

JIGSAW THE DAWNING



DAVID ALYN GORDON

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Easter May 1, 1910

Nikolayev in Tsarist Russia (present day Ukraine)

Dusk

My God, Aaron Klein thought in horror. The Cossack horde rode in like the Apocalypse. In moments, they ransacked, burned, and pillaged the local Jewish community that Klein called home. The Cossacks shouted words like “Christ Killers,” “Socialists,” and “Subhumans.” They rattled their sabers and fired their dragoon rifles, targeting anything on two legs.

Klein’s sister Idel was captured by a dark-bearded Cossack who pulled her up onto his horse as he passed. She screamed for help, and Klein ran after them. The Cossack rode into an old barn. Idel did not stop screaming. Klein crept inside a moment later, and found a pitchfork by the entrance. The Cossack was too busy trying to get Idel’s clothes off to notice Klein coming up behind him.

With unrestrained fury, Klein thrust the pitchfork into the big man’s back. The Cossack screamed, then spun around and clamped his hands around Klein’s neck, strangling him. Klein stabbed him in the throat with a pocketknife, then slashed across the jugular vein. The Cossack gasped and crashed to the floor.

Klein turned to Idel, who still would not stop screaming. He wrapped her in a horse blanket. “It’s all right Idel. I’m going to take you home.” He

gently picked her up and carried her toward the door. “Idel, sweetheart. You need to be quiet. We can’t attract the other Cossack’s attention.”

Idel quieted down, and Klein peered outside. There were no Cossacks at the moment, so he hurried to their mother’s home a hundred yards off. Their mother greeted them at the door. “My God, what happened?”

“Fucking Cossack tried to rape her” Klein replied. He set Idel on her feet. Their mother took her into her arms. “It’ll be alright my baby.”

Klein turned to go.

“Aaron, where are you going?” his mother asked.

“To kill as many of those bastards as possible,” Klein told her.

“No, please. They’ll kill you.”

“I’m sick of them raiding us every Easter. Look at what they did to Idel.”

“I won’t lose a son to the same monsters that killed your father. Now stay here and don’t leave until they’re gone.”

Klein started off.

“Who’ll take care of us if you die?” his mother pleaded.

Klein halted.

“Good. Now stay here while I take care of your sister. Come on, baby.”

A short time later, the Cossacks away, and Klein returned to the barn. His friend Isah Gitnberg joined him a moment later. “Is everything all right?” he said. And then he saw the body, the blood on Klein’s hands and the fear in his eyes. “My God, Aaron. What happened?”

“He was going to rape Idel.” Klein replied.

“Is she all right?”

Klein nodded. “She’s with our mother.”

“I’ll get the others and we’ll bury him,” Gitnberg said. “Go home to your family. We’ll meet you there soon.”

When Klein got home, he found the house had been ransacked. He called out for his wife, Raisa. A moment later, she and the children—Sarra, Klara and David—emerged from their hiding place. Klein kissed his wife and hugged all the children. He told Raisa about Idel, and told her to take the children to his mother’s house, saying he’d join them as soon as Gitnberg and the others left.

He sat in the middle of the destruction that was his home. He thought about rebuilding, but knew it was pointless. The Cossacks would just come back and wreck things again. He couldn’t stay here anymore. A moment

later, Isah Gitnberg arrived with Benjamin Cohen, Lev Kaplan and Isaac Bronstein. "How's your sister?" Bronstein asked.

"I think she'll recover in time. Fucking Cossacks, always thinking they can try and do what they want with our women."

"Is there anything we can do for you and Raisa?" Kaplan asked.

"No," Klein said wiping away tears. "Thank God she got everyone into the hiding place."

"Ida and I were lucky as well." Cohen said. "Our oldest boy, Abraham ran into the house and got his baby sister out just as the riders threw torches inside. He took her to and outside hiding place."

"There's nothing left for us here," Gitnberg said. "And they'll come looking for their lost comrade once they sober up and realize he's missing."

"They'll punish all of us for what Aaron did," Bronstein said.

"Like they need reason to come after us." Kaplan replied. "I can't put my family through any more of this. We should all go to Palestine."

"Again with Palestine!" Gitnberg said. "The pipedream of the Zionists."

