

THE DEVIL WITHIN US



PETER C WHITAKER

The Devil Within Us

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The Devil Within Us

By

Peter C Whitaker

Acknowledgements

For every reader who enjoys escaping into adventure

And in Memory of

Dave Moody

I am sure you would have enjoyed this one

also

My Wife Donna

The Origin of All Good Things in My Life

The Devil Within Us

Part One

Mephistopheles

*Hell hath no limits,
nor circumscribed in one self place,
for where we are is hell,
and where hell is there must we ever be.*

Christopher Marlowe. Dr Faustus

Chapter One

“Ciao, mio caro!” Artemisia Montessori pulled down the scarf that covered her lower face and smiled sweetly.

“Ciao!” Gianfranco Cappucci, better known as ‘Frank’, responded with a smile of his own.

The bullet pierced the centre of his forehead, just a little above his eyes. Only the slightest cough escaped the barrel of the gun due to the attached muffler.

Dwight Draper was sitting at the control desk, a big hand wrapped around the cup of coffee that Frank had just made. A scowl grew on his heavy face as Artemisia stepped inside the control room of the cable car station.

“What’d yer shoot Frank fer?” Dwight asked.

‘Dwight wasn’t bright’, that is what the others said about him. His right hand was already beginning to move from the cup of coffee towards the knife that hung from his belt, out of sight of the woman with the gun. He had his left side towards her. Instinctively judging the flight of his weapon to its target, calculating the effort required, all the time looking like he had trouble even thinking. Silently, the knife slid out of the leather sheath. Dwight was not bright, it was true, but he was very good with knives. He knew how to fight with a knife and he knew how to throw a knife. A second was all he needed. Killing a woman did not concern him, he had done it before. Dwight had killed women and men as and when required. He actually quite liked doing it.

“Sono un diavolo sotto mentite spoglie.” Artemisia smiled sweetly again.

She squeezed the trigger. Her finger was quicker than Dwight’s knife, which fell to the floor, slipping from his hand and landing near his big booted feet.

“Did you just call yourself a devil?” Maurice Clemenceau asked as he pushed past her and checked that the still seated man was as dead as his companion.

“In disguise.”

“Ich denke, wir sind ein bisschen in verzug!” Eduard von Hartmann said as he closed the door against the cold night air.

Outside, it was growing dark. There was still snow on the ground. He was glad to be indoors again.

“English, please?!” Clemenceau complained.

“Why?”

“Because French is the language of diplomacy and English the language of espionage,” Artemisia told the Abwehr agent.

“And what’s Italian then?”

“The language of dolce vita!” Another smile, as empty of warmth as the one she had bestowed upon her victims.

“I just wonder if you two could continue this conversation in the car. I am about to set it in motion, you see.” Clemenceau said with a forced smile of his own.

“Si, signore!” Artemisia responded.

She walked like a dancer, unbuttoning her winter coat as she went. It began to sway around her lithe figure, emphasising the feminine gait. Passing from the control room into the station and then into the empty car was an act as entirely sensual as it was natural to her. Hartmann scowled and followed her. The leather gloves disappeared from his hands. Deftly, he began to unbutton his overcoat as he walked towards the waiting car. His gun was carried in a shoulder holster, but the additional pieces that

made it even more deadly were placed separately in custom designed pockets inside the coat. Once aboard the vehicle he turned to look back at Clemenceau.

“You will be here for when we come back and descend again, ja?”

“Oui, monsieur, but I very much doubt that you will be using this sky tram for your return.”

“Why not?!” A flash of concern crossed his face.

“Why, I expect that you will both be dead!” He smiled.

Clemenceau closed the door with a press of a button and sent the cable car on its way. Slowly, it began its climb up to the strange building perched on top of the cliff that jutted out from the side of the mountain high above them. This was the only means of transportation to the eyrie that they had discovered. They had found signs of a road leading to the fortress, but it had been destroyed by explosives. It was a stronghold, unreachable by any other terrestrial means than this cable car. The person who awaited them up there was considered a genuine and serious threat. The difficulty of tackling their objective was such that the representatives of several different foreign governments’ security agencies had agreed to an alliance of expediency to achieve a common objective.

“It is not right that he gets to stay down there while we have to go up to where the real danger is!” Hartmann grumbled.

“We drew lots, remember?”

“Yes, but all the same, I don’t trust him.”

“And neither do I, but I don’t trust you either.” She smiled sweetly again. Hartmann noticed that she was still holding the Beretta M1915 in her hand. She saw the wary glance. “Don’t worry, as long as you behave yourself you have nothing to fear from me.”

“Lucrezia Borgia!”

“Mi scusi?”

“I am just reminding myself of how much a man has to fear from an Italian woman.” He smiled coldly at her.

“I am not sure if that is meant as a compliment, but I am going to take it as one.”

“It wasn’t.”

He withdrew his Mauser M712 from its holster. From a pocket he withdrew the shoulder stock that made the weapon steadier when using the automatic fire mode and fixed it in place. Next, he fitted a 40 round magazine.

“My, that’s a big weapon.” She pouted at him.

Hartmann scowled out of the window. It was dark beyond the pane of glass. He could see his reflection and he realised that she could as well. He wanted to say something witty, cutting even, but he was not fast enough.

“They have their faults, don’t they?”

The German agent told himself that he was not going to ask what she meant. He even bit his bottom lip to help resist the urge. The truth was, however, that he found Artemisia Montessori a frustrating obsession. He had done so since they had first met, five days ago at the hunting shack. It was conveniently located just over a mile away from the cable car station. She was too exotic for him. Her dark hair was neither black nor brown, but either colour depending upon the light. It flowed around her face, over her shoulders, and onto her back like a river of silk, responding sensuously to all of her movements. Those large soulful eyes, hazel in shade, were deep pools into which he could fall and lose his soul. Her skin was darker than his own, a wonderful Mediterranean tint. It made him think of warm beaches and cool lapping waves. He had been to Jesolo once, on a family holiday. His parents had wanted to visit Venice,

but it was the sea and the sand that he remembered most. And the warm sun on his fair skin. It had bleached his hair to a shade of white gold. His awareness of women had just begun then. He had noticed the subtle differences between himself and the girls his age, and even some of the women who were two or more years his senior then. This woman's femininity exuded from her person like a poisonous perfume. It violently assaulted his senses. Her salacious nature, the curves of her figure, the tone of her voice, the pout of her lips, the feline movement of her body, all of it was both her means of defence and attack. Hartmann wondered if he would be able to kill her when the time came.

