

Max

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Max

By **Sarah Cohen-Scali**

Translated by **Penny Hueston**



WALKER
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*I hope that, as I did, you will be able to feel indulgent
towards Max's flaws, and that you will love him,
defend him, and adopt this orphan of evil.*

Sarah Cohen-Scali

part one

1.

I don't know yet what my name will be. Outside, they can't decide between Max and Heinrich. Max, like Max Sollmann, the director of the Home where I'll soon be arriving. Or Heinrich, in honour of Heinrich Himmler, who first thought up the idea of my conception and those of my future buddies.

My personal preference would be Heinrich. I have a lot of respect for Herr Sollmann, but you should always aim for the top when it comes to hierarchy. Herr Himmler is more important than Herr Sollmann. He is no less than the Führer's right-hand man.

But who cares anyway; they're not going to ask my opinion.

It's the 19th of April 1936. Nearly midnight.

I should have been born yesterday, but that's not what I wanted. The date didn't suit me. So I've stayed put. Motionless. Rigid. Of course that means a lot of pain for my mother, but she's a brave woman, and she's putting up with the delay without complaint. Anyway, I'm sure she approves of my tactic.

My wish, the first of my future life, is to come into the world on the 20th of April. Because that's the Führer's birthday. If I'm born on the 20th of April, I will be blessed by the Germanic gods and seen as the firstborn of the master race. The Aryan race that will henceforth rule the world.

Right now, as I speak to you, I'm in my mother's womb and my birth is imminent. Only a few minutes to go. But you've no idea how nervous I am! My stomach is in knots. Even though I've got no cause for concern, I worry that the down on my little newborn head, and later when my hair grows, won't be blond enough. Because I *absolutely must* have blond hair. Platinum blond. The fairest possible, without the slightest tarnishing trace of brown. As for my eyes, I'm desperate for them to be blue. A clear blue, like pure clean water that you can't gaze into without the feeling of drowning. I want to be big and strong... Oh, I'm expressing myself badly. That sounds so flat and dull; I just can't find the right words. But that's normal. I'm not quite the finished product yet; I'm only a baby ... I'd be better off reciting the words of the Führer. I heard one of his speeches a few months ago, when I was still a tiny foetus, but his voice resonated so powerfully that it reached me here inside. I shivered with pleasure and that's precisely when I gave my first kick in my mother's womb – to communicate my joy.

Our beloved Führer proclaimed:

We must build a new world! The young German of the future must be lean and supple, as sharp as a greyhound, as tough as leather and as hard as Krupp steel!

So, that's exactly what I want to be: supple. Lean. Sharp. Hard. Tough. I'll bite rather than suck on the nipple. I'll yell

rather than babble. I'll hate rather than love. I'll fight rather than pray. Oh, my Führer, I don't want to disappoint you! I won't let you down. Indeed, I'd better pull myself together. Why should I worry? It's ridiculous, unwarranted – it's obvious that I'm going to look like Mother.

Let me tell you about Mother. Tall. Blonde. She ties her beautiful golden hair either at the nape or in a crown of plaits. She never wears make-up. Make-up is only good for Oriental women, whose coal-black eyes are like cockroaches! Disgusting. Make-up is only good for whores. (I'm not frightened of saying words like that, even if I'm only a baby. It's pointless not to speak frankly to a baby, even if the words are crude; it only weakens the child by rendering it timid.) Let's get back to Mother and her hair: it's dead straight; she's never used dye or those products that make fake curls – they're for whores! She doesn't smoke, because that harms fertility, and she has broad hips. She's not one of those women who just pick at their food in order to stay thin. Anyway, on the eve of war that would be stupid, because supplies will be scarce one day and we have to make the most of abundance while it's here to enjoy.

Mother wears a brown skirt and a white blouse and she never wears heels. Thanks to her large pelvis, she's had no problems carrying me. She has to rest now but she used to love working here in the Steinhöring Home on the outskirts of Munich. She helped with setting up and decorating our nurseries. Because, as you are no doubt aware, I'm not the only baby who will be delivered here. There are hundreds and hundreds of us on the way; the programme for the arrival of the others was set up a long time ago. Hundreds will turn into thousands, thousands into millions. We'll make up an army!

Mother's expansive hips will make my task easier: I'll have no problem getting out, forging the way for my future half-brothers and sisters – because Mother promised our Führer that she would produce a child a year for him.