"We could do with some dreams about now." Kaplan said. "And a place we can call home. Many of our people across the Pale and the rest of Europe are fleeing prejudice to go there. We can make a life there with a new farm. We could all start over again in the Promised Land."

"You're crazy." Gitnberg said. "Germany's the place to go. It is closer than that desert sand trap Lev boasts about. And it's a place with opportunities for Jews. Not like here. It would be good for my children. What do you say, Benjamin?"

"Either may be too far for us to journey because of Ida's heart condition," Cohen said. "We have some family close to Minsk. They've had issues with Cossacks as well, but not as bad as this. What about you, Aaron?"

"I'm going to take my family to America," Klein said. "We've talked about it for months. Thousands of our people are going there. We might have to stay in East London for a few years to save up the money, but America is the land of opportunity. We have cousins setting down roots in New York and Connecticut. Even one who moved to San Francisco. He writes that he's never known such freedom."

"Some of my wife's relatives live in Connecticut," Cohen replied "My brother and his family want to go there too. You should organize things with him."

“Bah,” Kaplan said, waving them off for their gullibility. “There are people who detest Jews in America. “

“People are against us everywhere.” Klein snapped. “Even in Palestine, there are locals that don’t want us there.”

“That’s different,” Kaplan replied. “The Bedouin are a disadvantaged race that will benefit from our presence as we turn the desert into an oasis. Why should they hate us?”

“That’s the view of the colonial master,” Bronstein said.

“I disagree.” Kaplan replied. “I just think it would be better if we all went together. We’re stronger that way.”

“I’m sorry,” Cohen said. “Ida and I can’t make the trip. Maybe later when she is better.”

“I’m sorry, too, Lev,” Gitnberg said.” I just feel that the land of opportunity for my family is Germany.”

“And I feel the same way about America,” Klein said.

“I think you’re all making a mistake,” Gitnberg said, “and your families will rue this day for the decisions you made.”

“You’re all wrong.” Bronstein said. “Why should we move when we can stand our ground and fight?”

“With what?” Gitnberg asked.

“Like Aaron. With our rage and our wits. We can take them. My cousin Lev is a leading Revolutionary against the Tsarist forces. We should join with his people and create a mass movement.”

“No, Isaac.” Cohen said. “I won’t risk the lives of my wife and children.”

“Besides, Isaac,” Klein said. “Your cousin, what’s his name now—Trotsky?—has been exiled to Vienna. He can’t help us from there.”

“Then you go and run away,” Bronstein said. “I’m going to stay and fight with whatever radical party takes me in. We’ll fight and build a new Russia where there are no Tsars and no Cossacks. A place where Jews, workers and peasants can be free from fear and oppression.”

“Enough.” Klein pleaded. “My friends, let’s not part with bitterness. Come, let’s gather our families together and get what belongings we need to travel. We haven’t much time.”

“Yes,” said Kaplan, “and we will toast the day our families meet again.”

As evening approached, the Cossacks returned to search for their missing comrade. They found his grave and rode to the village to take

revenge—but the families were already gone. The Cossacks would set fire to every home and building in the village. By morning, there was nothing left of the Jewish community that had been there for centuries.

November 1926

Savona on Ligurian Coast

West of Genoa

5:22 p.m.

Why can't the world see what we see in Mussolini, Parri thought as they approached the Ligurian Coast in their car. His friend Filippo Turati, the elderly senior statesman of the Italian Socialists, had outstayed his welcome in Italy. Mussolini's Black Shirt Squadristi chanted in the streets of Turati's home city Milan, saying that Fascists would chop off the socialist's beard and use his hair in brushes that would shine the Duce's boots. Opposition parties had been outlawed in Italy, their leaders now fair game for Fascist thugs.

The race was on to get the opposition leaders safely outside Italy. Turati had opposed Mussolini for years, since the time when the two of them were members of the Socialist Party. Now some Fascists thought it was time to even old scores. Younger Socialists, Ferruccio Parri and Carlo Rosselli among them, had persuaded Turati to go into exile in France. This secret trip they were taking to the coast by car would make that happen.

"This isn't over, sir," Parri said to Turati. "We won't give up the cause."

