

The Leader

Hitler was coming to town, and he wanted one of us girls. That's what we were told. Young, he liked them young. "How young?" I asked the prostitute who told me this.

"Young like you," she said. "That's what I heard from a friend of mine who's still a prostitute in Berlin. She was in a house that Hitler went to—oh, that was a long time ago. Now he doesn't go to houses. We just go to him and he or one of his aides selects. Anyway, he specified young—at least 20 years younger than him at least. That was ten years ago when he was first becoming our leader. Now it's maybe like 30 years younger than him—who knows? But young. You got a good chance to be the winner, sweetheart."

"Did your friend say what he's really like in person? Because I don't think I could take doing it with such an incredibly powerful and famous man."

"He's all right."

"She say that?"

"I don't know. She didn't say much. She just said she didn't get him. She was already then too old. And that he took the youngest girl in the group, who also happened to be the prettiest and best built, so nobody knows if he picked her only for her being young or pretty or her build or what. She had big boobs, that's what my friend said. Big and high and a tiny waist and hips that were in proportion to her breasts and long legs. And she was blonde."

"He prefers them blonde too?"

"It's difficult to say what he prefers. Remember, this is all secondhand. I don't know what other houses he's been to or if he's changed his taste much in women since then, but he's seen plenty of women I understand. That's what a general friend told me. Not a friend—a client, a one-shot deal. He came in here a couple years ago for a supposed quickie and said before we did anything 'You know what?' I said 'No, what?' He said 'Did you know I'm on Hitler's personal general staff?' I said 'No kidding, that's great.' What else am I to say? He said 'Wouldn't you like to know what Hitler's really like?' I said 'Yeah, yeah, tell me. What's he really like,' because I could see he was aching to say it. I really didn't care then or now, but you do?"

"Well, yes, in a way. After all, he is Hitler. The leader of the entire continent. Maybe one of the greatest men ever."

“The hell with Hitler, and you know it. And the hell with all the continents he conquers—though don’t breathe a word to anyone that I said any of that. Oh, go ahead. Tell the world. What do I care? I’ll say I never said it. No, that never works anymore. But I couldn’t give a damn what Hitler’s really like. Just give me my money, get your cookies, and go—next customer, know what I mean? But he was a general and, if he was telling the truth, on Hitler’s staff. And he had plenty of money to toss around also, so I said ‘Of course, what’s he really like? I’ve always been eager to know. But he’s very nice, though, am I right? Sort of like a god.’ I said that to make sure he knew whose side I was on. ‘What’s he like?’ he said. ‘He’s a god like you say, but a real god.’ I could see he was having second thoughts, as if I might suddenly be a paid informer or so patriotic that I’d run out and yell. ‘You would like him,’ he says. ‘He goes for girls like you and makes them excited with his godlike qualities and I am not just talking about the spiritual and moral, you understand?’ I said ‘No, I don’t understand. What do you mean? Because maybe I shouldn’t be telling you this, general, but I heard from a prostitute who’s dead now that he likes girls much younger than me—half his age preferably—and with big hips, tiny waists, blonde hair, and large breasts, but large firm breasts, no offense to the Reich, is that true?’ He said ‘The cut of the female figure doesn’t matter to him as long as it is perfect for him.’ Now that can almost mean nothing or two things, which can also be nothing if you can’t or don’t want to figure it out, so I dropped the subject. After, which is way after, for that was a weary old general who I think fought his greatest and maybe last battle on me and in the end won at great sacrifice to myself, he said ‘You want to know what Hitler’s really like?’ I said ‘Didn’t you ask me that before?’ ‘Did I?’ he said, and I quickly said ‘No, it must have been someone else,’ for he seemed angry. ‘Who?’ he said. ‘You know people who are talking disparagingly about our great leader?’ ‘No, just some harmless lieutenant in the tank corps I saw a year ago and who’s now dead,’ I said. ‘You go to bed with lieutenants?’ he said. ‘No, I just overheard him downstairs when I was wandering through the selection room looking for a lost brooch. Me, I save myself only for colonels and higher.’ Anyway, Hitler’s coming to town to check the military base, I suppose, and his first stop after he detrains is the Forest Hotel. We’re all to be in some room there when he or his aide comes in to make the choice. And no men for any of us till after the selection, as he wants the one he picks to be at least for the time being solidly pure.”

