

Marcus Schütz

Miles Apart – The Third Part of the Adventure

To my great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, who preferred a diamond to the conquest of Constantinople

'He was clothed in a robe, ..., a fearsome coat of mail, and wore on his head (a crown) ... of terrible splendor.' [Babylonian cuneiform]

Foreword

Long after I had discussed my research on the underground constructions of the medieval Knights Templar in Berlin Tempelhof with the association "Berliner Unterwelten e.V.", I flopped down, pondering over my writing as usual, on my living room Persian rug, which I had haggled for years ago in an oriental dive. Suddenly, it fulfilled a function I had only ever dreamed of: It lifted itself from the floor, fluttered through the open balcony door, grazed the Tempelhof Church, passed the Vienna Hofburg, swung southeast with a strong wind over the blue expanse of the Black Sea, scraped against the dome of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, shrieked the terrifying war carnage of the ruins of Babylon towards me, and finally dropped me in a distant land with unfavorable thermals. I continued on by camel through the Thar desert and discovered a fragrant spice shop in an old caravanserai from One Thousand and One Nights. Over a glass of tea, I started chatting with the poisoner. I laid out my problems with the search for Sophia on the small round marble table, whose inlays of lapis lazuli, carnelian, and onyx seemed to come to life under the effect of the masala tea. Budding blossoms twined along the table legs and grabbed at my trousers. With a swift hand movement, I wanted to alert my host to the absurd behavior of his inlays, but he had already retreated into a back room.

Still busy fending off the tendril attack, he suddenly emerged from behind the finely woven curtain and handed me a small bag with a gray, fragrant powder inside. "This will help you see things with fresh eyes." Gratefully, I took the bag, paid with a few coins, and left the old man. On the bag, in black letters, it read: "**Brain-Spices**".

Now, dear reader, see what the rug and powder have done to our protagonists, Sophia, Lukas, Marek, and Max.

Berlin

Lukas clipped his carabiner to the facade of the Bode Museum. His harness was tight around his thighs. The view, the perspective from the most unusual positions onto otherwise familiar places, was one of the reasons he had chosen this adrenaline-pumping profession. Below him, the Berlin S-Bahn clattered over a bridge across the Spree, squealing as it cut Museum Island in two. The sun reflected Lukas and Marek in the windows of the rattling train. "Got a spare carabiner?" Lukas yelled over the noise to Marek, who was also hanging in his ropes on the facade about ten meters away. Between the young men, a large banner fluttered in the wind. "Nope, need it myself!" The newly minted industrial climbers hadn't gotten the job for nothing: after all, it was, in a way, their exhibition that the poster was advertising. The Holy Grail was still rippling in the unfurled canvas, but when the golden autumn sun hit a fold just right, a shower of sparks swept over the murky water of the Spree flowing through the *Kupfergraben* canal.

The Bode Museum jutted out of the water like a battleship. Its bow was adorned with a massive dome, and at its feet, the newly rebuilt bridge. Just beyond the water, Prof. Weise paced up and

down in the 60-meter-long coin vault of the Bode Museum. Agitated, he ran his right hand through his somewhat disheveled hair, which couldn't decide whether it was still dark blond or already gray. Worried furrows had dug into his high forehead and refused to yield. He was surrounded by one of the most significant historical coin collections in the world. A collection that traced back to the obsession of the Prussian royal house, whose gold giants had recently been displayed in a much-acclaimed exhibition. And yet, among all the treasures he had guarded and scientifically processed for decades, none had been as significant as what a couple of kids had brought to light in the middle of Berlin at the beginning of the year.

He had been involved almost from the start: First, there was a portly, always slightly sweating detective from the homicide division who had presented him with a gold ducat from the Middle Ages to verify its authenticity. A gold coin that, as it later turned out, belonged to a blond-haired fellow who was now dangling from the museum's facade outside his window, installing the new advertising banner. Before he had even properly examined the coin, the same detective had summoned him, the professor, to a subway shaft in Berlin-Tempelhof, behind whose wall the legendary underground structure of the Knights Templar had been revealed, which had been sought for so long. After the entire city had been completely dug up to become the new capital after German reunification, every street renewed, subway tunnels, cable shafts, residential areas, skyscrapers newly built, no one really believed in this legendary story from the Middle Ages anymore. Nevertheless, like a miracle, on the 700th anniversary of the fall of the Knights Templar, this underground chapel suddenly appeared as if from nowhere! But even more significant than the structure itself was its content. And he, Prof. Weise, was now the much-celebrated curator of the Berlin Templar Treasure! Deeply moved, Prof. Weise once again ran a hand through his rather graying hair. He was at the absolute peak of his career. Pure joy wiped away the plasticity of his worried furrows.