"Who do?" His resolve eventually crumbled.

"The French and the English."

"Of course. The English are arrogant, and the French are decadent."

"But I have always found that the gentlemen, the French and the English gentlemen, know how to treat a lady properly. They understand the required etiquette."

"So do us Germans."

She shrugged. "Perhaps, but in a very clipped and efficient manner, which is too cool for my Italian blood."

"The French are too hot, and the English are too cold."

"More removed, I would say. I sometimes quite like that reserve that the English possess. It makes you want to get to know them all the more. It makes them mysterious. A woman like me enjoys a little mystery in a man. It excites my interest."

Hartmann suddenly felt a stab of jealousy and it made him angry.

"It's not that bad." Marty declared. "Guard duty I mean, it only lasts two hours and we're half way through it already."

"I know. It's just that I hate the cold." Dom replied as he stamped his booted feet and swung his arms through the night air. His black skin contrasted against the white hood of his coat.

"Hey, it's March 20th, spring will be here soon."

"I know."

"It's been warmer than usual they say as well."

"I know, but there's still snow about down there on the ground, not to mention up there on top of the mountain."

"Yeah, but guard duty was worse in the marines. Had to do it all the time with them. Hell, we had to even guard the coal at night!"

"I know. We did the same in the army. Stupid job! Marched up and down all day and put outside the gate on a night to protect the camp from an enemy that didn't exist. We never even got to go to France. God, I'm glad I'm out of the army."

"So, how'd you tip up in Washington State?"

"Looking for a job, like all the others."

"Me too. So, why'd you join this outfit?"

"Like I said, I was looking for a job."

"Me too."

"I thought it was a gag at first."

"Me too."

Dom glanced at the other man. He wondered if Marty was trying to get a rise out of him. He would not like it if he succeeded, Dom could tell him that for sure. "But the money's good."

"Ain't it though. You know, I thought at first this job was for some sort of movie, you know, like that Voice from the Sky or something."

"That's a serial."

"What?"

"The Voice from the Sky. It was a serial, not a movie. I know, I had a job as an usher in a cinema in Spokane awhile back, just after I got outta the joint. I got to see most of it, the serial that is."

"Well ain't that sweet!" Marty's words dripped with sarcasm. Dom felt bad. Correcting people was a habit of his. It had gotten him into trouble more than once before, especially with white people. "Made by a movie company though, I bet?"

"Yeah, sure was." He over-compensated, wanting things to remain friendly between them.

"So, maybe I thought it was a movie company making another serial like that one. This place looks futuristic enough. These uniforms he makes us wear wouldn't look out of place in one of those science fiction movies either."

"But why the guns?"

"What?"

"Why the guns? Why do we need guns?"

"I dunno! It'd seem pretty stupid doing guard duty without them I suppose."

"But whose gonna come all they way out here, in the middle of nowhere, and half way up a mountain. It don't make sense!"

"I dunno!"

"And what are we protecting?"

"You ask too many questions, you know that?"

"I just like to know why I'm doing this kind of thing. I mean, this place is stuck on the border between Canada and the USA, out in the wilderness. The nearest town is miles away, whose gonna come calling all uninvited like?"

"Look, we get good pay, warm clothing, chow, and a place to stay. That suits me fine for now. He don't ask much of us either. So, he likes to dress up like he's Buck Rogers or something. I reckon he's one of them eccentric millionaires. He likes play acting or something. Thing is, he don't care that most of us have been inside."

"All of us have been inside from what I've heard."

"Yeah, I reckon that too. It's tough to get a job these days as it is, even tougher if you admit to being an ex-con."

"Yeah, I know, but the whole deal seems weird."

"Hey, we're into a new year, three months into 1933. They say the economy's picking up. As soon as it does, I'll be looking for another job, maybe head south where it's warmer, go down there with the wife and the kid, but until then this suits me just fine, so don't go rocking the boat."

"I didn't mean to ruffle your feathers or nuthin', Marty. I'm just cold. I didn't know that you had a wife and kid."

"Yeah, I was surprised that she was still around when I got out of Joliet. You've done time, right?"

"Yeah, aggravated burglary. Got five, did two."

"Good behaviour?" Dom nodded. "Me too. Held up a store with my buddy, he had the gun, not me. He got ten years, I got five. Used the fact I had a wife and kid to get a bit of leniency. Saps fell for it. I've done loads of stuff they don't even know about. Wife's used to me doing time. Always there when I get out though. Don't know why. Figure I might make a go of doing something straight, well reasonably. She ain't that

bad and the kid's mine too. He's okay. Can't help thinking that if things do pick up maybe we should all move away and start somewhere new."

"Like heading down south?"

"Yeah, to California maybe. What about you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, yer not goin' to be doing this forever are you?"

"Expect not. Don't know what this guy is up to, but I never stay anywhere long."

"Things catch up with you, don't they?"

Dom nodded. "Yeah, they have that habit. Best not to linger too long in any one place when you've got a record. I don't have a dame waiting for me though. Never made that kind of attachment."

"You ain't a fag are you?" Marty sneered.

"I was in the army, not the navy!" Dom snapped back. Then he laughed. "Naw, ain't no fag. Kinda hope I might meet a girl, but you know what it's like when you don't have a steady job, ain't got no money. No woman worth having is gonna look twice at a Joe who can't even afford to take her out for a steak dinner."

"Ain't that the truth! Kinda glad I ain't in the dating game no more. Hard work if you got no dough. That's one of the reasons I was thinking of making a fresh start with my Flo. She's not so bad. Stuck by me when maybe she shouldn't have."

"That's another thing, we are making good money, but it don't make much difference when there ain't no place to spend it!"

"And no woman to spend it on!" Marty agreed.

As the top of the wall came into view, Doc Hunter tensed his leg muscles. He prepared to launch himself into space. If either he or Agent Frasier mistimed their jump then the aircraft would become dangerously unstable. There could be no hesitation. The wall quickly slipped beneath them. Two men in white winter uniforms decorated with red flashes were looking in surprise at the sudden appearance of the autogyro. Hunter leapt into space. The thunderous noise of the powerful aeroengine erupted behind him. The pilot had put it into idle on the final approach, using the aircraft's momentum to power the top rotor that gave it lift. Their arrival had been surprisingly silent. Before the guards could open fire, the pilot, having dropped his passengers from their precarious perch on top of his wings, turned his machine away, accelerated, and dived back down below the lip of the wall, disappearing from sight.