Two hours later the madam, Mrs. Dorfer, came in our room and said “Knock knock, darlings. Get your finest finery and most daring undies on, as we’re going to Hitler’s hotel.”

We all got in a couple of officers’ cars Hitler sent over. Seven of us girls packed in to each one, which was almost the entire house. Lotte and Ilse

were left behind. They were obviously too old—girls we saved for the soldiers and townsmen who had drunk or gambled too much and were down to their last mark. During the drive I asked the girl next to me “Excited?”

“For what? None of us has more than an eight percent chance of getting him, and I’m sickly today, so with my luck it’ll probably be me.”

“But Hitler. Just that you might see him up close.”

“Yes, Hitler. Maybe you’ve a point. But the truth is, till now I didn’t even think there was a real Hitler. No crap. He’s so easy to impersonate and look like, and that voice—even my own nephew fooled me with it once on the phone. I thought there might be four or five men dressed like him making speeches and shaking their fists all over Europe—something thought up by some military and industrial geniuses, let’s say, just to get our economy moving again, and knowing the national mentality, what better way? But real or not, I was never one of his bigger fans. He comes in like hailstones and thunder and thinks we’re going to take over the whole western world? You ever read world history? Modern politics? I did—before, when I was becoming a teacher, plus all the best literature there is. In the final round we got to lose. You can only stick it out so far and for just so long before choppo, you get your head and hands cut off and maybe if you’re not looking, your behind too. So big deal I quietly say in my own way—Hitler as a client. No, I thought it over. Years from now if I’m alive I’ll tell people that and they’ll say ‘That ignoramus and drudge? He was responsible for this, that and every other thing and brought the great German nation to its lowest ebb yet. You had the devil himself in you,’ the more mystically inclined people will say, so I’ll hold my tongue. And believe me, if I wind up with Hitler I don’t move any more for him than I would for any other man, unless he puts a cocked gun to my head. And with his tomorrows and past decisions and heavy worries, you think he’s going to do you any great tricks in bed? That’s for the newsreels. Like all the deep thinkers I’ve had it’ll take everything he has just to get started and to stay with it, so in the end I suppose I will have to move around a little, just to get the job over with.”

“Well I’m excited at the prospect,” the girl on my other side said. “It’s like a fantasy come true. When I was a young girl—I am not old—I fell in love with him right after they jailed him for that putsch. His face—so sensitive and brooding, yet sweet. And his presence, defiance and physique. That was then. Maybe now his body’s a little changed. But I wrote him a letter even. When he got out of jail he wrote me one back. He said ‘Your faith in my cause inspired me and inspires me still. We will win.’ That was very nice. I kept the letter knowing it would be valuable one day, but my ancestral home was bombed early in the war and everything went up in it—I won’t even mention what people were inside. But from that jail sentence till now I have adored him. If I was chosen over you girls it would be like for some

other women making love with the world's most famous movie star who they've been writing about in their diaries for years. And he's still handsome and gallant like one, wouldn't you say?"

"Very," I said. "Do you know anything about what kind of girl he prefers? I heard he likes them extremely young."

"No, I don't know, and I'm sorry to hear what you said. Maybe if he'd succeeded with that putsch and we were in the same situation now only ten years earlier, my chances would be better. But I wasn't a prostitute then, so I guess I lose out no matter what."

"I've a good idea what he likes," a girl on one of the jumpseats said. "The cleaning lady in our house told me he likes girls only with big derrieres. She said years before she was a girl in the most elegant house in Hamburg, and Hitler, who'd just become chancellor then, came in with Goebbels or Göring—though I know those two don't look alike, I always get their names mixed up because of the G and O. They were some pair, though, she said. Joking, playing the piano, throwing money in the air. You should speak to her. She has some funny stories to tell about those two just from their one trip. But Hitler took the girl with the biggest buttocks. She was also very young, chunky, and kind of happy-go-lucky and had short black hair."

"I thought he liked tall blondes with tiny waists," I said.