Exhibition

Weise had thrown on a tuxedo. A piece of clothing not to his style, but to the occasion: a classic black suit, white shirt. It couldn't get more conservative unless one wanted to come to the podium waving the silly tails of a frock coat. There was no leeway even in the choice of tie. The accessory belonging to the tuxedo was the black bow tie, as the British said. He was actually an archaeologist, and wasn't there a bit of the adventurer in every archaeologist, like a Howard Carter or Heinrich Schliemann, who, with a pith helmet, a sweat-soaked khaki shirt, and leather gaiters, faced the burdens of the tropics, pharaoh's curses, scorpions, and whatsoever? No, today was much worse. Today he faced members of three royal houses, to whose goodwill he, Prof. Weise, Curator at the State Museums of Berlin Prussian Cultural Heritage, had to pay tribute. Luckily, the patricide collar had gone out of fashion, the stiff collar that supposedly got its name from a son who had poked out his father's eye with the starched collar tip during an embrace. Unimaginable, the scandal: *German professor pokes out Spanish king's eye...* Weise had to pull himself together; he was about to have what was probably the biggest appearance of his life. He had to collect himself, squeeze his eyes shut for a moment, take a deep breath—with a bit more time, one might have called it meditating—his thoughts kept wandering, the opening formula, and then finally, the presentation of the unheard-of. The Holy Grail, no, THREE of them!

Red carpet, spotlights, media. Everyone had come: the Federal President, Berlin's Governing Mayor, the Director-General of the Berlin State Museums, the Director-General of the Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Gardens, the Minister of State for Culture, everyone who was anyone in the capital, but also the Master of the Order of Saint John, H.R.H. the Prince of Prussia, and his Austrian counterparts, Grand Master of the Order of the Golden Fleece Maximilian von Wolfzburg-Lothringen with his wife Franzi, who turned into a fury if her shopping

addiction didn't allow her to snag at least one new painting for her collection each week, as well as King Fernan VI of Spain, also a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, with his wife Cecilia and Spain's Minister of Culture in tow. Present were not only the representatives of the upper crust but also the protagonists of our novel: Marek with the dark, curly hair from Poland, his friend the blond Lukas with Uncle Max from Berlin, who together with Sophia had discovered the underground vault of the Knights Templar in Berlin-Tempelhof in the first place. Only the smart Sophia, the main protagonist, whose incredible story went far beyond Prof. Weise's rational frame of thought, remained missing without a trace. All honor should have been hers today.

In the magnificent domed hall of the Bode Museum, just behind the entrance portal, the guests in evening gowns, champagne glasses in their right hands, had entrenched themselves by the equestrian statue of the Great Elector and were listening to the professor's words: "...Since then, the discussion and legend-building around the Holy Grail has not ceased, and the literature is almost boundless. Today, we present to you three examples at once: the newest, discovered at the beginning of this year, which, with your permission, we call the **Tempelhof Holy Grail**; its counterpart from Spain, the **Santo Cáliz**, which has been venerated in a Gothic chapel of the *Iglesia Catedral-Basílica Metropolitana de la Asunción de Nuestra Señora de Valencia* since 1437..." Here the professor paused and glanced over at the Spanish king: "I hope I pronounced that correctly." The beautiful Cecilia and the tall, slender Fernan VI nodded benevolently, and a general smile and nod rippled through the domed hall. The professor continued, relieved: "According to legend, this grail from the cathedral in Valencia was used by Jesus for the Last Supper with his apostles. In the past, it has attracted a large stream of pilgrims and is said to have performed miracles, such as spontaneous healings."

