

The Devil Who Is (The One Hundredth Witch)

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1.

The itinerant inquisitor, or, as he was also known, Hexenkommissar (“commissar of witches”) Johann Spingler arrived in the town of Möckmühl in a black coach. He was escorted by a leather-covered wagon with the executioner and secretary, and by several armed cavalrymen. The wagon was driven by a midget with purulent eyes and thin tufts of facial hair. The driver of the coach, on the other hand, was colossal and fat. His red face, visible from afar, filled people with a terror that is beyond explanation: indeed, the Hexenkommissar employed the monster precisely for such an effect. His eyes glared piercingly from under a thicket of eyebrows, the disheveled hair on his head was gray like ashes, and the exposed parts of his face looked like two pieces of hanging flesh—he had almost no forehead. When Johann Spingler’s coach rumbled into a town, he stopped in front of the city hall and dispatched one of his attendants to the mayor. He did not even consider disembarking from his coach. The mayor came out alone to greet him, bowing deeply to receive a blessing. Disclosing the nature of his visit, the Hexenkommissar ordered that announcements be posted immediately on the doors of the city hall and neighboring churches, obliging every inhabitant of the town, under threat of excommunication and criminal proceedings, to report within twelve days on anyone who elicits any suspicion of involvement in sorcery, or about whom evil rumors are circulating, or who displays any suspicious behavior. The informant was promised heavenly blessings as well as a financial reward from the property of the sorcerer or sorceress. Confidentiality was guaranteed.

The inquisitor remained in his coach until the requested decrees were formulated, until they were nailed onto the doors of the city hall and the same was done at the churches—such was his peculiarity, as if to prove his curious dedication to the task he was assigned to perform. Moreover, the coach followed the person distributing the proclamations, the driver yelling loudly and cracking his whip. That yelling, together with the whole spectacle, dispersed any curious onlookers at once—the inquisitor observed with satisfaction the void expanding so quickly around him: the closed, even shuttered windows and the deserted streets and town square, where the wind

was free to blow, howling distinctively as if it too were affected by the stench of horror and dread that was descending on the town. Perhaps the wind itself became the messenger of that terror: the air had the smell, the Hexenkommissar liked to joke among friends, of impending blood and death.

After these formalities, the coach set off to the tavern courtyard: in each of the towns and villages he visited, Johann Spingler always stayed with the same person. And so in Möckmühl he called upon his acquaintance Maximilian Spee, who, having been notified some time earlier of the arrival of the fearsome guests, stood before the opened gates. When Pater Ioannes, or Pater Johannes, as he was also known, deigned to disembark from the coach—he was a hefty man and had a round face, in the center of which a small, pug nose protruded above puffy lips twisted in a scornful line—the innkeeper bent in two and kissed the priest's hand. The hosteller knew perfectly well that these guests would not be paying for their lodging, food, or wine, but their visit would benefit him no less than that of guests who paid for everything.

"Have you many lodgers?" inquired Spingler as he blessed the innkeeper.

"I have a few, Your Reverence," the innkeeper replied warily.

"Announce my arrival," Spingler said, raising his face haughtily. "And if someone wishes to hold converse with me, I am at their disposal."

This phrase was almost ritualistic. It meant that from that moment on, the courtyard had become a venue of the inquisition—access was granted only to those who wished to make a denunciation. Pater Johann knew from experience that no one would appear immediately, and so he could dine peacefully and take an afternoon nap, since his real work would commence as darkness set in—only then would informants begin to creep in. Sleeping then would be out of the question. He even knew what they would say, since it was almost always the same: someone has long been suspected of sorcery; a woman standing just outside of town at the onset of a storm was seen staring at the sky; a man developed severe abdominal pain after his neighbor gave him the evil eye. Someone will claim that his horse or hog fell ill after an quarrel with his neighbors; sometimes the informant himself, or an acquaintance of his, fell ill after being touched by a woman who had expressed an evil wish against him, which later came true.

Johann Spingler even kept a notebook, in which he recorded all incidents of witchcraft on good-quality paper. This was separate from the records of court proceedings: those he submitted to the inquisition, whereas the notebook was always at his side. So when the denunciation procedure began, he would find a similar incident in his notebook and nod his head in agreement—the repetition of motifs proved the veracity of the informant, since the things he spoke of were known to be practiced by witches. The Hexenkommissar's enthusiasm was even greater and swelled into a peculiar

kind of joy when the denunciation was new and unusual—this was proof that witches were developing novel methods of activity, and the revelation of these methods was his, Pater Johannes's, sacred mission. In quiet moments he liked to review this notebook. All sorts of things were entered in it: a peasant stole a sack from the accused and patched his pants with it, after which his knee ached, since the patch was directly over that knee; another ate a bun at his neighbor's and then fell ill; yet another complained that after a female suspect scolded him, his bull became afflicted; two women were burned at the stake because during the summer they had roamed forests foraging for medicinal roots. Yet another woman wiped her lips after communion while walking around the altar, that is, she attempted to incorporate consecrated bread into a magic formula. At any rate, Johann had become convinced long ago that any misfortune was a trick of the devil or the act of a witch: be it drought, storm, epidemic, an unexplained illness, and so on.

Johann Spingler hastened to his designated chamber; he could not wait to leaf through the pages of his notebook before lunch. Why before lunch? The midday meal always fatigued him and made him sleepy, whereas before lunch he was, though tired from travel, still full of vigor and strength. But Pater Johannes was unable to indulge this desire prior to partaking in food: just as he was settling into his seat there was a knock on the door, and he was informed that one of the lodgers at Maximilian Spee's inn wished to hold converse with the commissar of witches at once. The inquisitor was surprised; after all, by volunteering to confer with him so openly, the informant was exposing himself before other people and possibly the devil, who would certainly avenge himself later. But such was the case, and the Hexenkommissar, though somewhat perturbed that someone had dared to ruin his schedule for the day, sat up straighter in his seat and turned his face toward the door. He was disappointed, however, for it was only the mayor of Metz, Agrippe von Nettesheim, with whom he had studied at the academy and even befriended for a time, though now they had nearly come to the point of dueling, all because of a certain woman in Metz whose case Johann had not yet concluded. That is, she was still incarcerated, locked in tight irons and confined in a horribly tight space. Agrippe pretended to be interceding in the incrimination of the sorceress at the behest of his father's friend, and he had sparred verbally with Spingler in Metz on several occasions with regard to the case. All would have been well, had Agrippe not gotten so deeply involved that now he gave the inquisitor no peace, even tracking him down here. Agrippe would probably claim that their meeting happened completely by chance, since he just happened to be in town to take care of personal affairs. And so, this is what was said:

"I am glad to see you, Agrippe!" exclaimed Pater Johannes. "As long as you don't start pining for that witch again. Her case has been resolved, and I would advise you not to exhibit such approbation for a daughter of the

devil. Did we not conclude our discourse?"