"Me too. I didn't know about the waist thing, but the hair I was positive about. So I asked Helga again, but she said Hitler definitely picked the stubby black-haired and Göring or Goebbels got the tall blonde. But you got a nice derriere—not fat, but just big and broad enough to qualify—so what are you fretting about? Mine? Too small and firm, I think—coconuts, which lots of men prefer. But if Helga's right then I guess I should count myself out too. Though I'd like to be the one selected, and not just for the money involved. But also because I know it'll be one hell of a story to tell for the rest of my life."

"Did Helga say what kind of man Hitler was like?"

"Only the girl he was with saw him. But she did say something very strange happened after Hitler left. They found that the girl had fainted dead away on the bed. Well, they thought, she is overcome with being with the new magnetic chancellor, and maybe he also has something really going for him in a physical and amorous way to have such an effect on a young pro. So they revived her with salts, but she said she can't say anything about what happened and that she couldn't work anymore that night, and everyone was very understanding because she had been with a man that a thousand other girls in the city, prostitutes or not, would have done for free. Then for two days after she still couldn't work. All she could speak was gibberish—his tensions, his anxieties, it isn't easy guiding an entire nation and maybe becoming the future primary western leader and some such rot.

They got her a doctor, but the third day after she saw Hitler and without having another man, she did herself in."

"She must have been very immature," I said. "I know I wouldn't let myself go like that if he picked me tonight."

"You never know. Have you ever had a truly great man?"

"You mean a powerful figure—world famous, a great artist whose name just about everybody knows?"

"Like that."

"Once, Johann the tightrope walker."

"You had him? Out of the air I'd think he'd be very ungainly and tense."

"Sort of. But he's supposedly the best rope walker in Germany and so maybe the rest of the world we can say, can we not?"

"We might."

"He fell anyway. Two weeks ago—I read it in the papers. Broke both legs and his spine entertaining our troops. But he was the most famous I ever had and just average in bed I'd say. Wanted things done, wouldn't do much, peter out, come back, give him a few wiggles from below and you're done with him—really, nothing very different or perverse. Normal."

"Maybe that was a bad day for him, or a very good one. Maybe all rope walkers and aerialists and the like only think they have to come to us, but really don't do it well because they get most of their fulfillment on the rope and bars. And like our leader, just think of all the tensions they come to you with—everybody observing them, one false move and so forth, many people hoping they'll fall. But Hitler's problems are much different from any other man's, so I don't want to prejudge him too hard. Though I do think he'll be an experience to make love with just because he is Hitler and, because of all those pressures he has to release, to listen to and look at when he finally goes off."

The cars stopped. "Everyone into the hotel lobby and first door on the right," an officer said. "Quick. It's late. Leave your pocketbooks and all accessories in the cars." German soldiers all around—naturally, security was very tight. So many flags flying above, and the hotel never seemed so clean and bright.

The first door on the right was to the dining room. Only now, nobody was there except some 50 soldiers on guard. The middle of the dining room had been cleared except for 14 seats in a row for us girls. We were told to sit and wait. A few minutes passed. Then the commanding officer said "Everyone please rise." The soldiers stood at attention, and all the girls rose. The door from the kitchen opened, and out first in front of a group of officers and guards was Hitler, who walked very quickly and was in full uniform and knotted tie and holstered pistol and with his hat under his arm and also carrying a swagger stick, but instead of those riding boots I'd always seen

him wear in photos and newsreels were these highly polished black shoes. He walked past us with the commanding officer, as if we were this officer's troops Hitler was inspecting. He was taller than I'd heard he'd be, and he didn't look well: pale and much fleshier in the face and bags under his eyes. His hair style and mustache were the same, and his stomach pouch and the way the body drooped were no different than most other men his age. He also looked a little annoyed, as if with just one glance he knew that none of us were what he'd had in mind and that he was wasting his time here. Then he smiled.

"That one," he said, pointing the stick at Vera, the girl who'd been wanting him since the Putsch. "No good. Sorry, my dear," he said, sort of bowing, and the officer snapped his fingers and a soldier escorted her out of the room. Vera, who threw her hands to her mouth and screamed in delight when she'd thought she'd been picked, now seemed heartbroken. Hitler walked past us all again and kept on shaking his head.