Now, turning to the chubby-cheeked Maximilian von Wolfsburg-Lothringen, Prof. Weise brought his speech to the third grail: "With pride, I can reveal to you that today you will also be viewing the **Agate Bowl** from the Treasury of the Hofburg in Vienna, which comes from a cave under the crucifixion hill of Golgotha. While the Viennese Agate Bowl appears to be the largest but also the most modest object, both the Tempelhof and the Valencia Grail are composed of different parts that have been dated differently. Only one thing is common to all three bowls: they are made of semi-precious stone: agate, carnelian, or jasper, all undoubtedly made over 2000 years ago. Only the feet of the Tempelhof and Valencian chalices date from the Middle Ages—when the Grail legend reached its peak in literature. The carnelian bowl from Valencia bears an Arabic inscription whose meaning is disputed and was probably added later. Jesus, revered as Isa ibn Maryam, son of Mary and not the son of God, is after all considered one of the important prophets in Islam. There have always been doubts about the authenticity of the bowls because no one would have associated a semi-precious stone with a profane vessel from the possession of a healer and itinerant preacher, which is what Jesus of Nazareth ultimately was. ... According to the *Acta Pilati*, an apocryphal gospel that was not included in the Vulgate at the time, there was indeed a bowl from the provenance of Joseph of Arimathea, with which the drops of blood were said to have been collected when the side of Jesus was opened by the Roman centurion Longinus at the crucifixion. Which of the three bowls may have served which purpose, I leave to your imagination; for the scientific processing, many a moon phase will likely pass over the scholars' desks. ... We are proud today to open a chapter of European history that has shaped our culture in a Christian way for 2000 years, that has allowed us to rise from straw and mud huts through Gothic cathedrals to a pioneering world culture, and today, with the materialization of a legend, provides new identity-fodder for the European community. An important cultural asset is being presented this evening in the heart of Europe and not at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York or the Getty Center in Los Angeles. And even if we have not yet uncovered the magical powers that should have led to eternal youth or all-encompassing wisdom; and believe

me, I have eagerly rubbed, licked, and done other things to all three exhibits..." Enthusiastic laughter echoed through the body of the distinguished guests before Prof. Weise could continue his speech: "...it seems to me that the success lies in leading this cultural object to the identity formation and thus unification of Europe in these crisis-ridden times. Distinguished guests, I now ask you to take a personal look at the objects of the exhibition!"

Applause echoed through the dome, and curiosity urged the invited guests toward the sculpture passage, behind which the exhibition opened. The aristocratic gentlemen strode forward and were formally sucked into the magical ambiance of the replicated Tempelhof chapel with its frescoes. The domed room contained wonderfully illuminated showcases with the three chalices, at least one of which was supposed to be the true Holy Grail.

"My dear cousin, you must admit that our Valencia bowl is the actual Holy Grail! What miracles have been worked by your Viennese bowl?" King Fernan VI provoked his distant relative Maximilian von Wolfsburg-Lothringen. "To me, the Viennese bowl seems the most original. Jesus Christ certainly did not boast of gold and precious stones when he shared the wine with his disciples!" Maximilian von Wolfsburg retorted. Secretly, however, he thought, the Spanish still have their crown; Austria abolished the nobility with the proclamation of the republic in 1919. What a shame! Would it have turned out this way if his family had held the right chalice? And is the chalice from Tempelhof perhaps the right one? What would happen if he held the Tempelhof chalice in his hands now? But time had actually overtaken all monarchies, unfortunately! No grail had yet stopped the so-called democracies, no matter how often Prof. Weise might rub the chalices or lick them with his dried-out tongue. A pity, really! On the other hand, the Tempelhof Grail had slumbered for 700 years in a Berlin shithole, and no one had been able to test its powers since!

When Marek and Lukas spotted the showcase with the **Figura Baphomet**, the young men's hearts tightened. What had become of their dear sister, of their beloved friend? Her death seemed so unlikely, so incomprehensible. Where had she gone? There hadn't even been a body! Were there still some unknown forces between heaven and earth that could reverse death? What hadn't been discovered in the meantime! Wormholes that could at least theoretically explain time travel, or the divine Higgs boson, which had only recently been detected at CERN.