The car was driven by a young member of the Anti-Fascist Resistance Movement.

"I know you will carry on with the struggle," Turati said, his voice weary. "I will do all I can to help in the time I have left."

"We know you will." Rosselli added. "The resistance movement will leave no stone unturned in ridding Italy of Mussolini's tyranny."

The driver pulled the car up on a curb facing the coastline.

"We're here," Parri announced.

"Excellent." Rosselli said. "Let's do this quickly."

"Wait here," Parri told the driver.

Parri and Rosselli escorted Turati to the small boat that would take him to safety. Two sailors waited—Ruben and Luchese. "Signori," Ruben said. "We need to hurry to avoid the Fascist patrols."

“We understand,” Rosselli said. He gave Ruben an envelope. “This should compensate you for your efforts.”

Luchese took the envelope from Ruben and looked inside. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Signore Turati. My first mate will help you onto the boat.”

“Come with me, Signore,” Ruben said.

Parri and Rosselli waved goodbye and returned to the car.

Luchese started the engine, and Ruben threw off the rope. Turati quickly fell asleep. “I wish every mission was this easy,” Luchese said.

“We’re not in France yet,” Ruben said, and pointed the ship seaward.

Both men laughed. They then set sail for France.

Parri and Rosselli watched the boat depart. After a moment, they went in the car and told the driver to take them to their next destination.

“We need to talk about organizing resistance cells in this area,” Parri said. “Our driver here wants to start one in Voltri.”

Rosselli looked puzzled. “Voltri! Why not Genoa?”

“Voltri is out of the way,” the driver said. “It’s easier to organize without a heavy Fascist presence.”

“Interesting point,” Rosselli said. “And you want to lead it?”

“Yes sir. I’ve even thought of code names. I’m thinking of Renaissance Artists. I might call myself Giotto.”

“A forerunner of the Renaissance,” Parri said. “You can help lead the rebirth of Italian Democracy.”

“Thank you, sir. Can I set up in Voltri?”

“You have our blessing,” Rosselli said.

March 4, 1933:

Italian Foreign Ministry Offices

Rome

“*Cane Austriaco.*” Austrian dog. Those were the words Mussolini used to describe Germany’s new Chancellor Adolph Hitler to two of his guests, Frederick Saberstein and David Klein. Mussolini sought to reassure his two visitors further about Italy’s future relations with Germany.

“Italy has no wish to ally itself with that buffoon,” he said. “He gives Fascism a bad name with all this extreme racist nonsense. You can assure

your friends in Palestine that His Majesty's Government in Italy will never adopt the Anti-Jewish Policies that Germany is considering."

"That is a relief, Duce," Saberstein said. "Our superiors in the New Zionist Organization will be happy to hear this. As you may be aware, our families were subjected to the terrors of the Tsarist pogroms. We left Russia in 1910 to build new lives. My family on my mother's side went to Palestine with her brother Aaron Kaplan. Klein's family here wanted to go to America, was detoured in Britain, and finally moved to Haifa."

"The Tsar and his Cossacks were scum," Mussolini said.

"So true," Saberstein said. "Our leaders have always felt a kindred link with your revitalized Italy. Jabotinsky has profound admiration for you and Garibaldi. We're also grateful for the opportunities your government has afforded brethren like Finzi and Volpi. We believe that your ideals and ours are compatible, and we have a proposal..."

"Please proceed," Mussolini replied, thrilled with all the praise his guests were heaping on him.

"The leaders of our Revisionist Zionist group would like to strike an alliance with your government," Saberstein said. "We know about your dreams of *Mare Nostrum* for the Mediterranean, area and would like to help make that dream a reality."

"What about your relations with your British overlords?" Mussolini asked.

"The British have been nothing but double-dealers since the Balfour Declaration of 1917," Klein said. "We were promised all of Palestine as a Jewish homeland. But they have continually gone back on their word. They took Transjordan from us and gave it to Abdullah in the 1920s. They've restricted our immigration quotas, and now speak of partitioning what's left of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish States."

"And the current Jewish leadership in Palestine?"

