed. "Like Der Kaiser's hunting lodge, but built by beavers," was his estimate of the pine-forest lobby as we entered, baggage in hand.

"So, Donny, do like I told," he whispered as we headed toward the front desk. "Pretend you own the place, whole schmier is your vacation palace." Before coming in, he had dug down in the duffel bag past the Bible and found a tie to put on, an out-of-date one with mermaids twined coyly in seaweed, but a tie. He similarly dressed me up by making me put on my moccasins. "Now we are not looking like hoboes so much," he appraised us with a lot more confidence than I felt.

Or for that matter, the sleepy night clerk, who blinked himself more alert at the sight of us, glancing with a growing frown at his reservation book and our approach. He did take a second look at my impressive moccasins, although that may have been canceled out by his beholding Herman's dangling mermaids. Whatever he thought, he cleared his throat and addressed our coming:

"Checking in late, sir? Name, please?"

"No, no, hours ago," Herman waved a hand at the first question and simultaneously erased the second. "Boy here can't sleep, so got his souvenir collection from the car and laundry bag along with," he accounted for our conspicuous wicker suitcase and duffel. "Back to room we go, everything fine and jimmydandy."

"Oh, say, Grandpa," I spoke my part as we had to march right by the clerk's still inquisitive scrutiny, "did you lock the Caddy?"

“Ja, don’t want bears in the Cadillac, hah?” Herman laughed in such jolly fashion it infected the clerk.

Chuckling, the man behind the desk all but ushered us past. “You’re a hundred percent right about that, sir. Good night and sleep tight.”

Up the plank-wide stairs we went, climbing to the absolute top balcony and passing by rows of rooms until reaching a far corner, as Herman had calculated, out of sight from the front desk. Also as he had counted on, there was more of that wildwood furniture, massive chairs made out of lodgepole, parked along the balcony for lobby-watching. Grunting and straining, between us we wrestled two of those into our corner and tucked the duffel and suitcase in behind. Ourselves we tried to fit into the rigid wooden seats in some semblance of bedtime positions. “Arms of Murphy a little hard tonight,” Herman tried to joke, patting the tree limbs serving as chair arms.

“About like sleeping on a lumber pile, yeah,” I muttered, squirming in vain to get comfortable at all, missing the upholstered seats of the dog bus as if they were the lap of luxury. For that matter, the screeching springs of the attic bed Aunt Kate consigned me to would have sounded like the best of Kate Smith music just then.

I swear I had no hope in this world of dropping off to sleep, the still-several hours until daylight were going to be one long waking nightmare of bony unrest. Yet somehow I had to be shaken awake when the first hints of dawn shown in the upmost windows of the timbered lobby and Herman was whispering, “Up and at. Outside we must get before hotel people come around.”

After peering cautiously into the canyon of lobby to make sure a different desk clerk had come on duty, we headed down, with Herman saying, “Leave to me. We must go out like kings.”



Trying to appear like travelers actually able to buy tickets, we hefted our luggage over to the loading area, skirting a line of chattering tourists boarding to see mud volcanoes and other sights, as we made our way to the extensive bulletin board where in routes of red on a map sheeted over with weatherproof plastic, THE FLEET WAY once again was promised.

“Guess what, Donny,” Herman began as we approached the map, wagging his fingers piano-player fashion to encourage mine, “time for you to--”

“Huh-Huh-Herman!” I gasped. Unable to get out the actual word “*Look!*” I pointed an unsteady finger, not at the map but toward the opposite end of the bulletin board.

Like me, he stared in disbelief, then shock. There, past the park’s announcements of the day’s activities and its lists of don’ts and tacked-up tourist messages to other tourists, was a lineup of FBI MOST WANTED posters of the kind that kept a gallery of hardfaced criminals scowling from the wall of every post office in the land. Prominent in its glossy newness was the one featuring HERMAN SCHMIDT in bold black letters, full face on. The photo was many years old, without glasses or for that matter a glass eye, back when he was a Great Lakes seaman, but the similarity to the Herman stunned motionless at my side popped out all too clearly.

A soft strangled sound, which I suspected must be the German cussword of all cusswords, escaped from his lips. Recovering before I did, he glanced around and around, pulling me close as he did so. Whispering, “What we must do, quick, quick,” he rapidly told me how to proceed, and I followed his instructions as blankly as a sleepwalker, edging along the bulletin board as though every piece of paper was of surpassing interest, with him leaning over my shoulder. Reaching the MOST WANTED lineup, he shielded me with his body, check around again to make sure no one was looking, and when he whispered, “Now!” I ripped down the

poster with the awful words ENEMY ALIEN and VIOLATION OF and CONTACT YOUR NEAREST FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION OFFICE AT ONCE IF YOU SPOT THIS SUSPECT and stuffed it inside my jacket.

Deed done, we grabbed up our luggage and retreated to the deck of the Inn yet again, depositng ourselves in a corner farthest from the latest batch of sitters waiting for Old Faithful to live up to its name, which I could have told them it relentlessly would. With a ragged sigh, Herman held out his hand for the poster. Both of us studied the slightly crumpled likeness of the sailor Dutch, as he was then, and the paragraph of official language fully describing him and his offense. He shook his head in despair at the MOST WANTED treatment, definitely the wrong kind of being famous. "You would think I am Killer Boy Dillinger, Public Enemy Number Ein."

"One," I automatically corrected.

"Turned me in, she did," he said almost inaudibly.

It took me a moment to gather that in. "Aunt Kate? Aw, she couldn't, could she? I mean, isn't there a law or something? Holy smokes, Herman, she's your *wife*."

He stared at the WANTED poster in his big hands as if asking the same of it, then looked away from the photo of his younger self, from me, from anything except the real question that invaded the beautiful park, taking over his voice.

"Who said we are married?"

You could have knocked me over with the blink of an eye. Speechless at first, I tried to get my mind around the pair of them living under the same roof, sleeping in the same bed, fighting the same battle every breakfast, all these years without ever--as the saying was--visiting the preacher.

Thickly I managed to stammer, “But she’s a Schmidt, like you. You’ve got to be married for that, don’t you?”

He shook his head. “She took the name, is all. Easier that way. Keep people from thinking we are living”--he really gave his head a shake now, as if trying to clear it--“in sin, hah. More like, in duty. Drafted soldiers, both of us, if you would imagine,” he put it in starkest terms. “From time of Witch of November when--”

The story was, when Fritz was lost in the storm that sent the *Badger Voyager* to the bottom of Lake Michigan and Herman survived but with an eye gone, the new widow Kate came to see him in hospital. “All broke up, crying like cloudburst. Tells me she knows what friends Fritz and I was, how hard it is for me, like her. And this”--he tapped alongside the substitute eye--“meant I was without job.” You can about hear her, he mused, declaring this was too much on both of them, it wouldn’t hurt them one time in their lives to do something out of the ordinary. “Said if I wanted place to stay,” he drew the tale to an end, “I could come to the house.” Gazing off, maybe looking back, he shrugged. “Never left.”

Bewildered anew, I blurted, “But all the time I was there, the two of you fought like--”

--dogs and kitties, ja. Not at first,” he tempered that, his look at me a plea for understanding. “But you think about it, the Kate was used to Fritz away most of time, on boat. I was not away, ever, and it got on the nerves. Me on hers, her on mine, fair to say.” He spread his hands, as if balancing choices. “Not good way to live together, but both too stubborn to give in to situation. Until--”

He did not have to say the rest. Until I showed up, a stranger off the dog bus, bringing with me old baggage in more ways than one for Gram’s sister and a jolt of imagination for the man going through life not being Dutch, not being an

actual husband, not really grounded in anything but dreams of adventure in the West.

Feeling responsible, guilty, full of blame, all while trying strenuously to deny it to myself, I started to throw a fit. "Goddamn-it-all-to-hell-anyay, why didn't you and her get married in the first place like you were supposed to and we wouldn't any of us be in this fix and, and--"

My tantrum dwindled as the answer caught up with me. "The alien thinger?"

"Ja," he acknowledged wearily. "Marriage license could not be got without naturalization paper. Not worth the risk to go and say, after all the years, here I am, how do I make myself American?" With a last blink at the WANTED poster, he creased it to put in his pocket, still speaking softly. "The Kate believed same as I did, more so, even. As much her eye-dea as mine, pretend we're married. Worth it to have a man around, she telled me, somebody she can boss like she is used to with Fritz. Joke at the time," he sighed, "but she meant it, you maybe noticed."

I was listening for all I was worth, but Aunt Kate's bossy tendency that had driven both of us batty shrank to nothing compared to picking up the phone and turning in her imitation husband to the FBI. That truth rattled through me--the clank of a jail door closing behind Herman--shaking me to the core. The hard knocks of history were not done with him yet. Or for that matter, with me. Eleven going on twelve abruptly seemed way too young to be the seasoned accomplice of a fugitive, or when you came right down to it, a criminal whom the FBI put up there with the bank robbers and murderers as some breed of desperado. But what else was I?