"That's just it," said Agrippe. "I indicated to you that the documents do not provide sufficient evidence to charge the woman."

The priest was unhappy. This excessive affability of his former friend had begun to irritate him. Of course, that enchantress had undoubtedly been Agrippe's sweetheart and he was ruthlessly taking advantage of Spingler's partiality to him as an old friend. Johann sighed.

"The fact that her mother was burned at the stake as a witch is sufficient evidence."

"You know perfectly well, Johann, that does not bear upon her case. That concerns her mother's case."

Pater Johannes puckered his spongy lips. "Remember *Malleus Maleficarum*," he said. "The charge is completely well-founded. Witches dedicate their offspring to the devil right after birth. Or they procreate with incubi and in that way sow magic and sorcery in their families."

At that Agrippe turned crimson.

"That is fallacious theology, Johann. It is not sufficient reason to torture innocent women and drag them to a bonfire. Is this how heresy is to be eradicated? Your conclusions demonstrate that you yourself are a heretic!"

Johann felt an iciness inside. What Agrippe had said was no joke. And he too began to feel angry. "Explain!" he ordered, for this no longer concerned the witch, but rather Pater Johann himself.

"I'll explain," Agrippe replied curtly. "Let us say that you are right. Then, however, the sacrament of baptism would be nullified. There would be no meaning in the priest's words, 'Away, ye with a darkened soul; relinquish your place to the Holy Spirit,' if through the acts of a godless mother this child, too, fell under the spell of the devil! They are then meaningless. Is this what you claim?"

Johann could endure no more. He jumped to his feet and pointed a finger at the door.

"Don't abuse our long friendship, Agrippe!" he yelled. "It's better that you get out of my sight and not play with fire!"

"Are you saying that our friendship is over?" Agrippe asked quietly, eyes ablaze.

Johannes felt a glacial chill beneath his shoulder; perhaps he had overdone it? Would it be better to part with this man on good terms, so that Johannes could perform his holy mission in peace, and then dispense with him—well, not directly, but by pointing a finger at him?

Pater Johannes sat down and paused for a long moment.

"No, I don't wish to forfeit our long-standing friendship, Agrippe," he said warmly. "But we have chosen an unsuitable setting for our discussion. The matter will not be resolved in any case until I return to Metz. There we will resume our debate. Perhaps you will even rescue her whose case so consumes you."

"Thank you, Johannes. I am consumed with her case not for personal reasons, but because divine justice must exist in the world."

"You are consumed in vain, Agrippe," Johann said, barely opening his puffy lips. "God passes judgment not in this world, but in another, more perfect world. He has appointed us to be the judges here."

"And if you misjudge?"

"Then we shall be judged. Even a child knows, Agrippe, that heaven is for the righteous, and hell for the sinful—may the Lord save us from that!"

"Amen!" Agrippe exclaimed, his face brightening. "I'm glad that we met once again, albeit by chance, and have come to an agreement."

2.

The midday meal was brought to the chamber, although not by the maid, but by the innkeeper. Pater Johann Spingler enjoyed eating, especially the choice dishes that were masterfully prepared by the local chef, who had once known better days, but because of an excessive inclination for wine had ended up working here at this public house, which actually had a rather good reputation. And so when the priest spied the tray laden with salads and patés which were to be complemented with a well-aged wine, he immediately forgot about business matters, including the unpleasant conversation he had just held with Agrippe, and, raising his hands, surrendered to the charming approach of the beaming innkeeper.

"I am happy to serve Your Reverence however I can!" exclaimed the innkeeper unctuously, knowing full well that his presence was not superfluous: the established customs of their interaction demanded it. The priest was expected to invite the innkeeper to partake in the meal, even though the food and drink were the innkeeper's; in addition, Master Maximilian had to feign great excitement at the honor. The remaining dishes would be brought by the maid. Thus they ended up face to face in a repast that lasted a good two hours, Pater Johann gladly devouring dozens of platters and washing them down generously with truly magnificent wine. They conversed like genuine friends and shared entertaining fables, laughing all the while, the host sonorously, like a drum, and the priest giggling in a high pitch, although such a laugh did not befit an authoritative figure, especially one with so grave a mission. Only after the fruit had been served and eaten did the Hexenkommissar grow serious. His face hardened, and for the first time he looked at the innkeeper, his companion, in such a way that the latter felt shivers crawl up his legs.

"And now, Master Maximilian, serve me a delicacy for dessert. What can you offer?"

"Katarina Lipps, Your Reverence."

"Who is she?"

"The wife of a teacher, Your Reverence. She gets up late in the

morning and always has marks on her skin."

"Any witnesses?"

"Yes. A girl, her former servant. Sometimes there are even bruises on her body. Also, she gazes out from under her brow; at times she swoons in the middle of the day, rolling her eyes upward. But the worst is ... she reads books, my lord!"

"Books?" The priest twitched. "Where does she get them?"

"From her husband, the teacher, who buys them even though he does not earn enough to afford such luxuries."

"Oh, these are a pair of doves, to be sure. What is his name?"

"Peter Lipps, Your Reverence."

"Are they prosperous?"

"Quite. Peter's father was a merchant well-regarded by the townspeople. He bartered livestock. But the son did not wish to take over his father's successful trade; instead he chose to study the damned learning somewhere in Würzburg."

"Where?" Pater Johann shuddered. "I'll have you know, profane learning is not taught there!"

"Well, you know these matters better than I, Your Reverence," the innkeeper replied submissively. "This is what I do know: when a woman reads books instead of keeping house, it is a sure sign of the involvement of that one whom I do not wish to mention, Your Reverence!"

"Fine," said Pater Johannes, whose eyelids were now beginning to droop. "You shall receive a respectable guerdon from this. Respectable, respectable!"

"Was the dessert tasty, Your Reverence?" the innkeeper inquired suggestively.

