

Prüfungsteil B

Task 2

Text

Extract from the novel: **“Origin”**

As the ancient cogwheel train clawed its way up the dizzying incline, Edmond Kirsch surveyed the jagged mountaintop above him. In the distance, built into the face of a sheer cliff, the massive stone monastery seemed to hang in space, as if magically fused to the vertical precipice. [...]

5 When the train reached the mountaintop, Kirsch saw a solitary figure waiting for him on the platform. The wizened skeleton of a man was draped in the traditional Catholic purple cassock and white rochet¹, with a zucchetto² on his head. Kirsch recognized his host's rawboned features from photos and felt an unexpected surge of adrenaline.

Valdespino is greeting me personally.

10 Bishop Antonio Valdespino was a formidable figure in Spain – not only a trusted friend and counselor to the king himself, but one of the country's most vocal and influential advocates for the preservation of conservative Catholic values and traditional political standards.

“Edmond Kirsch, I assume?” the bishop intoned as Kirsch exited the train.

“Guilty as charged,” Kirsch said, smiling as he reached out to shake his host's bony hand.

15 “Bishop Valdespino, I want to thank you for arranging this meeting.”

“I appreciate your *requesting* it.” The bishop's voice was stronger than Kirsch expected – clear and penetrating, like a bell. “It is not often we are consulted by men of science, especially one of your prominence. This way, please.”

20 As Valdespino guided Kirsch across the platform, the cold mountain air whipped at the bishop's cassock.

“I must confess,” Valdespino said, “you look different than I imagined. I was expecting a scientist, but you're quite ...” He eyed his guest's sleek Kiton K50³ suit and Barker⁴ ostrich shoes with a hint of disdain. “‘Hip,’ I believe, is the word?”

Kirsch smiled politely. *The word “hip” went out of style decades ago.*

25 “In reading your list of accomplishments,” the bishop said, “I am still not entirely sure what it is you do.”

“I specialize in game theory and computer modeling.”

“So you make the computer games that the children play?”

30 Kirsch sensed the bishop was feigning ignorance in an attempt to be quaint. More accurately, Kirsch knew, Valdespino was a frighteningly well-informed student of technology and often warned others of its dangers. “No, sir, actually game theory is a field of mathematics that studies patterns in order to make predictions about the future.”

“Ah yes, I believe I read that you predicted a European monetary crisis some years ago? When nobody listened, you saved the day by inventing a computer program that pulled the EU back from the dead. What was your famous quote? ‘At thirty-three years old, I am the same age as Christ when He performed His resurrection.’”

35 Kirsch cringed. “A poor analogy, Your Grace. I was young.”

“Young?” The bishop chuckled. “And how old are you now ... perhaps forty?”

“Just.”

40 The old man smiled as the strong wind continued to billow his robe.

“Well, the meek were supposed to inherit the earth, but instead it has gone to the young – the technically inclined, those who stare into video screens rather than into their own souls. I must