The one thing clear was that the face of Herman the German, enemy alien, was plastered here, there, and everywhere on bulletin boards throughout Yellowstone National Park, as public as the sun. "Now we really need to get out of



here,” my voice broke, Herman chiming “Ja, ja, ja,” as I scrambled to my suitcase and he to his duffel. That was as far ahead as either of us could think. That and the FLEET WAY map back at the bulletin board.

Skirting the tour bus lines and trying not to notice the bare spot among the MOST WANTED posters which itself seemed to gape with guilt pointing our direction, we edged up to the Greyhound map in search of inspiration as much as destination. We needed a fortunate break in some direction, north, south, east, west, it didn’t matter. Somewhere to hole up, until people’s possible memories of a horse-faced man with a German accent waned with the passage of time and the fading away of FBI posters. But where? Make a run for the coast, to Portland or Seattle or Frisco? Hide out in some Palookaville? Hightail to Canada, on the chance they wouldn’t know an enemy alien when they saw one up there?

Still putting his faith in *fingerspitzengefuhl*--not that we had much else to draw on--Herman began wagging his fingers again to encourage mine. “Ready, Donny? Find us somewheres to git to, ja?”

“Nothing doing.” I tucked my hands in my armpits. “You choose this time. My finger-spitting got us into this.”

“Then must git us out, hah?” Herman said a little testily.

Hard to argue with that. But *fingerspitzengefuhl* and its outcomes unnerved me and I determinedly kept shaking my head, nothing doing, absolutely not, *you* do it for a change, when a certain dot of all those on the map caught my attention. Before I quite knew what I was doing, my finger flew to it.

“Here,” I said, decisive as Napoleon or any of those, “this is what we want.”

Startled by the suddenness of my choice, Herman pursed up and peered at the map as if my finger was pulling the wrong kind of trick. Close study was necessary in more ways than one, the dot so small it was hard to tell from a flyspeck. Taking off his glasses to clean them with his hanky, he blinked as if to clear his eyes too, especially the artificial one. I wished he would hurry up, as park rangers were starting to appear at various gathering spots around the geyser and hot pools, and I figured anyone in uniform was was some kind of law enforcement threat to us. Finally, glasses back on, very deliberate, as if he could believe his eyes now, Herman leaned so close to the map it looked as if he would touch it with his nose--how this fit with *fingerspitzengefühl* eludes me--but he didn't, quite. Making sure of the small lettering beside the tiny red dot of bus stop, he turned huffy. "Funny as a stitch, Donny. No time for piddling around, please."

"I'm not!" My exasperation at his short-sightedness, both kinds, boiled over. "You're the one who's piddling!"

He retorted to that, and I retorted to his retort, and in no time we were in a slambang argument, the kind where tempers go at one another with all they have until someone's hits its limit and backs off. In this case, Herman's.

"You are not making joke like I thought, hah?" he more or less conceded. "And maybe your finger is on the nose about where we must git to," he went even further after I'd raved that I was stroking the arrowhead in its pouch under my shirt, commanding it to show it was big medicine, damn it, make some luck for a change, and I could feel it working, all the way to the tip of my pointing finger. "You are powerfully sure about spot on map," eyeing me in my most rambunctious red in the head state of mind, Herman spoke very carefully. "Big question is, Donny, how to git anywheres." He glanced over his shoulder at the busloads of tour groups coming and going as free as the breeze. "Can't talk sweet to a driver, don't we wish it was easy as pies, and go on dog bus like seeing the sights, tra la

la,” he said with a deep and helpless longing for our old days as comparatively innocent cross-country passengers.

Who knows how these things happen, what whiz of a trick the mind will pull when you’re least expecting it. Suddenly my thinking apparatus was jogged, the teasing smidgen about Yellowstone standing out clear as purple ink on the white paper of the autograph book. “Herman, I’ve got it! What you just said! Idea!”

Misunderstanding me, he shook his head so hard it was a wonder his hat didn’t fall off. “Donny, no! We can not go begging drivers for tickets or sneaking on bus or such. They will report us, snap like that,” he snapped his fingers like a shot, “to rangers and rangers to sheriff and sheriff to FBI and I will be locked up until cows trot home and you, you will be put in--” He hesitated to even say my jail word, *orphanage*.

“Huh-uh, that’s not what I meant,” I feverishly shook off his concern in turn. “I just finally got reminded of something. Listen up, okay?”

Duly hanging on my every word as I explained my brainstorm, he couldn’t help still being dubious. “It better work right. Or *ptfft*--” He nodded an inch, plenty indicative, to a passing pair of park rangers looking as seriously loaded with authority in their flat hats and badges as any Crow cops.

“Don’t be so goosy,” I told him, full of something like desperate confidence, or maybe it was just the internal combustion of pickles and stale bread. “You keep telling me, Nothing to worry, so don’t, okay?” My temper may still have been up a little. “Christamighty, Herman, you dealt with a grizzly bear, remember?”

“Ja, but bear could not call all kinds of police.”

With no other real choice, he accompanied me to the park headquarters, and in we went to the WONDERS OF YELLOWSTONE exhibit, and up to the information

counter manned by a veteran ranger who no doubt had heard every possible tourist tale of mishap, including the one we were about to try on him. It didn't help, either, that despite my coaching, Herman pronounced what we needed as the *infirm-ary*.

Maybe his sympathy was simply feigned, but the ranger did peer over the counter as I made myself look miserable as possible, and accorded me, "Oh, the poor kid." Poor, yeah, little did he know. Anyway, he directed us to the infirmary, and down a couple of hallways and around enough corners, we came to a door with that sign on it.

As he found a place to sit and wait outside the office, Herman had some last jitters about me doing this alone, but I pointed out that we didn't want the enemy alien matter to crop up somehow due to a mess of paperwork, did we, and he had to agree he'd better stay absent. "Be brave as anything, like Winnetou and Red Chief," he resorted to the same encouragement as when I had passed myself off as a fancy dancer, not bad advice any time, really. Trying to buck him up as I fished the necessary item out of the duffel and into my jacket pocket, I in turn provided him one of Gram's sayings, "Here goes nothing from nowhere," and took myself into where they treated the infirm.

In the waiting room, a full-lipped and generously lipsticked young woman who reminded me strongly of Letty, except her crisp uniform was a nurse's and I could not spot her name stitched on in the best place, was busy opening up for the day. Probably figuring I had taken a wrong turn in seeking the rest room, she smiled at me in a seasoned way. "Hello there, can I help you find something?"

"Fishbone," I croaked, pointing to my throat.

"My goodness," her manner changed that quick, "we need to take care of that, don't we." Plucking up an admittance form and sitting right down to



administer it, she peeked past me, beginning to look perturbed. "Isn't there anyone with you?"

"They're at the geyser," I gagged some more. "I was supposed to catch up. Slept late, breakfast was slow."

The perturbed expression did not leave her, but she dropped the form. "We'll have to get you on paper afterward, it sounds like. Right this way." Her uniform swishing, she escorted me to the office off the waiting room and stuck her head in. "Throat case, Doc, the rainbow trout special strikes again. Give a shout if I'm needed, I'm still catching up at the desk."

The doctor was slipping on his starched clean white office coat as I entered the medical inner sanctum trying to keep my chin up like the bravest Indian who ever walked in moccasins. Not anything like I expected, with a surprising amount of gray in his crewcut and a twinkle in his eye, he greeted me with a smile as professional as the nurse's even though I was a surprise patient.

"Hello, buddy. Don't I wish the dining room would stick with hotcakes and eggs for breakfast." Busying himself with a tray of instruments to explore my throat, he maintained a soothing manner, observing that swallowing a fishbone was not a good way to start the day but at least I was not scalded or mauled.

Ready, he patted the operating table that I couldn't help looking at without thinking of Gram. "Hop up here, friend, and open wide so I can have a look."

"Uhm," I jerked back to reality, "it's no use." The doctor stopped short at picking up a tongue depressor so he could go to work down my gullet. "I mean, I didn't swallow a fishbone or anything."

Accustomed as he must have been to all kinds of odd cases, he nonetheless scrutinized me with a puzzled frown. "Then what's your problem, hmm? Nothing broken, I hope?"

"Yeah, that's it! Me," I seized my opening. "Flat broke."

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"Yeah, that's it! Me," I seized my opening. "Flat broke."

"Are you telling me," his tone turned as starchy as his medical coat, "you came in here to ask for--"

"Eleven dollars and forty cents, is all," I made it sound as reasonable as possible.

That brought me a stare nearly strong enough in itself to throw me out of the office. "Starting kind of young, aren't you?" he said along with it, more sternly yet. "At bumming?"