But the priest was already yawning and stretching. He liked to stretch contentedly before reposing; likewise, it was a signal for the host to be gone. The act of retiring usually played out as follows: the priest's lips broke open, his eyes misted over, then shut; sighs erupted from his parted lips. In the next moment, his capacious mouth fell open so widely, that his jaws cracked. This time was no different, and the innkeeper immediately sprang to his feet, so as not to—heaven forbid!—forestall or bespoil those sweet moments before rest and sleep subdued his esteemed guest. And the proprietor of the inn did indeed take his leave, for Pater Johannes had a weakness: after a satiating meal he must invariably have a nap for slumber would roll over him like an avalanche, overtaking him suddenly—whether he was sitting or lying down.

And so now, sitting in an armchair, the priest felt himself plummet into the underworld, dropping like a black bird, his arm-wings heaving, the hem of his black mantle unfurling, the air whistling around him. Perhaps it wasn't the air—the whistling intensified from below, like currents of steam gushing from underground pipes. Indeed, a wooly, whirling fog oozed out

with naked red figures streaking around in it. And Agrippe von Nettesheim's crimson face, contorted in a crooked grimace, was hovering over Johann Spingler and it was pronouncing: "Your evidence proves that you yourself are a heretic, Pater Johannes!"

"But I have managed to burn ninety-eight witches at the stake," shouted Spingler. "Two more and I'll have a hundred, not counting the one you are protecting and for whom you burn with sinful lust. Those two I shall find here, but yours, Agrippe, shall burn at the stake too! With her I will start my second hundred!"

At that Agrippe only laughed, flaunting ruby lips and teeth, and the priest suddenly understood with whom he was dealing. He let out a cry for his head was clearing, even as he was submerged in slumber's thousand-fold depths, afloat in reddish-blue billows of a malodorous fog. Nevertheless, his mind was working clearly and soberly, forever on guard for Divine Glory, whether asleep or not. In the considerable time that had passed since he became commissar of witches, he had learned his trade well, as he had also discovered the variety of tricks and chicanery used by the devil. No wonder he recorded everything so diligently and scrupulously. And he was well aware that he must not overlook his own preservation, for the power of the devil is, after all, greater than that of man.

This so excited him that he awoke, and he remained sitting in the armchair, recovering his senses and chiding himself for having been too lazy to get into bed for a restful nap. Again Agrippe's booming voice echoed in his ears with the unexpected accusation of heresy, accusing not just anyone, but him, Johann Spingler! No! This smelled of something foul.

"This cannot be ignored. The impious one must be overcome. I shall overcome him!" he thought with determination.

He blinked, his eyes like dark plums floating in milky whites. He was no longer thinking of Agrippe—more immediate matters concerned him. At once he would summon people and send them off to fetch that witch, whom, with God's will, he would expose and destroy as a lesson to future generations. As always in these cases, he was gripped with a keen fascination for his next victim. But at the same time a cold though passionate circumspection took hold of him, as if he were a hunter daring to attack a wild animal.

He stretched out toward the bell and rang it twice, rousing the bailiffs. And before the doors opened Pater Johannes contemplated only this: should Katarina Lipps be seized alone or with her husband? Peter Lipps undoubtedly practiced black magic, but even if they were both arraigned, he still could not be factored into the sum of one hundred witches exposed. Yet it would be much more efficient for the Holy Inquisition to seize them both at once—then the property of the godless sinners could be confiscated in full, and from the confiscated property he would pay the innkeeper. Yes! It was certainly better to take both of them! And as for the number one

hundred, there was a simpler and yet likewise certain way to achieve it. At any rate, he kept a separate account of sorcerers; they, too, added up to a round number—twenty-five. The ninety-ninth witch might be the maid who had unmasked her mistress. She should be closely examined! And so Pater Johannes ordered the bailiffs to apprehend both the Lipps and to bring their former servant in for questioning.

3.

Lately, Katarina Lipps had a sense of dread. It all started with the dismissal of her maid, Louiza Hilgen, who had turned out to be slovenly, lazy, and rude. Peering at her mistress from under her brow, Louiza had hissed: "This matter shall not pass lightly—I'll make sure of that!" Then she had turned and left.

Katarina fretted: she had no reason to keep the wretch, but to be so impudent, to have the gall to threaten—that was too much! She might have forgotten the whole thing, except that soon after, Katarina began to sense a chill from her neighbors, with whom she had maintained a harmony of sorts in the past. Evidently the loud-mouthed girl had spread lies and gossiped about her, relating those biting if good-natured jibes concerning her neighbors that Katarina had sometimes allowed herself in the confines of her home. A wall of exclusion had arisen around Katarina, who was now acknowledged coldly, or not at all. When she passed in the street, the women stopped talking and gawked at her with vacant eyes. The worst of it was that Katarina was unable to find a new maid, even though there were always plenty of girls willing to serve. It seemed that some kind of conspiracy swirled around her—she clearly felt it. Katarina could not bear it and complained to Peter, who tried to comfort her in any way he could. He advised her to go out less frequently, so as not to rub salt in the women's eyes; to treat everyone as before, as if she were unaware of their changed attitude towards her; and finally, to pay a visit to Pater Markus, confessing everything forthrightly—he was a serious and influential man.

Katarina heeded her husband's counsel. She rarely left the house, greeted everyone politely, and behaved as if she did not notice the neighbors turning their backs on her. She even called on Pater Markus, recounting everything that happened around her honestly and telling him about her shameful maidservant, who had obviously slandered her.

Pater Markus plainly knew more.

"There are rumors, my daughter," he said gently, "that you read your husband's books, often until midnight."

"Is that a sin, Father?" Katarina inquired, since what he said was true.

"It is not a sin for an educated individual, or for a man, but it is a sin for a woman," Pater Markus replied.

"But Father, those books expound Scripture!" remarked Katarina.

"Interpreting the Holy Book should be left to wise philosophers, men of sound intellect; for creatures with an intellect as thin as a woman's hair, prayer and the confession of faith suffice—a God-pleasing and honest life."

"Did I not lead a God-pleasing and honest life?"

"The answer to that you should know yourself. But you must have acted inappropriately to cause people to turn away from you. One should conform rather than stand out—arrogance is one of the great sins of mankind. Let your husband read books. You should concern yourself with the womanly matters that are appropriate for you."

"But I do not neglect my womanly responsibilities, Father," said Katarina, lowering her eyes.

"A woman's responsibilities are not confined to the home," Pater Markus observed. "They include the world as well. You may be womanly in your home, but if you treat other women with insolence, that is sinful too."

