

Excerpt from the book

## The Third Legacy

by

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### PROLOGUE

*September 1946*

Corporal Ken Hochster, U.S. Army, walked out of Nuremberg Prison. Another boring shift was complete. The afternoon was dark and gloomy, with intermittent rain, which perfectly fit Hochster's mood. He was a member of the Military Police unit assigned to guard the German war criminals. He shifted his coat and buttoned the collar tight around his neck to protect himself from the chilly drizzle that had begun to fall. The deserted street was littered with the remains of the war. As he walked along the street, he was unaware of a long, black car pulling up next to him. The car stopped, and a tall blond man got out of the passenger's side.

In a distinctly German accent, the young man called his name.  
"Corporal Hochster."

Ken stopped short and turned to look quizzically at the young man. He recognized him as the aide-de-camp to Field Marshall Goering. Ken had seen him in court many times, always sitting in attendance to Mrs. Goering. He did not know the man's name.

Ken was not in a good mood, and his surly nature did not generally make him courteous to anyone. "What is it?" he barked.

"Someone would like to speak with you," the man said.

"Yeah? Who?" Ken replied rudely.

"Please, come over to the car."

Ken looked at the young man for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders insolently. He walked over to the car, and the rear door swung open to reveal the passenger. Ken looked in and saw Mrs. Goering. She smiled and beckoned him to come closer.

"What do you want?" Ken growled. He wanted nothing to do with anyone, particularly Germans. What he wanted to do was go to the bar several blocks down and get drunk. His American dollars went far in postwar Germany. Mrs. Goering said nothing.

"Mrs. Goering does not speak your language well," said the young man. "However, that is neither here nor there. We have a proposition for you. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Wolfgang Kurtz, Marshall Goering's aide. If you will get into the car and drive with us for a few minutes, we will pay you fifty American dollars."

Ken paused briefly, but got into the car. It moved smoothly away from the curb and into the gathering dusk. He was sure no one had seen him.

The car was enormous. Ken and Mrs. Goering sat on the back seat, and Wolfgang sat on the jump seat. The window separating the chauffeur from the rear compartment was closed.

“Well?” asked Ken.

Mrs. Goering spoke with some hesitation and difficulty. “We would like to hire you to do a job for us. We will pay very well.” She stopped.

Wolfgang took up the thread of the conversation. “You will be required to take leave in the next few days and meet us in Lausanne, Switzerland. We will pay all of your expenses and give you five thousand dollars, whether or not you accept the deal. But it has to be done quickly. First, are you interested in making some money, and second, can you get leave?” His cold eyes watched Ken closely. The noncommittal expression on his hawk-like face never changed.

Ken thought this was a great opportunity. He had already decided not to do what they asked but would keep their five thousand dollars. He indicated with an arrogant nod that he understood their offer. He never questioned how he came to be chosen for this interview of all the G.I.s stationed in Nuremberg. Thoughts of easy money pleased him.

“Sure. What do you want me to do, and when?”

Wolfgang handed him a small envelope with detailed instructions. “Read this and memorize the contents.” Ken read the instructions twice and confirmed that he knew what to do. A fifty-dollar bill was also inside the envelope. He removed it and put it in his pocket.

The following day, he arranged to take leave. Getting permission from his sergeant was easier because another guard volunteered to take his duty—after Ken paid him twenty-five dollars. The day after, he went to the railroad station. Before the train pulled out of the station, he was approached by a seedy-looking, poorly dressed man who slipped him an envelope. It contained his tickets to Lausanne, as well as two hundred dollars. Ken followed the instructions he was given by Kurtz and went to a designated hotel where a room awaited him. He was scheduled to arrive at the Bank of Lausanne in two days at exactly eleven o’clock in the morning.

He arrived on time at the bank and was greeted by a youthful, anemic-looking clerk. Ken wasn’t sure what his name was and didn’t care. The clerk led him to the safe deposit boxes, located deep in the basements of the bank. Once there, Ken was taken into a modest-sized room. In the middle of the room, a large safe deposit box lay open on a wooden table. The only other people in the windowless room were Mrs. Goering and Wolfgang.