Hunter landed on the balls of his feet, dropped into a roll across the cold stone, and came to a stop in a crouch. The guard nearest to him had remained immobile. His surprise at their sudden appearance was obvious in his expression. Moving with incredible speed for such a large man, Hunter rose, closed the gap between them, and knocked the air out of the man's lungs with a single hard punch to the solar plexus. Dom crumpled to the stone floor. His breath exhaled as a cloud into the cold night air. The rifle he had been holding skittered across the floor of the parapet.

Marty finally reacted to the unexpected intrusion. He swung his gun off his shoulder and pointed it at the two men. The big guy dressed in a flying helmet, leather jacket, goggles, a scarf around his lower face, and tall leather boots was nearest. Another guy, dressed very similar, but not seeming as tall, was further behind him. That one had not landed with the same agility as the big fellow, instead he had stumbled and fallen without any agility. Marty reasoned that he could shoot the one nearest to him and then turn the gun on the other who was just climbing to his feet. That was the good thing about military training, you never forgot it. Even with his gloved hands he

moved the gun swiftly and purposefully towards his target. The big guy started moving. He seemed unbelievably fast. Marty's finger began to squeeze the trigger of his Thompson machine gun. Two bullets killed Marty. Agent Frasier lowered his pistol. The muffler had reduced the gunshots to barely a whisper.

"That was unnecessary."

"He had his gun on you, Doc."

Hunter stepped forward, collected the guards' dropped weapons and then threw them over the wall to fall into the valley far below.

"I would have incapacitated them both." He insisted. "They were slow to respond."

"The bullets were quicker!"

"And they resulted in a death that could have been avoided."

"You really do go in for this non-fatal violence idea then, Doc?" There was a hint of disbelief in his voice.

"When I have control of the situation, yes."

"And when you don't?"

Hunter did not reply, but walked over to a large steel door set into the far wall of the building out of which the parapet extended. It seemed to be what the two men had been guarding, an entrance into Mephistopheles' lair.

"What about this one?" Frasier prodded the winded guard with the toe of his boot.

"Leave him, he won't be following us."

"How can you be sure?"

"You've got a gun and he hasn't, would you risk it?"

"Might sound the alarm though?"

"I have no doubt that the alarm will be raised any minute now, whether by him or one of the guards at the cable car station it doesn't matter. Sooner or later, Mephistopheles is going to know that we are here."

Frasier glanced at Hunter; he had turned his back on them both. Casually, Frasier raised his gun and put two bullets into Dom as he lay prone at his feet.

"Hey, boy, time to say good night!" He said.

Without a second thought, the American Naval Intelligence officer trotted after the British agent. Glancing down over the wall he could see into a courtyard on their left. Set into the stone floor there were four steel domes.

"They look like the tops of grain silos," Frasier remarked.

"I think that Mephistopheles launches his rockets from within them."

Frasier shrugged. "He claims to have hit both Seattle and Vancouver from here. There's certainly been some unexplained explosions in both cities. Not sure if I believe in rockets dropping tons of explosives from the sky onto targets miles away though."

"Our alliance is prompted by the actions of this Mephistopheles. The danger that he represents with his apparent advanced weaponry has been assessed as credible, if that was not true then neither of us would be here."

"Sure enough," Frasier nodded, "and we all want to get our hands on that secret arsenal that my superiors say he has buried somewhere in this place."

Again, Hunter did not reply. He took hold of the cold iron handle of the door that led inside the stronghold.

"This could be a trap, Doc." Frasier suggested.

"More than likely it is. Mephistopheles must know that his actions would provoke this kind of response."

"Well, let's hope the others rode that cable car to the top and found their way in. I don't fancy taking on this guy's private army with just the two of us."

Hunter hardly had to exert his large muscular frame to open the steel door. It swung easily on well oiled hinges. They stepped inside.

Chapter Two

The cable car door opened.

“Ladies first,” Hartmann smiled.

He held his Mauser in his right hand, gesturing her forward with his left. Artemisia stepped forward obligingly. She was wearing a trouser suit underneath her coat. A dress was simply not to be considered for either this location or the kind of work that they expected to undertake. She turned to her left and walked into the sky tram station as if on a skiing holiday. They were in a modern looking vestibule built from steel and glass. Over to their right was a control centre for operating the cable cars, a duplicate of the one down below. Ahead of them there were two guards standing in front of a door that she presumed led into Mephistopheles’ lair. They both wore dark uniforms decorated with red flashes. One was holding an M1 Thompson submachine gun, but the nozzle was pointed down towards the floor. The other stood with his thumbs shoved into his belt and his feet apart. A holster hung from the same belt. His head tilted to one side. Neither of them looked particularly welcoming.

“You people lost?” The guard with the thumbs in his belt demanded to know. His tone was harsh, dismissive even.

“Ciao, mio caro,” Artemisia replied with another cold smile. “We have come to see the Devil himself!”

“He ain’t expecting visitors tonight, lady, I can tell you that.” The guard shook his head as if he were talking to someone of limited intelligence. “I don’t know why those guys down there let you up here, but you just as well better turn round and go back down ‘cos you ain’t going no further, capeesh?”

“Capisco molto bene grazie.” The muffler suppressed the two shots, but not the sound of the guards’ bodies falling onto the tiled floor.

“If they are all going to be this easy to kill then we will be finished in no time.” Hartmann observed.

Together they passed through the door and down a short corridor that led into a large antechamber. Bare mountain rock was evident in the walls and part of the ceiling. The architect had obviously decided to bring nature into the living space. To the left, an opaque wall rose. Clear windows were placed at the top to allow natural light to enter during the day. There were strong Art Deco themes to be seen everywhere.

“It looks impressive!” Hartmann conceded.

“Can you imagine the kind of wealth necessary to create this place?” She stepped further into the room, turning and looking upwards as she progressed.

“I don’t waste my time day-dreaming.” He said dismissively.

“But I, being poor, have only my dreams.” She glanced at him, that suggestive smile on her lips. “Poor, that is, in comparison to the fortune that was spent to achieve all of this.”

“It doesn’t look like that good a job was done to me. The building work appears quite shoddy in places!”

“Really, Hartmann, you are not jealous are you? This is a fine lair for a devil to hide out in!”

“Much good it’s going to do him.”