Suddenly, a brilliant idea came to Marek: "Lukas, what did the Figura Baphomet do in Tempelhof?" "It brought the Knights Templar back to life!" Lukas, always a bit slow on the uptake, didn't know what Marek was getting at. He had been there himself when they had started the thing with Sophia. "Right! And why shouldn't it do it again?" It was slowly clicking for Lukas: "You mean, if we were to operate the device again, the monks who turned to dust could be brought back to life?" An observer among the invited guests could have literally felt the realization dawning on Lukas. "Exactly! And then they could perhaps help us find Sophia again. After all, the Knights Templar are to blame for Sophia's disappearance!" "Yes, exactly, you're right Marek..." Lukas slowly concluded: "...maybe we'll even bring Sophia herself back with the machine. That would be something!" "Maybe!" Marek replied thoughtfully, while he dreamily searched the edge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger for dried nasal mucus. "In any case, we should try it!" "But how are we going to do that? It would have to be around midnight," Lukas thought aloud. "Exactly, and then all these people won't be in the way!" Marek gestured with his mop of hair toward the exhibition room packed with invited guests and rolled the result of his probing between his thumb and forefinger until it fell of its own accord onto the museum's parquet floor.

"Ah, Commissioner, good to see you here!" The commissioner with his round, veiny face, which clearly showed the excessive consumption of German pork products, turned to the left, from

where the familiar voice had come. Prof. Prekop stood impressively before him, his snow-white hair bobbing. "We have the results from our French colleagues! And imagine what they found out," the forensics professor gushed as he extended his hand to shake the commissioner's in greeting. "Greetings to you too!" the commissioner grinned and continued: "Well then, out with it!" "The French forensic scientists have examined the cave in the innermost part of Pic de Búgarach, where Sophia disappeared. It really seems to be a ritual site. The stone stool on which Sophia had been sitting is located directly under a hole in the cave ceiling. In front of the stool is a stone slab covering an opening in the ground. Strictly speaking, the scenario looks exactly like the one in the Greek temple of Delphi, where the oracles were once spoken." "You mean Sophia was used by the Knights Templar as an oracle medium?" the commissioner interjected incredulously. "Could well be, because to top it all off, ethylene, the same gas as in Delphi, is flowing out of the earth opening. The gas had apparently put Pythia, the Greek priestess, into a trance and thus provoked the oracles." "So that's what the Templars did with Sophia! But that still doesn't explain her disappearance!" "That's true, but the French found something else: When Pythia spoke an oracle in Delphi, a goat was sacrificed beforehand. So the French looked for traces of blood." "And found some!" the commissioner concluded like a fox. "Yes and no!" the professor burst out: "They secured blood and saliva samples. And now comes the kicker: The DNA of the blood traces is identical to the DNA of the blonde hair from the chalice and thus can be attributed to Sophia with almost certainty. Only very few drops of blood were found, which in any case speaks against the victim bleeding to death on site." "But there's still no trace of a body?" the commissioner pressed. "Correct!" the professor replied. "But it only gets interesting now!" he continued. "The DNA of the saliva is identical to the DNA of the blood in the Tempelhof chalice, which, as we were able to determine at the time, is a kind of super-blood, as all genes of the DNA showed a full signal, which has never been found in any other human or even animal cell." "So you mean we're dealing with some kind of divine spit now?" "If you like, even though as an atheist I don't want to believe in any god." The professor ruffled his sparse, snow-white hair and held this pose in thought for far too long. Slowly, the professor awoke from his stupor like a salamander warmed by the first ray of sun and turned again to the commissioner: "There's something else I have to tell you. Sometimes the priestesses in Delphi never woke up from their trance. If the concentration of the natural gas was too high, they died." After a thoughtful pause, he added with a smile: "But as you have already correctly noted: we have no body!"

Meanwhile, Professor Weise had also approached the two. The two professors and the commissioner now stood right by the showcase with the Tempelhof Grail. "Isn't our chalice beautiful? After we freed it from blood and hair and reworked it properly, not only do the precious stones sparkle, but also the jasper bowl itself, which is the actual Holy Grail, if I may say so!" The archaeologist's eyes also seemed to join in the sparkle of the grail.

"A miracle! A miracle has happened!" echoed through the exhibition hall. The visitors turned towards the voice and streamed towards it in a confused jumble. A man stood completely stunned in front of the altar, which had been brought from the Tempelhof vault into the museum. No one could comprehend the man's bewilderment. Suddenly, a child pointed towards the altar and said: "Jesus is bleeding." Now the other visitors saw it too: red blood was dripping from the crucifix on the altar. "A miracle." "A miracle," surged through the room, swelling like the roar of a spiraling autumn storm. With presence of mind, Prof. Prekop pulled an Eppendorf tube from his jacket and let some blood from the Jesus figure drip into the sterile sample tube.