Saberstein waved a hand dismissively. "Chaim Weizman and Ben Gurion are timid liberals, willing to take any crumb they're offered. We want to strike an alliance with you, Duce. We want your support in putting Jabotinsky in charge of Palestine. A Jewish state ruled by our group can serve as a good buffer between you and the Arabs, and act as an economic and cultural center to collaborate with in setting up your Mediterranean sphere of influence."

“This is intriguing.” Mussolini replied. “Of course, Italy would welcome kindred allies in Palestine... What can we offer each other to make this a reality?”

Saberstein took a document from his attaché case. It was a memorandum signed by Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky. “This outlines various options for our groups to work together. Exchange of ideas, staff and technologies.”

“Technologies?” Mussolini asked with increased curiosity and glee. “What technologies can your group offer?”

“As you know, Duce,” Saberstein said. “Our people have gained prominence in the scientific fields, particularly physics. In fact, there are Nazis call this area “Jewish Science.” Some of the scientists associated with us believe it’s possible to transport people and materials from one location to another, instantly. They’ve already drawn up early plans.”

“Fantastic,” The Duce remarked, his mind reeling with possibilities. “I never thought science was so close to realizing the fantasies of HG Wells, Jules Verne, and Conan Doyle.”

“Submarines were once fantasy,” Saberstein said. “Dirigibles and planes as well. It will take years of supplemental research, resources, equipment and capital, but this can help build a new Roman empire, with you its Caesar. All we ask is a free Palestine under our control, and an equal partnership with you in supervising the Near East.”

“Do you have these plans with you, for my scientists to review?”

“We have a sample for you, Duce,” Klein replied, pulling a file from his satchel. He passed it to Mussolini. “Your physicists should be able to confirm that we’re on the right path.”

Mussolini looked over the memorandum and plans. If this would help realize his dreams, so be it. He smiled. “His Majesty’s government looks with favor on this collaboration with our Revisionist Zionist brothers.”

November 5, 2024

The Falcone Foundation Annex
Beneath the School of Earth and Space Science
Arizona State University

Mariah and Bonomi held hands as they walked the Foundation hallways. “You were wonderful last night,” Mariah said.

“You were sensational to,” Bonomi replied.

“So what’s the big mystery?”

“Ferrara and Garth have a quick assignment for us, before you guys go to Voltri.”

“And they couldn’t tell me?” Mariah asked.

“I wanted it to be a surprise. I’m taking you to a movie.”

“A date?”

“Sort of,” Bonomi said. “It’s also a mission. We’re going to see *Frau im Mond*. Berlin, 1929.”

“Woman in the Moon,” Mariah said. “What’s the mission?”

“I can’t say too much right now.”

“Come on, tell me,” Mariah said, “unless you want to sleep alone tonight.”

“You’re very persuasive,” Bonomi said. “But you know the rules.”

“Alright.”

They reached the teleporter room. Ferrara and Garth were waiting. “How are you?” Ferrara asked.

“Ready to have a great time in swinging 1920’s Berlin,” Mariah said.

Ferrara smiled and looked to Mariah and Bonomi. “Your clothes are waiting in wardrobe.”

Five minutes later, Mariah and Bonomi were dressed for 1929 Germany.

“You two look sharp,” Ferrara said.

“I feel like an extra from *Cabaret*,” Mariah told her.

Garth passed an old wallet to Bonomi. “You’ll find German marks inside.”

Mariah and Bonomi stepped onto the teleporter pads.

“Have a good time,” Garth said. A moment later, the pads were empty.

Bernadette appeared in the doorway. “After this, we’ll know if she’s ready... Or not.”

October 18, 1929

Marmorhaus Theater

Berlin, Germany

Mariah and Bonomi teleported into an alley and headed for their destination. It was Friday night, and Berlin was electric, its streets filled with happy people.

“That’s not a theater,” Maria said when they arrived. “That’s a palace.”

“Yeah,” Bonomi said. “This isn’t your neighborhood Harkins or AMC multiplexes in Arizona.”

They moved to the ticket line. Mariah spotted a poster for *Frau Im Mond*. “Wow. It’s a Fritz Lang movie. He did *Metropolis*... Connor, Josh and Tori would’ve liked this mission. Okay, I’ll forgive you. Berlin just before the Depression is a fun place to be.”