"No, no, this isn't that!" I protested, my voice taking off toward the high country. Prepared as I thought I was in asking for the money as nicely as I could, I fell apart at being thought some kind of a moocher.

"What it is," I sort of whimpered out, "I know Mae and Joe." Shakily I pointed to the name plate on his desk identifying him as PAUL SCHNEIDER, M.D., his gaze following my gesture uncomprehendingly. "Your mom and dad?" I provided as if he needed reminding of the fact.

He still looked so baffled that I yanked out the Bible in desperation. "See, I'll swear on it," I clapped a hand over the chintzy paper cover, "we were friends right away fast. They were awful good to me, took my side against the dumb driver and everything, so I thought maybe you would be, too, at least a little bit, and really, all I need is eleven dollars and--"

"Whoa, slow down." A strapping guy as big as both of his parents put together, Dr. Schneider bent way down with his hands on his knees as if I needed closer examination. "The folks? Where do they come into this?"

enough, I could tell, but desperation sometimes grows into inspiration. “Here, look, they wrote in my memory book.”

To some extent, amusement replaced bafflement in his expression, I was relieved to see. “You’re a regular traveling library, aren’t you,” he kidded—at least I took it as kidding. Carefully grasping the autograph album, he studied the pair of inscriptions while rubbing a hand through his iron-gray bristle of hair. “That sounds like the old man, all right. And that mother of mine--” He silently read over the neatly composed lines, as did I, my eyes moist.

I won’t say her contribution to poetry ranks up there with Longfellow and Goethe, but I still think Mae Schneider’s tidy verse is so beautiful.

*When twilight drops a curtain  
and pins it with a star,  
Remember that you have a friend  
Though she may wander far.*

After that, again bending close to listen when I told of getting robbed on the last Greyhound by the sonofabitching phony preacher, whom I barely restrained myself from calling that and more, the doctor frowned as if still working on his diagnosis. “Then where’s this uncle of yours? Why isn’t he here with you?”

“Uhm, he’s sort of, you know,” I twirled my forefinger at my temple, “from the war. Scared of people in uniform. Like rangers. Or your nurse, even. What do they call it, nervous in the service?”

He mm-hmmed the way someone does to acknowledge they’ve heard what you’ve said, whether or not they believe it. “Why eleven dollars and forty cents?”

“Bus fare. Like my uncle says, we’re just trying to get someplace south of the moon and north of Hell.”

“You uncle has a strange sense of geography,” he was half laughing. Turning serious again, he parked his hands in the side pockets of his office coat the way doctors do when they’re about to deliver the news, good or bad.

“I’ve had some dillies come in here, but you beat all.” I swallowed real hard at that. Then that twitch of smile showed up on him again. “Nellie,” he called out to the front desk, “I’ve invented a new cure. Bring me a ten and a five from the cash drawer, please.”

Looking at me curiously, the nurse swished in, handed him the money, gave me another look and left. Dr. Schneider started to pass me the ten-dollar bill and fiver, but then hesitated, giving me a heart flutter. “If you’re so confounded broke, what are you eating on?”

I couldn’t tell him bear food. “Not much.”

“Nellie,” he called through the doorway again, “the case has grown more serious. Bring me another five.”

He added that fiver for something to eat to the pair of bills and handed me what amounted to a junior fortune, compared with my situation a minute before. Thanking him six ways to Sunday, I pocketed the money in a hurry and held out the autograph book. “Write down your address, please, huh? We’re gonna pay you back, honest.”

“Are you. When Uncle Wiggly gets over being nervous in the service, hmm?” Skeptical as he may have been, he wrote his name and address in, topping it with what he said was a prescription for a conditon like mine.

*I met a boy with hair so red  
it lit up whatever he said.  
He does not need a lucky star,  
his gift of gab will carry him far.*



Passing the album back, Dr. Schneider gave me a last curious look as if still searching for a diagnosis. “You haven’t told me, buddy, where that bus fare is supposed to take you.”

When I did so, he half laughed again, ending up with what I hoped was just a snatch of philosophy or something. “Good luck and Godspeed. Normally it takes most of a lifetime to reach there.”

Herman and I alit in the parking lot with many of the rest of the passengers after the driver's cheery announcement. Still yawning as we waited for our baggage, I looked around for the talkative minister, suspicious that he would hop off to stretch his legs and have another go at us, but there remained no sign of him, thankfully. He had disappeared from the seat next to us whenever I cracked an eye open from my series of naps, probably to farther back in the bus where religious pickings might be better, and I figured he must be staying aboard to work on some poor Salt Lake City-bound soul who needed directions to the Lord.

Well, the Reverend Mac was now digested into the memory book, and that was enough of him for me. Herman was not too pleased when I insisted on stowing the cheap Bible in the duffel bag, tut-tutting at my attempted joke that it might as well be in there with the French Bible of playing cards, but conceded that we could leave carrying the good word around in a pocket to someone more fit to do it.

Quickly putting aside the churchy bus experience, we turned to our much-awaited surroundings. Smell that piney air, feel that high altitude! We had made it to glorious Yellowstone, free as knights and Apaches and other roaming spirits, and in silent agreement we grinned at each other and took a minute to marvel at it all. Some distance away, with black forest as a backdrop, stood a whitish mound of earth, which we divined must be where the famous geyser would make its appearance. Out and around in what proved to be a geyser wonderland, steaming water bubbled out of the ground as if from gigantic boiling pots. Overlooking all this was the Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like an elaborate fortress made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. By now it was suppertime, and a place as grand as that surely would have a menu fit for the gods or at least us. "Notcheral wonders and feathery beds for the night, hah, Donny?" Herman exulted as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase.

late  
afternoon  
slant of  
sun

Just as  
fabulous  
for our  
purpose

make its appearance. In back of us loomed the Old Faithful Inn, so called, several stories high like an elaborate fortress made of logs, with gables everywhere and a sloping roof as long as a ski jump. Magically, a star brighter than all the others in the cloudless Wyoming heavens--probably the planet Venus, I now realize--stood out right over the geyser site. Not even a Jesus sky at twilight could compete with this, as far as I was concerned, or Herman either. "Must be your lucky star, hah, Donny?" he exulted, as he shouldered his duffel bag and I hefted my suitcase.

"Yeah, finger-spit knew what it was doing this time, didn't it," I crowed happily as we started off after everybody else to the fancy Inn for the night.

"Donny, wait."

What I heard in Herman's voice stopped me cold. When I glanced back, he had dropped the duffel bag and was clutching his chest. Having never seen a heart attack, I nearly had one myself at this sight.

"Herman!" In a stumbling panic, I rushed to him. "Y-you're not gonna die on me, are you?"

"No, not that. My wallet." He kept searching his coat pockets over and over. "Is gone."

"How can it be? Didn't you put it down the front of your pants when you were sleeping?"

"I didn't think."

I could barely squeak out the next. "Was all our money--?"

"Ja."

"Fuck and phooey, Herman!" my voice came back. "You mean we're skunk broke?"

"Hah?" He looked so anguished I was afraid he really might have a heart attack. "If that means all gone, ja again." He slapped his pants pocket, which did not jingle one bit. "Spent the chicken feed on candy bars, even," he moaned.

I still was in shock. This was a hundred times worse than the ex-convict trying to steal my suitcase at that Minnesota Palookaville. "Who--how--" We needed to do something, but what? "Let's ask on the bus, maybe Reverend Mac saw somebody--"

"Not just yet, hah-uh," he stopped me. There in the parking lot dimly lit from the Inn, he still looked stricken but in a different way. "Something is tickling my mind. Quick, your book. Let me look."

Blankly I handed over the autograph album, and peered along with him as he flipped pages to Reverend Mac's inscription. With some kind of swearing in German, he put his thumb next to the signature, *Isaac M. Dezmosz*.

"Should have seen. Dismas was thief crucified with Christ." It took me a moment to put together the initials with that pronunciation and come up with it: *I. M. Dismas*.

"Lying in his false teeth, he was," Herman bleakly summed up the so-called Reverend Mac.

I blew my top. "The smart-ass little sonofabitch of a thief! Distributing Bibles, my butt! C'mon, we'll show him troubled times."

I tore across the parking lot to where the bus was idling, ready to go, Herman galloping after me. I banged on the door, and Herman joined in as if he would tear it open with his bare hands.

The driver opened and considerately asked, "Forget something, boys?"

Without answering, I lunged up the steps and into the aisle, Herman right behind, both of us furiously searching for a distinctive gray head and silvery mustache.

The seat was empty. "Where'd he go?" I demanded at the top of my voice, glaring at the rows of startled faces, none of them the right one.



Grinning in admission, he shook his hand as if having touched something hot on the map. "Ja, sounds like some place. I think it is Wild West of its own kind, hah?"

"Ohhhkay," I saw nothing to do but give in, "if you've got your mind made up."