As for my father, it's a bit tricky to say much about him. I don't know who he is. I've never heard his voice. I don't know him and I'll never know him. That's what it's like for the children of the future. Our one and only spiritual father is the Führer. My biological father only met my mother once. One night. To conceive me. I know he's a *Sturmabführer* of the Waffen-SS, meaning he's a major. Two ranks to go and he'll be a colonel. It'll be easy once the war gets started: he'll kill lots of enemies and be awarded a higher rank.

I hope I'll have a nice black uniform like him one day.

In the beginning, without knowing what to expect, my mother applied to be a *Schwester*, that's a Sister. She wrote a letter and they summoned her to the offices on Herzog-Max-Strasse, where she underwent a series of examinations. They weighed her. They measured her. Standing. Sitting. Squatting. Leaning forward. Leaning backward. They studied the shape of her skull and measured it, as well as the height of her forehead, the placement of her eyes and how wide apart they were set. They measured the length, width and line of her nose. The length of her arms, her legs, her torso. They measured the distance between her lips and her chin, between her cheekbones and her nose. They measured the back of her head, her neck. The doctors called out number after number and their secretaries recorded them. Then the secretaries did additions, subtractions, multiplications, and wrote down the results. They also recorded the colour of Mother's skin, hair and eyes: white, blonde, blue. Anyway, Mother wouldn't have been allowed into

the offices if she had dark skin and brown hair and eyes. But the doctors also checked the colour of her pubic hair, which was as blonde as her hair, not overly lush, and sprouting in the right direction.

Next, Mother was sent to the *Doktoresses*, who took off her clothes. They studied her all over with a magnifying glass. Everywhere. Even inside her. Especially inside her. Right where her future partner's penis would go. To make me, yes, me. They pronounced, *Alles in ordnung!*

Mother was declared "perfectly suited for selection". That's top marks! Others were not so lucky; they only received "average suitability", and others, well, they got "not at all suitable". The latter were "relocated". Watch out, that's a code word! It doesn't mean they were relocated elsewhere. No, it means they were exterminated.

Garbage! Get out! Gone!

There are swear words and there are code words. You can use both with me as much as you like. The first lot don't shock me, and I know the hidden meaning of the second lot. Well, not all of them; I'll need to learn a whole lot more as I grow up. I'll also learn code names. Code names are extremely important. The programme for the years ahead, established by our Führer, is riddled with them. Here's an example: for the time being, my buddies and I have to be born in the utmost secrecy. Nobody knows yet the real meaning of *Lebensborn*, the code name of our programme. I'll tell you, but don't tell anyone else. It means "the fountain of life".

A programmed life, regulated according to precise parameters set up in advance. A life that feeds on death.

Getting back to Mother. She wasn't over the line yet. It's very difficult to become a talented Sister. It's not handed

out on a plate. Even though Mother got through the first part of the test with flying colours, the second part was still to come: she had to assemble all the documentary proof that she belonged to the Nordic race, and present it to the fertility advisors in another office, the RuSHA (the SS Race and Settlement head office). She provided them with papers proving that her ancestors had been German since 1750, that they were in perfect health, and that not a single drop of Slavic blood flowed through their veins. And especially not Jewish blood... So here we are!

I'm a bit worried about the last point. Papers are all very well, but when you haven't got the guy in front of you, how can you be sure? What I mean is that if, for example, my great-great-great-great-grandfather had the unfortunate idea of sleeping with a Jewish woman, could a drop of this inferior creature's blood, given the mysteries of genetics, reappear in my blood to contaminate it? That would be a disaster! How would I know? How? Impossible.

The only thing I know for sure is that I'm a boy. Yes, at least there's no doubt about that – the little bump at the base of my belly is proof. My penis: I'm male. I'm so happy I'm not a girl. When girls become women they have to obey the rules of the three Ks: *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*.^{*} Whereas I prefer the K of Krupp: tanks, cannons, guns, war...

Enough of that! Let's banish depressing thoughts. It's impossible for me to have Jewish blood in my veins. I've got nothing to worry about.

Because of my father.

That brings me to the third part of Mother's examination. After being checked out by the fertility experts, and after passing the genealogy test, she had to send in a photo of

^{*} Children, Cooking, Church

herself in a bathing suit. The doctors studied the photo (I think they took even more measurements) and put it alongside other photos – of SS officers, also in bathing suits – in order to work out who would make the best combinations, the best sexual partners. Imagine you had a stallion and you wanted to breed from it: aren't you going to choose the best performing mare to get the best result? How do Hitler's favourite Krupp factories make those cannons, which will soon turn on our enemies and annihilate them? With top quality steel, of course. And just as the best steel is made with the best materials, so I had to be the product of the union of the finest bodies. That's why the doctors studying the photos chose my father. Blond, blue eyes, tall, lean... You know the drill.