“Look over there,” Bonomi said.

Mariah glanced across the street. Nazi Brownshirts sat behind a table, asking passersby to sign petitions. “What are they doing?” Mariah asked. She tugged the sleeve of a man in the ticket line, and asked in German, “Excuse me sir. Can you tell me why the Brownshirts are there?”

“They’re trying to get support for their proposed Freedom Law. They want the government to renounce the Versailles Treaty Clauses.”

“Oh,” Mariah said. “Thank you.”

“Fascist alert” Bonomi whispered. “Future Fuhrer on the left.”

Mariah turned and saw Hitler with SA leader Ernst Rohm stopping at the Brown Shirts’ table.

“Holy shit,” Mariah said. “Did you know they’d be here?”

“Maybe.”

“What else haven’t you told me?”

“Well...”

Hitler and Rohm crossed the street and stood in line, right behind Mariah and Bonomi. “Good evening,” Hitler said.

My God, Mariah thought to herself. He had bad breath in 1929, too.

“Good evening,” Bonomi said back.

“This should be a fascinating movie,” Hitler said. “I’ve always wondered about rockets and what they might be capable of.”

“For space travel?” Mariah asked.

“And other applications,” Hitler said.

Mariah nodded and turned away. She held Bonomi’s hand tighter.

Hitler spoke to Rohm. “I don’t think we’ll get the government to accept this referendum, but at least it will give the party some needed visibility.”

“I agree,” Rohm said. “We need greater exposure to gain more seats in the Reichstag.”

Mariah and Bonomi purchased their tickets and went inside. They hung back until Hitler and Rohm sat down, then took seats two rows behind them.

Twenty minutes later, the movie began. Mariah was stunned by the quality of the silent film. “Great movie,” she whispered. “I wonder why Lang didn’t make this a talking picture.”

Later in the movie, when the spaceship was about to launch, Mariah found couldn’t help but be impressed with the Lang’s accuracy. “Look at that,” she whispered. “Forty years before Apollo landed on the Moon...”

“Some of Lang’s science consultants wound up working with NASA,” Bonomi told her.

A man wearing a dark trench coat arrived in the theater and took the seat in front of Mariah.

Bonomi gave Mariah a blowgun. “You may need this,” he whispered.

“What the...?” Mariah asked.

“Shh,” Bonomi said. “Watch.”

An instant later, the man in front of her drew a knife and moved to stab Rohm. *Oh shit*, Mariah thought. *Do I really have to save them?* She looked to Bonomi, who kept his eyes on the movie screen. *Bastard*, Mariah mused about her lover before putting the blowgun in her mouth.

Mariah blew a dart into the back of the man’s neck. He dropped the knife and slumped forward, unconscious.

“Well done,” Bonomi whispered.

“Can we leave now?” Mariah asked.

“We should wait,” Bonomi replied, “until the movie ends.”

They stayed another hour to watch. When the curtain fell, Hitler boasted to Rohm about the possibilities of rockets. The two men nodded farewell to Mariah and Bonomi before leaving. Soon, Mariah, Bonomi, and the would-be killer were the only ones left in the theater. “Please tell me this is a simulation,” Mariah said.

“No, it was real,” Bonomi told her. “I knew you could do it. Bernadette and Garth wanted to test you before sending you on the Voltri mission.”

“Did I kill him?” Mariah asked.

“No,” Bonomi said. “It’s just a stunner. He’s an agent from the *Abwehr*.”

“German Intelligence.”

“They saw Hitler as a potential threat and wanted to take him out even in 1930. I’m sorry you had to go through that, but we can’t wait until you’re on your own to find out if you can make the crucial decision when the time comes.”

“And if I hadn’t made the crucial decision during the movie?”

Bonomi pulled a second blowgun from a pocket. “Just in case.”

“Should we wake him up?”

“Let the usher do it. We’ve got 95 years to travel.” They got up to leave. Bonomi offered a tentative smile. “Do you forgive me?”

Mariah remained silent.

“Come on. I’ll cook your favorite dish tonight.”

“Veal Parmesan with Linguine Carbonara?”

“I went shopping at the Italian Grocer yesterday and got all the ingredients.”

Finally, Mariah smiled. “Okay. I forgive you.”