Now the question was how to get from here to there.

I was trying to think of a hard-luck story, but who could I even try it on? Not a park ranger, what with signs everywhere saying no hitchhiking and no panhandling and no overnight this and that and a list of other no's, a startling number of which we had already violated or were on the edge of. Not the hotel people, who already had too much of a look at us. Most of all, not some sheriff who would want Herman's name and full particulars.

Meanwhile Herman had moved off from the Greyhound map and was studying the Events of the Day chalked on a blackboard near the Inn entrance. "Herman, hey," I started to whisper to him that we didn't have time for the ranger talk on wildflowers or the nature walk through the steaming pools, when my stomach rumbled enough to deliver the message. Herman heaved a sigh, acknowledging how hungry he was, too. Still peering at the chalked list while I was growing wildly impatient for us to do something, anything, he poked a finger at what I thought was the most peculiar of the Events. "Look who else has appetite." BREAKFAST TIME FOR BRUIN--VIEW THE GRIZZLIES AT THE BEAR-FEEDING GROUNDS.

"Old Shatterhand fought grizzly once," the posting reminded him, not that it took much to send him off into the pages of Karl May. "Guess who winned." He couldn't wait to wink me the answer. "Bear rug, not Old Shatterhand rug."

"Whooppy-doo for him," I let out in exasperation. "But goddamn-it-to-hell-anyway, what are we gonna--"

venge

He tapped the blackboard beside BREAKFAST TIME FOR BRUIN as if it was my own suggestion. "Let's go see broons. Take our heads off our stomachs."

When it was put that way, I couldn't really object, although I was not a big fan of bruins by any name, particularly that of grizzly bear, which Yellowstone National Park was famous for. But at the same time a little hope stirred in me, the leap of fate-or-was-it-faith kind, that possibly one of the tourist couples Herman had gabbed across the aisle with on our trip west, like the retired Mayo Clinic doctor and his nice wife, might show up at the bear-feeding and we could pour out our hearts about the Bible-pushing phony minister, the bastard, and they would help us out. Possibly.

The bear-feeding area was a ways out back of the Inn, a pit dump, really, littered with tin cans and bread wrappers and other kitchen trash. A park service truck had pulled in with a green elephant bin to be emptied, and shiny metal garbage cans hauled from the Inn's no doubt prodigious kitchen were lined up on the lip of the pit, where a couple of rangers stood guard with shotguns while other employees made ready to dump the refuse over the edge. Off to one side for safety's sake, supposedly anyway, were rows of bench seats up the rise of the embankment, where we could all sit and watch the bears at their meal almost directly below. For me, this was bruin at pretty close quarters for breakfast, but of course that was the point, and like the rest of the crowd, at the moment I was a complete tourist ready to gape open-mouthed at this spectacle no less than at Old Faithful blowing its top regularly. And since this was his idea, Herman was taking in everything with that cocked look as if his glasses were magnifying it all. While he was occupied at that, I was busy scanning the ranks of onlookers seated around us, hoping for any familiar face to turn to for help in our broke and hungry condition. But no such luck. I had to accept that the bears were better off than we were.

Meanwhile the ranger in charge checked with the shotgun sentinels and the garbage handlers, and welcomed the audience, more or less, with the stern message that bears ordinarily were not the best guests at mealtime. "Folks, we do this to make the point that *you* are not to feed the bears," he reeled off, "they receive this snack from us in order that you can safely view them as they eat."

And with that, garbage can lids were clattered off and the crew began dumping kitchen leavings into the pit, and out of the timber beyond it emerged the bears, startling as apparitions in the suddenness of their dark furry forms against the sunlit forest.

Not one, not two, but ten or a dozen grizzlies padded swiftly out of the stand of trees. And oh sure, a set of cubs cuter than words can say, tumbling like dice in the steps of their mother. Yellowstone National Park in that moment became all bears, to the entire crowd of us watching like children at a magic show. I mean, I almost could not believe my eyes at this many of the king of bears, with that distinctive hump of muscle and the round head low to the ground moving back and forth in constant scrutiny, prowling like burglars who had hit it rich, the entire pack of wild creatures not that far away at all.

I was not the only one thrown for a loop by the experience, Herman drawing a whistling breath that fit with the appreciative gasp of the crowd. What's even more, besides the thrill of being there--Herman's eye-dea of westward adventuring definitely had its ups and downs, but this was a peak moment--I felt a tingle new to me, not real fright exactly but a sharpened sense of danger in the vicinity, even guarded as we were by the rangers with their shotguns. Instinctively I clasped my hand to the arrowhead in my pocket, I suppose in the same search for trust as the hunter who carried it in bear country centuries before.

As the garbage was served, so to speak, the grizzles tore into the food scraps, growling warnings at one another to keep away from their meal, when not



And she had called *me* a storier? What about living under false pretenses with a husband who was not anything he appeared to be? Busy piling that up against her, it took a few moments for that last part to fully register on me.

“You mean you don’t even...*exist*?”

Herman rubbed his jaw as if stroking an answer. Eventually, “A little more than Manitou, some ways,” he wagged a hand in the so-so motion, “but you are right, I cannot be a me.”

Talk about circumstances changing in a hurry. I thought we were bad off when we simply didn’t have any money. Now we didn’t even have a real Herman.

He turned to me, his expression the most serious yet. This next, I will never forget.

“Donny, I am so much sorry”--if spoken words ever shed tears, it happened now in his broken apology-- “for what is happened. Miles from anywheres, we are, and money gone, trip kaput.” In that moment he looked so much older, the way people do when they are terribly sad. I felt as awful as he looked.

“Hey, it wasn’t just you,” I felt compelled to take my share of the blame, “it was my bright idea for us to go to sleep to get rid of the goddamn minister. If I hadn’t thought that up--”

“*If* is biggest word there is,” he saved me from myself. Or maybe himself along with it. As I watched, he drywashed his face, holding his head in his hands while trying to think. For some moments I held my breath, until he came up with, “No sense beating ourselves like dead horse, hah?”

Just like that, he straightened up, unhunching his shoulders for the first time since the words *enemy* and *alien*, and tipped his cowboy hat back, if not the Herman of the dog bus again a pretty good imitation of it. “We got to git in for the night,” cocking his good eye toward the fancy Inn, “into the Waldorfer, someways, Donny.”

(someday)  
north of  
Hell



snuffling into the fresh trash for better morsels. One particular griz, an immediate crowd favorite, would pick up a two-gallon can that bulk vegetables came in and sit back on its haunches with its head in the can like a trained bear in a circus. "Clown in every crowd, broons or peoples," Herman nudged me with that bit of wisdom.

The cubs were another popular feature, of course, barely dodging trouble as their mother kept their antics out of range of the big male bears, delivering a swat to one offspring or another when needed. If laughter is good for the soul, the bear babies in their cute clumsiness raised our spirits along with that of the crowd generally, spectators that we were into something otherwise forbidden. The whole thing was fascinating in a kind of spying way, as if peeking into a zoo where the cages had vanished. Meanwhile the garbage feed kept on, course after course, the green elephant bin down at one end now disgorging its own plentiful load, likely from picnic grounds.

Enthralling as the bear show was, I was surprised when Herman murmured in my ear, "Nature call," and slipped away from where we were sitting. I worried some about that, him going back into the Inn to use the convenience so soon after we had bluffed our way out. But with tour groups checking in and out as they were, he'd simply blend with the crowd, I reasoned. Besides, he had been squirming restlessly on the edge of his seat much of the while, so it obviously was time, to sum the matter up, that he went and went.

Right away I lost myself again in watching the bear-feeding at its fullest, the ranger in charge doing almost as good a job as a rodeo announcer in keeping up a line of talk about how grizzlies, aptly named *ursus horribilis* biologically, could weigh up to a third of a ton, eat anything from ants and berries to bull elk, hibernate for six months at a time, and similar facts of the Believe It Or Not! sort, while the bears roamed the dump, sparring with each other over trash tidbits and generally behaving like the monarchs of the wild they were. The audience continued to ooh

7050

2

and ah and more than that, in other languages even. Someone sang out in a comical falsetto accent “Incroyable! C’est magnifique!”--I figured it must be French--and I could hear yet other foreign talk that sounded like Herman at his most German, although probably these speakers of it were not enemy aliens. All in all, it felt like quite an assortment of us, sort of like busloads of souls from many places, meeting a little adventurously at the edge of the bears’ world.

Then it all blew up, in a way far different from Old Faithful.

Quicker than it takes to tell, one of the main grizzlies, a huge old silvertip that had been crowding the others away from chosen scraps with menacing growls, suddenly reared up on its hind legs, let out a woof, dropped to all fours and in the bat of an eye bolted at full speed toward something out of sight, the other side of the green elephant bin. As it gave chase, threatening to charge right up out of the pit, the nearest ranger hollered “Idiot tourist! and ran toward what was happening, firing his shotgun in the air.