“I wish I shared your confidence. I can’t help feeling that we have walked into a trap.” She raised her hand to the side of her mouth and called. “Richiamo il diavolo. Vieni a salutare! I summon the devil, come and greet us!”

“Good evening!” A responding salutation boomed out unexpectedly.

The face of a devil appeared on a far wall. It laughed and the sound of the cachinnation echoed around them. The lighting within the room turned to red also, flashing chaotically. The image of the face jumped from wall to wall, dancing around, each appearance giving rise to another roar of demonic humour. To their right and high up, just below the vaulted ceiling, a large pane of glass was illuminated red. A silhouette took shape, that of a man with horns, the bouncing devil’s head disappeared.

“I am Mephistopheles, welcome to my Hell!”

“There goes the element of surprise!”

“Prendere il tiro!” She snapped at the German. “Take the shot!”

Hartman swung the Mauser up and pushed the stock into his shoulder. He sighted the window, confident that he had the silhouette in his aim, he squeezed the trigger. The gun barked in automatic mode. Three volleys hit the glass. Each time it kicked in his hand and each time he brought it back to the window. Mephistopheles laughed in a suitably devilish manner. The window was pock-marked where the bullets had struck it, but clearly, it was too dense to be shattered by small-arms fire.

“It was worth the effort,” Artemisia asserted when Hartmann gave her a quizzical glance. She removed the silencer from her gun.

“You’ve had your chance, now let me take mine. I have a legion of devils to oppose you and they are armed with weapons the like of which you have never even dreamed of!”

An alarm deafened them. The light went out in the window above and the figure of their adversary disappeared. Also, the white light in the room flashed back on for an instant, but was then replaced by a vibrant red illumination that flashed in a stroboscopic fashion. The effect was designed to be confusing.

“I think I had better reload.” Hartmann said grimly.

“I think they know we’re here.” Frasier observed.

“It may be better if we split up.”

“Why?”

“Like the others, you want the arsenal, don’t you?”

“And you don’t?”

“Stopping Mephistopheles is my priority.”

“Sure it is!”

“He could launch his missiles at any moment; he has to be stopped first.” Hunter insisted.

“Okay, I get what you’re saying, Doc, but the others, they’re after the arsenal as well.”

“It should be a secondary concern, but I agree with you, they’re agents of the Abwehr and the SIM, getting their hands on any of Mephistopheles’ advanced technology would be desirable to their governments. Such science would give their countries a significant technological advantage over others.”

“If those missiles are aimed at Seattle and Vancouver, like they were supposed to be last time, they may not be limited to military targets. Civilians could be killed.”

Frasier looked into Hunter's stern face. He made a decision. "Okay, let's get Mephisto first!"

They were standing at the end of a corridor that appeared to have several storerooms leading off it. Behind them was the way out onto the parapet that they had jumped to from the autogyro. Immediately in front of Hunter was another door. It lacked a window, but they could hear people moving around. The main lighting had been replaced with a red warning shade. It made the place seem unearthly. The sound of many feet running in unison could be heard.

"Armed guards?" Frasier speculated.

"Possibly. The information we both received suggested that he had them in his employment."

"I am not going to hold back against men armed with guns."

"On three then."

The two of them lunged through the doors and into what seemed to be a mess hall. There were rows of tables capable of seating up to eight people at each. Chairs had been placed on their tops so that the area around the tables could be cleaned. The mess hall had three other exits.

"Sleeping quarters must link to this place." Frasier mused.

"By the size of it I would say there are at least a hundred men here."

"A hundred eh?"

"And we don't have any idea of the layout of this place."

"Yeah, I know."

"One of us has to discover where the control room for the launch of the missiles is located."

"You're going to suggest splitting up again, aren't you?"

"It seems logical."

"Yeah, I know. So which way do you want to go?"

"I expect that the largest number of guards went through the centre door."

"It is the only entrance with a double door." Frasier conceded.

"So, it probably leads to the main working area, and probably where the sky tram is to be found."

"And our friends from Italy and Germany."

"I suggest that we go left and right."

"You go left."

"Any particular reason?"

"Nope, other than I just don't like left wing politics!"

"Take care, Agent Frasier!"

Two doors led into the antechamber, positioned on opposite sides to each other. The right hand one was nearest to the cable car terminal, from which they had entered the building. Next to each door there was a hefty circular metal plate. Without warning both plates suddenly dropped revealing a hole. From within each opening the barrel of a large calibre machine gun was pushed forth. Flame erupted from the muzzles. The guns fired in quick sweeping bursts. Bullets began to fill the room, along with a deafening roar.

Artemisia went left. The wall of frosted glass was behind her. She shrugged off her heavy coat as she moved. Bullets sprayed the area that she had passed through, crouching as she ran. The floor of polished tiles allowed her to slide behind a stone built planter. The lead projectiles chipped the frosted glass of the opaque wall.

Artemisia placed her pistol on the floor and removed one of the six hand-grenades that hung from her belt. In a single continuous motion she removed the pin and threw the bomb towards the machine gun. The sound of Hartmann's Mauser was suddenly interrupted by an explosion. Snatching up her gun she started forward, her weapon held at the ready. The machine gun barrel was pointing downwards; smoke issuing out from the cubicle behind it. She presumed that the close confines of the small room would have increased the impact of the grenade. Without bothering to check if there were any wounded casualties in there, Artemisia passed through her chosen door.

Eduard von Hartmann wasted no time in assisting Artemisia Montesorri. He was actually relieved to be free from her distracting presence. Instead, he advanced on the other door, firing short bursts, moving in a crouch and with quick sprints. The machine gun was noisy and dangerous, but its arc was limited by the size of the aperture through which it fired. Hartmann used this to his advantage. He found the limit of its kill-zone on the right and moved quickly to the wall. Having lost sight of its target the gun moved from side to side, scanning the room, but no longer firing. Suddenly, Hartmann jumped forward and thrust his Mauser into the hole. He emptied an entire clip into what he presumed to be some kind of pillbox. The gun barrel stopped moving and fell listlessly downwards. He paid it no more attention and passed through the door that it had been guarding.

Agent Frasier followed a narrow corridor as it bent round to the left. The route felt like it was taking him further inside the fortress. He could hear the sounds of running men, their boots thudding on the floor. Someone was shouting orders, but their voice was indistinct. It reminded him of when he had been undergoing basic training in the navy. The guards appeared to be up ahead. He came to an open door on his right. Looking inside the room, Frasier discovered an office. A quick glance revealed what appeared to be a map stuck on the far wall. With his free hand he took it and scoured the plan. It indicated that ahead of him there was a stairway leading down towards the arsenal. Frasier stopped to think for a moment about what he had said to Hunter. He agreed with what the British agent had said, theirs was indeed an alliance of convenience. A moment later, he exited the office and headed to the stairway.