"So what must I do, Father?"

"Pray and have faith! Be obedient and kind! Attend church daily, approach your neighbors and ask their forgiveness. Be humble. And forget books. Books strengthen a sound mind, but they can break a weak one."

She left the church deep in thought. No, she did not comprehend many matters in this world. Her husband had taught her to read and write; she had such aptitude that she became adept at both with surprising ease. Pleased, Peter instructed her further, in grammar and Latin. She mastered that brilliantly, as well, and in a few years they were able to converse in Latin. Katarina, being childless, found great pleasure in learning. Her husband added poetics. Within a year, Katarina astonished Peter even more by composing verses.

"You should have been born a boy," he stated once. "You would have been famous the world over. As it is ... let's hope no evil comes of this."

He instructed her no more although she craved to delve into the mysteries of rhetoric and philosophy. That is when she set out to peruse his texts, even the most complex ones. She read in private, and had it not been for that wretch, Louiza, no one would have known.

She did not walk but flew home from church. The bitter insults seared her heart: what evil had she committed in the world? Is it a crime for a woman to devote herself to learning and poetry? Shouldn't wisdom be spread throughout the world? And irrationality dispelled?

But then so many books asserted—Scripture among them—that wisdom can hide in ignorance, for that which is rational to the world is irrational to God, and the other way around. Then to what avail are all books, learning, and knowledge? Of what use are schools, collegiums, academies? Who needs philosophers, magistrates, theologians? Why is a man allowed to be educated, but not a woman? Cannot a sensitive mind schooled in worldly wisdom become a sound mind? If she had children, she would be too busy for such introspection. No, she did not comprehend the

world. She knew only this: her endeavors, her reading did not cause anyone harm. The single wrong she had committed was not to retain that malicious and obtuse loudmouth who secretly spied on her, listened to the conversations she had with her husband, and then revealed everything in public.

And so now Katarina felt the world hemming her in, tightening around her like a noose, cutting off the air so that there was not enough to breathe. She felt as if she were trapped inside a glass sphere running and running, yet remaining in place as the sphere slid from under her feet. Bug-eyed faces with flattened noses glued themselves on all sides of the glass, their fingers pointing at her, their cavernous, toothsome mouths laughing and shouting. And she knew what they were shouting:

"Ogress! Ogress!"

It was so ghastly.

Katarina restrained herself. It was street lads playing and calling.

"Are they mad? How dare they use that word to describe her!"

Frightened and outraged, she looked around—the sun flashed into her eyes, blinding her for a moment. A fanciful white cloud hung suspended next to it. The ground around her glowed with glistening green grass, as if ablaze. The boys' faces, contorted from shouting, came into her sight. Curious eyes followed her from behind wooden shutters, women's eyes—oh, how they despised her, and she them! And near the approach to her yard stood a covered black cart. Strange armed men clothed in black milled about, and clusters of townspeople swarmed around; all at once, they stretched their arms toward her. And there, next to the wagon, stood her husband Peter, stunned, his hands in manacles (were they really manacles?). He turned his pale face towards her, his face was as white as that cloud overhead, next to the sun.

Katarina felt the blood rush from her body too, her eyes bulging, her mouth agape in shock. Startled, she stopped, and suddenly turned, trying to flee, but someone cloaked in black was waiting for her nearby. Or perhaps it was one of those mischievous boys who had absurdly labeled her an ogress that tripped her. She staggered and fell into the dust. It was then that she heard jeering laughter and the stomping of heavy boots. Once again, she tried to escape, screeching like a mortally wounded bird. A heavy fist struck her between the eyes, and she tumbled again, face into the dust. Thick, unyielding hands grabbed her legs, tied a noose around them, and dragged her along the road, writhing and screaming, and again there was no help.

4.

"She's a genuine witch," declared Louiza Hilgen with complete conviction. "I've been observing her for a long time. One day she woke up late, and when I helped her get dressed, I noticed round red splotches the size of coins all over her body—this was in the morning. And one night I

crept into her bedroom: she lay motionless, as if dead. I touched her, and her body was cold. Something creaked in the chimney before dawn. I stayed awake deliberately to observe and investigate, and I witnessed a white shadow crawl out of the cookstove and run as fast as it could into the bedroom. And at times she boiled herbs. What she studied in books I don't know. Once she murdered a child and boiled it in a kettle, prancing around it and muttering. And a man came to visit her: he looked much like Master Peter, but he had a funny hat on his head and wore tiny boots. When this Peter-like man took off his hat, I saw little horns on his head. He threw himself at the lady, embracing and kissing her—pew, pew, pew, lest I conjure him up! Then he pulled his boots off and I saw that he had hooves instead of feet. And he proceeded to perform acts with my lady that I can't describe, cursing God in the process with words I can't repeat."

"Do, do tell us!" prodded the Hexenkommissar soothingly.

Louiza fell to her knees, crossed herself, raised her eyes toward heaven and swore: "Kill me, slice me with a knife, but my lips shall never utter such words against the Lord."

"Very well, then. Tell us what acts they performed."

This Louiza agreed to recount, though at first she stuttered, but only on the condition that she be allowed to whisper those words into the Hexenkommissar's ear. She proceeded to whisper passionately and frantically, as if she were not condemning but rather envying her mistress, as if she herself might have enjoyed doing such things.

"Enough!" Pater Johann cut her off. "What else?"

"For entire days and nights at a time she read books of magic. A black mist emanated from those books and my mistress inhaled that mist, muttering something. Little black men with black tails cavorted all over those black pages; my mistress watched, clapping and laughing. Her hair stood on end, and I became so afraid that my teeth chattered."

"Why did you not report her immediately?" Pater Johannes asked.

"I wanted to investigate and not to overlook anything," Louiza replied firmly.

"And you denounced her after she dismissed you."

"Because I had uncovered all I could and could do no more."

"Did Master Peter also read those black books?"

Louiza's eyes fluttered and she seemed to regain her senses.

"Master Peter is a good man," she said. "He tried to turn her away from the books."

"But he was aware of the fact that his wife was a witch?"

"No, he wasn't," said Louiza, alarmed. "As far as I know, he simply discouraged her from reading books."

"How do you know?" the priest asked sternly. "And don't lie!"

"He is a good man," Louiza blurted out, frightened.

"Evince the truth," Pater Johannes declared solemnly, "so that I won't

be forced to extract it from you by other means."

Louiza shook her head nervously.

"I have spoken the truth," she said.