That brought us all to our feet, did it ever. This was not the kind of bear-feeding event you’d expect, seeing somebody get eaten by a grizzly. I craned my neck as much as anyone, the entire audience straining to see what was going on at the green elephant. Until, that is, the ranger who had been delivering the talk switched to a much more urgent message.

“FOLKS, PLEASE DISPERSE BACK TOWARD THE INN! THERE’S NO REASON TO PANIC, JUST GO IN ORDERLY FASHION. LEAVE NOW, PLEASE!”

Of course, hearing that, the whole bunch of us rushed out of there pellmell, as the standoff between the rangers and the aggravated grizzly continued with more hollering and gunshots and audible snarls issuing from the pit. I won’t say I panicked, but I lost no time leaving the vicinity along with the rest of the fleeing tourists.

grabbed  
mic

Even though it was all I could do to handle the duffle and wicker suitcase both, I managed to scramble off to the largest stand of trees in back of the Inn, in the probably futile hope that I could shinny up a tree if the grizzly broke loose in that direction. Thank goodness there was no sign of that, the commotion confined to the dump--so far, anyway--and Herman came puffing up instead.

"Where you been?" I let out, so glad to see him it poured out of me, as he dropped down beside me. "You missed the excitement! Some dumb guy was behind the green elephant there, taking a leak or something, I guess, and a griz took out after him and the rangers went loco. Did you hear the shooting?"

He clucked his tongue, that he sure had registered it. "Sounded like cowboys going to town, hah."

Both of us kept a cautious eye back toward the dump and the interrupted event, but there was no sign of an oncoming grizzly, rangers the only ones prowling around, shotguns at the ready and firecrackers being thrown into the pit to drive the bears away. While I can't say we really relaxed, we did soon enough turn our attention from being eaten by a bear to what we were going to eat, ever. In desperation I was about to say maybe we could sell something, my moccasins even, to buy some food, when Herman half whispered, although there was no one around but us, "Lots of surprises in Yellowstone, ja, Donny? Another one for you, I have."

"Yeah, what?" All I needed was another revelation that he was some kind of desperado that made him, or both of us, eligible to be thrown in the clink.

"Breakfast. Have some white toast." From under his jacket, he pulled out a half loaf of leftover bread, still in the wrapper. So stale it was all hard as crusts, nonetheless a stomach as empty as mine didn't care, appetite and gratitude agreeing this was a surprise feast.

duffel

stang 2



question.” He gazed off to the Old Faithful Inn and its busloads of tour groups coming and going as free as the breeze. “Can’t be a dog bus robber, I guess,” he said with a certain longing.

Suddenly my head was jogged, the missing little think standing out clear as purple ink on the white paper of the autograph book. “Herman, I’ve got it! Idea!”

Misunderstanding me, he warned, “Donny, thieves of bus tickets, we can not be. Catch us robbing anything but broons and they will clink me until cows trot home and you, they will put--” He hesitated to even say it.

“Huh-uh, that’s not what I meant. I just finally got reminded of something. Listen up, okay?”

Duly hanging on my every word as I explained my brainstorm, he still couldn’t help being dubious. “It better work right. Or--” He pointed off toward the sign with the big list of no-no’s.

“Don’t be so goosy,” I told him, full of something like desperate confidence, or maybe it was just pickles and stale bread. “Holy Jumping Jesus, old pard, you faced a bear down.”

“Ja, but bear could not call the police.”

With no other real choice, he accompanied me to the park headquarters, and in we went to the WONDERS OF YELLOWSTONE exhibit, and up to the information counter manned by a veteran ranger who no doubt had heard every possible tourist tale of mishap, including the one we were about to try on him. It didn’t help, either, that despite my coaching, Herman pronounced what we needed as the *infirm-ary*.

Maybe his sympathy was simply feigned, but the ranger did peer over the counter as I made myself look miserable as possible, and accorded me, “Oh, the poor kid.” Poor, yeah, little did he know. Anyway, he directed us to the

change  
clink  
look  
me  
up



scramble to learn. Still spellbound over his current feat of robbing the bears and living to tell the tale, I caught up a little late with his next pronouncement.

“Guess what, Donny,” he sounded as cheerful as a preacher at a picnic, “a treat, we have. Right there top of the elephant trash, it was. I picked it up just before bear got excited.” With a glass-eyed wink, he produced from his coat pocket a half full jar labeled PERKINS GHERKINS--THE COOK’S BEST CUKES! “Threwed this away, can you imagine.”

Yes I could, because people did not come to Yellowstone Park to fill up on sour pickles, as we were about to.

Making a meal of the so-called white toast and gherkins required considerable puckered effort on my part, while Herman chowed away in apparent contentment. With both of us concentrating on getting belly timber, as he and Karl May fancied it was called by cowboys, into ourselves, neither one went near the unspoken question, namely how in the name of Manitou or Winnitou or any other leading spirit were we going to get out of this geyser-blowing grizzly-thick wonderland?

Doing my best to make the mental process work as hard as the digestive one, I kept trying to come up with that back-of-the-mind thinger about Yellowstone, the tickle always maddeningly out of reach. Herman appeared to be thinking of nothing except breakfast served up by the green elephant, while I was on the edge of frustration. When I noticed him start to nibble a slice of bread a certain way, I couldn’t take any more Hermanic high jinks. “Not now, huh?” I groaned.

Giving me a guilty look, he apologized. “Save Australia, I will.” Casting aside the start of the toast map, he took on an expression at least as serious as mine. “Donny, I know we must get away from notcheral wonders here. But how is big

“Aw, gee, Herman.” I choked up to think he’d been reduced to begging bread scraps from the kitchen staff while he was in the Inn to take a leak. Begging, in my mind, was right down there next to the poorhouse at the bottom of life. On the other hand, hunger is not interested in the finer points of existence like that, and I started wolfing down dry old slices as if they were sacher torte.

Herman was chewing mightily too, urging me through a mouthful, “Eat up, Donny. Bears don’t need it, they got plenty else.”

I choked again, for an entirely different reason. “This is from the *garbage*?”

“Got to be from somewheres, don’t it,” he said as if retrieving thrown-away food from a garbage can was the most natural thing in the world. Which was nothing to what he said next.

“Dog robber, bear robber,” he munched on that a moment as if comparing the two. “You know what, Donny? Not so much difference like you might think.”

Now my jaw would have dropped to my shoetops, if that were possible.

“That was *you*, the griz was after?”

“If you will imagine, ja. No reason bear-feeding can’t be Donny-and-Herman-feeding a little, too, but bear didn’t want to share,” he frowned disapproval of such manners. Before taking a tearing bite off a corner of stiff bread, he paused to reflect on the dump experience. “Fast runner, broon was, for so big. Old Shatterhand was lucky to skin the bear, not the bear skin him.”

Not to mention the luck or fate or faith or whatever it qualified as that kept himself alive and breathing, unmauled and uneaten, right there at my side as usual, Herman the German surviving one more danger in a life packed with them. For a long moment I simply looked at him in wonder, counting up. Hohe Toter Mann otherwise known as Dead Man’s Hill, the Hitler putsch, Witch of November, ursus horribilis, his narrow escapes were mounting up into a fresh language I had to

Or freeloaders to be arrested on sight, I thought to myself.

As we approached the obstacle of the front desk again, I tried to appear as prosperous as royalty who went around in Blackfoot moccasins, although the wicker suitcase was no help. Striding as if he genuinely did own the place, erect as the timber of the lobby and his nose in the air, Herman gave the clerk the barest of nods and a guttural "Guten morgen."

"Ah, good morning to you, too. May I help--"

"Checked out, we already are," Herman growled impatiently, throwing in some more gravelly German. "How you say, grabbing early bus." In the tone of a grouchy weary parent, he indicated me with a swat of his hand as we kept on going, past the desk. "Liebchen too excited to sleep. Pah. Park not made for night's rest."

"Wait, your room number is--?"

Herman threw over his shoulder some rapid incomprehensible number in German and a farewell wave. "Auf weidersehn."

With that, we were outside in the fresh Yellowstone morning, fresh enough to make my teeth chatter.

"Lived through the night, hah, Donny?" I could see Herman's breath as he made this pronouncement.

I simply looked the real question to him: Now what?

A *whoosh* growing louder and louder in the still air, Old Faithful percolating out of the mound again, spared him from answering that. "Notcheral wonders we are not short of, anyways," he stuck with, gazing at the plumes of hot water shooting skyward.