"Stand straight and tall, girls," the officer said.

"No, that's all right," Hitler said. "They're standing fine. That one," and he pointed the stick at Hetta, who had the biggest buttocks and maybe the best shape of us all. "She's very charming looking, but her age is against her. Please," he said to the officer. "To save them this embarrassment, you should have left the ones behind that I said. Excuse me," he said to the woman, and the officer snapped his fingers and she was escorted out of the room.

Now I was one of the two girls left with the biggest pair of buttocks. Maybe only Lena had a behind that came close to being as big as mine but still relatively compact, if that was what Hitler liked most in a woman, but she also had a bigger bosom and tinier waist and was blonde and almost as young as me, so I thought he'd pick her. Then maybe Gretchen next, who was the real beauty of the bunch though perhaps too tall and slim for him and like me a brunette, with maybe the long-legged Frieda and me coming in third.

"You," he said, pointing to me. So I was out too. "I would like her. She has a bit more sparkle in the face than the others and a seemingly cheerier disposition, though you are all so nice for taking the time to come here today and Colonel Heineman will see that you are adequately recompensed. Thank you," and he saluted us with the stick and left.

The rest of the girls crowded around me. "Oh Gerta, you are so lucky," they said. "You clever girl. I bet you winked at him or showed him a peek of what you had, isn't that so?"

"The winner and maybe new champion," Hilda said, raising my hand above my head. "You will be fantastic. He will adore you and be fantastic. Play your cards right, dearie, and you can take that other whore's place and give orders in all his castles and feed his big dogs."

"Just be careful and return to us safe and sound," Mrs. Dorfer said.

"The rest of you please return to the cars you arrived in," the commanding officer said. "Mrs. Dorfer, see Colonel Heineman, and you please," he said to me, "come with me?"

I got into the hotel elevator with him and two guards. "You have no weapons of any kind?" he said. "Barrettes, nailfiles, things you wouldn't be aware of—mind if I search?"

"And if I did?"

"I'd have the matron do it. I don't take liberties with women, madame."

"Search me."

He searched me during the elevator ride. "You're clean. Now you be good to the leader, you hear? He doesn't need to be counseled or consoled, just relaxed. Say only pleasant and reassuring things to him. If need be, the weather. Beautiful day today—words to that effect. He won't find them rude or dumb and will understand your unease. And don't be aggressive or suggest anything unless he asks you to. He likes politeness and warmth. In other words, do what he says to do, and you will be amply rewarded, and if he comes this way again soon, you'll be his choice for a second time."

"How long do you think it will be?"

"This is between you and he. And I forgot: be responsive too. Whatever he does, say you like."

"Though I know he's not like anybody else, I do that with all my clients unless they're suffocating me with their weight or murdering me. Any other advice?"

"None that I can think of. After it's over, he'll tell you so by leaving through the door to the adjoining room, and probably without saying another word. Then you get washed and dressed and see me outside your door."

He walked down a hotel corridor where a lot of soldiers were. "Can I ask you one more thing? Why do you think he picked me?"

"He already said. He liked you. Your disposition and sparkle and such."

"Some of the girls said they heard he only likes us young and with big buttocks and larger breasts than me and maybe blonde and very narrow waists, which mine—though flat—is not. Any of that true?"

"He likes all kinds. Young maybe, but most men do. But you with your brown hair and others with red or black or even dyed to those. But no more of this. Here is his room. Just go inside and undress and get in bed under the top sheet. He'll be in soon."

I went inside and undressed and got in bed. There was an opened bottle of Moselle in an ice bucket by the bed. I'd like a drink but didn't know if I should take one. I'd wait. There was fruit too. And tiny cheese and wurst sandwiches on a silver tray. Truth was, I was getting nervous and would

like something to eat and drink to calm those nerves. For what would I say to him? How was I to act? He'd see through any pose I put on. *La guerre* goes well, *mon general*, *n'est pas*? No, that wouldn't do. Whatever I'd say: no jokes. And suppose he didn't like me nude? My simple little belly scar might put him off. Then he'd say so and I'd leave if he wanted me to, easy as that. He wouldn't get upset or mean. And he had so much power. That was what frightened me. I must be on my guard what I say and do. People who it seemed hadn't done or said anything had disappeared. Not anyone I knew, but friends of friends. All for a good cause, though some say no. But who was to say what was the good cause? A man with so much power could establish his own good cause. That was true. Just keep the words functional and complimentary and wait for the right signals for him, that was the best way.