He passed through a door and onto a stairwell lit with what he considered to be over melodramatic red light. Concrete steps took him downwards. All around him he could hear the sounds of people moving and muffled voices. So far, however, his luck had been good; there had been no encounters with Mephisto's guards to slow his progress. At the bottom of the first flight he reached a door that carried a sign identifying it as a storeroom. He checked the map again. It clearly stated that this was the way to the arsenal and, beyond it, the missile control room. He found it on the next floor down. The door was constructed from heavy metal and had a reinforced glass window. Two men stood in front of the door. They carried rifles. Clearly, they had been set as sentries, but they were not very disciplined. The two men were talking to each other. Frasier could not hear what they were saying; he was still on the landing above the last flight of stairs, being careful not to be seen. He listened for a moment, but not to the guards, rather he was trying to hear if anyone else was on the stairs. It did not seem so. He brought his Colt up in two hands to keep a steady aim and sighted down the barrel. Two bullets each was all he needed. The guards fell dead.

Frasier moved quickly, but quietly, down the last flight of stairs and checked the two men. His marksmanship had been exemplary. He threw their rifles to the other

side of the landing, just a precautionary measure, before turning his attention to the door. Peering through it, Frasier could see a series of racks disappearing into a scarlet gloom. It resembled a warehouse. On the wall to the right there was a large red button. Stencilled onto the wall above it in yellow was the word 'Open' and beneath it 'Close'. Hitting the button with the heel of his palm led to a powerful electrical motor kicking into life. The apparently heavy door began to swing open.

As soon as the aperture was wide enough, Frasier slipped through and into the arsenal. It appeared to be a very large room. He could already see crates of guns on the nearest shelves. As the alarm had been sounded and he was now in a more open area Frasier removed the silencer from his gun. It was useful at close quarters but lessened the efficiency of the weapon. Moving along the closest row he inspected the firearms. The first examples were all very conventional, rifles, hand guns, and submachine guns, the kind of weapons that both the navy and the army already used, which was disappointing. Frasier progressed further into the room. The rows of shelving fell short of the centre, creating a space in which a smaller collection of weapons had been gathered. Even as he approached the racks he could see that these firearms looked nothing like the kind of guns that he was used to. They were all painted dull silver, and their shape, although suggestive of a firearm, was nothing like anything that he had seen before.

Frasier holstered his own weapon. He picked up a large handgun. The design was bulbous with plenty of flowing curves. It appeared far more dangerous than his standard issue Colt M1911 pistol.

"Are you a G-man?"

"Huh?!"

Something hard hit Frasier in the chest. He had a blurred image of a man, or at least the shape of one. A fist had shot towards him. There might have been the whir of an electric motor. Pain exploded in his sternum and the room seemed to flash past his head at a ridiculous speed. His feet were no longer in contact with the floor, but then suddenly his back most painfully was. Somehow, he managed not to bang the rear of his skull on the concrete beneath him as he impacted with the floor.

"You look like a G-man." The sound of electric servos again. "I hate G-men!"

A heavy hand grabbed the front of Frasier's jacket and lifted him effortlessly off the floor. Instinctively, he grabbed hold of the other's arm, but found only cold metal under his hands. Frasier's progress through the arc of his momentum continued until he collided again with the cold concrete. His vision blurred.

Eduard von Hartmann spared the American agent a quick burst from his Mauser. His bullets hit a man who looked to be wearing a suit of armour. The overlapping sections of metal reminded him of a lobster, an image reinforced by the red lighting. The surprise impact of the rapid gunfire momentarily staggered the assailant. Instinctively, Frasier scuttled out of his reach. Hartmann was not sure if the American was injured, but then he really did not care. He hoped for the moment that Frasier would be able to continue the brawl as it meant that the guardian would be distracted. While the Naval Intelligence Officer was presumably trying to acquire the futuristic guns, the German Abwehr agent was interested in a much more powerful weapon. On entering the arsenal he had noticed the signs that indicated the direction of the missile control room. He followed that route and left the two combatants to continue their fight.

Frasier scrambled to his feet and drew his Colt. The strange gun that he had been admiring had been lost in the first impact from his assailant. Deftly, he sighted the

weapon and fired two quick shots. He was rewarded by the sound of metal hitting metal.

"That popgun ain't gonna bother me!" The man in the suit of armour assured him.

His head was covered in a helmet and large, broad bands of armour fell down across his shoulders and torso, all the way to his groin. More plates protected his arms and thighs. Steel shin-guards were fastened around his lower legs. He lurched forward with surprising speed. Frasier realised that electric motors were indeed assisting the wearer of the suit, neutralising the weight of the steel protection he wore. A frontal attack was suicidal. Without hesitating, Frasier turned and ran, hoping to put some distance between him and his assailant. He needed to get some time to think his way out of this fight.

Hartmann passed through another heavy steel door and into a large room with a long window that appeared to be looking into a bay where four tall missiles were housed. Steel slats were fixed to the outside of the window. They were currently open, but he guessed that when one of these missiles was launched the slats could be closed like Venetian blinds and that they then protected anyone within the control room from the explosive exhaust of the rockets. He was surrounded by tall machines decorated with flashing lights and illuminated displays suggesting information that he could only guess at. Hartmann was not a scientist, but he knew that what he had discovered could prove invaluable to his country. Holstering his gun, the Abwehr agent withdrew a small camera from the inside of his coat. Quickly, he began to take photographs of everything that he could see. Obviously, he would not be able to take anything tangible away from this place, but the experts back in Berlin might be able to make use of what he was able to capture on film.

The Abwehr did not care about Mephistopheles or the threat he appeared to present to world peace, but they did care about the rockets that he claimed to have attacked cities such as Seattle and Vancouver with. Like other governments in the western world, the German Republic had received a film depicting a rocket being launched into the sky. A powerful jet of flame had driven it towards its target, a city many miles away. The fall of the rocket was marked by a powerful detonation, greater than that which a bomb dropped by an aeroplane could achieve. His superiors had immediately understood that the ability to strike targets so far away, and with such accuracy and devastation, would make Germany the first of all the powers in Europe. Someone important within the German government highly prized this kind of technology. It was the sole reason for Hartmann being here. His mission was completed the moment that his camera used the last frame on the film inside. Hartmann returned it to his pocket for safe-keeping. No one else seemed to have found their way into the missile control room, which only meant that he had only one immediate objective left to complete.

