A convoy of trucks made their way slowly along a rutted gravel road under a cloudy evening sky with crescent moon smiling mysteriously. Around them was forest, but the fog was rolling in. The lead driver slowed as visibility decreased, silently cursing the officers who had delayed them, and the wartime blackout that meant the headlights were all but useless. This would be a long night.

Dieter peered through the murk. They were approaching the crossroad where they had to turn left, and it wouldn’t do to miss it. They rounded a bend and he stared at the pool of bright light and the man standing in the middle of the road. Dieter braked to a halt.

“What is he doing standing there?” Werner, the black clad SS officer sitting beside him asked.

Dieter shrugged, hoping the officer would not see. “No idea, sir.”

The officer opened the passenger window. “What are you doing there? Get out of our way!” he barked in badly accented French.

“I require a lift.” the man replied in perfect German. He was tall, dressed in a yellow zoot suit, lavender shirt, brown brogues, and aviator sunglasses. His head was completely bald, but there was a black fringe running neatly around his jaw to a pointed goatee. He switched off his lantern and began walking to the passenger side of the truck cabin.

“We are on official business of the Reich.” Werner replied pompously. “We are not running a taxi service, you can’t have one.”

“That was not a request.” said the man, wrenching open the passenger door. “I am Lukeios Morgenstern, you will obey my orders as you would those of your fuehrer. You are expecting me, now move over.”

Werner wanted to draw his pistol and threaten the man, order him out, but he found himself making room, and saying “Certainly Herr Morgenstern.” He remembered now that they were expecting to meet this man.

“All right, driver, we can start moving. We turn right here.” Dieter, used to following orders, obeyed.

Werner, however, protested “But that’s not ...”

“The way you came?” Lukeios finished. “No, but it is where we are going. Remember?”

“And where are we going?” Werner remembered now that they had another destination before returning to barracks.

“Ah, another village. We have business there.”

They’d been picking up their cargo at several villages, but they weren’t at capacity. “Our last truck is nearly empty, we could take another thirty or forty, I think.”

“Yes, it concerns your cargo.”

Werner felt obliged to strike up a conversation, and find out more about this strange man. “Herr Morgenstern, Lucius is not a very German name.”

“Lukeios, it’s ancient Greek.” the man seemed amused. “It was one of the epithets of the god Apollo. It has several meanings. The first is light bearer, and when used with Apollo it meant the morning star, herald of the sun.”

“Which is what your surname means.”

“Precisely. The second meaning is wolfsbane. When used with Apollo it meant the god who defended the shepherds and their flocks.”

“That’s very interesting. What made your parents give that to you?”

“Ah, I have Greek and Egyptian heritage.”

“Then you are not racially pure!” Werner was shocked.

Lukeios laughed. “Neither are you, Werner. Your grandmother on your father’s side was Italian.”

Dieter kept his eyes on the road, not wanting the officer to know he was listening intently. SS officers were supposed to be pure.

“How ... how do you know that?” Werner tried to sound normal, but could not keep the note of strangled surprise out of his voice.

“It is my business to know these things. It’s not all bad Werner. Even Hitler has a Jewish father.”

“He does not! You are uttering treason.”

“Ah, Werner, all you Nazis are hypocrites. Why do you think Hitler hates Jews so much? Ranting on about racial purity, when his own father was Jewish.” Lukeios chuckled. “Of course, racial purity is a myth. All humans came out of Africa half a million years ago, you are all the same species now, ever since you killed off the Neanderthals.”

*What does he mean by referring to us as “humans” and “you”*, Dieter wondered. Beside him Werner was fuming, almost choking trying to get words out. This racially impure sub human had insulted the fuehrer!

They came to another crossroad, and this time went straight ahead, past a large cross. “There are lights ahead.” Dieter remarked.

“Yes, that’s a village. Just drive slowly through, we’ll be turning at the end.”

The road was paved from the crossroad all the way through the village to the other side. The fog lifted, or at least thinned, so they could almost make out where they were. Dieter turned onto the side road that Lukeios indicated, and in another half a kilometre they came to the gates of a stately house, with a number of electric lights illuminating the outside of the property, in contravention of the blackout requirements.

“Park on the gravel near the door.”

Dieter stopped the truck, killed the lights and engine. It was only now he noticed people at the entrance waiting for them.

“All right, everybody get out. No weapons.” Lukeios ordered, jumping from the truck. The Germans obeyed, forming two knots on the gravel, three SS officers in their black uniforms in one group, and in the second the four drivers plus the twenty soldiers from the fourth truck. Three of the trucks were cattle trucks, the fourth a covered van for the soldiers.

“Open the trucks.” The SS officers looked at one another before doing as they were bid. Each one unlocked the padlocks and chains at the back of their particular truck. The soldiers placed planks at the back of each, allowing the cargo egress from the cattle trucks.

“Everyone please come out onto the ground. You are safe, you won’t be hurt.” This time Lukeios’s voice was softer, and he spoke French.

Werner tried to pull his pistol from its holster, but it seemed stuck. “Hey! What are you doing?”

“Yes, we should be picking up Jews, not letting them out!” another SS officer added, struggling with his own pistol.