The door to the next room opened and he came out. He didn't say anything, just looked at the ceiling blinking his eyes as if the light there was too bright for him, then at me. He was in slippers and a bathrobe. Very nice one too. Velvet. Red, with black piping and a thick braided rope. Stern, though, and it didn't seem a smile would ever come.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello. You're a very attractive young lady—you know that, don't you?"

"I've been told."

"Hasn't gone to your head yet, has it?"

"The Moselle?"

"The Moselle? Oh, the Moselle? No, not that. You want some? Maybe you've had some."

"No, I haven't. I thought I'd wait."

"You could have, you know. I wouldn't have minded. You should have felt free and helped yourself." He was still standing by the door he'd come through, bathrobe still tied. "Did you think I would have minded if you'd taken a glassful?"

"No, I didn't think that. I don't know. I thought it would be politer and more respectful of me to wait till you got here. It's your wine. I'm your guest and these are your rooms. I would wait till you offered it, that's what I felt."

"It's the hotel's wine. They gave it to me. The best Moselle, they said. Let me see." He came over and read the bottle's label. "Good, but not the best. So now it's our Moselle and I will only drink a glass if you'll have one too. No, that's not so. But drink a glass or two. Don't wait for me."

"Do you want some? I'll pour it for you."

"Yes, pour it. Why not? And I'll offer you sandwiches. That way, we can be polite to one another and give each other different things."

"Thank you." I poured the wine into two glasses, held his glass out for

him. We clicked glasses. He first, then I clicked his. I drank all of my wine. He only sipped from his.

"You drank so fast," he said.

"I think I'm a little nervous. Oh oh, maybe I shouldn't have said that."

"Of me? Don't be. And say anything. I am in here like all other men. And you are young. And have nice breasts. I like them."

"Thank you."

"I won't tell you why. That might embarrass you. You'll have to guess. All breasts are nice on women, but yours especially so. But I still won't say why."

"I'll think about why you think they're nice later on."

"Do. It's good to have something to think about later on."

"You mean after you leave?"

"No, always. Always to have something to think about but not always to think about it. Activity. Physical and of the mind. Both you can't do very well together at the same time, now can you?"

"I don't think so."

"Don't say so or agree with me unless you believe it."

"I won't."

"Then what do you really think about it?"

"About what?"

"That physical and mental activity can't go hand in hand together very well. And then, not too much of only one without the other coming soon after it, and on and on and on and interchanging themselves like that till you sleep. Thrust yourself into experience and then reflect on the meaning of it. But all reflection and no experience makes us mad. The opposite, and we are nothing but brutes. Now who previously said that?"

"I've no idea."

"Guess."

"Goethe?"

"That's right. Very good. You're educated. Or look straight at me and tell me you didn't read my mind."

"I didn't."

"Something happened. Or perhaps it is that you're just plain smart."

"I went through your schools. And almost became a history teacher."

"You should have. And I'm excited by you, you know? Educated, or a mind reader. Both would do." He sat on the bed. "Oh, I completely forgot." He offered me the plate of sandwiches. "Eat, go on. You're young, maybe still growing. And you'll grow bigger, stronger, and wiser and just maybe even telepathic if you take the headcheese."

I took the headcheese sandwich, though I never liked it because it's gelatinous and all those foot and mouth parts.

"Don't take it just because I suggested you to. What's your favorite little sandwich here?"

"Headcheese."

"Truth now."

"Actually, I prefer an unadorned cream cheese, but they don't have any here."

"What they didn't supply for us here is not what I asked you." He seemed miffed.

"I'm sorry, you're right. I was being selfish. Out of all of these, it's the hard cheese on the black bread there. I like that best of all."

"Then put down the headcheese."

"Headcheese is nice too."