He removed four grenades from his belt. They were not the same as those used by the Italian SIM agent; these were a unique German design. Not only could they be employed in the same manner as a conventional explosive weapon, but they also possessed an extended timer function, meaning that the moment of detonation could be controlled. He placed each grenade in what he deemed to be a suitable place, hoping that the resulting explosion would destroy much, if not all, of the equipment in the control room. He set the fuse for each bomb to four minutes, removed the pins from them, and then quit the place quickly.

Chapter Three

The squad of four men turned the corner and stopped. Hunter did not. He had heard their footsteps on the hard floor of the corridor and accelerated. His huge frame collided with the uniformed guards. Two were knocked to the floor by the force of the impact. One bounced into the wall of the corridor. Holding the fourth by his neck, Hunter kicked the legs out from the man leaning against the wall. He ripped the machine gun from the hands of the guard he was holding and then hit him hard in the stomach. The two who had fallen were climbing to their feet. He knocked them down again using the body of the man he held. Fabulous strength was transmitted through his perfect physique. His assault was executed with irresistible speed and power.

“Who are you?!”

Hunter turned to look at the guard laid with his back against the corridor wall. His gun lay in his lap; his hands were raised in defence, palms outwards.

“Where’s Mephistopheles?” His voice was hard.

“Work your way upwards, to the top. He don’t pay me enough for this.”

A powerful hand gripped the front of his uniform and raised the man from the floor as if he weighed nothing. He came face to face with a visage that some might have described as handsome, if only his eyes did not carry such a threat of measured violence.

“Point me in the right direction and don’t think to deceive me.”

“That way, to the right. Follow it all the way down, it curves round a bit, but it will bring you out into kind of an indoor forest. Go across there and through the door on the other side. It takes you into a kind of spiral that climbs to the top. The boss is up there, right at the top.”

“You better not be lying!”

“I ain’t lying, mister, I’m terrified!”

“If you want to live get out of here. Take your mates with you.”

Hunter dropped him. The man fell against the wall and cowered. His fear was genuine enough. Following the directions given to him the British agent found himself following a curving corridor that lead to a closed steel door. He took hold of the handle and opened it, entering what appeared to be an arboretum. Hunter had also noticed that the door was not as heavy as the steel front suggested it would be. Inside, the ceiling was high enough to allow several trees to grow. The humidity contrasted with the cold mountain air outside. Water trickled in the background. A wall on his right suddenly glowed red and a figure appeared on the other side.

“Mephistopheles, I presume?”

A deep laugh emitted from hidden speakers and the figure approached closer to the glass. He was a tall man dressed all in red and sporting horns like the devil he had named himself after.

“I am he.” His voice was sonorous.

“I also presume that the glass panel is bullet-proof?”

“Of course, I can’t have my demise occurring too soon, there would be no fun in that.”

“Do devils’ die?”

“Oh, come now, Dr Hunter, this persona never fooled you for a moment.” He smiled.

“I am surprised that you know of me.”

“Well, of all the assassins sent to destroy me you are most certainly the most famous. I would have thought that being so well known would prove an inconvenience to your profession as a spy?”

“In this instance, perhaps not.”

“True. Tell me, what have you come for?”

Hunter studied the face behind the coloured glass for a moment. He got the distinct impression that the man was both unafraid and genuinely curious.

“To stop you.” He replied eventually.

“As an agent of the British Empire?”

“Yes.”

“You, a man of the most marvellous physique and mental agility, allowing yourself to be used as a weapon of your government. I would have thought that you would be given to a more worthwhile pursuit in life than that?”

“What is the point of this?”

“I wanted to meet you.” He smiled. “Of all those sent here to kill me I consider you the most formidable, and it has nothing to do with that impressive physique of yours. Yes, you are quite the eugenic superman aren't you?”

“No, actually, I am not.”

“I thought that you were? The eugenicists of America talk of you that way. You know, they are desperate to have an American version of you?” Hunter did not respond, but simply continued to assess the man in the devil costume. “You are perhaps aware of Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller? He was one of the founders of your English Eugenics Society.”

“I know of him.”

“There is an observation attributed to him that I like to quote, it is the underlying reason for what I do and what I have done.” Mephistopheles raised his chin and struck a dramatic pose. “The collective stupidity even of the most intelligent and civilised societies is stupendous!” Hunter made no response, neither in word nor movement. Mephistopheles looked disappointed. “You do not agree?”

“I am not here to discuss philosophy with you.”

“Then why are you here?”

“I have already given my reason.”

“Yes, to stop me, but that really is no more than an excuse, isn't it? I mean, you are really more of an adventurer than a spy, aren't you? These missions that they send you on; they give you a thrill, don't they? The danger makes you feel alive, I expect. That's why civilised men like to go out hunting big game animals or exploring un-reached parts of the world or race cars and aeroplanes; for the thrill of it. Life is never more exciting than when it stands on the precipice of destruction. To feel the beautiful surge of life in our veins before it is snatched away by age or surrendered to convention by adherence to social mores. That superb physique of yours, allied to that impressive intelligence, makes of you a most formidable man, how can you not be bored with normality? You are so exceptional.”

“If you surrender to me here and now, I would be happy to continue this conversation with you in your prison cell.”

“Well, that was a little unsubtle.” He looked disappointed.

“I can hear gunshots. People are dying.”

“People are always dying.”

“You are not always the cause of their deaths as you are tonight.”

“Do you know the true nature of Mephistopheles? He never damned anyone. He is only ever attracted to those who have already started down the path of damnation

themselves. All I do is encourage a smoother progression to hell itself. It is all I have ever done. People are dying, you are quite correct. We are all born to die. I expect that more of my people will die than yours tonight, however."

"They are not mine."

"They are by virtue of the fact that you are all here for the same reason, me!" His right eyebrow arched.

"Why did you call them all here? What is your real purpose?"

"Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris. It is a comfort of the wretched to have companions in misery. What you people do not see is that you are already living in Hell. You have all damned yourselves; you are just ignorant of the fact. Being born is not Original Sin; it is the only sin. This world is but a dream and I will diffuse it, like a mist, and when all the world dissolves every creature shall be purified, and then all places that are not Heaven shall be Hell."