If even a microscopic drop of Jewish blood had tried to emerge, I'm sure my father would have dealt with it on the night he was set up with my mother, here, in Steinhöring, in a different building from the one where I will be born.

Right, now I must tell you about Steinhöring. I like telling you all this; it passes the time, and as I talk we're getting closer to midnight, to the 20th of April, to my birth.

The Home used to be an asylum. An asylum for mentally retarded people, imbeciles, idiots, in fact, all those useless people that society subsidizes. Parasites. They were "relocated". (No point in repeating myself, you remember what that means, don't you?) Then there was a huge redesign and the asylum was transformed. It had to be a radical renovation, a total change that reflected the difference between the old and the new residents. The old ones represented the country's shame, the new ones its pride.

First of all they disinfected the premises. Then they set up living rooms, dining rooms, birthing rooms, visiting

rooms, treatment rooms, dormitories for the new mothers, nurseries for the babies, verandas. They had to knock down walls, erect partitions, construct a brick wall around the park and plant tall trees so spying eyes couldn't see us. It was a huge project that came together quickly, thanks to a large number of labourers who worked for nothing: prisoners from Dachau – a camp that imprisons Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and political opponents of our Führer and his regime. (Unfortunately some of these people still exist. But soon they'll be gone, "relocated" like the others.) They worked night and day, without a break, and built our Home, as well as the building I mentioned earlier, the one where the couples go for their meetings, their sexual intercourse.

It's a smaller building. Inside there's a music room, a dining room – usually the selected couples have dinner together before doing what they have to do – and bedrooms. The bedrooms are not as inviting as the dormitories in the Home. That's intentional. No unnecessary furniture: only a bed and a table, that's all. A large window: it's very bright in there. Very cold too, so that the sexual act doesn't last too long. And so that if the individuals happen to like each other – which isn't necessarily the case – they don't get a taste for what they're doing. Apparently, some girls try to get out of there at the last minute, when they understand what is expected of a Sister. What on earth are they thinking? That they get to choose their partner and live happily ever after? How naïve. How cowardly. We have to make the most of these men, while they're alive. A lot of them are going to die fighting for their country. The birth rate will decrease. And we don't want a population of oldies in Germany. So we have to stay focused, take action. Hence our special programme.

From now on, the sexual act is *a patriotic duty*. So our country can be guided out of darkness into light. The sexual act (I remind you that I'm not frightened of words and I already know a lot) can no longer be about personal pleasure; even if it's difficult, even if it's painful, it's an obligation, a sacred task, destined for a higher purpose.

I think Mother had a hard time when she and my father did it.

I don't think she knew what the code word "Sister" really meant.

I think she was about to give up and try to get out of there, too. But my future father and I urged her on. My father made her drink a good slug of schnapps to warm her up, so she'd relax and do the right thing. I was still only a small inner voice, an abstract notion in my mother's mind, but I urged her on: "You have to do it, Mother! You have to! For National Socialism! For the Reich! For the thousand-year Reich! For the future!" So she kept her eyes glued to the portrait of the Führer hanging in the bright, cold room. She gritted her teeth and hung in there.

She did it.

I'm here.

And, now that it's after midnight, I'm off.

I'm getting out fast. As fast as possible! I want to be the first in our Home to be born on the 20th of April. I already have a few rivals in the birthing rooms. I have to get out before them, even if it's only a matter of seconds.

Cheer me on!

Wish for what I told you: I must be blond. I must have blue eyes. I must be sharp.

Lean.

Hard.

Tough.

Made of Krupp steel.

I am the child of the future. The child conceived outside the Law. Without love. Without God. With nothing but force and fury.

Heil Hitler!

2.

It was hard, extremely hard.

I can admit it to you, but it has to stay strictly between you and me, OK? Because the child of the future *never complains about hardship!*

Still.

Ahead of me was this narrow tunnel I had to go through. I couldn't see the end. Nothing. Not the slightest glimmer of light to guide me. It was like a long trench, mined with traps and all sorts of obstacles in which I could at any moment be snared. But with a headbutt here or a shoulder nudge there, I managed to widen my sphere of operation. Not by much, not enough. I realized that if I wanted to make headway properly, I had to alter my position. A quarter turn to the right and I was on my belly, which was much better. I managed to gain a bit of ground. Except I had to watch out that I didn't get tangled in my safety harness, the rappelling cord that keeps me alive – “the umbilical cord”, if you prefer the scientific term. It was so tight that I wasn't getting much oxygen.