"No, put it down. Eat what you like. You don't get that many opportunities for that now, am I right? Food is generally scarce. Not for me—I won't lie to you. But I'm sure it must be for you. So here you have a choice. More than a choice—you can have all these sandwiches when you leave. Tell the commanding officer that I said so."

"He'll believe me?"

"It's what I usually do. He knows. You only don't get them if you don't tell him."

"I'll tell him. Thank you. All the other girls would probably like some too, so I'll take it to them and we'll divide it up."

"Do that. Very generous." Then silence. He sipped his wine, was looking away from me, still hadn't touched the bathrobe rope. I didn't think I should say "Don't you want to remove your robe?" as I would have now with any other man. No: wait for the signals. He was paying much more, first off. And he was who he was. He knew about time. At his own time. And I'd made too many mistakes already. Though who knew—maybe he wanted me to say that. Maybe he was shy and unassertive in bed—but someone would have said. But maybe the commanding officer didn't know and was only guessing at the right tactic when he said don't be suggestive or aggressive, or at least that those ways of being with Hitler didn't apply here.

"Would you like to come under the covers with me?" I said.

"In time."

"Of course. In time. I'm sorry. I knew you knew better what to do and I felt you'd say that. But I think I said it out of force of habit. That's the truth now, even though my saying that about habit and all it alludes to might also be the wrong thing to say. But I'm getting in deeper and deeper, but I also have to admit that I'm feeling more than a little nervous in your presence and I don't know what to do about it."

"Relax, and by my telling you it's all right, that's all. As I said, I'm not un-

like any other man in many respects. Act natural. I want that. Not fright or anxiety. I chose you because you seemed the one young woman downstairs who'd be least afraid of me and so would do what I want you to do."

"I'm not too different. A couple of the other girls would have been like that too."

"Yes, but I chose you."

"Thank you."

"Come all the way out of the sheets this time and I'll sit on the bed more."

We did.

"Very nice breasts. Strong body. I like you. You are very nice. And you will be very nice to me too, all right?"

"Of course."

"Lovely hair. Kiss me." I kiss him. A little kiss. "Soft lips. Lovely lips." He stood up and untied his bathrobe. He still had all his clothes on underneath except his jacket and belt with revolver. He got undressed, touching my thighs and forehead every now and then. He looked his 50 or so years in physique. He sat back on the bed. "I'm tired, though not much."

"I've time. Really. And energy—all you wish."

"Touch me. Hard if you like. Don't worry. Everyone can take a little hurt."

"Down there?"

He nodded. I held and rubbed him.

"Now I'm going to lie on my stomach and I want you to do something."

"I think I know what it is."

"No you don't. Not even with your educated guess. I want you to urinate on me."

"I couldn't."

"Yes you can. It's easy. And you must have done it to others. And everyone can urinate a little at most times. So do it."

"Where?"

"Waist up, but principally on top of my head. Now please."

I stood over him. "It's not easy for us to direct it," I said. I urinated on his shoulders first and then made it up to the top of his head.

"That's good. Thank you. Now defecate on me."

"I could never do that. And I never have."

"It's harder, but try."

"No."

"You don't want to?"

"It's not that I don't want to. I'll do all the other things if you want."

"You can sleep with 20 men in succession in one afternoon—that's true—that's maybe an exaggeration—so you can do this for me once." He was get-

ting angry again. "It's what I'd like right now. Please, darling—what's your name?"

"Gerta."

"Please, Gerta. Be nice. You said you'd be very nice. That's why I picked you. So you do it once in your life? What's that? Once and it's done. What is it even having it done to you once? And after, you can run to the bathroom without making an excuse. I don't ask for this all the time. I swear. Now I'm ready."

He'd put his head face-down into the pillow. I got over him again. "It might take time," I said.

"All the time you need." His head was now right below my behind. A funny thought I had was that I suddenly felt like one of his bombers circling over an enemy town. His head was the town center—the primary target, where the main enemies and command post and warworks were, and maybe I sprayed it and a little of the town's outskirts before with my urine like bullets. If I told him this now, would he laugh? No—no jokes. Serious business with him, bombing, and I better get serious too. But a town eager to get bombed—pleading for it, in fact? Enough. Must concentrate. I tried. Nothing. His head turned a little to the side and one of his eyes was now visible and looking up.