"You prefer Marlowe's Mephistopheles to Goethe's?"

"It is time for me to go, Dr Hunter. Before our next meeting I would like you to consider the real reason as to why you are here in my domain tonight?" The light went out behind the panel and the figure disappeared.

Artemisia Montessori advanced cautiously down the corridor. From all around her she could hear the sounds of people moving. Muffled voices shouting. Boots stamping on the cold floor. She was perplexed by the layout of the place simply because she was ignorant of it. There were no helpful signs. On this level, when she came to a stairwell, the choice was simple, either go up or go down. She chose up. Artemisia knew very well the attraction for many of the others here tonight; the advanced weapons. They were not her reason for undertaking this mission, however.

Moving silently, she climbed the broad staircase. It led to a walkway that looked down into the atrium that she had passed through earlier. The area below was pockmarked with bullets. To her right there was a door. With the gun in her hand she approached and opened it. A silent corridor waited on the other side. It curved to her left very gently. No sounds issued up it.

Only instinct guided her. Advancing cautiously, Artemisia crossed the threshold. She walked close to the wall on her left. This position offered a degree of both cover and concealment. After a few moments she heard the sounds of voices. A man was issuing orders, others were responding. The corridor terminated in a junction. There were four uniformed men armed with guns. Risking a quick glance around the curve of the wall, Artemisia assessed her options. She pulled a grenade from her belt. Removing the pin the weapon was then thrown underarm towards the guards. It hit the floor once and then rolled in amongst them. The sound of the explosion was amplified by the constricted space. Artemisia had knelt down and turned her back to the scene, her hands covering her ears and her mouth open so that the sudden increase in air pressure would not damage her hearing.

The junction was a grisly mess and she stepped gingerly across it, not wanting to stain her leather boots with the human remains. The intersection offered her three options. She could turn left, go straight on, or turn right. Instinct told her that to go left would just take her back to the walkway above the atrium. Ahead, the corridor curved back in the same direction. She turned right. Some yards down this corridor she came across a Thompson's machine gun, blown out of the hands of its previous owner. She holstered her pistol and retrieved the gun, checking that it was fully

loaded. There was no obvious damage to the weapon. It was an efficient and reliable firearm that could do more harm more quickly than her Beretta.

Remaining cautious, she advanced once again, following the corridor to its conclusion at a large steel door. There was no apparent opening mechanism so she just shoved it with her shoulder. The door gave way silently and more easily than she had expected. Beyond it was a circular room some fifty feet in diameter. The ceiling was low and pierced by a broad spiral-staircase down which the only light flooded. Her eyes were already accustomed to the red emergency lighting. She could see several guards standing some distance away. They all had their backs to the staircase that was at the centre of the room. The men formed a protective ring and were too well spaced out to make using a grenade efficient as an initial means of attack. She was glad to have the Thompson at hand.

"Hey, who are you?!" One of the guards shouted.

Moving to the right, Artemisia opened fire. Two guards fell without having the time to respond. The others instinctively crouched. Their weapons began to chase her fleeing figure. The room appeared to lack any kind of furniture. Not even a planter or space divider. Aware that her course was obvious to her enemies, Artemisia changed direction suddenly. Bullets were coming close to her. She threw herself into a roll to the left. The stream of projectiles that had been catching up with her passed harmlessly through the space that she had vacated. Coming out of the roll she remained low, down on her knee. Quickly, she targeted the nearest guard. A brief burst as her slim finger squeezed the trigger. The gun bucked in her hands, but her aim was true. The man fell.

The staircase was between her and the remaining guards. They were trying to shoot at her through the gaps in the stairs, but they had no luck. Moving to the right again, Artemisia cut down two more of the armed men who were too slow to respond to her change in direction. She assumed that only three remained. They did not seem confident, however. Although still several feet from one another, the guards were also moving to their right, keeping the staircase between them and their attacker. A grenade was in her hand once again. She pulled the pin and rolled it over the floor to her left. With a quick burst from her gun, Artemisia rushed to the right. The guards backed away. One fell as the shrapnel from the explosive ripped into his body. Two guards dashed to their left and opened fire. Artemisia took aim and ran forward. Bullets hit the first. Ducking low and cutting to the left, but still going forwards, she hit the second. His aim had been poor, the bullets impacting high on the far wall behind her.

This Mephistopheles might have a private army, but they were of poor quality in her estimation. Taking the time to confirm that the area was secure, she detected no further movement. No one groaned. She was sure that they were all dead. She checked her machine gun. The magazine was almost empty. A quick examination of the dead returned three extra magazines. She replaced the one she had almost emptied, the other two she could not carry. Leaving them on the hard floor she mounted the stairs.

"Do you know, Hartmann, you really could have lent a hand!" Frasier mumbled to himself.

He was hiding at the end of a row of shelves, checking the remaining ammunition in his gun. It was more than enough, except that his enemy happened to be wearing a suit of armour that his bullets could not pierce. Conventional tactics were not going to

help him here. Frasier looked around for inspiration and thought that he saw it. A noise suddenly attracted his attention. He rolled to the left, in the opposite direction to the one he wanted to take. Something large crashed into the shelving at about the same height as his head had been. Through the assembled wares on the shelves he saw the dull reflection of the armour. The guy's motorised suit made him stronger than normal. He had just thrown a metal crate several feet with no apparent effort.

Frasier turned on the spot and disappeared down the row behind him. He was aware of one advantage; the electric servos in the lobsterman's suit were not quiet. Every time he moved they gave him away. He heard those servos once again. Turning around he saw his adversary reach up and pull the racks to his left. The motors whined, but the heavy shelves began to move.

"Jesus H. Christ!"

Frasier turned and sprinted for the end of the row. A growing crescendo of noise followed in his wake. He felt something hit him from behind. He staggered but kept going. He was some one ten feet from the end of the row when another object, a piece of debris ricocheting off the floor, passed close to his head. Frasier hurled himself forward, hoping that the desperate slide would carry him out of danger. Boxes and cartons fell around him. Some hit him painfully, but he was able to avoid being buried underneath the upturned ordinance. Quickly, he scrambled to his feet. A motion to his right caught his eye. He saw Hartmann running. The German spy showed no interest in helping him out.

"Can't rely on the cavalry this time!"

He moved to the left and looked down the row, it was all clear. Checking the next row along on the right revealed the guy in the armour was nowhere in sight. For a moment, Frasier wondered if he had gone after Hartmann, but he was sure that he would have heard the bark of the Mauser. That gun packed more of a punch than Frasier's Colt, but it might still not have been able to pierce the steel armour. He reckoned that Hartmann would probably still have used it to protect himself if attacked though.