I hung in there. I edged forward as fast as I could. By manoeuvring my arms, I crawled over the hostile terrain, never hesitating to thrash out with kicks, headbutts, fist blows, like a little stallion, like the little warrior that I am... That's how I got most of the way, until I glimpsed in the distance, still too far away, a gleam of light that I followed through the darkness. It shone from behind the final barrier I had to cross: The Cervix. The notorious Cervix. The frontier to the world that was waiting for me.

I had to take it by storm.

There was a terrible uproar outside; I could hear it more and more clearly. Screaming, roaring, howling, an onslaught of noise. Wow! My arrival on the scene was causing chaos. My mother's cries were shocking. She showed no restraint. It was not very classy of her to let herself go like that. On the other hand, every scream was accompanied by a contraction that propelled me forward. I was grateful for that. I felt like a cannon ball catapulting towards the enemy.

Mother was in real pain. She was gritting her teeth, just like on the night she met my father, when they made me. Worried she'd run out of steam at the last minute, I took a few breaks so she could recuperate. When I felt she was on the point of exhaustion, I whispered to her, "Hang in there! Don't take your eyes off the portrait of our Führer!" (I know there's one in the birthing room. Actually, there's one in every room of the Home.) "Our Führer is looking at you. You promised to give him a beautiful child, your *first* child. Now it's time to keep your promise!"

So she pulled herself together, gritted her teeth again, took a few big breaths and began to push, push, push harder, urged on by the midwife, whose voice I could hear loud and clear (what a screamer she was, too).

Mother outdid herself from then on. She refused all medical assistance, including anaesthetic drugs. Bravo! It was all to her credit. And it worked in my favour: in the room next door, my rival was also making good time. Except that his mother, who was not as brave as mine, was given medical assistance; so the staff decided they could leave her for a while, and the whole medical team rushed to attend Mother and me. Josefa, the matron, along with three other nurses, joined the midwife. What a welcoming committee.

Josefa placed her hands on Mother's belly, right where I had positioned myself. Just as I was about to mount my attack again, she suddenly started screaming, "Oh my God! He's so big! Oh, yes, he's incredibly big!" And she decided to call Doctor Ebner.

SS-Oberführer Gregor Ebner.

The maternity and paediatrics chief of medicine, the one who decides everything. Power over life and death. The Führer's representative in the Home.

I felt incredibly honoured. Just imagine, newly enlisted privates rarely have the opportunity to be granted assistance from their colonel in person. I had to show that I was up to the task, and demonstrate all my strategic skills in this final showdown, without forgetting that the aim was to keep Doctor Ebner in the room with Mother and me. Under no circumstances could he go and see what was happening in the next room, in case he helped my rival! I had to make the most of the situation: my rival's mother's pain had eased and she was pushing less. He was sure to fall behind. All I had to do was widen the gap. Pluck up my courage and mount my attack on The Cervix.

As fast as I could.

I went for it. I charged, headfirst. But I hadn't calculated

on the two bones that suddenly jutted into both sides of my skull. Huge spikes! There was I thinking my mother had wide hips. That was way too presumptuous of me... Nasty bones! My nose scraped against them, then my mouth, and my chin. But I ignored the pain and ended up with my head up against the wall of The Cervix. I charged even harder. *Come on! Come on! Full speed ahead!* I didn't care about the disfigurements I was inflicting on myself. So what if I ended up with a skull like a mortar shell? Warriors don't worry about their looks. Anyway, babies' bones are malleable, and I was sure that, even if I had a squashed head on arrival, it would soon find its proper shape.

The main thing was to be on the top of the list of births for the 20th of April. I mobilized all the troops I had for the attack and the wall began to give way. Oh yes, with every push, it yielded a little more, until... Wham! It opened up.

I made it!

I ejected myself into the world, just after midnight. Talk about precision.

Doctor Ebner's hands were the first things I saw. The white gloves made them look especially long, slender, pale and bony. Their appearance belied the strength with which they seized me. He slapped me around the head until I felt like I was in a vice; then he grabbed my shoulders and yanked, and yanked.

I yelled to show that I was alive, and breathing.

"Bravo, Frau Inge!" Josefa shrieked. "It's a boy! He is splendid. You should be proud of yourself."