Festival of Lights

Berlin, now grown cold, was celebrating its Festival of Lights for the umpteenth time. The evenings were already becoming noticeably chilly, and coats and scarves were once again a

mandatory part of the nightly hustle and bustle. Crowds of Berliners and tourists thronged around artfully illuminated buildings. The Quadriga of the Brandenburg Gate shone in a cool ultramarine, perched casually on orange columns. Flickering banners scrolled across the building's cornice. Herds, armed with cameras, tripods, camcorders, or simply their smartphones, crowded in front of what, during the day, would have been sandstone gray or at best ocher, hardly transforming the viewer's retina into flickering nerve impulses. But at the end of October, when the illuminations turned night into day, even the laziest couch potato was drawn from behind their warm stove out onto the streets of Berlin. Crowds pushed along Unter den Linden. Crowds that not even the Christmas shopping frenzy would have mobilized during the day. An exceptional situation, a colored one at that. It was no different at the foot of the Berlin TV Tower, whose gray concrete column now shimmered in all the colors of the rainbow. The largest gathering of onlookers, however, was to be found at the Lustgarten, in front of the Berlin Cathedral. The entire square was filled with people, spellbound by the changing projections onto the venerable edifice. What would the sunken kings, princes, and princesses have said, condemned by death to slumber in the crypt behind the spectacular cathedral facade? From the same location, the portico of the Altes Museum also glowed in deep ruby red to the inclined viewer. Just a turn of the head was enough to feed the back of the eye with fiery embers again.

The ever-new projections on the cathedral facade incited the crowd to break out into constant "oohs" and "aahs." Suddenly, an even greater gasp of amazement howled through the masses, spreading from left to right through the audience like a breaking wave in the ocean's surf. But this time, the cathedral projection did not seem to be the trigger. People nudged each other to direct their captivated gaze away from the magnetizing cathedral spectacle to the left, behind the Altes Museum. There, a massive pillar of light shot into the sky, briefly enveloping the nightly visitors in a dazzling light—like broad daylight. The absolute eye-catcher, the highlight of the evening, everyone was immediately agreed on that. Only one or two wondered what kind of light source could produce such brightness for far longer than the flicker of a lightning bolt. Probably no one had even realized that this illumination was not part of the light festival's program. Only Lukas and Marek knew better.

Potsdamer Platz

Simultaneously. At the *Facil*, four waiters swayed oval, pre-warmed plates to the table with the best view of the square. A finger-thick risotto held nightingale tongues foamed with vanilla aromas on its turret-like peak. The entire course was lost on the expansive white of the porcelain and, to top it all off, was hidden behind an orchid blossom, which was admittedly also intended for consumption. Synchronously, the servants lowered the artful composition in front of the guests, while Maximilian, Franzi, Fernan, and Cecilia lunged at the delicate pile of the third course after the amuse-bouche with the much-too-heavy Robbe & Berking silverware. With an amber-colored drop of a well-aged Madeira, the four nobles washed down the served pink tongues, just as must have been a matter of course at the court of Tsar Alexander II.

As Franzi brought the rice tower on her fork to her red lips, which were opening for the culinary delight, a tremor suddenly went through the restaurant, just as if a truck wouldn't stop driving by on the street, causing the tower to collapse, miss her mouth, and instead find its way into the décolletage of the art patron's white pantsuit. Agitated, she reached for her napkin when her gaze caught a pulse of light through the window, causing her to let out a cry: "Is the Mayans' delayed apocalypse coming upon us now?" Cecilia, who was sitting with her back to the window and thus did not see the beam of light, interjected: "Always with these doomsday thoughts. Seriously Franzi, the exhibition is really a successful stroke, regardless of which grail is the real

one." King Fernan VI, who had so far been completely devoted to his palate, smiled at his wife, took her hand tenderly in his: "You're right, darling!" His gaze wandered from his wonderful Cecilia to his coarse-featured cousin: "Regardless of whether it's your, my, or the new grail that's the real one, the fact is: now there are three grails in one room, and in an exceptionally beautiful ambiance, if I may say so. And isn't it astonishing that all of this is happening here in Berlin, of all places?" "I don't think so, my dear cousin! No place would be more predestined!"

