

BENJAMIN KING



**THE
GRUENWALD
DECEPTION**



Klaus Schwerin's secret mission is to get the mystical and powerful Kaballah for Hitler. Anton Gruenwald, a Jew and the expert on the Kaballah, agrees to help him so his family can escape Germany. They travel Europe looking for the Kaballah, but find agents of Churchill and the Pope want it. The mission turns lethal when Schwerin is shot in Rome. The race is on and Gruenwald wonders if they'll live to find it...

The Gruenwald Deception

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The Gruenwald Deception

Benjamin King

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First Edition

**To
Joseph Augustus King
And
Gordon Douglas King.**

Chapter One

The Lead-Sheathed Box

**Paris, Ile de la Cité, La Concierge,
Saturday March 2, 1314**

Jerome heard the footfalls outside the cell and the whispers of the other prisoners. "For whom are they coming? Who will be next?" The question was asked in terror and the emaciated prisoners dressed in the stinking, filthy rags that remained of their clothing instinctively shrank back against the walls. They hoped against all reason that the murky shadows would conceal them. Jerome knew they were coming for him. He didn't know why, he just knew. As the door swung open, five men entered. They were all wearing dark trousers, sleeveless leather jerkins and black hoods. One carried a torch, holding it high to illuminate the dark, dank walls of the cell. Their habit was to move around the cell as if they didn't know which man they wanted and add to the torment of the prisoners. This time they were in a hurry and moved directly for Jerome. Cowed, the other prisoners huddled sheepishly against the walls. Better him than me, they all thought.

Jerome had not been there long so he had not been weakened by hunger and neglect. He was physically strong and as a man-at-arms to a knight he was not afraid to fight. Despite the pain in his ankle, he resisted. The attendants who grabbed him were large men used to struggling prisoners. Four easily over-powered him and dragged him down the dimly lit stone corridor. Jerome could make out locked, heavy doors recessed in the shadows. The whole place stank of fear and suffering. They came to a wider gallery illuminated by torches along the walls and stopped before a stark wooden frame. Jerome had heard of the rack but this was the first time he had seen one. It was just a few timbers and looked so innocuous. As four of the attendants held him the fifth expertly sliced off his clothing with a sharp knife. When he was naked, they tied him to the rack. The leather hoods that they wore had once been dyed completely black. Now, they were creased from wear and bare leather showed at the bottom edges and the eye holes. The eyes behind the hoods were dead and emotionless. These were not men to whom one could appeal to for mercy. To them Jerome was just another piece of meat.

As soon as Jerome was secured to the rack, the hooded men stepped back and a countenance without a mask appeared in view. The man was of middle age with a narrow, oval face, a sharp chin, a long nose, and pocked skin. He wore a rich embroidered dark blue robe trimmed with fur. From his neck was suspended a gold necklace with a large jeweled medallion that was

a badge of office. Unlike the place itself and the guards who stank of filth, sweat and misery, he smelled slightly of perfume. It was such a shock that Jerome looked directly into his face then quickly regretted it. The man's eyes were brown and cold as death.

"Do you know who I am, Jerome?" The question was bland and without malice.

"Yes," Jerome said defiantly, "you are Monsieur de Nogaret, the king's chancellor." And the one who tortured the Templars, he thought, and turned away.

"Alas," the man said with a brief smile. "I am Monsieur Enguerrand de Marigny, the chamberlain of His Most Christian Majesty Philip IV of France also known as 'The Fair.' M. de Nogaret, my esteemed predecessor, was called to God barely four months ago. I stand in his stead." De Marigny's voice was soft and even as if he were discussing the weather. He paused as if waiting for a reply but Jerome remained silent. He continued. "Jerome, because of your association with the heretics formerly known as the Knights Templar, you have been also charged as a heretic." There it was, the death sentence, and Jerome knew it. His eyes darted to de Marigny's face and unconsciously revealed his fear. Jerome had always assumed he would die on the battlefield, sword in hand now he was to die like a pig on a spit.

"You can save us both a lot of trouble, Jerome." De Marigny continued with the same soft, even tone. "All I want is the answer to a few questions. If you answer truthfully then you will be untied without any more inconvenience and set free. I will even provide you with a new suit of clothes." De Marigny gave him a brief smile that reminded Jerome of a serpent.

It was a lie and Jerome knew it. "I don't know anything," Jerome said, not realizing it was an error.

"Oh, but you do," the chamberlain insisted calmly. "There is the matter of a sealed lead-sheathed box that you and your master took from the Templar Preceptory in Paris. Just tell me where you took it and to whom you delivered it and you can go."

Jerome wondered how de Marigny knew about the box. It was a secret and surprise showed in his face. Jerome's mind raced to find something to say to cover his expression but there was no time to work the puzzle out. The chamberlain nodded and the man at the wheel turned the spokes. Jerome's arms were stretched one way and his legs, the other. At first there was merely discomfort. The pain took Jerome by surprise. It started at his joints then raced up and down his limbs until he couldn't think. He was nearly deafened by the scream. The scream was loud and long and it took him a moment to realize that he was the one screaming.

When the pain momentarily stopped de Marigny spoke softly in Jerome's ear. "I see by your scars that you were wounded in battle. That proves you are a brave man. However, bravery has no place here. Eventually even the

The Gruenwald Deception

bravest tell us what we wish to know.” The chamberlain’s voice was calm and even.

Jerome was a soldier and would not give up without a fight. Neither could he betray his master and the Templars who had raised him up from a mere peasant to a man-at-arms. He had to resist. He would show them. De Marigny nodded to the man at the wheel again.

La Concierge Tuesday, March 5, 1314

Jerome did hold out for a long time, but De Marigny was unimpressed. He had seen the same scene played out too many times before. While Jerome was stretched on the rack, his nipples and genitals were burned with hot irons, the soles of his feet were struck with iron rods and his toe nails were pulled out one-by-one. During that time, Jerome screamed, sweated, drooled, urinated involuntarily and soiled himself. The only interruptions were the efforts to revive him when he passed out. The end came suddenly as it always did. Instead of screams there were loud sobs and the uncontrollable flow of tears. There was nothing left of Jerome, his pride, his loyalty and his courage. In their place were a broken body and a broken mind begging to tell what they knew just for a few moments respite from the pain.

“Stop,” Jerome sobbed. “I’ll tell, I’ll tell, just stop.”

De Marigny looked at one of the hooded men. “Get me a scribe,” he said. The man nodded and hurried away.

“Water, please,” Jerome moaned, “Water...”

“When you tell me what you know,” de Marigny told him quietly.

The hooded man returned with a thin monk dressed in brown robes. He was carrying a scroll of parchment, a quill, a pot of ink and blotting sand.

“You have done this before?” The chamberlain asked.

The monk bowed. “Yes, Your Excellency.” He said spreading his writing materials on a small bench next to the rack.

Jerome answered the questions de Marigny asked, describing in detail what had occurred. The scribe dutifully recorded every word and when he was finished, de Marigny took the parchment closer to a torch and carefully read it. Satisfied that it was correct in every detail, he rolled it up, tied it with a ribbon and left the dungeon with Jerome still begging for water. As he made his way up the steps, he blinked at the bright light coming through the windows. De Marigny thought it was evening but it was afternoon. He had lost all track of time interrogating the prisoner as he often did. He stopped in his apartments long enough to change into garments that didn’t stink of torture and death and to eat a light meal. As he entered the part of La Concierge that contained the palace, doors were opened by guards, the lesser inhabitants of the king’s household bowed and even nobles nodded in

his direction. Like his predecessor, Monsieur Enguerrand de Marigny was not to be trifled with. He was absolutely loyal to Philip and utterly ruthless in carrying out the king's business.

The herald at the door of the throne room announced him and the room went silent as he entered. The king nodded, de Marigny bowed and left the room. This was to be a private audience. De Marigny followed the corridors to the King's private chambers without a thought. He knew them as well as his own. When he came to the heavy doors embossed with the king's arms, the halberdiers opened it without question and bowed as he walked through. Standing by the table gazing out a window was Philip IV, King of France, known popularly as "the Fair." The sobriquet had to do with his physical appearance, not the way he treated others. He was indeed a handsome man, tall with sharp eyes, a straight nose and full lips. His light brown hair was worn long as was the fashion of the day. Today he was dressed in green trimmed with ermine. The green hat was decorated with a white feather and his green shoes turned up at the toes. He cut a striking figure.

De Marigny bowed deeply. "Your Majesty."

Philip turned to look at his chamberlain with intense curiosity. "What news, M. Chamberlain?" He asked testily.

De Marigny straightened, approached and handed the king the scroll. Philip didn't open it. The king sat at a long oak table and indicated the chair he wished his chamberlain to take.

"The prisoner's name is Jerome and he was born in Angouleme of a peasant family. He is one of six children. At the age of 13, he left home and became the servant of a Burgundian mercenary. When his master was killed, he took work with the Templars and applied himself. He rose to the station of man-at-arms and eventually became the servant of Brian du Bois, a young brother of the order."

"Do we know the whereabouts of this Brian du Bois?" The king wanted to know.

"We captured them together so he is also a prisoner, but since he is of noble birth, he is not in the dungeon."

"What did you learn from the servant Jerome?" Philip asked impatiently.

"Seven years ago, just prior to the arrest of the Templars, Brother Brian du Bois was tasked by the Templar Grand Master Jacques de Molay to take a lead-sheathed box to Anvers and deliver it to a Rabbi David ben Aliazer."

"A Jew?" The king shouted and his face grew red with anger. "That bastard gave the box to a Jew?" The king fumed. He had been out-witted by de Molay. Who would have dreamed that the Grand master of the Templars would give one of the order's most precious possessions to an infidel Jew?

Unlike many in the court who dreaded the king's anger and instinctively drew back when he fumed, de Marigny remained calm. "Yes, sire," he continued evenly. "Once they delivered it, they escaped to Italy where they

The Gruenwald Deception

took service with several mercenary companies. That's where we found him with the help of the Pope's men."