"How are you doing?" he said.

"Soon."

"Good. If you need another glass of wine, take one. Take two."

"No, I think I'll be all right without it."

"Better to take it, and fruit."

I drank standing up on the bed with him still flat below me. Poured myself another glass and drank that one down too. I reached over for a pear, bit into it and threw it back into the bowl, but I missed and it fell to the floor. He didn't stir. I got over him again.

"I think you should be ready," he said.

"I just about am." It came. First direct hit on the town center and he moved his face back into the pillow. He made noises like a man making noises during the sex act rather than at the end. Then it was over. The enemy town was totally destroyed. Mission accomplished and with a first strike also, or whatever the expressions were that air force people used. "Excuse me," I said.

"I understand."

He was still flat on his stomach with his face in the pillow, though you'd think he'd want to get out fast too. I got off the bed and went to the bathroom and cleaned myself. I looked in the mirror. Hitler, I thought. Nobody would believe it. Or rather: for my own sake, nobody was ever going to

have a chance to believe it. He didn't have to tell me that. The woman he lived with: she did it to him too? Had he always done it this way and only with young women? She wasn't that young. Nice figure though: I didn't know about her behind. But he said no—"I swear," he said, "not all the time." All right. But that suicide girl. Having someone like him plead for you to do such a thing must have been too much for her to bear. Suppose she once worshipped him. She might have been to rallies or at least seen movies of rallies with him speaking to a half million cheering people at once. She must have been very young to react so extremely, or what? But if only she could have been like me. I wasn't tough but I'd been around long enough to take the healthy way: in many respects he was inferior, a crazy pathetic pervert, simple as that.

I left the bathroom. He wasn't there. And the soiled sheets and pillow cases were gone and a perfume had refreshed the room. I dressed and left. The commanding officer was waiting outside the door.

"So everything went well?" he said.

"I think he was satisfied. He didn't complain. I treated him as nice as I could, just as you said."

"If the report back from him goes well, then I hope we'll see you again." He snapped his fingers. The same two guards came over. "Drive her home in an officer's car or to wherever she wants to go."

"Home," I said. "And thank you." We shook hands.

The guards and I walked to the elevators. "Wait," I said, "there's something else. He said I could have all the sandwiches in his room."

"Forget the sandwiches," one of the guards said.

"But he said I should ask your officer for them."

One of them ran back and knocked on a door. The officer came out. "She says that he told her she could have all the sandwiches in his room."

"Then get them for her."

"But you must come with me, sir. I'm not allowed unless with you."

They went into the room I was in with Hitler before. The guard came out carrying the tray of sandwiches and gave me it. The officer returned to his room.

"But it's silver and belongs to the hotel," I said. "He only said the sandwiches, nothing about the tray."

"If my officer says it's what I should give you, nobody will mind."

I kept the tray, offered each of them a sandwich as we rode down in the elevator. They each took one. We ate. I thought that maybe one of them would ask me what Hitler was like in the room. As a test of my silence, perhaps. Or maybe because of his crying curiosity on the subject concerning such a man, he might lose his head for a moment. If one of them did

ask, I'd say "I'm sorry, it's something you know I can't talk about, and if you insist, I'll have to report you to your officer." That would be the right answer. But neither of them asked. I also thought that maybe one of them, if he didn't already know what Hitler was like in the bedroom, would want to pay to be the first one to make love to me after Hitler. But that too neither of them asked.

POETRY / BELL, LAZARD, MATTHEWS, DUBIE,
JARMAN, EDSON, FINKEL, POULIN, MYERS,
STAFFORD

John Clare's Badger / Marvin Bell

The man we had thought drunk
was twice-stabbed, and the knife
left in his back. I remember
his falling forward, or not one of us
would have come down from the fence.

We would sit that fence at dusk
and truckloads of potatoes, ducks
and cauliflower spill on past
and the farmers without a whimper.
Salt air came up the street

from the South. East and time past
New Amsterdam, we faced
the Atlantic and (we knew this) England.
We were not called. Not chosen.
England might have been a star.

You want to know what happened
to that man? He lived. He fought back.
He's going to die. If there's a reason
it took these twenty years
to round him up again, that may be why.