Thanks for the compliment, but it wasn't news to me.

As I looked around more I spotted Doctor Ebner's tall black boots; which were partly hidden by his white gown. They were magnificent. I would have liked to slide inside

one of them; I could have made it my bassinet. I also noticed bloodstains on the gown. Mother's blood. Or perhaps mine? I didn't gag; I didn't even hiccup. There's nothing more normal than blood after a battle. I had to get used to that from now on. I fixated on the gold badge of the Party insignia, pinned to the collar of *Herr Doktor's* gown. It was so beautiful, so shiny.

I screamed. I kept screaming, because I wanted to grab that golden badge. I really liked it. But I couldn't reach it, so I gave up and stared at Doctor Ebner's face instead. Obviously my eyesight wasn't yet functioning perfectly, but I could make out a bald head, smooth and shiny like the badge. I could see a big vein sticking out on the side of his temple, and I could see that his lips were as straight as the uppers of his boots. And tight, no sign of a smile. I saw that *Herr Doktor* was wearing round glasses, and that he was watching me with his bright, blue eyes. So bright they seemed transparent, a deep pool of water I seemed to be diving into, drowning. Icy water. Suddenly I felt cold, very cold.

I screamed even louder. But I could still hear Josefa worrying about the mother next door. There was a problem with her baby, who – what a dope – had managed to get knots in his rappelling cord! Josefa asked Doctor Ebner to go and check on her. He raised his left hand to tell her to be quiet – he was holding me tight against him in the crook of his right arm – and ordered her to sort it out herself with the midwife. Because he wanted to examine me first. Me.

Oh dear ... scary.

I knew what that meant. Even though I had won the contest against the clock, my victory wasn't yet confirmed. Just like Mother becoming a Sister, I had only passed the

initial test before being anointed “Baby of the Third Reich, firstborn of the Aryan race”.

The measurements test was still to come.

There was a chart hanging in the birthing room. (This chart, like the portrait of our Führer, is in every room in the Home.) It shows the hierarchy of the Aryan races. At the top is “the Nordic race”; in second position, “the Westphalian race’]” living in harmony with the land; and in third place, those from around the Balkans, “the Dinaric race”, with a deep sense of patriotism. The famous Bismarck and Hindenburg are two examples of pure Westphalians. But one man alone symbolizes the perfect union of these three superior races: the Führer.

Which category was I going to fit in?

With a sharp click of the scissors, Doctor Ebner cut my rappelling cord – I had no further use for it. *Snap!* – and took me into a nearby room. Away from Mother. She asked to hold me, but Doctor Ebner ignored her. As for me, a second ago I would have given anything to suck on a breast, any breast, and have a go at lying with Mother, who had what I wanted, but now I’d lost my appetite. Why? Because Ebner insisted that he not be disturbed under any circumstances.

Not a good sign.

He called in his secretary, who joined us in the room that looked like a laboratory, sat down at a desk and opened a big ledger. There were lots of columns drawn up on the blank page. My page.

When Doctor Ebner asks to be left alone with a newborn, it’s a very bad sign. While I was still in Mother’s belly, I heard rumours that spread through the Home. (Some women can’t hold their tongue: magpies chattering non-stop and frightening the others.) It’s said that when Doctor Ebner – he

alone (and his secretary) – examines an infant and finds it lacking, he “relocates” it. He does it himself. Then his secretary writes “Stillborn” (= code word) in the ledger.

Believe me, I was worried stiff. I uttered a few requisite wails, but then, like Mother, I gritted my teeth – well, at least my gums. And, without so much as a whimper, I prepared myself for the worst. So what if my life was cut short? It belonged to my Führer.

After washing me, the doctor laid me on a little table next to various instruments that were lined up neatly. Among them, I recognized a set of scales, a ruler, a compass and a little container, like a jewellery box, with five or six pairs of eyes – glass ones, not real ones – in different shades of blue. There was also a hair chart in different colours ranging from dark brown to the lightest blond. Lying by itself, away from the other instruments, was ... a syringe.

Ebner began the examination. “Height: 54 centimetres. Weight: 4 kilos and 300 grams.”

They’re the only statistics I retained. There were so many that followed and I was screaming so much that I couldn’t hear Doctor Ebner’s voice reciting them very fast.

Length of arms.

Length of extended arms in relation to pelvis.

Length of torso.

Contour of chest cavity.

Length of legs, penis, feet, hands.

Finger-span, toe-span.

Size of ears.

Distance between earlobes.

Distance between eyes.