"No wonder we could not find it," the king said to himself as if de Marigny wasn't in the room, "a damned infidel." Then he looked back at the chamberlain. "Send a reliable body of men to Anvers to get it!" He snapped, his face redder than before. "I must have that box, Monsieur!" He struck the table with his hand. "I mean to have it even if you have to kill the damned rabbi, his family and a thousand other Burgundians. I am going to have it even if it means war with Burgundy." He was nearly screaming. "And while you're at it question this Brian du Bois."

"Regarding his birth..."

"He's a damned heretic Templar," the king shouted in frustration. "His birth means nothing."

The chamberlain rose from his chair and bowed deeply. It was going to be another long interrogation. As de Marigny backed away, the King said, "Oh," and the chamberlain looked at him. The King's eyes gazed into his with a cold intensity. "It would be best if as few as possible knew about the box."

De Marigny smiled in understanding and bowed again. "Yes, sire."

Anvers, The Jewish Quarter

Tuesday, March 6, 1314

The rider was exhausted and his long dark cloak was spattered with mud and offal. He had been on horseback for four full days in horrid weather stopping only to change horses and relieve himself. His meager meals were bread, cold meat and cheap wine that tasted strongly of the badly cured leather wine skins it came in. Dozing in the saddle had been his only rest. Immediately on arriving in Anvers, he headed for the southeastern part of the city wherein lay the Jewish Quarter. Both Christians and Jews looked at him suspiciously. The former when he asked for directions to the Jewish quarter and the latter when he asked for directions to the Rabbi's home. As he rode deeper into the quarter, the signs which had been primarily in Flemish, French and Latin changed to a script he assumed was Hebrew. Late in the day, he came to a small synagogue identified as the one presided over by Rabbi David ben Eliazer. The rider knocked on the stout, iron bound oak door. It was answered by a hulking man with long shaggy hair, rough clothes and a dagger. He was obviously no Jew. He looked the mud-spattered rider over with a disapproving glare. "Yes?" He said in the Flemish dialect.

"I am here to see Rabbi David ben Eliazer," the rider said tiredly.

"The Rabbi said nothing about visitors today," the servant replied haughtily.

"I have a message concerning a friend," the rider said. He pulled a silver florin from his purse and held it up.

Benjamin King

The man gave him a knowing grin. "I'll tell him." He reached for the coin.

The rider withdrew it. "When I see him."

The man shot him a dirty look. "Wait here."

The rabbi was not what the rider expected. He was a young man with a short beard that showed no trace of gray. Tall and slim, he moved energetically. His eyes, however, reflected care and worry. The rabbi regarded his visitor. Despite the dirty cloak and weary countenance, the rider was obviously a man of consequence. Bowing politely, he greeted the rider. "Good day to you, good sir. How may I be of assistance to you?"

"I am Brother Pierre d'Arbley," the rider said, abruptly, "and the news I bring is bad."

At the look of fear in Pierre d'Arbley's eyes, the Rabbi's eyes grew wide and his face went pale, "You are a Templar?" He asked cautiously.

The man smiled weakly. "I was, now I am but a fugitive."

David ben Eliazer looked up and down the street to insure no one was observing. "Come in, come in quickly. Hugo," he said to his servant with agitation in his voice. "No one is to enter, no one."

"Yes, Rabbi." He nodded as d'Arbley pressed the coin into his palm.

D'Arbley followed ben Eliazer down a corridor to a small room filled with scrolls, quills and pots of ink. There was a tapestry with a picture of the 10 commandments on the wall. Here they were alone. "May I offer you food and drink?" The rabbi asked.

The Templar shook his head wearily and waved his hand. "That is most kind of you, sir, but there is no time. Brian du Bois and his servant Jerome have been captured and taken to Paris."

The rabbi's jaw opened in shock and looked at d'Arbley silently for a long moment. "Dear God what are we to do?" He muttered.

"The king's chamberlain de Marigny is a worthy successor to de Nogaret who tortured us...the Templars. He will break them as he does all he interrogates. They will no doubt give them your name. You and your family must flee, I am sorry." The sorrowful Templar shook his head.

"What of the box?" The rabbi asked worriedly. "Can you take it?"

D'Arbley looked at him sadly. "I have nowhere to go where it would be safe. I am the last of the Parisian Templars at liberty. My most important task has been to warn you should there be danger. I have managed to elude them thus far but Philip is still on the hunt and he has a long reach. Sir Brian and his servant were captured in Italy and I fear I shall not long be free." He sighed.

The man was exhausted. The rabbi placed a gentle hand on his shoulder. "You must at least eat something, please sit."

The exhausted Templar sat heavily in the chair and David ben Eliazer called to his wife Miriam to bring their guest something to eat. Then the rabbi called to his son. "Mordecai, come here quickly. An awkward youth of 15 with

The Gruenwald Deception

a straggly beard appeared in the door. "Get your uncle, Nathan, immediately." For a long moment, the boy stared at the Templar. "Get your uncle, now!" The Rabbi insisted in a loud voice. "We have to get out of Anvers now or we are all dead!"

The boy swallowed hard and his eyes grew wide in fear. He turned away and ran to the door then down the street. A few minutes later he returned with his uncle, a merchant who was five years older than the Rabbi and a little taller. He too, wore a full beard but his garments were of excellent quality and cut in the current style as befitted a well-to-do merchant.

"David," he embraced his brother. "What is it?"

"The box, Nathan, it is no longer safe and you must get it away from here as quickly as possible."

"Where do you want me to ship it?" Nathan asked.

"Wherever it goes, you must take it personally," David insisted.

"I cannot take it to either England or France for our people have been expelled from both places. In Germany they kill us." Silent for a moment, he wondered where it might go.

"It must not fall into the wrong hands," the Rabbi cautioned.

His brother laughed sarcastically and smiled. "It has been in the wrong hands for nearly 200 years."

"Nathan," the rabbi snapped to reproach his brother. His expression was stern.

Nathan raised both hands to placate him. "Fear not, my brother," he assured David calmly. "I will find a safe place for it."

"Where in the world can a Jew find a safe place?" The Rabbi worried.

"A Jew, none, but the box, perhaps." Nathan was a man used to hiding his wealth.

"May the God of Moses go with you, brother," the Rabbi told him.

"I will return with a cart directly." The brothers embraced.

The Rabbi returned to the room where d'Arbley was finishing a plate of stew and a thick slice of bread. Taking a small bag of coins from a drawer, the rabbi handed it to the Templar.

D'Arbley held up his hand and protested. "Rabbi, I cannot..."

David ben Aliazar placed the pouch in D'Arbley's hand and closed his fingers around it. "You have brought news that may save our lives and you also need it to escape. Consider it my thanks."

"You are too kind, sir," the Templar said taking it.

"I just hope there is a way to keep the box from that fiend, Philip," the rabbi sighed.

The worn Templar nodded sagely in agreement. "Fiend he is," d'Arbley said shaking his head in despair. "He tortures Christian and Jew alike and steals their wealth. Now he wants even more. Thank you for your kindness, rabbi, I am sorry to be the bearer of such bad tidings."

Benjamin King

"It is the way of the world, good Templar. Thank you for the timely warning. God go with you."

"And with you."

Rabbi David ben Eliazer followed him to the door. The two men looked at each other for a moment and bowed in respect. The Rabbi watched the weary rider disappear into the winding streets and closed the door. He wondered how God could allow one man like Philip to cause so much misery among the faithful. Returning inside, he sent Hugo to get a cart for his family's belongings where were they to go? Spain perhaps, he thought, I have cousins there.

A short time later, Nathan ben Eliazer sat in his warehouse staring at the box on the table before him. The dull metal sheen glowed eerily in the candle light. What could he do? Since there was no way to secure it legally, it had to be done by guile and subterfuge. Subterfuge, he thought, there was the key! "Pierre," he called for his most trusted apprentice. A gangly young man with black hair, brown eyes and a surprisingly full beard appeared in the doorway. Although he was a Christian, he was devoted to Nathan. "Yes, Master Nathan," he said attentively.

"I have a task for you," the merchant said.

Pierre look directly at his master ready to do his will. "Yes, sir."

"Do you see that lead box?" Nathan pointed to it.

Pierre nodded. "Yes, master, it appears to be a child's coffin."

"Just so. Measure and weigh it then find a cabinet maker to fashion two duplicates. I must have them in two days' time. Then, I will tell you where to take one. Say nothing to anyone and it will be worth your certificate and 100 ducats."

Pierre stood stunned at his good fortune. "I...I..."

"Do not thank me, worthy apprentice." Nathan told him sternly. "You're a good man and must know that there is danger here. Once you take on this responsibility you are not only guilty of being the apprentice of an infidel Jew, but you may even be considered a heretic by some very powerful people."

"What is in the box, then, good master?" The apprentice asked curiously.

"Don't ask, Pierre," Nathan told him. "In this case what you know may certainly hurt you. Think carefully and tell me your decision in the morning."

Pierre bowed, and without hesitation, stepped to the table and began his measurements.

"Are you that sure?" Nathan asked curiously.

"Good master," Pierre replied humbly, "when you found me I was a homeless orphan begging in the streets. Like all such people I imagined my fate would be the gallows for stealing a crust of bread. However, you took me in, taught me to read and write and made me an apprentice in a lucrative trade and much more. I now have a future. With a certificate and such a sum,

The Gruenwald Deception

I may join a guild and marry. I will not desert you and I will not fail you – ever.”

Visibly moved, Nathan placed a hand on the young man’s shoulder. “Thank you, Pierre.” Then he went to his writing table, took up his quill and began composing a letter to a cousin who had converted to Christianity to remain in Scotland. To the rest of the family Andrew was dead because of what they considered his betrayal, but Nathan and David had never broken contact. In these uncertain times, Nathan was asking his cousin to store the lead sheathed box until he called for it. After he sealed the letter, Nathan returned to stare at the box. Which box should go where? If they were identical, how could he tell them apart? Nathan prayed and came up with answers to both questions.