At this point the executioner entered from an adjoining room, holding a thumbscrew in his hands.

"See this?" he said. "We put a foot or hand here, the bolt is tightened—it is very painful. Better to confess."

"Confess what?" asked Louiza, frightened. Her thoughts became confused.

"You've already forgotten what I asked. Was Peter Lipps aware of the fact that his wife was a witch?"

"He knew," Louiza pronounced quietly, her lips trembling.

"And did he discourage her not only from reading books, but also from flying off to the witches' sabbath?"

"Yes," Louiza whispered.

"And did he himself read those books of magic?"

"No, he read academic texts."

"How do you know that, if you are illiterate?"

"There were no demons dancing atop those pages."

"The truth!" exclaimed the priest, as the executioner demonstrated the Spanish boot to Louiza. "It's a fine item, my lass! Would you like me to show you how it works?"

Louiza screamed.

"Reveal everything!" shouted Pater Johannes.

"He read the same books," gasped the maid.

"Now you're a good girl!" the executioner observed.

"We have enough," said the priest with a yawn. "Did you record everything?" he asked the clerk. "Let her put her mark beneath it."

Louiza complied.

"Do not wander far from town," ordered Pater Johannes, inserting a finger into his ear to scratch an itch. "We may need to summon you again. Go with God, my daughter, and may the Lord bless you!"

Louiza bowed, kissed the priest's hand, and ran out the door as fast as she could. She was overcome with dread. She felt the priest's piercing gaze fixed on her back as if he were a snake eyeing a frog. She did not know what ideas had formed in his head, but they were not favorable to her.

5.

All this took place at the magistrate's building, where the itinerant Holy Tribunal was temporarily installed. This was also where the prison, with its stocks and implements of torture, was located.

Katarina lay in a deep dungeon. Her feet were shackled, rendering her immobile. An iron collar with spikes pointing inward, toward her skin was

fastened around her neck. The collar was on a chain that was bound to the wall. Her wrists were in cuffs clamped to a perpendicular shaft and she lay on a horizontal beam. She appeared to have been crucified. She could not move. Her body was stiff and wracked with pain. She sent her thoughts and prayers upwards to Him who was crucified 1516 years ago for preaching love and mercy and all the ten commandments to the world. But now His disciples had appeared, extracting from His wisdom only what was advantageous for them, that is to say, profitable; in the name of His cross they had proceeded to crucify the disgruntled and the arrogant and along with them the innocent, sowing death in the name of love, and in the name of submission—confrontation. This thought bored into Katarina Lipps's mind like a wedge until suddenly it occurred to her that someone had once hopelessly betrayed the Master, that the act of Judas Iscariot was merely the first sign of that great betrayal (the Master knew it was coming, for nothing transpires without His will); after all, that deed was not a betrayal, but a repudiation. The real betrayal was formulated among the loyal and faithful, those who made renunciations when necessary and repented and reverted when it was beneficial for them to repent and revert; those who first persecuted the Master and then suddenly took His teachings to heart, recognizing a pragmatism in His sermons and sensing an enduring vitality in His words.

She had considered these notions earlier, when studying Scripture, but she had not allowed such thoughts to enter her heart. Now, however, crucified as He had been and sensing the suffering that awaited her, she could only think about Him and the great betrayal. In spite of herself she seemed to become His body; her thoughts seemed to develop from His thoughts.

"Lord," she whispered, "You came into the world and allowed Yourself to be crucified because You wished to deliver the world from the hatred that had flooded it. But Lord, You did not save the world, You merely extended your agony throughout the ages. You command the good and the enlightened to die and the evil ones to reign. Is this the lesson of love?"

She listened as if expecting an answer, but there was only silence around her. Her body ached oppressively because she could not move. The crossbeam ate into her spine. The disintegration of her body, it seemed, had commenced from within. No, she was not entirely sure what to expect—no one knew how those suspected of witchcraft were dealt with since only vague rumors circulated, especially about the inhuman torture that was inflicted upon them. After all, nobody ever came back alive. She had witnessed the burning of witches at the stake only once, and that was so gruesome that she had not gone to view it a second or third time. Those hapless victims had crushed fingers and toes, blackened faces, scorched heads, crazed eyes, blue splotches on their necks—and now here she was, in their skin. Her kind and surprisingly calm husband Peter lies somewhere near, also in chains—how she yearned to exchange a few words with him,

to seek counsel, but that was not possible. A feeling that she needed to remember something crucial overtook her—something she had read in a book or something her husband had cited; this would be the thread she should grasp—she felt dizzy from the effort. She had read somewhere—or was it her husband who had mentioned?—that those accused of sorcery were not allowed any means of defense. In the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *Hexenhammer*—"the hammer of witches"—the identity of the denouncers was to remain secret, according to established principle. There was only one circumstance that the defendant could take advantage of—but what was it? She could not recollect: it was mentioned just once, in a chance conversation; perhaps with a clear head she might remember it, but now, suffering as she was, treated as the Prophet was, while at the same time labeled His foe, she was completely helpless. She tried shifting her head—the spikes bit into her neck and she shrieked. She tried to move her hands and feet—the only response to her efforts was pain.

Then she heard footsteps in the corridor—two men were approaching. The sound of their steps reverberated loudly in the silence. She shuddered with dread. The footsteps stopped in front of her door and a key scratched in the lock. One of the guards held a torch. After first illuminating her from head to toe he slipped it into a sconce.

"Shall we treat ourselves before she is turned into meat?"

"Hee-hee!" sneered the other one. "You first, or me?"

"Me, of course!" responded the first, who was obviously the older. "Unfasten her collar, so it doesn't tear into her. You hear, my beauty," a face overgrown with stubble hung over her. "So we'll unshackle you and play with you a bit, heh? Witches enjoy such things, and even revel in the excesses!"

She screamed. Then they gagged her and began raping her. She felt a weight bearing down on her, she heard panting, smelled putrid breath and garlic. Then the other one collapsed on her, reeking of burnt onion. And again the weight, the wheezing. Choking, she tried to resist, but was powerless. Tears streamed down her cheeks—here it was, the beginning of her torture, the violation of her honor. But no, she had been stripped of her honor earlier, when they hauled her by the legs to the coach—that had been her first contact with the brutal force into whose power she had fallen.