Yeah, right. Stranded and broke in a natural wonderland was still stranded and broke. Stiff and sore and tired of Old Faithful butting in every time I pressed

Herman for some way out of the hot water we were in, I was feeling out of sorts. Doubly so, actually. Because along with our predicament, something about Yellowstone itself kept tickling my mind, to put it in Herman's terms. One of those itches in the head that a person can't quite scratch. Some out-of-this-world fact from Believe It Or Not? Something digested way too deep from a Condensed Book? But whatever the teaser was, it kept refusing to come out from behind the immediate matter of Herman and me being the next thing to hoboes and maybe even having crossed that line.

And of course as if to rub it in, while we parked ourselves again on the chilly deck outside the Inn and gnawed what was left of the cardboard-like bread and the pickles that had not improved overnight either, the tourist world was comfortably coming to life, people moseying out from actual breakfast to gawk at Old Faithful gushing away like a hundred fire hydrants, while tour busses pulled up in front of the Inn like plush conveyances and baggage wranglers piled fancy suitcases into the luggage compartments. All that was as hard to swallow as the miserable dump food, as I sat there longing for a Greyhound to take us somewhere, anywhere.

Herman read my mind. "Better look for a safe harbor, hah?" It went without saying that our world of the West had shrunk way, way down, with our money and prospects both kaput. The land of the Apaches, say, was far out of reach until our fortune and fortunes drastically improved. At the moment, looking nervously around at the park rangers starting to appear at various gathering spots around the geyser and hot pools, all the getaway I wanted was some sort of escape from Yellowstone National Park and Herman's lack of legal existence. "Right," I said, getting to my feet as he was, "let's go see where we could go if we only could."



“Who, the nice little minister?” the driver called down the aisle to us, perplexed by our invasion. “He got off at Livingston, couple of hours ago. Said he had a train to catch.”

“Sunk, we are,” Herman said huskily, putting a hand on my shoulder to steady me, or maybe himself.

Retreating to the front of the bus, we laid out our situation to the driver, who could only shake his head as if now he had heard everything and offer the commiseration, “Tough break, boys, better report it at park headquarters and they’ll get the sheriff in on it.”

I piled off the bus to do that very thing, my view of law enforcement having come around full circle in the past few minutes, with Herman more slowly following.

“Hurry up,” I called over my shoulder, half frantic or maybe more, as he lagged, “let’s get some kind of cops after the thieving bastard.”

“Donny, hold back. Over here, please.”

Disconcerted by the detour, I uncertainly trailed after as he veered off to the gigantic wooden deck fronting the Inn, where people could sit out to watch Old Faithful display itself, although at that time of night we were the only ones anywhere around.

He dropped his duffel bag at a vantage spot near the railing, so I set my suitcase there too until it would become clear what this was about. More and more unnerved, I whispered when I didn’t have to, “Why’re we wasting time here when he’s getting away with--”

“Shhh, notcheral wonder is coming,” he softly shut me up.

Unstrung as I was anyway by Herman behaving this way, now I was hearing what sounded like low thunder and heavy rain mixed together, although the

night remained cloudless. I thought I felt the earth tremble, but it may have been just me. We turned together toward the source of the sound, a boiling hiss coming out of the floodlit mound, and as we watched, in its center what looked like a giant fountain started up, the cascades of steaming water billowing and falling, but steadily and incredibly billowing higher and higher, until the ghostly white column in the night stood taller than the tallest trees, almost touching that single bright star, it looked like. Magnificent as the sight was, it did little to change my anxious mood. Old Faithful was an eyeful, for sure, but so what? It faithfully would be blowing off steam again in an hour or so, after we'd had time to spill our story to whatever passed for cops under these circumstances, yet Herman was making no move whatsoever in that direction.

Rather, he motioned wordlessly for me to take a seat in the deck chair next to the one he claimed. Scratching a match on the arm of the chair, he lit a cigar and gazed fixedly at Old Faithful's rising and falling curtains of water as he puffed. Had he gone loco? This I could not understand at all, the two of us planting ourselves there sightseeing the starlit geyser fading slowly back into the ground while the thief who'd left us skunk broke except for a cheap Bible was making a getaway free as the breeze. Half a dozen times I itchily started to say something of that sort, but could not quite bring myself to, with Herman locked on to the vanishing pillar of water as if it was the last thing he would ever see.

Finally he extinguished the red dot of his cigar and murmured as if coming out of his deepest think yet, "Guess what, Donny. Not a good eye-dea, to go to police."

"Not a--? Sure it is. We've got to, they're the ones to chase down the sonofabitching phony religious--"

"Many questions, they will have."

"So what?"

“Donny, listen one minute.”

Something in his voice warned me to prepare myself for what was coming. Not that I possibly could, because what he was leading up to saying was:

“I am not American on paper.”

That took some digesting. At first, I didn’t know what to make of it.

“Then what are you?”

“German.”

“Well, yeah, sure, that’s pretty obvious. But who cares about something like that any more?”

“*Citizen* of Germany, yet,” he spelled out, his voice growing strained.

“Here I am what is called an alien.”

Giving this news what I thought it deserved, the French salute, I asked what was wrong with being one of those, whatever they were.

“An enemy alien.”

That hit me where it counted. It put things right back to when I learned he was Herman the German and feared he was one of the Hitler demons who shot my father’s legs to pieces at Omaha Beach. Was I right the first time?

Fearfully I trembled out, “How--how are you an enemy?”

He threw up his hands. “By not showing my face when World War Zwei”--wincing, he corrected that to Two--“got America in. Some big danger I ever was, hah?”

I listened dumbstruck to the rest, how having had enough of war in the first one, the second time around he quietly shipped out on ore boats like the *Badger Voyager* where no questions were asked as long as you could shovel heaps of coal, keeping himself at sea or whatever it was on the Great Lakes, and, beyond that, essentially hiding out in plain sight. “Manitowoc is German sort of place, you

maybe noticed," he said whimsically. "Government was not going to declare whole town an enemy."

The meaning was sinking in on me now, all right. "You're not supposed to be in this country at all? They'd throw you out?"

"Not at first," he said, raising my hopes. But then: "Put me in jail, they would."

"In the *stony lonesome*? You're that much of an--" I couldn't bring myself to say *enemy* "--alien?"

"By stupid law, ja," that came spat out. Given how law enforcers seemed to side with Sparrowhead against me, I couldn't blame him for feeling picked on. "But if you're still stuck being a, a German," I was back to circling in confusion, "how'd you get here at all?"

He laughed, the hollow empty kind.

"Took French leave."

I unsteadily told him I didn't quite know what that meant.

"Long story, Donny."

"Hitler, pah. Too bad I did not break his neck when he was close as me to you, that night."

And so in the next unforgettable minutes there in an American national wonderland, I learned that French leave meant desertion, although in this case not from any army but an entire country. Germany, that is, when it was falling to pieces after losing World War One and the Nazis were coming out of the woodwork. As his searching words led me through, my imagination transformed the hunched figure clasping his hands between his legs into a young veteran like my own father coming home from combat. Aunt Kate may have thought Herman had an abbreviated intelligence, but it sounded to me as if he had been smart as an Einstein in his choice of livelihood after his term as a soldier on the losing side:



“So, Donny, do like I told,” he whispered as we headed toward the front desk. “Pretend you own the place, whole schmier is your vacation palace.” Before coming in, he had dug down in the duffel bag past the Bible and found a tie to put on, an out-of-date one with mermaids twined coyly in seaweed, but a tie. He similarly dressed me up by making me put my moccasins on. “Now we are not looking like hoboes so much,” he appraised us with a lot more confidence than I felt.

Or for that matter, the sleepy night clerk, who blinked himself more alert at the sight of us, glancing with a growing frown at his reservation book and our approach. He did take a second look at my impressive moccasins, although that may have been canceled out by his beholding Herman’s dangling mermaids. Whatever he thought, he cleared his throat and addressed our coming:

“Checking in late, sir? Name, please?”

“No, no, hours ago,” Herman waved a hand at the first question and simultaneously erased the second. “Boy here can’t sleep, so got his souvenir collection from the car and laundry bag along with,” he accounted for our conspicuous wicker suitcase and duffel. “Back to room we go, everything fine and jimmydandy.”

“Oh, say, Grandpa,” I spoke my part as we had to march right by the clerk’s still inquisitive scrutiny, “did you lock the Caddy?”

“Ja, don’t want bears in the Cadillac, hah?” Herman laughed in such jolly fashion it infected the clerk.

Chuckling, the man behind the desk all but ushered us past. “You’re a hundred percent right about that, sir. Good night and sleep tight.”

Up the plank-wide stairs we went, climbing to the absolute top balcony and passing by rows of rooms until reaching a far corner, as Herman had calculated, out of sight from the front desk. Also as he had counted on, there was more of that

making beer where they drank it like water. "In Munich were beer halls like you would not believe, big as this, almost," he pointed a thumb to the whopping Inn behind us. "And Oktoberfest there, two-week festival of foods and beers." He gave that hollow laugh again. "Crow Fair for drunkards. Good place to be a braumeister." From what he said, that was a vital role in the brewing of beer, and he had enough knack at it to work up to a job at a famous place, although I had never heard of it until his chilling telling.