Paris, Office of the King’s Chamberlain Wednesday, March 6, 1314

De Marigny and his scribe looked up from their work as Charles le Rochert entered. The chamberlain nodded briefly to the scribe who glanced at Le Rochert and left in haste. This was a conversation that could not be overheard. He would record the incident later. Le Rochert was short squat and unimposing. His round face, covered with a full beard, showed great intelligence for those who wished to notice. The clothing he wore was of good quality with a burgundy doublet trimmed in gold and a fine black hat decorated with an ostrich feather that had been dyed red. He appeared to be a prosperous merchant which, in a way, he was because he would do anything for the right price.

“You summoned me, M. Marigny?” He asked with a low bow.

“I have work for you.” The Chamberlain said simply.

Le Rochert remained expressionless and said nothing.

“I want you to go to Anvers immediately and find Rabbi David ben Eliazer. He has a lead-sheathed box the size of a small child’s coffin that belongs to the king. His Majesty wants it back.”

“What methods may I employ?” Le Rochert asked matter-of-factly.

“I prefer subtlety, Monsieur Le Rochert,” de Marigny replied directly. “This man is a Jew so I imagine he will part with it for a reasonable sum. If that doesn’t work, I leave it to your discretion. However,” he paused for emphasis, “the Duke of Burgundy is very protective of his sovereignty and his Jews and the last thing we need is a war. Therefore, if you must use other means do nothing that is too overt or too messy.” The chamberlain’s eyebrow turned up to indicate what he meant.

Briefly Le Rochert’s mouth turned up in a slight grin to show he comprehended the chamberlain’s meaning. “I understand, perfectly, monsieur.”

Benjamin King

"Good, leave immediately." De Marigny withdrew a pouch of coins from his belt and handed them to Le Rochert. "200 ducats now and another 500 when you get the box, use your own men." The chamberlain paused. "If you run afoul of the Burgundians, it's your head."

Le Rochert could not hide a little smirk. As usual, the King's chamberlain didn't want to get his hands dirty or have anything reflect on his royal master. It was a situation le Rochert found most profitable. He picked up the purse, bowed and left the room.

The Port of Anvers, the Duke of Brabant Inn Thursday March 7, 1314

Delayed by a storm, Nathan sat with Pierre in the Duke of Brabant Inn drinking wine and listening to a frigid gale lash the Port of Anvers. Located right on the docks, the inn was the unofficial gathering place of the wool merchant guilds when shipments were due.

"As soon as this unholy wind abates we can sail," Nathan remarked glumly.

Nathan was obviously depressed and Pierre wished he could cheer him up. "All will work out well, master, you will see."

"The confidence of youth," Nathan said wistfully. "I wish I still had mine."

"Why do you not wish to tell me the secret behind these boxes?" The younger man asked.

"Because it is a secret that brings nothing but torture and death," Nathan explained.

"Then why not just burn it?" Pierre asked.

As if the weight of the world were on his shoulders, Nathan said solemnly, "Duty, my apprentice, duty. If I had my way, I would sink it in the deepest part of the sea, but I am bound by oath to keep it safe."

"Are there many of you pledged to its safety?" Pierre wanted to know.

"I don't know, Pierre, I honestly don't." Nathan waved his hand wearily. "Now, no more of this box. Let us have more wine while we wait for the winds to lessen."

Pierre looked at the man who had been so kind to him and wished there were some way he could lighten Nathan's burden.

Anvers Saturday, March 9, 1314

Charles le Rochert had chosen his men well. Eight of them were former soldiers and brigands who were good fighters and loyal as long as he paid them. That was fine as far as it went but they were ready to solve every

The Gruenwald Deception

problem with a blade or a cudgel without thinking it through. The other two were men of a different sort entirely. Antoine Langres and Henri Molitor were his men. Like their master they were cunning, ruthless and shrewd. They also were loyal. As they rode through Anvers, passersby viewed them curiously. Three men dressed as merchants followed by eight armed to the teeth. It was too heavy an escort for a merchant who did not have even one goods wagon in his train. Still, one never knew, he might be carrying gems and these were uncertain times. That was why most gave the riders a wide berth. Le Rochert needed no directions in Anvers. He knew the city well and found the building easily enough but he had not expected to find it empty. Not only was the rabbi and his family gone but so was the synagogue. They had not even left a caretaker. Obviously the bird had been warned beforehand and flown. Monsieur Chamberlain would not be happy. Then le Rochert scowled. No rabbi, no 500 ducats. He was not happy. "What to do," he said to no one in particular.

"There must be someone here who knew them," Molitor said.

Langres shook his head. "These are Jews. If one had to flee, it is doubtful the others would tell without being forced to do so."

"Yes," le Rochert agreed. He paused. "Perhaps one of the servants might tell us." He rode to the neighboring house and dismounted. "Watch my back," he told his men and ambled unhurriedly to the door. He did not want to appear too bold by striding to it. Langres and Molitor remained in the saddle and looked up and down the street. Those passing up and down were mostly women and their servants on the way to the markets, a few peddlers with their goods on their backs and a push cart or two.

At the second knock, le Rochert smiled at his luck. A serving maid answered the door. She was blond and plump with her hair braided under a white cap. A white apron covered her pregnant belly. She looked at him with impatience and disdain. He had obviously interrupted her work. Le Rochert doffed his cap. "Excuse me, madam," he said with an ingratiating smile, "but I have business with Rabbi ben Eliazer and find he is not here. Can you tell me where he is?"

The woman didn't care and wasn't curious. She shrugged. "They left four days ago, all of them. Other Jews came and took away their religious things. Who knows what goes through the minds of Jews?" She looked at Rochert as if he were a pesky insect.

"Ah, yes," the agent continued with the same air of affability, "who indeed? Is there perhaps some friend of his who might know?"

Hand on her hip, obviously wishing Rochert gone, she thought for a minute. "Hugo might know."

"Hugo?" He asked.

"He used to be their servant. You can probably find him at the Crown Tavern in that direction." She pointed west.

Benjamin King

"How will I know him, madam?" Rochert asked.

"He's big, you can't miss him." She said curtly, "now if you will excuse me, I have work to do."

Le Rochert bowed as she shut the door.

It took hours to find the Crown Tavern. It was a modest establishment just outside the Jewish quarter. Le Rochert entered with his two henchmen and spotted Hugo immediately. He was a very big man. "Henri," he whispered to Molitor, "check the building and see if there's a back way out. Then make sure it's covered." Molitor nodded and left. "Antoine," le Rochert whispered to his companion. "Remember, we are merchants looking to sell Jewish prayer books."

Langres nodded.

"Smile," Rochert reminded him.

Rochert and Langres walked over to the table where the big man and four others were drinking ale at a long table. The four were obviously together while Hugo sat apart.

"Mijnheer Hugo," le Rochert asked politely in the Flemish dialect.

"Who are you?" The big man asked, his speech slightly slurred.

"My name is le Rochert and this is my partner Monsieur Langres. We are book merchants who were hoping to meet with Rabbi David ben Eliazar who wished to purchase some Jewish prayer books. We arrived at his residence this morning to find it empty. Has he moved to another part of the city?"

Hugo shook his head sadly. "They are gone, all of them, the Rabbi, his family, even his brother."

"Gone where?" Le Rochert asked with concern.

Hugo shrugged, "I don't know, to Spain, I think."

"Spain, why Spain?" Le Rochert was genuinely surprised.

"It had something to do with the box," Hugo explained.

"What box?" Rochert asked.

Hugo leaned forward conspiratorially and whispered. "Seven years ago, two Templars came to the house and gave the Rabbi a box. I wasn't supposed to see it but I did. It was about the size of a child's coffin and covered in lead. The rabbi kept it locked in a sturdy chest reinforced with iron plates. Then five days ago, a rider covered in filth and utterly exhausted arrived to warn the rabbi that someone had found out about the box. I couldn't hear everything because they whispered. That same night someone came with a cart and the next morning they left. Later in the day other Jews came to get the religious things. The rabbi gave me a purse, generous man the rabbi, and now he's gone." Hugo said wistfully.

"What was in the box?" Le Rochert asked him.

Hugo leaned even further forward, glanced at the men at the other end of the table and lowered his voice even more. "No one said but the way it was

The Gruenwald Deception

sealed it must have held gold or jewels worth a fortune. Why else would they take such pains to hide it and keep it in such a chest?"

"Why, indeed," Rochert agreed. "Did the Rabbi take it with him when he left?"

"He gave it his brother Nathan to send somewhere," Hugo replied drinking more ale.

"Does this brother have a family?" Le Rochert wanted to know.

The former servant shrugged his large shoulders. "None alive, they all died of disease as far as I know."

"And he left, too?" Langres asked.

"Oh, yes, they are all gone with family and goods." Hugo slurred.

"I see." Le Rochert leaned back on his stool and looked at Langres. "There goes our sale," he said with obvious disappointment. "We'll have to find another rabbi who wants to buy the books. He turned back to Hugo. "Do you know of other Jews who might want to buy books? He asked.

Hugo shook his head. "The rabbi and his family were the only Jews I knew."

Rochert signaled to the landlord, "Another tankard for Mijnherr Hugo," he said placing a few coins on the table.

"You are most kind, sir, God bless you and a safe journey."

Le Rochert and Langres left the tavern and mounted their horses. "Where to now?" Langres asked.

Rochert thought a moment. "The waterfront, maybe we can learn something there."

Paris, La Concierge, Thursday, March 14, 1314

The king's chamberlain listened carefully as le Rochert made his report. He looked neither pleased nor displeased. "You say this Hugo described the box as a lead covered box the size of a child's coffin?"

"Yes, Monsieur de Marigny," Rochert replied.

"And what did he say was inside?" The chamberlain asked.

"He didn't really know, your Excellency. He said it was never opened, but he thought it contained gold or jewels because it was sealed and kept in a secure chest bound with iron."

De Marigny nodded. "Who else heard the conversation?"

"Just Antoine Langres and myself," Rochert told him. "He whispered the entire time."

De Marigny rose from his chair. "Well that's a relief." He reached inside his robe and handed le Rochert a small pouch. "Another 100 ducats, I want this Hugo dead as soon as possible, understood?"

"Yes, monsieur." Le Rochert bowed and left.