Afterwards they left her alone. They left, closing the door behind them, chatting cheerfully, their boots clanging—she knew that they would return. The rest of her tears poured out, and she calmed herself as best she could. And a strange thought came to her: the world only appears to be sunny and beautiful. In reality the world is the belly of an apocalyptic beast, inhabited by a nebulous darkness—a darkness without contours or dimensions. Perhaps that blackness, in the form of an invisible and shapeless beast, is actually a kind of predatory fish that aimlessly and indiscriminately swallows living beings. And the unfortunate victim ends up

in its maw, that is, subject to the beast's will. It does not matter whether the victim is guilty or not. What matters is that the beast gains possession of the victim, and until it digests and absorbs him, the victim will not be disgorged from the beast's bowels. Such a darkness—perhaps it was the apocalyptic beast, or maybe a carnivorous, sightless fish—once befell the Prophet. He was consumed, as a mortal might be devoured, though He was not mortal. Who knows, perhaps He went deliberately toward that apocalyptic beast, into that darkness so as to enlighten a generation about how, having entered into the beast, one can remain pure.

"Lord, Lord," she whispered. "Is it really possible to remain pure in the belly of the apocalyptic beast, in the purgatory of this world?"

6.

Again the steps resounded in the corridor as again those two brutes, the servants of darkness, approached. Again they unchained her and again they raped her; and, punching and shoving, led her along subterranean passages. Her body was numb, and she could barely move. She was full of disgust at what they had done to her, yet she was glad that she could at least unbend her limbs (though with great difficulty), that the ribs of the beam were not eating into her, and that she would have the chance to explain everything to that man from the witch-hunting committee: an unearthly error had occurred. Her maidservant, the hateful wretch, had lied about her. In truth Katarina had led a God-fearing life, attended church dutifully and confessed regularly. She was a faithful lamb in the Shepherd's flock, and wished to remain such forever.

Everything she longed to express she recited at once, the moment she appeared before the pug-nosed, puffy-lipped, beady-eyed priest: she was raised to respect the clergy. Weeping, she described how the guards had defiled her, an honest and proper matron. The priest listened politely, nodding his head and smiling ever so faintly. A clerk sat at a table in a corner of the chamber—motionless, like a scarecrow, recording nothing, simply watching her with a glassy stare; in another corner stood the executioner—monument-like, arms folded across his chest, unsmiling—his expression steely, unmoving. She talked and talked, she could not stop. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she implored the priest with outstretched arms: he was the one, after all, who must understand and help her draw closer to God. So she prayed and entreated him. The priest listened attentively, without interrupting, head slightly bowed; he attended her like a confessor, letting her speak, waiting patiently for all the words to spill out. He was calm and kind, this Hexenkommissar. And when she stopped, he graciously let her be seated. Then his voice flowed, warm and soothing:

"I hope, Madame, that you possess a sound mind and a conciliatory manner, so as to lighten my onerous and thankless duty and to save yourself

from torment. Allow me to explain. We do not snatch innocent individuals; we apprehend only those against whom we have evidence. Crimes are separated into *crimina ordinaria* (common crimes) and *crimina exscepta* (exceptional crimes). But there is a particular crime, *crimina exscepta in exscepta*, a crime extraordinarily exceptional, which is committed in secret, concealed in darkness, veiled in mystery—the devil himself aids these criminals, tutoring witches in perjury and denial, muddling witnesses' recollections, blinding judges and exhausting the torturer. We hold incontestable evidence against you, avowed by living witnesses. Hand me the paper," the priest said, addressing the clerk. "Here, please; you can read this yourself, you're literate, or else I can read it."

"I can read it," Katarina stated, taking the page.

As she took the leaf and read it, her mind cleared and she remembered how she could contest the charge.

"The evidence was collected from Louiza Hilgen, whose testimony against me is biased, based on hatred and vengeance because I dismissed her from my home for incompetence and lack of integrity."

Pater Johannes Spingler's mouth fell open. This was a first in his practice of witch hunting—the defendant was familiar with canonical law.

"Possibly, possibly," he murmured mildly, already delighting in the fact that his hundredth witch would not be that simple, loudmouthed maidservant, but rather the devil's beloved—not his usual, basic victim.

"So, upon departing, did that ne'er-do-well gaze at you from under her brow, perhaps? And did she threaten you?"

"Yes, that's how it was!" said Katarina Lipps.

"And your testimony is presented with full accountability, as expected of a witness?"

"Yes," declared Katarina, and the priest nodded his head cheerfully.

"We accept your attestation," he said gently. "That wretch shall be apprehended as your accomplice. I am glad that you are disclosing those who were in collusion and accord with you."

"But Master Hexenkommissar, I did not say she was my accomplice, because I am an honest woman!" Katarina exclaimed. "I challenge her testimony against me only because it is based on her lethal rancor towards me."

"Possibly, possibly! But unfortunately ... we have secured another witness, about whom, Madame, you most certainly cannot say that his testimony is based on lethal rancor towards you."

"And who is that?"

"I see that you are familiar with the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Therefore, Madame, you are aware that the court cannot divulge the name of a witness to the accused." He lowered his head and seemed lost in thought for a moment, but quickly raised it again. His beady eyes glistened. "But because you exposed your accomplice, I shall tell you: it is your husband, Peter

Lipps! Of course, we were forced to conduct his hearing a bit more roughly than yours."

She could not bear it—she screamed. The blow was too calculated. Katarina was now indisputably convinced: that evil, that apocalyptic beast, that blind fish, was annihilating her. Peter, her kind and gentle husband, could not endure the torture. Nobody can endure it. He said about her what was not true: the darkness had forced him, wringing treacherous words out of him—nay, not treacherous words, but words of agony, words beaten out of him, wrenched from his tongue with red-hot clamps.

"What shall become of him?" she asked, her voice hollow.

"The same as with you," Pater Johannes replied calmly.

"Will we be burned alive?"

"Well, it all depends on you. For instance, I could be of help, since in some instances you were cooperative. If you concede guilt, without the need for us to enlist the methods familiar to you, we will consider you to be one whom the devil has forsaken and no longer protects. That is, I can promise that you will be put to death before you are burned."