Franzi, meanwhile, felt completely taken by surprise. She wrinkled her much-too-pointed nose, which stuck out of her oval face like an index finger. What was her table company babbling about the three grails? Had no one noticed this tremor, this beam of light? Sometimes she really believed her senses were playing a cruel trick on her, but the nightingale tongue sunk in her décolletage taught her otherwise.

"Doesn't anyone notice what's going on here?" Everyone stared at her. "You mean it's not clear why Berlin, of all places, has become the site of the three grails?" "No, yes..." no one wanted to understand her, but as a bustling art patron, she could at least answer this question immediately: "That's quite clear. Who brought the three cups under one roof?" Without leaving the question hanging in the air, she preferred to answer it herself: "Right: Weise is the man of the hour!" "So what?" it seemed to ripple from all three faces that were fixated on Franzi. "Where did Weise study? In Munich. Who was the archbishop in Munich back then? Georg Ratzinger! They knew each other, of course, and what did Ratzinger—alias Benedict XVI—do first when he became Pope? He traveled to Valencia!" "Right!" King Fernan VI now remembered too. "He held a holy mass with the Holy Grail of Valencia. That's how important the thing was to him—and not just to him, I believe over a million people attended the mass back then. After all, the Santo Cáliz isn't brought out into the sunlight every day. His predecessor, old Wojtyla, had also taken it out once; the two were always close, God rest his soul!" "True, strictly speaking, the grails have never traveled much, let alone ever been exhibited together. Our Viennese bowl has been around a bit more; as an imperial regalia of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, it has traveled a lot. It lay in Nuremberg Castle for a long time until it had to flee from Napoleon's troops and made it to the Vienna Hofburg in 1800. It remained there until the Anschluss!" "True, malicious tongues even claim that Hitler only brought about the Anschluss to get his hands on the imperial regalia. And that was his first official act: he had the treasure brought back to Nuremberg. The Holy Lance, included in the collection, he believed, would bring him power and, above all, invincibility. As is well known, the Americans delivered everything back to Vienna neat and tidy after the war." "In any case, Weise didn't need a Napoleon, Hitler, or a Spanish Civil War to get his hands on the cups; the blessing of the Holy Father, who just happened to be a German and apparently belonged to Prof. Weise's circle of acquaintances, was enough for him." "Yes, and what a Pope, who managed to step down in his lifetime and make way for a younger man, just because he knew that his senile moral concepts stood in the way of the necessary renewal of the church. Has Francis actually had time to read his mass in Valencia, or does he now have to take care of all three bowls at once?" Franzi's ample bosom found a bouncing rhythm under her laughter, which hopefully moved the nightingale tongue into a favorable position, invisible to her table neighbors, and findable during her evening toilette, where she might still be able to enjoy the main course. Confidently, she looked forward to leaving the *Facil* and arriving at the Ritz-Carlton hotel. Then Maximilian raised his glass, unaware that the old Madeira had just been swirled in the glass by the tremor, wafting even more of its sweet bouquet into the distinguished circle. The four toasted to the successful evening.

Bode Museum

Still feeling the poster campaign in their climbing legs, Lukas and Marek crept under the S-Bahn viaduct to the facade of the Bode Museum. They had swapped their freshly ironed shirts from the exhibition opening for their work clothes: functional clothing, harness, carabiners, climbing rope on the belt, headlamp, and a few other useful things that would facilitate an unauthorized entry into a building. Besides, the blond Lukas had his new flame in tow. She was the complete opposite of the Nordic lad. Her jet-black hair was lightly curled around her smooth face in a Mediterranean style. Her dark almond eyes were made for seduction, and her almost black but finely drawn eyebrows left neither northern nor southern men unimpressed. Cleopatra was at best a cheap imitation of what was currently approaching under the drafty underpass of the museum facade. Lukas had met the law student Kaisea at the Eastern Bloc climbing gym when he was trying to teach her bouldering. They had become not only close climbing friends.