***Paris,
Sunday, March 17, 1314***

Jacques de Molay, former grand master of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, otherwise known as the Templars sat in his cell reading the Bible for comfort. In the seven years since his arrest, he had been confined in a small place and, unlike many of his followers, had been decently treated. His domain consisted of a table, a heavy chair and a bed in which the straw was changed regularly. He was served two indifferent meals a day with meat and wine on Sundays. While he was allowed no paper or pen, or other books, he was grateful for the bible and the priest who came weekly to hear his confession. At first he had hoped to save as many Templars as possible by agreeing to false confessions. That way the order might be destroyed but its members would live. The grand master was kept isolated so that he never knew how many of his brothers were tortured and forced to sign bizarre confessions admitting to sodomy and idolatry. Neither could he learn their identities, but Phillip was shrewd enough let de Molay hear enough of the guards' gossip for him to know that many died either during or shortly after their interrogations and others languished in prison. The worst part was not knowing if Brother Brian had succeeded. He was sure, however, that his own time was drawing nigh, not that it mattered any longer. An unaccustomed clatter outside his cell drew his attention away from the passage he was reading. The door rattled and in walked King Philip IV of France. He was dressed in purple trimmed with sable. The black hat was decorated with the same fur. On his feet were heavy boots. De Molay looked up in surprise as Philip entered his cell with two very large guards. The former grand master went down on one knee and bowed his head. "Your majesty," he said.

The king didn't reply. Instead he ordered the guards, "bind him to the chair."

"Are you going to torture me now?" De Molay asked, expecting the worst.

He didn't resist as the two men bound him firmly to the heavy wooden chair. The king remained silent until it was evident that de Molay was unable to move.

"Leave us," the king ordered his men and they looked at him in surprise.

"Leave us," Philip repeated in a harsher tone, "and close the door."

The king waited until the echo of the heavy door died down and took a deep breath. Glancing once at the door, he strode to de Molay and leaned over him. "I want it," he whispered, "and you're going to tell me where it is."

"I don't know what you mean," de Molay replied.

The king smiled cruelly. "Yes, you do and I am not in a mood to be trifled with any longer. I am talking about the lead sheathed box that Brother Brian du Bois and his servant Jerome took to Anvers seven years ago." Philip

The Gruenwald Deception

nodded. "You were very clever to do that. It took a long time to find out what had happened. Most of your followers didn't even know about it. My chamberlain wasted a great deal of time with them." He paused, walked to the window and sighed heavily.

"As for Brother Brian," the king continued, "do not worry about protecting him, he's dead." He turned to observe de Molay's reaction.

The former grand master bent his head and a tear rolled down his cheek. "God rest his soul."

"Does the news sadden you? His servant is also dead. My agents aided by the Pope caught up with them in Italy a few weeks past. Brother Brian was very brave, but at the end, he told us the box contained the head of John the Baptist." He laughed cruelly.

De Molay looked up in surprise.

"He believed it," the king informed the former grand master with a smile. "Did you tell him that?"

De Molay shook his head slowly. "No, I told him nothing. I imagine he thought it held an important relic, how sad."

The king sneered. "How sad, the servant was the one who really told us what we wanted to know although he didn't know what was in the box either. He told us that they delivered it to some Jews. Jews!" He shouted. "You gave it to the accursed Jews?" The king's eyes burned in frustration and hatred. "After I took the trouble of driving the lot of them from my realm, you gave it to the Jews?"

De Molay thought about telling the king that the Jews in Anvers were people he could trust but thought better of it. The former Grand Master looked at Philip IV and said nothing.

"I should have known," Philip scoffed. "No wonder you always had such an easy time transferring money. You were always in contact with the Jews and the money lenders, weren't you?"

Again de Molay remained silent.

"Is that why your order refused to massacre them? I would have killed every cursed Jew from here to Amsterdam to get the box except that damned Capetian Hugh who is Duke of Brabant is getting money from them and wouldn't hear of it." Philip crossed his arms and moved back to stand by the chair. "Nevertheless we consulted agents and even searched part of the Jewish Quarter. It wasn't there." Once again he leaned over to whisper. "Do you think I don't know what's sealed inside that damned box?"

"They were rare jewels the order brought back from the Holy Land," de Molay said unconvincingly.

Again the king let out with a cruel, vicious laugh and strode around the room. "You really must think me a fool, grand master."

"Are you seeking the Holy Grail, then?" de Molay asked a little too lightly. "Many have claimed we had it."

Benjamin King

The king turned, leaned closer and whispered hotly and angrily in de Molay's ear. "Let us stop this foolishness once and for all. You know as well as I do that the box contains the Hebrews' Kaballah."

De Molay's head jerked up and he stared at the king, wide-eyed. Philip regarded him and grinned smugly. "Surprised, grand master?"

The former grand master was speechless. The great, deadly secret of the order had been compromised, the secret that he had taken a solemn oath to protect at all costs.

De Molay assumed an air of calm. "And who told you that we held the Kaballah?" He asked.

"No one in particular, my dear Jacques," the king said smugly. "I knew you had something very valuable since you sheltered me from the mob when I devalued the coinage."

De Molay looked at him in dismay. "You even betrayed our hospitality."

"I am a king," Philip shot back. "I betray no one. It wasn't hard to discover. There were bits and pieces of conversation that, in themselves, meant nothing. In sum they meant much. When I returned to the palace I set about finding out. It took some time but it was simple enough, some money here, a woman there and, in one case a pretty boy. Eventually I did find out. Face it, you were betrayed and your precious order destroyed in the process. It's over. Tell me location of the box and you can peacefully live out the rest of your days in the monastery of your choice."

"All this trouble for a few Hebrew scrolls, your majesty?" de Molay's tone was slightly mocking and it infuriated Philip.

"A few scrolls? Don't insult my intelligence, grand master," the king snapped angrily. "It was the greatest treasure of your order, so valuable that you were ready to sacrifice all of the gold, jewels and property to protect it."

De Molay closed his eyes. This was something every grand master lived in fear of. He knew the fate of those who had tried to use it. He shook his head solemnly. "It was a burden not a treasure," the grand master said.

"You expect me to believe that, Grand Master? Before you possessed the Kaballah your order was an impoverished pack of warrior monks, yet once you found it your influence and power began to grow. If that was not the case then why was it that the Kaballah was the only thing you Templars brought back from the Holy Land? And why was it that the Saracens dismantled the building you occupied stone by stone looking for it? Because it is the source of unlimited power, power that I must have," the king shouted, his fist clenched before him. "With those powers no one can stand in my way and I shall be more powerful and wealthy than Charlemagne or the Caesars."

De Molay shook his head slowly, "If you value your soul, your majesty, you'll leave it alone."

"Why?" The king asked contemptuously.

The Gruenwald Deception

"Because it was not the source of our wealth, it was our curse. It has powers, all right. When it was found lo those many years ago, there were those who did try to use it and they all died horrible deaths. That is why we locked it away and that is why we took it with us. It is cursed and any who try to use its power are doomed. Please, leave it be." Molay looked into the king's eyes pleadingly.

The king laughed coldly. "Don't try to frighten me with old wives' tales, Grand Master. I am not some poxy beggar that can be frightened by stories of ghosts and goblins."

De Molay sighed heavily. "There's proof," he told the king. "In 1217 Grand Master Guillaume de Chartres thought he could use the box's power to restore the declining influence of the order in the Holy Land so he had it removed from its vault. It did no good, however, a few months later, his body broke out in horrible stinking sores and he went mad. He died raving like a lunatic. Even before he was dead the box was resealed and returned to its hiding place."

The king snorted. "Guillaume died of wounds suffered at the siege of Damietta." He insisted.

De Molay slowly shook his head. "That was what the order wanted everyone to believe," he explained. "I beg you, leave it be."

Unmoved the king's eyes fixed the former Grand Master's. Philip's lust for power burned in them and de Molay realized there was no way of reasoning with him.

"Where is it?" The king asked flatly.

"I don't know where it is," de Molay said in a whisper "As God is my witness, I don't know."

Philip leaned very close and whispered harshly, "Perhaps you would prefer to discuss the matter with Monsieur de Marigny, my chamberlain."

De Molay looked at the king and knew exactly what he meant. "He will never learn its whereabouts from me, either, because I don't know where it went. That was one of the safeguards. I cannot call it back even if I wanted to."

"I hope for your sake that is not true, for if it is, I will send you to the stake as a heretic," the king snapped.

"Then I will burn," he let a soft, pathetic laugh escape his lips.

"What's so funny?" The king wanted to know. "I've just told you that you're going to the stake and you're laughing?"

"I don't know," de Molay said looking at the king. "Perhaps it is relief because the wait to discover my fate is over. Also the supposed magic of the Kaballah did us little good."

"No? For two nearly centuries your order gained enormous wealth prospered and rose to great power. I would call that much good." The King replied.

"In the end whatever magic there was deserted us, if ever it was with us," De Molay told him.

The king turned to look at him. "Perhaps you and your order just lost your faith," the king snapped nastily.

The remark cut the former grand master deeply and De Molay hung his head. "Perhaps you're right," he muttered. Perhaps they had all lost their faith, he thought. The fearsome secret of the Kaballah had been passed down from one grand master to the next and de Molay was not about to unleash it on an unsuspecting world. Better to give it back to the Jews and let them wrestle with it. It had been theirs to begin with. Perhaps they might abate its terrible power. Either way, the Jews would survive whereas he would not.

"Guards," the king called. The two men walked in ready to obey. "This is your last chance, grand master," the king said.

De Molay said nothing.

"Take him to the dungeon," Philip ordered. "There is much to do."

The following day, a special court convened. Using forged evidence, the judges condemned de Molay and Geoffroi de Charney to burn at the stake that very day.

As the flames licked cruelly around his blistering body De Molay screamed "Let evil swiftly befall those who have wrongly condemned us - God will avenge us!"

The king was not there to hear. He could not be bothered to witness his own handiwork.

