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His method was as ingenious as it was simple. He ran a large gang of thieves who stole on his behalf. He would then take possession of the stolen goods and wait for the various thefts to be announced in the local news-sheets. When this happened, he would announce that his “thief takers” had recovered the stolen items. These were duly returned to their rightful owners, but only on the payment of a substantial reward. Wild used this money to recompense his “thief takers” for their criminal activity, while retaining a substantial share for himself.

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Trutz was unaware of the state-sponsored programme known as Lebensborn. Its aim was to raise the birth rate of blond-haired, blue-eyed “Aryan” children through interbreeding. Racially “pure” women were chosen to sleep with SS officers in the hope that they would become pregnant.

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It is estimated that some 20,000 babies were bred during the twelve years of the Third Reich, principally in Germany and Norway. Many were adopted after the war, by which time the records of their birth had been destroyed. To this day the majority have never been able to discover the terrible truth about their conception and birth.

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A possible explanation for Beria’s behaviour is to be found hidden in the post-mortem report on Stalin’s corpse, a report that has only recently become available. The doctors who conducted the autopsy said that Stalin had suffered a haemorrhage in the brain, the cardiac muscles and the lining of the stomach. They concluded that his known high blood pressure had triggered the haemorrhages. But modern analysis suggests otherwise. High blood pressure might indeed have caused a brain haemorrhage, but it would not have caused Stalin to vomit blood and nor would it have necessarily provoked the gastrointestinal haemorrhage. A far more likely trigger for such internal bleeding is the tasteless transparent chemical warfarin, a blood thinner, which had just become available in 1950s Russia. It is now believed that Lavrenti Beria administered warfarin to Stalin’s diluted wine on the evening of 28 February.

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He produced a zeedonk (a zebra-donkey cross), a zubron (a bison-cow cross) and endless hybrids of rabbits, rats and mice. By the early 1920s, he was convinced that the blood cells of humans were so similar to those of chimpanzees, gorillas and orang-utans that producing an ape-man hybrid would also be possible.

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Ivanov was bitterly disappointed: the governor general had dealt a big blow to his experiment. A further setback came when his three female chimps failed to conceive. Soon afterwards, the disappointed Russian professor left Guinea for good. He departed with twenty chimps; they were to stock a new ape laboratory being established in the Soviet republic of Abkhazia.

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Although Ivanov's work came to an end with his death in 1932, it was not quite the end of the story. Indeed one aspect of the professor's work continues to this day. His primate laboratory still exists in the republic of Abkhazia, where it is now part of the Abkhazian Academy of Science, although it struggles from chronic underfunding. After an exchange of scientists in the 1950s, Professor Ivanov's bizarre laboratory-cum-zoo also became the model for the US National Primate Research Centers programme.

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The carnage caused by the attack was spectacular. Six people were killed by the grenades and gunfire and a further forty were wounded. Amazingly, none of the gangsters was killed. The stolen money was taken to a safe house where it was quickly sewn into a mattress and later smuggled out of Georgia. Neither Stalin nor any of the others involved in the heist were ever caught, even though scores of detectives were sent to investigate. It was the perfect robbery. But if the crime itself had proved a spectacular success for Stalin, the aftermath was not so triumphant. The stolen roubles included a large number of 500-rouble notes whose serial numbers were known to the authorities. It proved impossible to cash them. Nevertheless, the robbery was extraordinarily audacious and was to be the making of Stalin. He had proved himself a skilful organizer of men and utterly ruthless in action.

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The Hindenburg disaster was never satisfactorily explained, despite numerous investigations. It marked the end of travel by airsh

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The water was contaminated by turtle blood and offal and would be poisonous if drunk. Aware of this, she insisted her family take enemas using tubes made from the rungs of a ladder. She knew that if the water was taken rectally, the poisons wouldn't work their way into the digestive system.

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Heim gave him anaesthetic, ostensibly so that he could operate on his foot. But no sooner was the man asleep than he cut him open, took apart one kidney, removed the second and then castrated him. He then cut off the man's head so that he could use the skull as a paperweight.

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He knew if he was to avoid capture, he needed to construct a convincing new identity for himself. He changed his name to Tarek Hussein Farid and converted to Islam. Each day, he would walk through the Egyptian bazaars to the Al-Azhar mosque. He would also frequent the famous Groppi cafe, where he bought cakes and sweets for the children of his friends.

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The prosecution witnesses shed much light on his regime of monstrous cruelty. One of his former cooks, Philippe Linguissa, recalled how he had been ordered to prepare a special feast for Bokassa. The main course was a human corpse that the emperor kept stored in his walk-in refrigerator. ###
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On 12 June 1987, Bokassa was found guilty of all charges, with the exception of those relating to cannibalism. There was insufficient evidence to convict him of eating his own subjects. Nor was it ever determined whether or not he served human flesh at a banquet held for French president Giscard d'Estaing. The ex-emperor wept silently as Judge Franck sentenced him to death.

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Hitler had already appeared in court in the previous September. On that occasion, he had been called as witness in a case against two army officers who had joined the Nazi Party. (At the time, it was forbidden for army officers to be party members.) Under oath, Hitler had contended that his party operated in accordance with the law. He described its paramilitary wing as an organization of “intellectual enlightenment”.

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He must surely have known that the writing was on the wall. On the night of the Reichstag fire, less than a month after Hitler became Chancellor, Litten was arrested and incarcerated in Spandau Prison. For the next five years he was brutally beaten, interrogated and tortured. In the summer of 1937 he was sent to Dachau concentration camp and realized that the end was near. On 5 February 1938, in the middle of the night, he took his own life.

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Gabaldon was as nervous as he was excited. “If I pull this off,” he said to himself, “it will be the first time in World War II that a lone Marine Private captures half a Japanese regiment by himself.”

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Wernher von Braun was to prove PO Box 1142’s most controversial prisoner, especially when it was discovered that he had used forced labour from Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp when building his deadly V1 and V2 rockets. He could have been tried and condemned at the Nuremberg Tribunal. Instead, the American government decided that his extraordinary brain was too useful for him to be put on trial. He was given a false employment history and his Nazi Party membership expunged from the public record. He was then given security clearance to work in the United States. Wernher von Braun was eventually given a leading job at NASA. He would reward his adopted country by designing the Saturn V rocket that launched the crew of Apollo 11 on their successful mission to the moon.

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The biggest winner in the whole saga was the Louvre itself. It now found itself with a world-famous painting to hang on its walls. Vincenzo Peruggia’s extraordinary theft had turned the Mona Lisa from a moderately well-known painting into an internationally recognized masterpiece.