

The Reformation of Wolfshausen Teil Neun, 1521

“Water Karl’s mass is boring and blasphemous!” Frau Braun yelled at Heinrich, the morning after her dream. “He ran away from Elizabeth’s church! I doubt his communion even counts. And the confession! I wouldn’t tell that old gossip anything, he consorts with whores!”

It has been too long since I saw a proper service in Marburg. Have you no fear of Satan’s fires?”

Herr Braun shrugged. “Very well, when would you like to go?”

“Three Sundays from now will be market day. We should go then. You can sell cheese while Dietrich and I tend to our souls.”

“The carpenter will be coming with us to Church, then? That seems odd, not that I mind.” Frau Braun glared at her husband but he was already off to cut hay. When Dietrich next came to strengthen the milking stanchion, Frau Braun told him that on the third Sunday, her husband would drive the two of them to Church in Marburg, and he took the suggestion without resistance. She took his response as proof that her lessons had been effective.

The day came and Herr Braun hitched up the shay to a horse. The shay had one seat in front and two in back with a short bench behind the back seat. The horse was stout and steady. Frau Braun was practically glowing. The mood didn’t become her and the farmer worried for her plans like he’d never fretted the weather.

Dietrich came down the hill from town by something brisker than a trot and stiffer than a skip. His clothes, always as neat as a poor man’s could be were crisper than

Frau Braun had ever seen them, His expression was less bitter than Frau Braun had seen it before. To her, he seemed as pious as a pew.

On the road to Marburg, Frau Braun helped Dietrich understand the importance of the mass, the gift of the eucharist and the necessity of denouncing Martin Luther within earshot of the priests.

The cart rumbled along the road. Dietrich hoped Herr Braun would speak, and a few times he drew breath as if he meant to, but Frau Braun's orthodoxy not only excluded opinions contrary to the teachings of Rome but also those in agreement as well as the weather.

Finally, the forest opened and above the Lahn, the castle at Marburg could be seen. Although Marburg could be reached in a few hours walking, Dietrich had never been there before. The square stone castle stood on top of the hill, admirably attentive to the city below. St. Elizabeth's church rose from the bottom. Her spires soared, trusting in heaven. In between church and castle, the city encumbered the hillside with houses of wood and streets of stone.

The appearance of the city struck Dietrich as a good omen and, sure enough, Frau Braun began to gag. The cart had passed through a horde of late-summer gnats and Frau Braun, container of the only accessible esophagus was their target.

Herr Braun turned to check on his wife and noticed that on Dietrich's face, wide eyes dominated the grim mouth. "When I was a boy working my father's farm," Herr Braun offered, "Every visit to the city was a wonder. But he took me every market day and I can't remember the first time I saw this view. Right now, you are the luckiest man in all Hessen."

And then Dietrich smiled, a sight the old farmer had never seen before.