***Paris, La Concierge,
The Office of the King's Chamberlain
Monday, March 25, 1314***

Le Rochert and Langres entered de Marigny's office where the Chamberlain was sitting with a scribe and a captain of the king's guard. He nodded to them both and they left. De Marigny looked at the two of them. "It is done?"

"The man Hugo is dead," Le Rochert informed him. "I gave him a knife in the ribs and cut his throat. Then I took his meager purse and dropped him into the Scheldt River to make it look like robbery."

De Marigny nodded and even smiled briefly. "Well done, his majesty is very pleased." Again he withdrew a pouch of gold, "Another 100 ducats to show his gratitude."

Le Rochert picked up the pouch and smiled, "Our thanks to his majesty." He and Langres bowed when they turned they were facing the captain of the guard and at least half a dozen soldiers. The knives flashed and in a moment the two men were dead on the floor. The captain returned the pouch to the

The Gruenwald Deception

chamberlain. "Excellent," de Marigny told him. "Now kill the rest of his men to be sure."

The captain bowed then signaled to his men to drag the bodies out. There was blood on the stones. De Marigny made a note to himself to have the necessary woman clean it up. Now only he and the king knew of the box.

The Port of Anvers, The Duke of Brabant Inn Monday, December 9, 1314

Despite the foul weather Nathan ben Eliazer stood at the rail of the cog, fighting the urge to vomit as he waited for it to tie up to the dock. He did not like the sea or the ships that sailed on it. As the gang plank was lowered he staggered down to the dock hunched in his heavy cloak hoping to keep away the bitter wind that blew in from the North Sea. Pierre was waiting at the bottom of the gangplank. With genuine affection, he embraced his former master. "Welcome home, master," he said.

Nathan smiled warmly. "Pierre, you don't have to call me master any more. You have your own certificate."

Pierre laughed. "Even when we are old and gray you will still be my good master. You look pale. Are you sick?"

"I am not cut out to be sailor, I'm afraid." Nathan grinned weakly and shook his head.

"Then come, you need some good Burgundian food and wine to make you well. There are many at the inn you know." Pierre put his arm around Nathan's shoulder.

"What is amiss?" Nathan asked.

"The weather," Pierre replied looking at the gray sky. "The wind is not severe enough to do damage but it is contrary enough to delay the shipment of wool from England."

Nathan looked around. The ships at the docks swayed gently at their moorings like a troop of dancers moving this way and that. Soon they entered the familiar confines of the Duke of Brabant Inn where the warmth of the fire offered a blessed relief from the harsh winds. Inside was a throng of acquaintances and competitors who were gathered in a group. When Henrik van Gang, a fellow wool merchant, saw him he shouted a greeting and waved. "Nathan, what did you teach that apprentice of yours?"

"What?" Nathan was confused.

Someone else said, "Pierre's wife is ready to give birth."

Pierre d' Anvers as he was called now was already married to a woman of a respectable family. He also had his own business weaving cloth and an apprentice of his own.

"What is this?" Asked another. "What kind if Burgundian are you, Pierre, lusting after your own wife?"

That brought a howl of laughter and a round of drinking. The jokes done, the men's conversation gradually turned to the bad weather and its affect on the price of wool.

"Master Nathan," Pierre said cheerfully. "Have a seat by the fire and a mug of mulled wine to take away the chill."

Nathan nodded and sat on a bench near the roaring hearth. The heat was soothing. "So, congratulations are in order," he said. "You are married with a child on the way."

"I am blessed," Pierre said. "And how are you and your family?"

"Thank you, all are well, praise God. David is settled in Spain." A serving wench brought the wine.

Pierre leaned forward and quietly asked, "Have you heard the news from France?"

Nathan lowered his voice also, "What news? I have been at sea for weeks"

"King Philip the Fair is dead, killed in a hunting accident." He said softly.

Nathan's eyes went wide in genuine shock. "No?"

"Yes," Pierre confirmed. "Laid low by the curse of the Templars, so it is said, just like Pope Clement last spring." He crossed himself to ward off the curse.

"I am amazed," Nathan told him, but wondered to himself, was it the Templar curse that killed him or the Kaballah?

"He was an evil man, Nathan," Pierre continued earnestly, "an evil man. Look at the misery he caused the Children of Israel and the poor Templars. I know it is un-Christian to say so but I'd not wager a copper penny on the salvation of his soul."

So the King of France is dead, Nathan thought, and with him dies his lust for the Kaballah. Now, maybe we will all be left in peace. The older wool merchant sipped the hot wine and thought, or am I a fool with a fool's hope?

Chapter 8

The Streets of Rome

Rome

Tuesday November 22, 1938

With the tantalizing confession of the unfortunate Geoffrey de Rennes, Schwerin and Gruenwald redoubled their efforts. They attempted to access records on Brian du Bois alphabetically but the records had been accessed long before modern indexing and the two researchers had to content themselves with continuing with a chronological search of the folios. It was the only way they could insure that they didn't miss anything important. Once again they didn't leave the library until after 8:00 PM. Gruenwald was exhausted and even Schwerin who habitually went out for a meal and a drink took a light meal along with the professor at the hotel.

"We need a typist," Gruenwald declared as he ate a rich tomato Florentine soup. "I have at least 30 pages of notes now and they need to be typed. I can't take notes and type at the same time. Besides, my typing is execrable. Since I've started I've managed to type only two pages at the Vatican."

Schwerin tore a piece of bread which he dipped in olive oil and looked seriously at the professor. "I don't like to type either but I don't think getting a typist is such a good idea. I have 12 pages of notes myself and there is frequent mention of the artifact."

"Then let's eliminate all references to it and call it the 'Holy Grail' as a code. All anyone has to know is that we're researching the Templars and the Holy Grail. Let's tell them we're writing a script for a film. Most people would think we're terribly eccentric but they'd believe it."

Schwerin chewed thoughtfully for a moment. "It would save a lot of typing at the end of trip when we have to prepare our report and since we don't have a typist and neither of us likes to type..." he paused. This would also give him more time with Katrina. "Why not?" He said agreeably. "Tomorrow, why don't you ask your friend Monsignor Callahan if he knows of a reliable and discrete typist who speaks, reads and writes, excellent German."

"And Latin," Gruenwald added. "Some of my notes are in Latin."

"And Latin." Schwerin yawned. He was so tired he didn't want to discuss it further.

At 2:00 AM, Raimondo Cerulio turned away from the hotel and gave up his vigil without once taking the camera from his pocket. The only one left

The Gruenwald Deception

was Robert Parke. After Cerulio left, he lit a cigar and watched the hotel for another hour. Then, he, too, went to bed.

Rome

Wednesday, November 23, 1938

"Just what I need," Schwerin grumbled as they stepped into the cab, "rain."

"We're going to be inside all day," Gruenwald sighed, "so what does it matter?"

"Perhaps, I want to go to supper this evening," Schwerin snapped.

Gruenwald said nothing. The SS officer was in a foul mood. Schwerin seemed to have infinite patience with people and situations but not with methodical research. On this third day they were recognized and passed through the security procedures with ease. Gruenwald checked the catalogue excerpt they had been given, wrote the numbers on the call slip and gave it to the assistant librarian in the black cowl. In a few minutes, they were once again closely examining the pieces of parchment that chronicled the torture and interrogation of real men 600 years before.

After several hours, Schwerin said, "Look at this." He slid a piece of parchment toward the professor.

Gruenwald began reading the confession of another Templar. After days of torture, he admitted witnessing the sealing of the box. When the interrogator attempted to find out what was in the box, the man died. "This confirms it," he said. "It was in a lead sheathed box that was last seen in the dungeon of the Templar preceptory in Paris. Now all we have to do is find out whether or not they found Brother Brian du Bois and his servant."

"And whether they confessed," Schwerin added. "I just wish there were a quicker way."

There's no one here for you and your Nazi thugs to intimidate or torment to make it go faster, Gruenwald thought uncharitably, but wisely remained silent. They were interrupted by a polite knock on the door and looked up to see a smiling Monsignor Liam Callahan.

"Please excuse the interruption," he said in Irish accented Italian, but I have two small items that should please. The first is an invitation. I would like both of you gentlemen to be my guests at supper this evening."

Gruenwald glanced at Schwerin who looked up with one of his artificial ingratiating smiles. "That is most kind of you, monsignor," he said, "but I have a previous engagement. Perhaps professor Gruenwald is free."

Pleasantly surprised, Gruenwald accepted.

"At seven then," the monsignor said. "I'll pick you up at your hotel."

Gruenwald nodded.

"And the second thing is that Cardinal Ratti has read the professor's book on the Kaballah and would like to meet him if it isn't too much trouble."

The silence that followed was deafening. Schwerin didn't like it but there was little he could do about it. "Can you tear yourself away, professor?" His tone dripped with sarcasm.

"I'm sure a few minutes will be all right," Gruenwald replied hesitantly.

"This way, then," Callahan said.

As they walked down the corridor, Gruenwald whispered, "Go easy with Schwerin. He doesn't like to see me being treated with any kind of deference. It is a matter of life and death, you know."

"I know, but when you meet the cardinal you'll understand. In here." They entered a small chamber with a few chairs and no one in it. "Patience," Callahan counseled.

A moment later a side door opened and in walked two men. The first of medium height and a round face wore glasses and was dressed in a white cassock and skull cap with a red cape around his shoulders. The other in the black and purple of a cardinal was taller and had an oval face and a long nose. While the one in white looked pleasant, the one in black and purple was dour. Before Gruenwald could react, Callahan went down on one knee and kissed the ring of the man in white.

"Your Holiness," he said.

Gruenwald's jaw dropped and he stood stupefied. Cardinal Ratti was Cardinal Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti, who was, in fact, Pope Pius XI. Totally unaware of papal protocol he just stood in amazement. The pope who looked mildly bemused approached him and took his hand. "Professor Gruenwald," he said in very good German, "I am very happy to meet you."

Finally recovering, Gruenwald replied, "This is, indeed an honor, Your Holiness."

"More like a shock, I think." The pope said it with a smile that indicated he was enjoying a bit of a practical joke. "Let me introduce Cardinal Pacelli."