“You have been collecting Jews from the surrounding villages, and now you are delivering them. Remember?” The SS officers relaxed as they remembered that. Of course they had to deliver the Jews somewhere, what happened after delivery was not their problem.

With frightened faces, clutching one another for support, men, women and children made their way down the planks and onto the ground. Some carried overnight bags, most only the clothes they stood up in. Some of the children clutched favourite toys. Many of the men had beards.

Lukeios addressed the crowd in French. “Everyone, I apologise for the manner in which the Germans have treated you. Regrettably, French citizens in your own villages have reported you to the Germans as Jews. The Germans meant to harm you, and enslave you, and likely kill you. Instead I have rescued you, you will stay here safely for as long as necessary. Tomorrow we will return to your villages so you can collect anything that is important to you, but you will not be staying there, it is too dangerous. For now, my staff will find rooms for you in my chateau.”

Most of the Jews walked around as if in a dream, not quite believing what was happening. Lukeios turned to the Germans. “You have delivered your cargo, and now you will go on your way. When you reach the crossroad where we met, you will proceed straight ahead toward your barracks. You will forget everything that has happened since meeting me, and you will remember only that you delivered your cargo into the custody of a high ranking German officer. Now get into your vehicles and go.”

The Germans themselves were walking now as if in a dream. They climbed into their trucks and drove off.

One old man with a white beard stood in front of Lukeios. “I want to thank you, this is a miracle. You give an order, and the Germans obey you. Who are you? What are you? You are not an ordinary man. Tell me the truth.”

“Ah, rabbi, what is truth? Can you handle it?” Lukeios removed his sunglasses, revealing strikingly yellow eyes. “These days I call myself Lukeios Morgenstern, or Luc Morningstar in French. Many years ago, the ancient Greeks called me Apollo Lukeios ... “ he explained the meaning. “Before that, the Egyptians called me Horus, the eagle of the dawn. I am one of the light bearers, the shepherds of the earth. I am not one of the nophelim.” He made the ‘o’ long.

“The Fallen Ones.” The old man switched from French to ancient Hebrew. “Then you understand Hebrew?”

Lukeios answered in the same language. “Fluently. I spent many years in the region.”

They switched back to French. “In Latin, I think that Venus as the morning star was called Lucifer, now thought to be one of the nophelim.” The old man spoke carefully, as if his words might cause offence.

Lukeios chuckled softly. “The Romans called me Lucifer, that is true. But stories of my fall are false. I bring knowledge to people, and fundamentalist Christians were not happy with that.”

“Then you are a Malach Adonai, a messenger of the Lord?”

“No, your forefathers declared that I was one of the b’nai Elohim. I do not claim that, I regard myself as a shepherd, so I call myself Lukeios – Light Bearer, and Wolfsbane.”

The old Rabbi looked carefully at Lukeios’ face, studying it. “A shepherd carrying a burning brand, fire to drive away the wolves. You have that about you. How old are you?”

“I am not sure. I am older than the Egyptians, but my memory grows hazy.”

The old Rabbi sighed. “I am not sure what I expected, but I believe you. I will tell the others that God worked a miracle, and that you were the intermediary.”

“That is a truth your people can accept.”

The old man nodded. “One more thing. I feel we have met before, but surely I would remember your face.”

Lukeios smiled fondly like a father looking at his young son. “You have, Abraham. We spent many years together in Prague from 1261. We both wore different bodies. One day you will remember and understand.” The old man said nothing, but looked thoughtful.

“Luc, are they truly safe here? The Boche must know about your chateau.” the priest asked.

“Father Marcel, our parish priest. Rabbi Abraham.” Lukeios introduced the pair. “The Germans know we exist, they have maps showing that, but after they killed Collette’s parents they cannot find the chateau or the village. Only I can conduct them here.”

“I have known there was something strange about you since then. Who or what are the bene elohim?”

“B’nai Elohim, there’s an apostrophe after the ‘b’. Rabbi, you might be able to explain things better.”

“Hmm, I suppose you want a short explanation. The b’nai Elohim are ‘the sons of God’, special beings who go about carrying out God’s work. They are not angels, usually they are humans. They may or may not have special powers. Think of Moses, or Ezekial or Elijah for example. Monsieur Lukeios is able to confound and command the Germans.”

“You could stop the war.” Marcel suggested.

“You over estimate my powers.” Lukeios replied. “Perhaps I could kill Hitler, and maybe the war would stop, but I think not - it has a momentum of its own. Besides, I do not kill. If I commanded Hitler to stop the war his supporters would likely kill him anyway. Nazism is not a disease that can infect you all unawares, it is a poison that one must drink willingly and I do not interfere with free will.”

He turned towards the chateau. “Now, I think we should go inside. We have accommodation to see to, and I am sure the people are hungry. I have arranged chicken soup, with boiled chicken and vegetables to follow. I hope that will prove acceptable. Tomorrow you must advise the kitchen staff on how to cater for your dietary laws. I do not expect payment for my hospitality, but a little volunteer work would be appreciated. Marcel, I am sure you and Abraham and I will have many things to discuss, but that is always better with a full stomach.”