She once again thought of the Master. Perhaps He too had answered the summons to appear in court to persuade the judges. After all, His force of persuasion was great. Yet He realized that even the Son of God cannot prevail over the apocalyptic beast. And so He agreed to be crucified, even though His power was greater than the power of judges, and to accept death, even though He was immortal. Because only in that way was it possible to proclaim the greatest, the most terrible, and the most edifying lesson. This is what He proclaimed: the devil exists. The consuming darkness that engulfs like the open jaws of an unseeing fish, that apocalyptic beast—that is his image. That darkness is within those who are powerful in this world, no matter that they claim to be the light and its guardians. The darkness is ubiquitous and eternal; it exists not in one era but throughout time. It does not end with any generation—it is in all generations. Like the germ in a grain, it exists. For a grain has two sprouts: one verdant for life, and the other black for decay. Thus the Master chose death in order to conquer it. He allowed the darkness to swallow Him to demonstrate to the righteous that there is a force that even the Son of God cannot defeat, there is a death that even an immortal being cannot avoid. But this does not mean that the Master himself succumbed to darkness and death. It was the criminals crucified next to Him who surrendered to death and darkness. And one of them, Barabas, was pardoned to instill one truth: a life in darkness is not a life.

Katarina Lipps, a woman whose genius was to be extinguished in that darkness, stared with wide-open eyes at the grinning Pater Johannes Spingler, a smiling man with peculiarly cold eyes. It occurred to her that he could easily have lied to her: perhaps no torture had yet been inflicted on her husband, and he had offered nothing against her. But she knew that it

might happen; she knew, moreover, that even if while tormented he would not disclose anything, that would not alter her fate. And suddenly a steadfastness filled Katarina; she sensed that this duel with the pseudo-priest sitting opposite her would not only test her spirit, but continue that eternal battle first undertaken by the Master.

"Evince the truth," Pater Johannes declared solemnly. "Do you admit everything your maidservant, Louiza Hilgen, disclosed about you and which your husband, Peter Lipps, the professor, confirmed? Do you acknowledge the fact that you directly participated in a witch's mass, and that you had intercourse with an incubus, and that you committed debauchery with him? If yes, then describe what occurred and how you amused yourself with the incubus, that is, the devil in human form."

"I am an honest woman, a proper matron," Katarina replied, without flinching.

Pater Johannes regarded her with his small, round, nearly glittering eyes. "After all that has been revealed about you, you can say that? Is this your idea, or is the devil counseling you?"

"I speak independently, with my own mind," Katarina stated.

"Do you know where this will lead? We will be forced to inflict torture upon you. Show her, lad, how she will be tormented. Actually, it is not you who will be tortured, but the devil in you, and you yourself know that there can be no mercy in such circumstances."

The executioner displayed everything just as he had for Louiza Hilgen. Katarina beheld the tools of torture with wide open eyes but remained silent.

"I still have some compassion for you, Katarina Lipps," the priest remarked, "because I have studied witches like you very carefully. Understand this well: one who has not experienced torture cannot know its power. But it is a terrible force and horrible experiences await you, Katarina."

Katarina shuddered.

"Have you no fear?"

"I am afraid," she admitted openly. "And I wish that I could confess everything. But tell me, truthfully, Father: is it possible to preserve a soul's purity after bearing false witness?"

"Nobody is invoking you to bear false witness," the priest said. "You are only urged to attest to what witnesses have testified against you."

"The testimony of Louiza Hilgen is false," Katarina said, "for it is founded on her lethal enmity towards me. The testimony of my husband, if it exists, is likewise false, since it was extracted under torture. I am well aware of what I did or did not do."

"Not exactly," said Johann Spingler less warmly. "You could have committed acts unconsciously. For example, you could have attended a witch's mass while leaving your body at home, that is to say, you were there in spirit, but not physically conscious of what you were doing."

"Can one who is ignorant of one's deeds be brought to court?" Katarina asked.

"Of course," Pater Johannes said. "The court examines the deed, not the state of consciousness."

"So why am I being questioned, if I am not aware of my evil deeds? Of what use is my testimony?"

Pater Johannes's eyes grew large once again. He did, indeed, have an unusual witch, one wisely instructed by the devil himself. How powerful was her logic! But he, too, was no laggard.

"You are cognizant of the evil acts you have committed," he said. "They are simply buried deep within you. We shall attempt to repel the devil, your protector so you will recollect everything. Proceed, executioner!"

The executioner grasped Katarina by the arm and pulled her into a corner. Implements of torture lay there and a ladder stood against a wall.

"Will you undress yourself, or do you need help?" he asked.

"I will undress myself," Katarina said.

She took her clothes off, although she was terribly ashamed—she did not want that monster to undress her. Meanwhile, he snatched a burning torch from a sconce and held it to Katarina's head. Her hair crackled and burst into flames, burning Katarina with unbearable pain. She began to run, but, tripped by the executioner, she crashed to the floor, extinguishing the fire. The executioner bound her tightly and again ignited her hair.

"Lord, help me!" screamed Katarina, "do not forsake me, Lord—I am innocent!..."

When she regained consciousness, she saw the tyrant's face hovering over her. The burns on her head and in her groin caused excruciating pain.

"So, have things cleared in your head?" the executioner asked.

"It is better for you to confess," the priest said in a weak voice.

"All right," said Katarina. "I will gladly die and confess to anything you wish. But under one condition." She licked her scorched lips.

"Have you heard anything like this, Your Reverence," the executioner said, cackling. "She is proposing conditions!"

"It is her right," Pater Johannes spoke calmly from the depths of the chamber. "We are listening."

"I will avow everything," Katarina said, "if you, my judges, take responsibility for my sin of lying."

The executioner recoiled.

"Did you hear, Father Johannes?" he shouted. "I have never heard anything like this!"

"This proves," Pater Johannes said, unruffled, "that the devil has promised her his protection. Resume! Probe her body for signs of the devil!"

The torturer poked her body with needles but she no longer

screamed—only her body twitched. Without leaving his seat, Pater Johannes watched intently as the executioner poked and pierced.

"I believe her entire body is under the spell of the devil," he observed. "Those especially preferred by the devil behave this way. I am certain that what we have here is one of the devil's favorite witches."

"I agree," the executioner said.

"Katarina Lipps!" the priest proclaimed. "Before embarking on real torture, I once again appeal to you: evince the truth!"

"Your Honor," the woman replied, "I ask only this of you: condemn me in innocence. I would confess gladly, but I truly am innocent. I committed no evil deeds."

"Progress to torture of the third degree," Pater Johannes ordered.

The tormentor locked a press around Katarina's foot. Katarina screamed. He pushed the *capistrum* (gag) into her mouth and tightened the bolts. Her body heaved and stiffened. She cried not a single tear.

"Well, let her lie a while," said Pater Johannes. "Come, let us enjoy some wine."