Ken walked to the box, looked inside and saw large amounts of currency in many denominations from different countries, including the United States. He didn’t touch it or try to count it, but the amount of money there was obviously immense. Beside the money lay five rolled canvases. He reached over and casually unrolled the smallest. Wolfgang watched him carefully. Ken’s eyes

widened almost imperceptibly as a shimmering riot of bright colors leapt out at him, and he placed the canvas back in the box casually but carefully. How had these canvasses come to be here?

“Okay,” said Ken. “I came here. Give me my five thousand now.”

Mrs. Goering stared straight ahead. Wolfgang’s face tightened, but he said. “Listen to us first, then you may have the money.” He took out a wad of U.S. currency, bound with rubber bands, and placed it on the table beside the box.

“We want you to smuggle a cyanide tablet to the Field Marshall. He is scheduled to be hung in a few weeks, and that is not the death for such a warrior. Do you not agree?”

“I don’t give a damn how he dies. From what I hear, he deserves to die,” Ken sneered.

Angrily, Wolfgang began to respond, but Mrs. Goering laid a restraining hand on his arm. He regained control of himself.

Ken continued. “What’s in it for me?”

The response came from Mrs. Goering. “You may have all the money in this safe deposit box, as well as the paintings. Just the amount of only the money is more than you will ever make at one time in your life, but the paintings are much more valuable. However, you may not return to the bank to claim the contents of the box until you have delivered the poison to my husband and he is dead.” She dropped her eyes and looked at the wedding rings on her left hand.

“And the five thousand?” asked Ken.

“That you may have now,” said Mrs. Goering. She slid the roll of money to Ken, who picked it up and put it in the deep pocket of his raincoat. He looked at the two people in front of him.

“One more thing,” he said. “I want complete control of the box. That means signature authority.” His military training had taught him about how to take care of details as well as anyone.

“Wait a moment,” said Wolfgang. “That is not part of the deal. We will both have signature authority.”

“I quit,” said Ken. He took the envelope with the instructions out of his pocket and laid it on the table. But he kept the five thousand dollars.

Wolfgang looked at Mrs. Goering. She gave a slight nod of her head.

“Very well,” said Wolfgang. “We agree.”

Ken picked up the instructions again, smiled smugly as if he knew he had won, and nodded. They rang for the attendant, and the box was returned to the vault. All three accompanied it back to its resting place. Afterward, they filled out the necessary forms for Ken to control the box. He was given the only outstanding key. No one spoke as they went upstairs to the main floor. The two men watched Mrs. Goering as she left the bank without a backward glance. Wolfgang turned to Ken.

“Someone will be in touch with you after you return to Nuremberg. Do not try to contact either of us. Wait for the message that will be delivered to you.” With that, Wolfgang turned on his heel and walked quickly from the bank.

While he was still at the bank, Ken opened a savings account and deposited all but five hundred dollars of the money. The five hundred he had left would be just for fun. He was advised by the clerk who led him to the vault that the interest on his savings account would take care of the safe deposit charges. Ken was already impatient to return to the marvelous contents of his box.

After he returned to Nuremberg, nothing happened. After several days with no contact from anyone, he decided that maybe he should ignore the entire strange event, but thought often about the money in Switzerland. Since there had been no contact, what was their game? About ten days later, however, he was passed a small brass capsule emblazoned with a swastika on the deserted street in front of the prison; it held one white tablet.

*October 15, 1946*

Furtive steps arrive at their final destination—the end of a dank and poorly lit hallway. A guarded glance passes between two men. A solitary tablet is pushed through the cold iron bars of the dreary prison cell into Goering’s awaiting hands. Their eyes meet: the pair inside the cell cold but resigned, the pair outside reptilian and sly. The cascade of water pouring into a metal container is the only sound that can be heard except for the swallowing, gagging sounds that follow.

“Ich bin ein Jude,”<sup>1</sup> is whispered softly from outside the cell. At this ultimate humiliation, a sound of pure animal rage comes from within, followed by a groan, then . . . nothing.

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<sup>1</sup> “I am a Jew.”