“*Wunderbar.*”

They held hands on the way back to the alley. They vanished a moment later, on their way to 2024.

April 2, 1933

Berlin Germany

6:00 a.m.

The Nazis declared a boycott of Jewish businesses. Hours later, the Gitnberg Family Butcher Shop was ransacked. The windows were broken, meats were stolen, and groceries were thrown all over the floor. Those who tried to interfere were stopped by SA Brown Shirts.

Isah Gitnberg, who had told his family that Germany was a place of safety, was savagely beaten. Afterward, he sat in his ruined store while the family doctor attended to his broken right hand, black eye and fat lip. His wife Rosa and his 27-year-old son Yakov were there with him.

“I thought we were free from such persecution,” Isah mumbled. “It’s like the Cossacks have returned to haunt us.”

“Isah,” Dr. Rosenberg said. “You’ll need to come into my office so I can properly set the broken bones in your hand.”

“All right. What time?”

“Meet me in about half an hour. I want to look around the neighborhood and see if anyone else was hurt.”

“But I have to get the store ready to open.”

“Mama and I will take care of that Papa,” Yakov said.

“Very well,” Gitnberg said. “Be careful on your way to the office.”

“I will,” Rosenberg said. “You know they’ll come after the professionals too. I don’t know how long I can stay in Berlin if this behavior continues.”

Yakov looked to his parents. Privately, he was furious that they had never seen the Nazis for the threat they were. The family got to work putting the store back in order.

After a few moments of silence, Yakov could contain himself no longer. “Papa. You have to know now that continuing to live here is madness.”

“Don’t think that, Yakov,” Rosa said. “We’ve lived here for more than 20 years, and set up a successful business. We’re respected by the community. You and your brothers and sisters were able to go to university. That wouldn’t have happened in Russia.”

“Yes, Mama, we are respected. But the Stormtroopers bullied away the neighbors who tried to help us against the vandals. What happens if the thugs come back?”

“Then we’ll put things back together again,” Gitnberg said. “And again. And again. I won’t let these bastards push us out.”

“There’s another way for all of us,” Yakov said.

“Don’t start again with going to America,” Gitnberg said. “They’re worse Anti Semites there. Their immigration laws won’t allow us to enter the country.”

“I think you’re wrong, Papa. With my background in physics, I think they’ll take me in. And I think I can get the family in with me. It might take two years, but I’m pretty sure we can do it.”

“You go if you want. But your mother and I will stay. This is our home.”

“Papa, you’re not grasping reality.”

“This country has given us so much. I fought for it in the Great War against Tsarist scum. I can’t believe this nation would sanction pogroms.”

“It only takes one more instance of violence, Papa.”

Gitnberg hugged his son. “You do what you think is best, Yakov. We love and support you. But respect our wishes as well.” He stepped back. “I should go off to the doctor. Can you two finish cleaning up here?”

“Yes Papa.”

Gitnberg kissed his wife and left the shop. Rosa finished restocking dry food products, and Yakov put out fresh meat.

“Have you decided for sure on America Yakov?”

“Yes Mama. I’m going to the American Embassy later today.”

“You’ll do well there. They need scientists like you.”

“Tell Papa to change his mind. I’m sure I can make arrangements before it’s too late.”

“I’ll try, but you know him. I’ll talk to your brothers and sisters about emigrating as well.”

“Thanks, Mom. I’ll talk to them too. Should I wait for Moshe before going to the embassy?”

“No, I’ll be fine. Your brother should be here in a few minutes. He can fix the windows.” She hugged and kissed her son. “One thing. If you do go to America, take the name our cousins used when they went there. Your father won’t mind, and it will help you fit in better.”

“Sure,” Yakov said. “Though I have to admit, “Patterson” will seem strange after all these years as a Gitnberg.”

“What’s in a name, as long as you live like a good Jew, and a good man.”

“True. Bye for now. I’ll stop by again after school, assuming they still let me teach.”

“Love you.”

“I love you too, Mom.”

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David was born in New York and now lives in Arizona with the love of my life Gwyn. They are both dog people, and enjoy travel and food—Italian, Asian, Middle Eastern and Indian cuisines in particular.

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