They withdrew to an adjoining room where they ate, drank and shared anecdotes. After half an hour they returned to the torture chamber. Katarina was unconscious. The executioner poured a bucket of water on her. As he pulled the *capistrum* from her mouth, she cried: "I am innocent! Oh, Lord, do not forsake me! Help me in my suffering!"

"We will have to proceed to torture of the fourth degree," the priest said.

But here a surprise awaited them. For when they put on the Spanish boot and tightened it, she not only did not shed a tear—she didn't even scream, even though the *capistrum* was not inserted into her mouth.

"*Per maleficium*—The Devil's Work" Pater Johannes uttered, stumped. He leaned toward the martyr. "Do you concede your guilt?"

"I am innocent," Katarina moaned.

"All right. We shall deem that she endured torture of the fourth degree. Have you ever witnessed anything like this?" he asked the tormentor.

"It happens sometimes," the executioner replied equivocally.

"Stretch her!" the inquisitor ordered.

The tormentor twisted Katarina's arms and, attaching weights to her feet, hoisted her off the floor with pulleys. Then she was flogged with boughs. Katarina groaned feebly. She did not answer the demands to confess. In the end she screamed, beseeching the Lord's help, and fainted.

When Katarina came to, she saw Pater Johannes, seated on a bench and watching her closely.

"Your obstinacy is useless," he observed. "You must confess, because you must be guilty. We will torture you today and tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, until you confess. Even if you die from torture, you will be proclaimed a witch and burned at the stake. And if you endure all the

torture—which I doubt—that will signify even more surely that you are indeed culpable. The devil is lending you his power; he is holding your tongue, rendering you speechless, so that you do not confess. So listen to me. I wish to counsel you well: it is better to concede, since there is no escape for you. If you led an evil life, you led it in association with the devil; if you lived a proper life—it was all pretense, so as not to cause any suspicion. If you are afraid of torture—that is a sign of guilt, and if you are convinced of your innocence—you are guilty all the more, because the devil is protecting and abetting you. Without his aid one cannot bear that which you have already suffered. By attempting to save yourself, by trying to persuade us that you are innocent—you prove that you are guilty. Remaining silent under torture is a sure indication of guilt. One way or another you must die, and you must die horribly, because during the torture your eyes moved. That means you were searching for the devil. But you also restrained yourself, body rigid, eyes unmoving—that, too, means you saw the devil. If you found the strength to endure today's torment, that already indicates you deserve punishment. And if you last through all the torture, if you survive and still refuse to confess—you shall remain in prison until you die. So there is only one way for you—to confess. And that you will do!"

As Katarina listened to the monologue, the priest appeared to metamorphose in front of her eyes: his form began to quaver, as if he were fluid. She clearly saw his pug-nosed, round face with its soft lips and spidery eyes darken; little horns sprouted from the top of his forehead. And when she looked down, she saw that the priest's ankles were overgrown with fur: in place of his boots there were hooves.

"Do you see the devil?" the priest asked in a booming voice.

"I do!" Katarina whispered.

"Did you attend a witch's Sabbath?"

"I was dragged here against my will!" Katarina stated.

"Does the devil that you see want to protect you?"

"No," replied Katarina. "He wants to pass judgment on me."

"That is enough," said Pater Johannes Spingler, commissar of the witch hunting committee. "She has confessed, and we can now put her on trial." He circled the chamber, tapping the floor with his hooves, a long, black tail in tow. Then he turned toward Katarina, who was staring in unworldly fear, and with a wink said: "You, Katarina Lipps, are a strong woman. To tell you the truth, I feel sorry for you."

7.

The following day, after the Lipps had been burned at the stake in Möckmühl together with their maidservant (Louiza likewise did not want to acknowledge being involved in witchcraft; the Spanish boot was employed

repeatedly, she was suspended for hours, the hair was scorched off her body, she was poked with a needle in search of devil's marks; in the end she too confessed), Pater Johann Spingler and his retinue departed the town in a good humor (their portion of the Lipps' confiscated property was substantial) along their predetermined route, more precisely, to the town of Metz, where there was unfinished business with that woman whom Agrippe von Nettesheim desired.

Along the way, Pater Johann mulled over several matters: Whom should he consider the hundredth witch, Katarina or Louiza? Louiza turned out to be even more intractable than Katarina, but he settled on Katarina, since she was an educated witch. The second item he pondered was this: the time had come to deal with that hateful Agrippe. He needed to sacrifice his friend; it would suffice to set one of his new acquaintances against him, say, Friedrich Mintz—that wasn't too complicated. And Pater Johannes contemplated the strange power of the devil. So much was expounded on the subject everywhere—but in the depths of his soul he did not believe it. All that exists, the priest reflected benignly, exists; therefore, thinking logically, if the priest, a warrior against evil, exists, it would be a mockery to hold then that evil does not exist. Nevertheless, he was unable to conquer his own inner doubt, but there was no need to reveal that to anyone. No man would describe his work as pleasant, but the priest would not exchange it for any other, and not only because it yielded an income. In his own way he believed in his mission. He also believed that by performing such an odious function he was protecting himself from the arbitrariness of the inquisition, since he had learned the crude but merciless mechanism of its operation. He wanted at least to live peacefully into old age, without experiencing the horrors that he himself had brought into the world.

This was indeed the fatal notion for which God or the devil avenges. For just as this thought occurred to him, his coach was halted; strange men tore off the door, seized the priest by his cassock and pulled him out. Pater Johann Spingler protested. They hauled him along in the dirt, kicking him, until they dropped him under the wheels of a coach exactly like his own. The door swung open, and Friedrich Mintz, his new friend, the very one whom Pater Johannes had planned to sway against Agrippe von Nettesheim, stepped out.

"You are under arrest, former Master Hexenkommissar," Mintz officially proclaimed. "We have indisputable evidence against you, deposed by live witnesses, that you are a heretic."

Pater Johann Spingler raised his eyes; a cloud of darkness appeared to glide out of the shadowy interior of Friedrich Mintz's coach. It floated toward him, like a fish or the apocalyptic beast, its toothsome jaws opening wide to swallow him.

Pater Johann howled and turned to run, but somebody tripped him. As he fell, several bailiffs pounced on him. They bound the priest tightly,

locking sturdy manacles around his wrists.

Spingler screamed, shrieked, prayed, whined, and swore, but someone hit him over the head with a club, and he was still.

Translated by Olha Rudakevych

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