"The Buergerbraukeller, biggest in Munich." He paused, the night just before Armistice Day in 1923 coming back to him as it brought me to the edge of my deck chair. "Not always a good idea to be where history gets made," he ducked his head as if dodging too late. "Packed hall that night, thousands drinking beer, government people there to say the country is not going to the dogs, if anybody would believe them. I am notcherly curious, so I come out from where brew vats are, to listen. Bring mug of beer for myself, why not, and sit at table near the back, where people have left." All of a sudden he flung an arm up as if firing a pistol at the moon, making me nearly jump out of my hide. "Right in time for Hitler to come through door and climb on table and shoot in the air, ja, like some cowboy. Close as me to you," he repeated, shaking his head at how history brushed past him. "But when I reach across table to grab him by back of his foot, pull the feet from under this crazy person up there shooting, make him fall on his face like fool he is, I can't get hold, my fingers slip off his heel. Before I can try again, whole bunch of brownshirts"--storm troopers--"with guns out jump on me and others around, goverment people and all." Drawing a breath, he husked out the rest of the recitation. "Hitler takes those to a room, the rest of us is held at point of guns, told shut up and drink beer. When myself and some others say what is happening is not right, we get knocked around and told we are now on list to be shot." Talk about spellbound; I was as much all ears as when he'd told about being swept up

by the Witch of November, only this November rough weather was called Adolph Hitler.

“A putsch, it was,” which he defined as a gamble at taking over everything. “Did not work that time, Nazi march on rest of Munich failed the next day, so putsch collapsed, good thing. But I had two eyes then,” he made a face wan as the partial moonlight, “and did not like look of things in Germany. Beer hall bullies, Hitler bunch was, but maybe more than that if they ever got hold of government, hah? Being on list to be shot reminded me too much of Hohe Toter Mann”--the specter of Dead Man’s Hill sent a real chill up my spine. “*Pthht*, to that,” he rid himself of his homeland again. Leaning toward me as if that would bring me nearer to understanding, he tapped his temple, where little thinks came from. “Listen, Donny, this is the how of it. Find a safe harbor, is good saying. In Germany then, that meant small ports on the Baltic, where Nazis was not thick on the ground yet. Always ships going out the Baltic Sea, all places of the world.” This I could follow almost as though I were at his side escaping from the Nazis and that sonofabitch of all sonsofbitches, Hitler. “I give the engineer a little something,” he went on, rubbing his fingers together in that familiar gesture meaning money. “He lets me hide in tool room, down where boilers are. Nobody topside comes ever, and I make friends with stokers by helping out. Learn to shovel coal. When we dock in America, jumped ship, I did.”

In three paragraphs, there it was, not so long after all. One for Believe It Or Not!--the man who came within a shoeheel’s width of stopping Hitler. Not only that, the history that had made him an enemy of Germany for real and an enemy of America on paper, both at the same time.

Almost dizzy with the size of the fix he was in--*we* were in--one more thing I had to check on.



“Jumped ship. Is--is that against the law, too?”

“Could say so, ja,” came the not unexpected reply. “Stowaway, is that word,” he ruefully added it to the growing list of other names for Herman Schmidt.

“Aunt Kate,” I whispered again, for no reason but the weight of the question, “was she in on this? You being an alien and all?”

He nodded slowly. “She knew, all the time. Had to. House in her name, car in her name. She is the Schmidt that counted, on paper.” He shrugged, helplessly resigned to the one-sided situation. “No identification papers can I show for anything, as enemy alien.”

And she had called *me* a storier? What about living under false pretenses with a husband who was not anything he appeared to be? Busy piling that up against her, it took a few moments for that last part to fully register on me.

“You mean you don’t even...*exist*?”

Herman rubbed his jaw as if stroking an answer. Eventually, “A little more than Manitou, some ways,” he wagged a hand in the so-so motion, “but you are right, I cannot be a me.”

Holy Jumping Jesus. I thought we were bad off when we just didn’t have any money. Now we didn’t even have a real Herman. Lucky star up there, hah. If it was supposed to be shining good luck on us, its aim was way to hell off. Nor were we receiving a damn bit of help from the charmed arrowhead in its medicine pouch, dead weight around my neck lately. Hard to know what to cuss at first.

I shivered, for all sorts of reasons. “It’s getting cold out here.”

“Hah, ja, north of Hell,” he heaved a sigh that gave Yellowstone’s mile-and-a-half elevation its due. He turned to me, his expression the most serious yet. This next, I will never forget.

“Donny, I am so much sorry”--if spoken words ever shed tears, it happened now in his broken apology-- “for what is happened. Miles from anywheres, we



are, and money gone, trip kaput.” In that moment he looked so much older, the way people do when they are terribly sad. I felt as awful as he looked.

“Hey, it wasn’t just you,” I felt compelled to take my share of the blame, “it was my bright idea for us to go to sleep to get rid of the goddamn minister. If I hadn’t thought that up--”

“*If* is biggest word there is,” he saved me from myself. Or maybe himself along with it. As I watched, he drywashed his face, holding his head in his hands while trying to think. For some moments I held my breath, until he came up with, “No sense beating ourselves like dead horse, hah?”

Just like that, he straightened up, unhunching his shoulders for the first time since the words *enemy* and *alien*, and tipped his cowboy hat back, if not the Herman of the dog bus again a pretty good imitation of it. “First thing first, Donny. We got to git in for the night,” cocking his good eye toward the fancy Inn, “into lobby of the Waldorfer, anyways.”

“But what are we gonna do after that?” I spread my arms helplessly. “About everything.”

He gazed into the dark, as he must have gazed into many a night since that one in a Munich beer hall. “We take a leap of fate.”

Believe me, I have looked this up, and the roots of fate and faith are not the same. Nonetheless, I followed Herman the German into the Old Faithful Inn.

Ever stepped into an aircraft hangar? The lobby of the elaborate old Inn was like that, only roomier, largely higher. In the big open area I had to tip my head way back to count balcony after balcony held suspended by beams thick as trees, the supports all the way to the towering roof peak positioned each on top of the one below like those circus acrobats standing on one another’s shoulders. Except for a mountainous stone fireplace, every single thing in the Inn was wood--walls, floor,

balcony railings, chairs, benches, ashtray stands, light fixtures. It must have taken a forest to build it all. In the best of circumstances, I would have felt like I didn't belong in such rarefied lodgings. Penniless as we were in this parlor of tourist heaven, I more than half expected someone in authority to spot us instantly and order, "Throw them out. And into the stony lonesome, while you're at it."

Herman seemed unperturbed. "Like Der Kaiser's hunting lodge, but built by beavers," was his estimate of the pine-forest lobby as we entered, baggage in hand.

"So, Donny, do like I told," he whispered as we headed toward the front desk. "Pretend you own the place, whole schmier is your vacation palace." Before coming in, he had dug down in the duffel bag past the Bible and found a tie to put on, an out-of-date one with mermaids twined coyly in seaweed, but a tie. He similarly dressed me up by making me put my moccasins on. "Now we are not looking like hoboes so much," he appraised us with a lot more confidence than I felt.

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Up the plank-wide stairs we went, climbing to the absolute top balcony and passing by rows of rooms until reaching a far corner, as Herman had calculated, out of sight from the front desk. Also as he had counted on, there was more of that wildwood furniture, massive chairs made out of lodgepole, parked along the balcony for lobby-watching. Grunting and straining, between us we wrestled two of those into our corner and tucked the duffel and suitcase in behind. Ourselves we tried to fit into the rigid wooden seats in some semblance of bedtime positions.

"Arms of Murphy a little hard tonight," Herman tried to joke in a whisper, patting the tree limbs serving as chair arms.

"About like sleeping on a lumber pile, yeah," I muttered, squirming in vain to get comfortable at all, missing the upholstered seats of the dog bus as if they were the lap of luxury. For that matter, the screeching springs of the attic bed Aunt Kate consigned me to would have sounded like music just then.

I swear I had no hope in this world of dropping off to sleep, the still-several hours until daylight were going to be one long waking nightmare of bony unrest. Yet somehow I had to be shaken awake when the first hints of dawn shown in the upmost windows of the timbered lobby and Herman was whispering, "Up and at. Outside we must get before hotel people come around."

After peering cautiously into the canyon of lobby to make sure a different desk clerk had come on duty, we headed down, with Herman saying, "Leave to me. We must go out like kings."



Or freeloaders to be arrested on sight, I thought to myself. As we approached the gauntlet of the front desk again, I tried to appear prosperous as royalty who went around in Blackfoot moccasins, although the wicker suitcase was no help. Striding as if he genuinely did own the place, erect as the timber of the lobby and his nose in the air, Herman gave the clerk the barest of nods and a guttural "Guten morgen."