The dour cardinal came forward and the two men shook hands. "Oh, yes," Gruenwald said recognizing the man's face from the newspapers. "The Concordat," he said.

Pacelli shrugged slightly. "I hope that's not what I'll be remembered for," he said.

"Please have a seat," the pope said. "May we get you some coffee or tea?"

Gruenwald waited until the pope and the cardinal sat then took a seat facing them. "No thank you, Your Holiness," the professor said glancing over at Callahan.

"Don't be angry with your friend," the pope told him. "When I heard you were here, I wanted to meet you. I did read your book, *The Meaning of the Kaballah* and I thought it was very prescient the way you concentrated on the

The Gruenwald Deception

intellectual importance of it to western religion, especially to Christians and Jews. I also appreciated the way you debunked all of the legends about magic. You are to be commended. It is an important work."

"Thank you, Your Holiness." Gruenwald blushed slightly at the praise.

"As you know we have tried to deal with the anti-Semitism in Germany without much success. If it is not too painful, would you please tell us of your experiences, we get so few firsthand accounts and so many priests have been arrested..."

Gruenwald took a deep breath and recounted the experiences he and his family had from the time the Nazis came to power. Every now and then the pope looked at Cardinal Pacelli who shook his head.

Gruenwald concluded, "We hoped that your Encyclical, 'Mit Brennender Sorge' would help, but the Nazis are bent on the destruction of the Jews and everything that stands in their way. I doubt if they will respond to anything but brute force."

"Do you think there will be a war, my son?" The pope asked.

"I don't know, Your Holiness," was the reply. "As a student of history I can only think that one day Hitler will demand more than others are willing to give and there will be one. It is possible that Hitler wants a war to show the world he is a great conqueror."

The pope sat quietly for a moment then spoke with genuine concern. "Monsignor Callahan told us of your situation and before you get angry with him, I confess I coerced the story from him. He is, indeed, your friend and quite stubborn. Do you really think you will find the Kaballah?"

"It's quite possible, Your Holiness." Gruenwald said.

"And you are prepared to hand it over to the Nazis?" There was a note of dismay in the Pope's voice.

"If I can save my father, yes," came the unhesitant reply.

The pope looked at him dolefully. "No man should have to make the choice you are making. Your father is fortunate to have such a son. However, I beg you to reconsider your course of action. The Kaballah is one of the foundations of both Christianity and Judaism. In the wrong hands it could be a major disaster for both our faiths."

"Your, Holiness, I don't see that I have any choice." The professor stated emphatically. "My mind is made up."

The pope leaned far forward in his chair and his tone became more authoritarian. "Professor Gruenwald you must not turn the Kaballah over to our mutual enemy, ever! Even now Hitler has assembled a group of so called Aryan theologians to rewrite the bible and eliminate any mention of the Jews. Jesus will be an Aryan prince and there will be two new commandments, one to remain loyal to the Fuehrer and the other to maintain racial purity. The Kaballah will only encourage them to proceed in this evil plan."

Benjamin King

Gruenwald remained silent then the pope leaned back in his chair. Wearily he rubbed his eyes. "Forgive me, my son, but this situation is most upsetting, go with God."

"You, too, your Holiness," Gruenwald replied politely. "No offense taken." The professor looked at Pacelli who remained unmoved and silent the entire time. What are you thinking, cardinal, Gruenwald wondered? He understood that he had been dismissed and left the room. Callahan followed closely on his heels.

Back in the corridor Callahan said apologetically, "I'm sorry I misled you. When his holiness started asking me about you, he knew exactly what you were doing and why. I couldn't lie to him."

Gruenwald was baffled. "How could he know? This was supposed to be a closely held secret among a few high ranking Nazis."

"When it comes to intelligence, it appears that the Third Reich leaks like a sieve, all puns intended."

"I wish I could laugh," the professor told him.

Schwerin shot Gruenwald a dirty look as he returned to the study room in the library. It was obvious that he was irritated and wanted a full accounting.

"Cardinal Ratti read my book on the Kaballah," he explained, "and told me he thought it was an important work."

"With all your friends and admirers here in the Vatican, it's a wonder you don't become a Catholic," the SS officer remarked cattily. "How many books have you written?"

"Four, but only one was on the Kaballah," Gruenwald replied warily.

"What were the others on?" Schwerin asked with a sharp edge to his voice.

"Christianity and Judaism and how they affect one another." Gruenwald replied.

"Humph. That is why Germany has to get out from under the yoke of Jewish and Christian philosophical slavery," Schwerin snapped.

Schwerin's comment sounded like a rote reply from a Nazi textbook and made no real sense. For a moment, Gruenwald didn't reply. "Would you prefer I not meet Monsignor Callahan for supper this evening?"

"No, go ahead," the SS officer was exasperated. "As I said, I have something else planned." And Katrina is her name, Schwerin thought. "Also, I have to go to the German embassy to make a confidential report to Berlin so we can leave a little early this evening."

Rome, the Regina Hotel

Schwerin washed and put on a clean shirt and a different tie and left the hotel room earlier than Gruenwald. He certainly wasn't going to have supper with a Jesuit and Jew. That would be a pretty sight. The evening was a little

The Gruenwald Deception

chilly and it was threatening to rain but he decided to walk. They had made real progress here in Rome and Schwerin needed to report good news to keep Himmler and Heydrich happy. Instinctively, he believed that Gruenwald would lead him to the Kaballah after that it was problematical whether he could bring him back to Germany. Perhaps he would kill the professor. That would be a lot simpler. He'd have to ask Heydrich. Up ahead a man in a broad brimmed hat was taking a picture of his girlfriend, telling her to move this way and that. Schwerin turned up a side street to keep from being photographed in the background. Cerulio smiled to himself as the German walked away. It's too late, my friend, I already have four exposures of your face beneath the street lamps. As soon as Saltikov/Schwerin was out of sight, Cerulio hailed a cab to take him to OVRA headquarters.

Once he was alone, Gruenwald penned a letter to his mother and sister and one to his father. He was about to ask a large favor of Callahan. At seven PM, Callahan was waiting outside the hotel behind the wheel of a 2 door coupe.

"What happened to the touring car?" Gruenwald asked getting into the passenger seat.

"That was official Vatican hospitality, this is just friends going to supper." The monsignor smiled.

"I'm beginning to wonder if there is such a thing anymore." He said and immediately regretted the remark.

Callahan held up his hand and gave him a guilty look.

"Oh, Liam, I don't mean you. I mean the whole world. Here I am on what is supposed to be a secret mission that my life depends on. I'm a professor not a spy and half of Europe seems to know about it."

"It probably does, Anton," the monsignor replied. "The Germans are only adept at deceiving their own population and those who wish to be deceived. Inside Germany are so many who hate the Nazis that hardly anything can be kept secret. If there's a war they might do better if they seal the borders, but now..." he let the subject drop. "Are you hungry?"

"I guess so." Gruenwald sighed.

"Good, I know a place that has the best veal."

"I need a favor," the professor said.

"Name it." His friend said.

"I have a letter for my mother and sister addressed to our cousins in Birmingham, England and one to go to my father," Gruenwald explained. "Drive me to a post office."

"Give them to me," the priest held out his hand.

"Why?" The professor asked in surprise.

"If they go through the Italian post, there's a chance they can be intercepted. I'll see that they go out through the Vatican diplomatic post. That way these fascist scum can't get their hands on them." Callahan explained.

Benjamin King

Gruenwald handed them over and Callahan drove to a small restaurant on the other side of Rome where the waiter led them to a little round table and brought them wine and hot fresh bread. "Now, try to relax," the priest said. "We'll drink some of this excellent wine and talk about sweating our backsides off for those archeologists in the desert outside Jerusalem."

Gruenwald tasted the wine. "It is good," he admitted. "You know, I think the closest thing to a slave is a graduate student. They kept us at the dig for four weeks. There was enough water to drink but here were days I would have killed for a bath or a swim."

"How idealistic we were. I know it's the cradle of every major western religion but who would want to live there?" He tore a piece of bread.

"A lot of Jews are buying land there," Gruenwald sighed shaking his head. "Some are prosperous farmers. I'm beginning to wonder if it isn't the place to go to escape Hitler."

Callahan laughed good-naturedly.

"What's so funny," the professor wanted to know.

"I'm having difficulty picturing Anton Gruenwald gentleman farmer," he replied with a chuckle.

Gruenwald laughed quietly in return. "Now that you mention it, the only contact I've ever had with the soil was digging trenches in the war. But if there are farmers, there will probably be children and I could teach."

"True, and it's a noble profession," the monsignor assured him.

"Speaking of professions..." Gruenwald began.

"Yes?"

"I...that is we, Schwerin and I are in need of a typist that can speak, read and write German, Latin and French and is discrete. Schwerin and I can barely type and we have over 40 pages of notes that need to be put into some sort of order." Gruenwald said.

Callahan thought for a moment. "I think I know just the one, Francesca Gianella, she's a linguist and does translations for us from time-to-time. I will give you her address and telephone number tomorrow. She should be exactly what you're looking for."

"I would appreciate it." The professor said.

"All right, that's the last we mention about your quest tonight. Do you still play chess?"

"I haven't played in years." The professor told him.

Callahan smiled. "Good, I need an easy mark."

Rome

OVRA Headquarters

The dark room in the basement of OVRA headquarters was barely large enough to hold Miranelli, Cerulio and the technician doing the developing.

The Gruenwald Deception

When the technician was finished printing the pictures, he hung them up on a line above the vats to let them dry and then turned on the lights. "Thank you," Miranelli told him. "That will be all."

The man bowed and dutifully left the room and Cerulio pointed at the photos. "On my mother's grave, that's Saltikov," He stated emphatically.

Miranelli stepped back and smiled. "That's also Captain Klaus Schwerin of the Condor Legion."

Cerulio looked at the picture and back at Miranelli. "It's true then, they're both the same?"

"Yes, he's also an SS-Sturmbannfuehrer who works for Reinhard Heydrich on special projects. In other words, he's a spy and I've met him." Miranelli told Cerulio the story of how Schwerin came into the Italian trenches and how his identity was confirmed. Warming to his subject, he told his nominal subordinate about the man's uniform, the car in the middle of the night and his own suspicions. "I didn't think about it at the time but the monastery was not more than a kilometer away from the forward trenches our regiment occupied. The listening posts in some cases were barely 50 meters apart."