The row on the right had one advantage; the rack was not continuous as it had been on the left. There were several breaks in it. Stealthily, he stalked down the aisle, unconsciously crouching. He paused at the end of the first rack and checked the area. There was no sign of his adversary. Moving onto the second rack, Frasier edged further towards the centre of the room. He saw the strange looking guns once more. It occurred to him that Mephistopheles' own advanced weapons might prove more effective against that suit of armour. He holstered his gun and approached the stack of curious looking armaments.

Frasier picked up something that looked like a streamlined rifle. It was surprisingly light. The design did not seem to add anything different to the gun. He put the stock to his shoulder and sighted down the barrel. The trigger was exactly where it should be. He squeezed the trigger. Nothing happened. He tried again. Still nothing. Almost petulantly, Frasier threw the thing to the floor. It broke apart. Separate pieces slid across the floor. He stared at it without comprehension at first.

"It's made of plastic?!" He was both surprised and dismayed by his discovery.

A sudden whirring alerted him to the attack. The guy had been standing perfectly still. It was probably easy to do it in that suit. No more than four feet away from the Naval Intelligence agent he lunged forward. Frasier let him come. As the hands inside thick leather gauntlets tried to close on him, Frasier fell backwards, pushing his right foot into the armoured abdomen. He let the other's momentum carry them over, heaving with all the strength in his thigh muscles to keep the heavy weight from

crashing down on top of himself. It worked. Frasier came out of the roll laid on his stomach while the guy in the suit was crashing around on his back a few feet away.

Jumping to his feet, Frasier bolted for his initial objective. He reached the fire extinguisher and ripped it from its wall mountings. Jogging cautiously back the way he had come, he found his attacker successfully, but slowly, climbing back to his feet. Just as the man in the armour rose to his full height, Frasier turned the extinguisher on him, aiming for his visor. He also targeted the few gaps that he could see between the armour plates, hoping to force the pressurised liquid into the suit and short the electric motors. The armoured man flailed around blindly. Sparks erupted from his back. The extinguisher was quickly emptied and the man was still moving, albeit erratically. Frasier hefted the heavy brass container up and hit his adversary full in the chest. The man toppled backwards and fell like a deadweight. More sparks suggested that he was not going to get any electronic assistance in climbing back to his feet this time.

A sudden explosion shook the room, knocking Frasier to the floor. He lay on his side for a moment, shaken by the impact of the blast. Climbing to his feet he found to his relief that he had not suffered any serious injury, just a few cuts and bruises. Deciding that it was time to go, Frasier headed back to the large steel door that was the entrance to the arsenal. Passing through the portal he followed his path back upwards. Exiting the stairs, he decided against returning to the parapet where he and Hunter had made their entrance. Instead, he headed for what he hoped would prove to be the cable car station. The missile control room was gone. He instinctively knew that Hartmann had destroyed it. For his own part, he had discovered the true nature of Mephistopheles' presumed advanced weaponry, it was all a lie. The weapons were a sham. There was nothing to keep him here now.

Frasier believed that he had an instinctive sense of direction. Fate seemed to think so too. He passed through a door and entered an atrium that looked like a battle site. Movement caught his attention.

"Hey, Hartmann!"

The German did not stop to acknowledge the American. He ran into the control room for the cable car. As Frasier trotted after him, Hartmann reappeared, thrusting his head through the doorway.

"Agent Frasier, quick! The cable car is still operational. I will open the doors, you hold them and I will join you once I press the start button."

"Sure!"

The doors to the car opened. Frasier held them until Hartmann joined him and then they both entered the car. The doors closed and it began its descent.

"What about the others?"

"I do not know what has happened to them, Frasier, but their safety was never one of my concerns."

"Yeah, you've proved that to me already."

"You cannot be so naïve, Agent Frasier? We each work for our governments. We do not trust each other, not even those who represent our presumed allies."

"So, you got what you wanted and now you're just quitting on them?"

"Yes, I got what I wanted. I achieved the objective given to me."

"And it wasn't to kill Mephistopheles."

"My superiors don't care about that madman."

"They might do if his missiles could reach Berlin?"

Hartmann shrugged. "Yes, maybe then, but that is not now. Did you achieve your objective, Agent Frasier?"

He glanced back through the glass window of the car, up towards the private fortress that was disappearing into the night.

“No, I don’t think that I did.”

“That is unfortunate.” Frasier turned back to look at Hartmann and found the barrel of the German’s gun barely an inch from his face. “However, they may decide that you died in action and give you a hero’s funeral all the same.”

“Hey, Hartmann, what is this?”

“Herr von Hartman if you don’t mind.”

“Look, we’re on the same side here!”

“So, you are as naïve as you seem. All alliances are expedient. It suited America to align with Britain and France in 1917, but you still planned to take Canada after the war was over, didn’t you? Those plans still exist and await only a fortuitous moment to be enacted, don’t they? I would like to see such an event occur. England is more of an enemy to America than Germany ever has been.”

“Well, right now you seem more like the enemy, so why not lower the gun?”

“Because I have a feeling that you will try and stop me from leaving with the information that I have been successful in attaining and you have not, Agent Frasier.”

“Oh, I’ve discovered some intelligence of my own, Herr Hartmann.”

“Have you indeed?”

“Yeah, those missiles are fake! So are those futuristic looking guns in the arsenal. It was all a lie, Herr Hartmann; all of it!”

“I don’t believe you.”

“Look, I don’t pretend to understand the why of it, but I do know it’s a fake, this whole Mephisto threat. That fortress place was built like a Hollywood movie set. It was all fake, all smoke and mirrors. There might have been a few goons in there acting as his private army or something, but, in reality, he posed no threat to world peace no matter what you saw in those movies that he sent your government! We all saw them, didn’t we, and we all jumped to the same conclusion.”

“You make no sense!”

“We all believed the lie!” Hartmann shook his head in response to Frasier’s words. “For me, you can take what you found in that place, I don’t believe it’s of any real value anyway, but right now, right here, I’m not your enemy, Herr von Hartmann.”

“I don’t trust you.”

“Look, we’re almost at the end of the ride. I’m going back to America to report my failure, you’re going to Germany, probably through Canada, and maybe what you found might be useful. The others might be dead up there, but there’s no reason for either of us to go the same way!”