"Where should we attempt entry?" Marek asked Lukas. "We have to get in through the dome. We can get onto the roof directly via our banner here in front. I left the hooks in above the banner, since we're supposed to take the poster down again after the exhibition." "Great, then this way." Marek pushed the beautiful Kaisea, her hair dancing in the wind, along the facade of the Bode Museum, directly to the corner of the building that led to the Spree canal. A safety rope from the exhibition banner was attached there, which they could use for climbing. Like three dark cats, the three figures crept up the facade in the cover of darkness and, practiced as they were, quickly reached the museum roof. Then everything followed like in a typical Tom Cruise movie: glass cutter on the dome roof, suction cup to remove the pane, rappelling into the museum. And the rest was practically a practiced ritual. They were familiar with the premises, a quick flick of a switch in the fuse box to turn off the alarm system, and the three of them were standing among the exhibits of the special exhibition they themselves had originated.

Opposite the three chalices, of which they knew exactly which was the real Holy Grail, the Baphomet machine towered man-high on a stone base. Not even Prof. Weise seemed to have figured out what this machine was actually capable of. They had kept its secret to themselves so far. Only today, the blonde virgin Sophia could not function as the medium; this time, her complete opposite had to suffice: Kaisea with long black hair. And whether Kaisea was still a virgin, the inclined reader should not question too closely now. And whether Kaisea's virgin status would have been necessary for the success of their experiment would soon be shown in practice.

Lukas urged haste: "Marek, take the bowl out of the display case and fill it with the Jesus blood!" The latter did not hesitate for a moment, lifted the glass case over the Tempelhof Grail, grabbed the bowl, hurried to the altar, and dripped some blood from the Jesus figure into the grail. Lukas lifted the corundum into the opening between the two heads of the Figura Baphomet, submerged the tips of Kaisea's hair in the blood bowl, and placed it in the chest.

An aura of fluorescent shimmer enveloped Kaisea, just as it had Sophia in the underground vault in Tempelhof. A heavenly, almost spherical-sounding song echoed through the church-like room, which was only a museum here. And suddenly, a beam of light shot through the corundum into the museum's dome. With thunder and roaring, so loud it almost made one's ears fall off, a part of the floor collapsed, revealing a view into the museum's basement vault. Marek shone his headlamp into the basement. The mummy cabinet. Huge shelves stood in the repository, where still-wrapped and already-unwrapped mummies, mummies coated with gold leaf, sarcophagus lids from Egypt, and all sorts of stuff from the Valley of the Kings on the Nile seemed to be lying around. Only this time, there was no trace of the Knights Templar.

Lukas was proud of Kaisea, who had functioned wonderfully as a medium. He carefully freed her from the clutches of the Figura Baphomet, pulled her close, and his tongue already found its way between her lips. Kaisea returned his kiss and slowly re-entered the world of humans. "Oh dear..." Marek suddenly burst out, still standing at the edge of the basement opening. "I think I'm seeing things!" "What's wrong?" asked Lukas, still holding Kaisea tightly in his embrace. "There are Egyptian mummies in the basement!" Lukas let go of Kaisea and rushed to Marek: "Yeah, so?" "One of them is moving!"

Ritz-Carlton

Franzi had finally made it to her boudoir at the Ritz-Carlton. At last, she could slip off her pantsuit, and at last, she could open her bra, which had been too tight for her for a long time this evening, and at last, the little nightingale tongue slipped from her bosom into her lap, getting caught in her pubic hair. Still curious about this unusual culinary delight, she reached for the morsel with her fingers and popped the nightingale tongue into her mouth. Buttery soft and still exuding a hint of vanilla, she crushed the little tongue with her own muscular tongue against the roof of her mouth, closing her eyes to fully enjoy the bite.

From the next room, she heard her husband on the phone: "I know the Vienna bowl is not the real grail! But now two others have appeared, and I want to know which one is the real one, and I want it on my table. ... I don't know what's so hard to understand about that. You belong to our order and are familiar with such tasks. Bring me the grail! The right one! And as quickly as possible!" Maximilian von Wolfsburg-Lothringen slammed the receiver down. Monastic blood boiled in him as he mused on what power the right grail would bring him. The Vienna bowl had not stopped the downfall of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, had driven the Wolfsburgs from their once leading role in Europe into total obscurity, made them the laughingstock of German tourists who only smiled at the Austrian mountain villages and dismissed the '...yes, gracious lady, this way to the fiacre,' or, 'whether the Herr Kommerzienrath would care for whipped cream on his strudel...' as ridiculousness or at best honored it as a tourist spectacle, but not a claim to power, which he, the last scion of the Wolfsburgs and his Order of the Golden Fleece, should now finally reclaim with God's grace!