"Then it is the bastard," Cerulio said more to himself than to the colonel.

"Definitely," Miranelli mused staring at the photo of the tall blonde man in the overcoat.

"Do you want me to kill him?" There was an eagerness in the one armed man's voice that gave Miranelli pause.

"No, Raimondo," the colonel said calmly. "I don't want you to kill him. You must continue to follow him, that's all. Tomorrow night, I will accompany you so I can watch him, too."

"Then you are going to kill him?" Cerulio asked hopefully.

"I told you, it would be very impolitic to kill a member of the SS considering how Il Duce admires Herr Hitler." He put his arm around Cerulio's shoulder. "Be patient, my friend, problems such as this sometimes solve themselves. The streets of Rome can be very violent at times. Come let us have a glass of wine in my office and go home to bed. Tomorrow will be a busy day."

The Regina Hotel

Schwerin returned to the room in a much improved mood. His report to Heydrich had been very positive, indicating that evidence was now pointing to a lead sheathed box taken away from Paris by Brian du Bois and his servant. It could not be much longer. He also asked for specific instructions on the disposition of Gruenwald. Then he had an excellent meal and a wonderful time with Katrina. When he opened the door, the professor was sound asleep and his notes were piled on the small desk. He had to admit

that Gruenwald had given him little trouble. As long as he thought he could save his father he would be tractable. Nevertheless, he didn't trust him. There was something going on with that damned Jesuit bastard, and Schwerin didn't like it. On the bright side they were getting closer to the Kaballah and this assignment would soon be over. The SS officer washed up, brushed his teeth and stretched out on the bed across from Gruenwald's. In a few moments he slipped into a deep sleep and dreamed of another promotion and Katrina.

The morning was cloudy and the temperature had fallen. "How was your evening, professor?" Schwerin asked politely.

Gruenwald finished running the razor down his cheek and rinsed it. "Monsignor Callahan took me to a nice restaurant, we spoke of the days we were in Jerusalem and then played a little chess. I lost every game."

"Sounds like a nice evening," Schwerin said without conviction. Conversation with a priest and games of chess, he was thankful he didn't go.

"Oh," the professor remembered. "Liam...Monsignor Callahan recommended a linguist he knows to do our typing. Apparently she does some translations for the Vatican Library from time-to-time. I thought I might take some time to sanitize my notes and see what she can do."

"Good idea. I will do the same. If she can do a good job it will save us time. Call her this morning and we'll make an appointment. In the meantime we should get our breakfast and get back to work at the library."

The Vatican Library ***Thursday, November 24, 1938***

The tedium continued. Gruenwald and Schwerin covered 1309, 1310 and 1311 and it was obvious that Phillip the Fair's persecution of the Templars had not let up.

Schwerin finished a transcript and passed it over to the professor. "I don't understand this," he said tiredly.

Gruenwald looked up. "Do you mean this series of interrogations?"

"Precisely, many of these men had been questioned before and confessed to all sorts of things to save themselves. Suddenly, after two years in prison, they are dragged out of their cells and tortured again. Then in the middle of this second round of torture when you'd think that they would admit to anything, they recant and deny the first confession."

"I see what you mean," Gruenwald agreed, "it is a bit confusing but we are seeing two separate things going on here." The professor leaned forward and interlaced his fingers. "First, this set of interrogations is far more pointed than the ones from 1307 and 1308. In those, Phillip's agents were looking for something to justify their accusations against the Templars. The Templars were playing the game which was to confess and let the king have their

The Gruenwald Deception

property, after which they would be let go. However, Phillip wasn't playing the usual game. He wanted something specific and when he didn't get it, he decided to start all over again. Most of these men being questioned the second time realized that they were dead men and denied their first confessions."

"But, didn't recanting a confession, in itself, carry a sentence of death?" Schwerin asked.

The professor nodded. "Yes it was. Though there's no definite proof, I think these men knew they were already dead so they were offering a last bit of defiance to the king and his agents by denying them any basis for their original arrests. Did you notice how pointed these interrogations are?"

"Yes," Schwerin said. "Once you know what's happening, it's very obvious that the interrogators are looking for something in particular although the language is veiled and most of the Templars didn't know what they were talking about. Then, there are the deaths."

"You noticed them, too," Gruenwald remarked.

The SS officer shook his head in disbelief. "I didn't count but it seems that almost one out of four of them were dying on the rack this time."

"Again it's not surprising, Herr Sturmbannfuehrer. Most of these men were weakened by their time in prison and the interrogations were undoubtedly harsher."

"Yes, I see." Schwerin reached for another sheet of parchment and began reading.

At 1:00 PM the two men broke for lunch. Schwerin left Gruenwald at the library and returned to the German Embassy to see if there was a reply to his report and the question concerning Gruenwald's fate. The professor asked the librarian who was a Pole and spoke wretched Italian how he could get in contact with Monsignor Callahan. At the mention of his friend's name, the librarian picked up the phone. A moment later, the good father appeared.

"Where's your alter ego?" He inquired.

"He had to go to the German Embassy," Gruenwald informed him.

"Is he coming back?" Callahan asked.

"I don't think so," Gruenwald told him. "We're going through some very tedious interrogations and I think he was looking for an excuse to leave. What I need is the number of Miss Gianella, the typist you mentioned."

"Ah," Callahan cautioned, "she is a linguist not a typist, although she does a lot of transcribing. 'I'll tell you what, I'll take you over and introduce you, how's that?'"

"That would be very nice," Gruenwald replied. "I can use a break. Reading these 'confessions' is awfully depressing."

"Good," Callahan said with a grin. "For that you can buy me lunch."

The professor laughed, "Liam, you never change."

Francesca Gianella's office was on the second floor of an apartment building off the Via Fiori, a block down from the telegraph office. The top of the door was frosted glass and in gold letters outlined in black was:

Signorina Francesca Gianella

Lingusita

Notario Pubblico

Callahan knocked politely and opened the door. The main room was an office lined with bookcases containing a number of works on international business law as well as dictionaries and numerous volumes of Italian law. In the center of the room was a comfortable desk resting on a very attractive oriental rug and in front of the desk were two tastefully upholstered chairs. On the desk were a huge typewriter and two telephones. Sitting behind the desk was a young woman in a nicely tailored business suit. She was in her mid-to-late twenties with a pretty face and shoulder length jet black hair. Signorina Gianella's sensuous mouth widened into a broad smile the moment Callahan appeared.

"Monsignor Callahan," she called rising. She extended her hands to his and kissed him joyfully on the cheek, "how wonderful to see you. I miss your visits."

"Francesca, my daughter, as usual you look radiant," he told her. "I would like to introduce a very dear friend who is in need of a transcriber. Signorina Gianella, Professor Anton Gruenwald."

She extended her hand and the professor took it. Francesca Gianella had long, elegant fingers and a firm business-like grip. What he hadn't noticed before was the intricate antique chain around her neck and the large Star of David it supported.

"I am very happy to meet you, professor," she said. "You are not nearly as old as the monsignor said you were."

Her laugh was soft and throaty and she had the darkest brown eyes he had ever seen. She's lovely he thought. Gruenwald felt himself blushing like a smitten school boy, but he was not to be outdone by Liam Callahan. "I'm afraid the good monsignor is a bit forgetful," he replied, "But I must be kind, he was my great grandfather's best friend."

Callahan's eyes grew wide. "Great grandfather?"

Francesca Gianella chuckled. "He also didn't tell me you had such a quick wit." Gruenwald reluctantly released her hand.

"What would you like transcribed?" She asked getting down to business.

Gruenwald reached into his briefcase, withdrew the sheaf of notes and handed them to her. "Can you transcribe these as is?" he asked.

Gianella studied the first four pages carefully. "I noticed here that you have three types of quotes in Latin, Classical Latin, Vulgate Latin from the late middle Ages and what looks like your notes mixed with some modernized usage."

The Gruenwald Deception

He leaned over and looked at the places she indicated and noticed her subtle but very alluring perfume. He had trouble concentrating on the notes. "Very perceptive," He said. "Can you turn the modern usage into classical Latin?"

"Yes, of course," she replied confidently. "How soon do you need them?"

Gruenwald shrugged. "Three days but there will be more."

"How much?" She wanted to know.

"I really don't know," the professor admitted. "It depends what we find."

"We? You and Monsignor Callahan?" She asked.

"No," he clarified, "a colleague."

"Oh." She didn't ask and Gruenwald wondered how much Callahan told her. "If you can call later, I can tell you when I can finish them."

"Fine," he said continuing to look at her. "What is your fee?"

"I can only give you an estimate," she said with a nice smile. "Once I look at the work I will give you a final price."

Before Gruenwald could say anything, Callahan interrupted. "Charge him double for his bad handwriting."

Francesca Gianella laughed softly. As they said their good-byes, Gruenwald looked at her again and wished the world were a different place where he could ask this lovely Italian woman to dinner or the theater. He said nothing as he and Callahan went down the steps to the front door and got into the monsignor's car. When he closed the door he looked up at the second story of the building.

"Do you like fish?" Callahan asked.

The professor looked at him for a moment without comprehending. "What?"

"For lunch, do you like fish?" The monsignor repeated.

"Yes, fish is fine," and he glanced back at the building.

Callahan glanced over at him. "She's 26 and as you can see she's intelligent, attractive and witty. She's also unmarried. She was engaged but her fiancé was killed in Ethiopia a few years ago. And, as I'm sure you noticed, she's Jewish."

Gruenwald looked at his friend. "Are you trying to play matchmaker, Liam?"

"Yes." Liam Callahan said emphatically.

"You're the wrong religion and the wrong sex to be a Yenta." Gruenwald told him.

Callahan leaned forward with a crafty smile. "Never underestimate the power of the Jesuits, my friend. How do you know the Yentas aren't working for us? Besides, she's a very nice girl."