Then he checked my reflexes. Sucking reflex: he held up his finger and I grabbed it and sucked hard, greedily.

His finger tasted like metal, like steel. Top quality Krupp. It tasted good. Rooting reflex: he stroked me in random places and I turned my head in the direction of the stimulus point. Then he held up his two index fingers and I grasped them, so tightly that he lifted me up. I went straight into the Automatic Walking reflex: one foot in front of the other, even if it was pretty lopsided. I felt like I was hooked onto a parachute. If Ebner let go of me, I'd crash for sure. I pushed down on the table when my legs reached it, but they felt as floppy as marshmallow. Next, Ebner started tapping me very hard. That startled me! Once again I extended my arms, fingers spread, then I held them against my chest, fists tight.

Everything was going well, I was confident, I trusted my instincts, and Doctor Ebner seemed pleased. The vein throbbing on the side of his bald head had almost disappeared.

He took the hair samples, placed them on my head and told his secretary to make a note that the down on my head was fair, very fair. (*Twice* fair, thank God!) He used the little box with the glass eyes to check my eyes. He chose an eye that was right at the top of the jewellery box and held it against mine. "2c!" he exclaimed. "Check in two months." Given that the eye in his hand was blue, I deduced that mine were, too. Did "2c" mean "twice blue", like my hair was twice blond? In my opinion, I didn't have anything to worry about on that account either – Ebner looked confident.

Next my head was examined. A rigorous, meticulous examination. It seemed to go on for hours. Ebner spent ages palpating with his metallic fingers. The top, the sides, the back, the temples. The forehead. That's when I started to lose the confidence I'd regained with the statistics, the reflexes, the colour of my hair and eyes. Oh dear, how I regretted struggling so ferociously in the trench before getting out,

because – what an idiot – I'd given myself a misshapen head! It was oval, like a conical sugar loaf. Not round. Not round like Doctor Ebner's head, to be precise. As he was bald, you could see that his was in the shape of a soccer ball, whereas mine was only a pathetic rugby ball.

Stupid head.

Poor me. Fancy failing the very last test, the final criterion for selection. When Doctor Ebner grabbed the compass and brought it up to my head, I no longer had any doubts about the verdict. My fate was sealed. It was perfectly obvious that the span of the compass was too wide. If only I had known. It would have been better if I had been born after my rival. Hey, I wondered idly, despite my distress, had he made an appearance in the meantime? At least that way I wouldn't have damaged myself like this.

Come on, Oberführer Ebner! Let's get this over with. You might as well "relocate" me straightaway, that's what I deserve.

The tip of the compass point drew near, nearer and nearer ... I shut my eyes and clenched my little fists as it headed for my heart, which was beating like a drum. All my blood rushed to my head, I was bright red, my skull about to explode like a bomb.

But I didn't feel the compass tip stab me... What was going on? Did the doctor feel sorry for me? That wasn't like him. Anyway, I didn't want his pity. That would be dishonourable. So ... instead of the compass, it was going to be the syringe I'd seen on the table earlier. Obviously! The syringe was for the "relocation" injection.

Despite my panic and my screaming – I hadn't drawn breath the whole time – I saw Ebner scribbling a new set of figures on a scrap of paper. Then he did some sums out loud:

"The cephalic index being the transverse diameter over

the anterior-posterior diameter multiplied by one hundred, that gives us a result of ... 86 centimetres. *Eighty-six centimetres!* Mark that down quickly," he ordered his secretary. "The occipital ridge is prominent and there's no frontal bulge. The cephalic index thus confirms what is visually apparent, namely the long and narrow head of the infant subject."

He paused for a minute, then, still to his secretary, he uttered a word I didn't understand. "Conclusion: the child is dolichocephalic," he said. "He fills all the criteria, without exception. He is perfectly suited for selection."

What? Was that a slip of the tongue? Did he say "perfectly" instead of "not at all"? I no longer had a clue. "Dolichocephalic", was that like "hydrocephalic", those babies who had a whole lot of water in their heads? Who were disabled, imbeciles, like the inmates here before the asylum became a Home?

Of course not. After writing Doctor Ebner's words in the record book, the secretary joined him and leaned over me. All smiles, she went into raptures and heaped praises on me. So I put two and two together inside my deformed head – well, not that deformed after all. I realized "dolichocephalic" was the trump card that classified me as having a long head and being of the Nordic Aryan race.

Hurray! Victory!

That was it; this time I could really claim victory. And I didn't hang back.

I yelled and yelled.