"Ah, good morning to you, too. May I help--"

"Checked out, we are," Herman growled impatiently, throwing in some more gravelly German. "How you say, grabbing early bus." In the tone of a grouchy weary parent, he indicated me with a swat of his hand as we kept on going, past the desk. "Liebchen too excited to sleep."

"Wait, your room number is--?"

Herman threw over his shoulder some incomprehensible number in German and a farewell wave. "Auf weidersehn."

With that, we were outside in the fresh Yellowstone morning, fresh enough to make my teeth chatter.

"Lived through the night, hah, Donny?" I could see Herman's breath as he made this pronouncement.

I simply looked the real question to him: Now what?

A growing *whoosh* out across the flat, Old Faithful starting to percolate out of the mound again, spared him from answering that for the moment. "Notcheral wonders we are not short of, anyways," he dodged to.

Yeah, right. Stranded and broke in a natural wonderland was still stranded and broke. I was feeling out of sorts, to put it mildly. Even beyond our predicament, something about the whole Yellowstone experience kept tickling my mind, as Herman had said. One of those nagging leavings in the back of the head



that a person can't quite get to again. Some amazing fact from a *National Geographic*, maybe? Something digested way too deep from a Condensed Book? I hoped it was not anything one of the canasta witches came up with, because I was trying to forget their yackety-yack. Whatever the elusive think was, to put it in Herman's terms, it was lost to the immediate matter of being the next thing to hoboos.

As if to rub it in, the tourist world was comfortably coming to life, people moseying out onto the deck from breakfast--breakfast!--to gawk at Old Faithful gushing away like a hundred fire hydrants, tour busses pulling up in front of the Inn and baggage wranglers piling suitcases into the luggage compartments. I watched the busses with a pang, longing for a Greyhound to take us somewhere, anywhere.

Herman read my mind. Trying to appear like travelers actually able to buy tickets, we hefted our luggage over to the loading area, skirting a line of chattering tourists boarding to see mud volcanoes and other sights, as we made our way to the extensive bulletin board where in routes of red on a map sheeted over with weatherproof plastic, THE FLEET WAY once again was promised.

"Guess what, Donny," Herman began as we approached the map, wagging his fingers piano-player fashion to encourage mine, "time for you to--"

"Huh-Huh-Herman!" I gasped. Unable to get out the actual word "*Look!*" I pointed an unsteady finger, not at the map but toward the opposite end of the bulletin board.

Past the park's announcements of the day's activities and its lists of don'ts and other usual tacked-up messages was a lineup of FBI MOST WANTED posters of the kind that kept a gallery of hardfaced criminals scowling from the wall of every

post office in the land. Prominent in its glossy newness was one featuring Herman, full face on. The photo was an old one, without glasses, when he was a Great Lakes seaman, but he could readily be recognized.

A soft strangled sound, which I suspected must be the German cussword of all cusswords, escaped from Herman's lips. Recovering before I did, he glanced all around, pulling me close as he did so. Whispering "What we must do," he rapidly told me how to proceed, and I followed his instructions as blankly as a sleepwalker, edging along the bulletin board as though every item was of surpassing interest, with him leaning over my shoulder. Reaching the MOST WANTED posters, he shielded me with his body, took a look around to make sure no one was watching, and when he said, "Now!" I ripped the poster down and stuffed it inside my coat.

Deed done, we grabbed up our luggage and retreated to the deck of the Inn once more, depositing ourselves in a corner farthest from the sitters waiting for Old Faithful to blow. With a ragged sigh, Herman held out his hand for the poster. We both studied the slightly crumpled likeness of the sailor Dutch, as he was then, and the dark black official language describing him and his offense.

"Turned me in, she did," he said almost inaudibly.

It took me a moment to gather that in. "Aunt Kate? Aw, she couldn't, could she? I mean, isn't there a law or something? Holy smokes, Herman, she's your *wife*."

He stared at the WANTED poster in his big hands as if asking the same of it, then looked away from the photo of his younger self, from me, from anything except the real question that invaded the beautiful park, taking over his voice.

"Who said we are married?"

#

You could have knocked me over with a fingernail. Speechless at first, I tried to get my mind around the pair of them living under the same roof, sleeping in the same bed, fighting the same battle every breakfast, all these years without ever--as the saying was--visiting the preacher.

Thickly I managed to stammer, "But she's a Schmidt, like you. You've got to be married for that, don't you?"

He shook his head. "She took the name, is all. Easier that way. Keep people from thinking we are living"--he really gave his head a shake now, as if trying to clear it--"in sin, hah. More like, in duty. Soldiers, both of us, you could say. From time of Witch of November when--"

The story was, when Fritz was lost in the storm that sent the *Badger Voyager* to the bottom of Lake Michigan and Herman survived but with an eye gone, the new widow Kate came to see him in hospital. "All broke up, crying like cloudburst. Tells me she knows what friends Fritz and I was, how hard it is for me, like her. And this"--he tapped alongside the substitute eye--"meant I was without job." You can about hear her, he mused, declaring this was too much on both of them, it wouldn't hurt them one time in their lives to do something out of the ordinary. "Said if I wanted place to stay," he drew the tale to an end, "I could come to the house." Gazing off, maybe looking back, he shrugged. "Never left."

Bewildered anew, I blurted, "But all the time I was there, you fought like--"

--dogs and kitties, ja. Not at first," he tempered that, looking to me for understanding. "But you think about it, the Kate was used to Fritz away a lot, on boat. I was not away, ever, and it got on the nerves. Me on hers, her on mine, fair to say." He spread his hands, as if balancing choices. "Sad to say, but both too stubborn to give in to situation. Until--"

He did not have to say the rest. Until I showed up, a stranger off the dog bus, bringing with me old baggage in more ways than one for Gram's sister and a



jolt of imagination for the man going through life not being Dutch, not being an actual husband, not really grounded in anything but dreams of adventure in the West.

Feeling responsible, guilty, full of blame, all while trying strenuously to deny it to myself, I started to throw a fit. "Goddamn-it-all-to-hell-anyway, why didn't you and her get married in the first place like you were supposed to and we wouldn't any of us be in this fix and, and--"

My tantrum dwindled as the answer caught up with me. "The alien thinger?"

"Ja," he acknowledged wearily. "Marriage license could not be got without naturalization paper. Not worth the risk to go and say, after all the years, here I am, how do I make myself American?" With a last blink at the WANTED poster, he creased it to put in his pocket, still speaking softly. "The Kate believed same as I did, more so, even. As much her eye-dea as mine, pretend we're married. Worth it to have a man around, she telled me, somebody she can boss like she is used to with Fritz. Joke at the time," he sighed, "but she meant it, you maybe noticed."

I was listening for all I was worth, but Aunt Kate's bossy tendency that had driven both of us batty shrank to nothing compared to picking up the phone and turning in her imitation husband to the FBI. That truth rattled through me--the clank of a jail door closing behind Herman--shaking me to the core. The hard knocks of history were not done with him yet. Or for that matter, with me.

The one thing clear was that the face of Herman the German, enemy alien, was plastered here, there, and maybe everywhere in Yellowstone National Park, as public as the sun.

"Now we really need to get out of here," my voice broke, Herman chiming "Ja, ja, ja," as I scrambled to my suitcase and he to his duffel. That was as far ahead as either of us could think. That and the map back at the bulletin board.



“Nothing doing.” I tucked my hands in my armpits. “You choose. My finger-spitting got us into this.”

“Then must get us out, hah?”

I was shaking my head, nothing doing, absolutely not, *you* do it, when a certain dot on the map drew my attention. Before I quite knew what I was doing--it was one of those things “Here, This is what we want.”

He leaned so close to the map it looked as if he would touch it with his nose--how this fit with *fingerspitzengefühl* eluded me--but he didn't, quite. Close study was necessary in more ways than one, because it went without saying that our world of the West had shrunk drastically, with the diminishment of our money and prospects. The land of the Apaches, say, was far, far out of reach until our fortune and fortunes improved.

He pursed up at that, but did not wish to really argue the point. Taking off his glasses to clean them with his hanky, he blinked as if to clear his eyes too, especially the artificial one. Then, glasses back on, very deliberate, visibly thinking, he leaned so close to the map it looked as if he would touch it with his nose--how this fit with *fingerspitzengefühl* eludes me--but he didn't, quite. Close study was necessary in more ways than one, because it went without saying that our world of the West had shrunk drastically, with the diminishment of our money and prospects. The land of the Apaches, say, was far, far out of reach until our fortune and fortunes improved. At the moment, looking nervously around at the park rangers starting to appear at various gathering spots around the geyser and hot pools, all the getaway I wanted was an escape from Yellowstone and Herman's lack of legal existence.

“Donny, no,”