"I know," Gruenwald admitted painfully. "If this were a different time and a different place..."

"There's no time like present," the Jesuit told him.

"At the present, my father and I are under a death sentence," Gruenwald reminded him testily.

"I know, my friend. God, I wish it were not so. In any case, I'll leave it up to you."

The German Embassy, Rome

Thursday, November 24, 1938

The guard at the embassy gate saluted and passed Schwerin right through as soon as he saw his identification. He strode in and the clerk at the desk stood to attention and saluted with his arm outstretched. "Heil Hitler, Herr Sturmbannfuehrer."

"Heil Hitler."

"Have you come about the message?" The clerk asked.

"What message?" Schwerin asked curiously.

"We sent a note to your hotel." The clerk explained. "You are to call SS headquarters as soon as possible."

"I was at the Vatican," he told the man.

"Follow me, sir," the clerk instructed. "You can use the telephone in the undersecretary's office. He's at lunch at the Italian Foreign Ministry and should be there for some time."

Schwerin followed the clerk into a spacious office where he held the chair at the desk for the SS officer. Removing an envelope from his tunic, he handed it to Schwerin. "This is a copy of the message. The operator will get you your party." He indicated a button on the desk. "Ring me when you are finished."

"Thank you."

Schwerin opened the envelope. It was message from Heydrich to call as soon as possible. The operator made the connection quickly and a few seconds later he heard Heydrich's voice.

"Schwerin?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was a good report, the Reichsfuehrer is very pleased." Heydrich told him.

"Thank you, Herr Gruppenfuehrer."

"When do you think you can wrap this up?" His superior wanted to know.

"I can't say." Schwerin admitted. "We will probably have to go to another city. I'll report as soon as I find out."

"Are you sure this Jew professor isn't leading you on a wild goose chase?" Heydrich asked pointedly.

"Positive," Schwerin replied. "I see every document he does. The Templars hid it from the King of France. Now it's just a question of where."

"Is he giving you any trouble?" Heydrich asked.

The Gruenwald Deception

"None, he is counting on us letting his father and him go." Schwerin said.

Heydrich laughed nastily. "He isn't going anywhere except back to Germany. Since he's the leading expert on this thing, the Reichsfuehrer and I want you to bring him back unharmed. We are going to need him for a while. Until then, promise him anything so he'll cooperate."

"Yes, sir," Schwerin replied.

"Whenever you find it, call and we will send an airplane and enough men to see the Jew gets on it." The Gruppenfuehrer told him.

"Yes, sir."

"Speed, Schwerin, Speed. We have important work to do. Heil Hitler."

Before Schwerin could answer, the connection was broken. So Gruenwald had to go back, too bad for him and his father.

Rome

The Rosetta Restaurant

Gruenwald ordered a glass of wine but no food.

"Anton, are you all right?" Callahan asked eating a small antipasto.

"No, I'm not, Liam. I'm miserable." Gruenwald admitted.

"I'm sorry if..."

"Don't apologize, none of this is your doing. I'm very happy to have had your company these past few days, believe me. I've regained some of my humanity. I was beginning to think of everything in terms of getting papa and me out of Germany. There was certain comfort in detaching myself. It's amazing how clearly you can think when there is no emotion involved. Now...I'm beginning to wonder."

"Are you speaking of Fancesca?" The priest wondered aloud.

"Yes, I wish I'd never seen her." The professor said somberly.

"I'm sorry," Callahan said. "I thought you might find her attractive."

"That's just it. I do find her attractive. My God, she's beautiful. She's also intelligent with a wonderful sense of humor. Unfortunately, she's also reminded me of what I'm missing and what a rotten fix I'm in. Until I get clear of this I have no future and it would be unfair to get acquainted with her and then get dragged back to a German concentration camp."

"Anton," Callahan said softly. "Why don't you see how she feels before you turn your back on her?"

"It's too damned tempting." Gruenwald finished his wine and ordered another.

"As soon as lunch is over," Callahan said quietly, "I know a place we can go. It might help."

"Where?" The professor asked.

"It's a surprise." Callahan smiled.

Benjamin King

Schwerin returned to the hotel shortly after two in the afternoon. He went up to the room and was relieved to find that Gruenwald wasn't back yet. I'll be damned if I'm going back to that library today, he thought, so he left the hotel to go someplace to get a drink.

"That's him," Cerulio said standing in the doorway with Miranelli. "He's early."

"It certainly is," the colonel agreed. "In the name of the Madonna, it's Schwerin."

"And Saltikov," Cerulio insisted.

The entire time they spoke, their eyes never left Schwerin. And when their quarry disappeared around the corner they followed.

Callahan was in good appetite and finished lunch with a Pasticciotti and an espresso. Without comment Gruenwald paid the bill and they returned to the car. Callahan drove through a series of side streets and stopped in front of an oriental looking building with the Ten Commandments in Hebrew beneath a Star of David on the front.

"What's this?" Gruenwald asked.

"It's a synagogue, Anton. I thought you might find it helpful to pray a little."

Gruenwald hesitated.

"How long has it been since you went?" Callahan asked.

"Years."

"The Rabbi's name is Giuseppe Calderone, he's a good man."

"A friend of yours, no doubt," the professor surmised.

Callahan shrugged. "We're in the same business and we have the same boss. It's just a difference in details." He grinned.

Gruenwald looked at the building and then at his friend. "Not just yet."

"You're sure?"

"Yes." What good would it do? Gruenwald thought.

"Promise me you'll let me know."

"You'll be the first, Liam." Gruenwald said. "Count on it."

The Vatican

Callahan had just left Gruenwald at the library and was returning to his office when a young priest informed the monsignor that Cardinal Pacelli wanted to speak with him. Callahan turned around and went immediately to the cardinal's office and entered with no small degree of apprehension. The cardinal was a very powerful man rumored to be behind a number of machinations within the Vatican and that kind of power made Callahan very wary. The monsignor composed himself and went in. As with most of the powerful men in the Vatican, the Cardinal's office was spacious suite with an outer and inner office, both decorated with priceless works of art. Father

The Gruenwald Deception

Pietro, Pacelli's secretary looked up as Callahan entered. Since the two were old friends, the monsignor asked, "What kind of mood is he in?"

Pietro smiled, "Rather good, go right in."

In private the Cardinal wore the same dour look he did in public but he was exceedingly polite, offering the monsignor a comfortable chair and some refreshment. Callahan accepted some mineral water. Then, Pacelli sat opposite him. "I am very concerned about the Kaballah," he said directly. "The thought of it falling into the wrong hands concerns me deeply."

Callahan said nothing and Pacelli continued. "How well do you know this Professor Gruenwald?"

"We are very good friends," the monsignor replied.

"I sense there is more than friendship there," the cardinal said. "And I don't mean anything untoward, monsignor."

"Anton Gruenwald saved my life twice," Callahan informed him.

Pacelli's reaction was one of genuine surprise. "How did he do that?"

Callahan paused and drew a breath. "In my youth, I was involved with some of the more violent elements of the Sinn Fenn, the Irish Republican Army. I was naïve and idealistic and carried messages for them. I even had an alias of Jerry O'Higgins. An informer gave the British my alias along with a number of others who were involved in a killing. So the British put out a notice for my arrest. Shortly thereafter, I left the IRA and decided to study for the priesthood. I completely forgot about my old alias until one day I was working at a dig in Palestine. Suddenly half a dozen British soldiers arrived looking for Jerry O'Higgins. The expression on my face must have given me away. Anton...Professor Gruenwald asked what was wrong. When I told him it was a long story, he hid me in an underground room filled with large storage jars. He was actually with the soldiers when they searched the room, boring them with archeological trivia. Shortly thereafter, they left."

"Why weren't you pursued further?" The cardinal wanted to know.

"A few weeks later, the notice for my arrest was cancelled because the British caught the actual killers and found out that I had nothing to with the murder."

"You said he save your life twice." Pacelli continued.

When the warrant for my arrest was withdrawn in 1927 that should have been the end of it. Unfortunately, one of the men for whom I carried messages was Michael O'Leary, a pathological killer who considered everyone who backed away from him a traitor. His men attempted to murder me even though I was in the seminary. With the help of one of my teachers, who was Irish and understood my predicament only too well, I fled to Germany where Anton and his family took me in. It was no small sacrifice. That was during the depression when it took a cart full of Reichsmarks to buy a loaf of bread. A few months later the IRA executed O'Leary for killing four innocent men and I went back to my studies. I saw Anton again at another

dig in the Holy Land. Thereafter we corresponded regularly and managed to see each other from time to time."

Pacelli looked at him with an expression of interest that betrayed no sympathy. "I want you to keep track of the professor and report whatever progress he makes in finding the Kaballah to me."

"You want me to spy on my friend?" Callahan asked in shock.

"No," the cardinal replied calmly. "I want you to do your duty to the Church. The Church is the only loyalty you have. I can understand your gratitude and friendship for this man. He sounds admirable. I don't think I have to remind you that we live in dangerous times and the survival of the Church is paramount."

Callahan flushed, half in anger and half in embarrassment. "No, your eminence."

"I want you to closely monitor Schwerin's and Gruenwald's progress and report significant events to me. We must prevent the Kaballah from falling into Nazi hands. If possible, we must have it for our own."

Expressionless Callahan looked at the cardinal and said nothing.

Pacelli took a deep breath and sighed. He held up his hands with a contrite expression. "Monsignor, I apologize. Sometimes I am a bit too harsh," he said soothingly. "I meant what I said about the Kaballah but you have my word that I will do whatever it takes to insure your friend doesn't go back to Germany."

"Thank you, your eminence, I appreciate that."

Pacelli held out his ring to be kissed. The interview was over.



Klaus Schwerin's secret mission is to get the mystical and powerful Kaballah for Hitler. Anton Gruenwald, a Jew and the expert on the Kaballah, agrees to help him so his family can escape Germany. They travel Europe looking for the Kaballah, but find agents of Churchill and the Pope want it. The mission turns lethal when Schwerin is shot in Rome. The race is on and Gruenwald wonders if they'll live to find it...

The Gruenwald Deception

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