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But Some Did

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Prologue/Epilogue

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Berlin Plötzensee

Why return? Why brood again over their story of futile sacrifice and murder, ponder yet again the thin line that separates evil from high-minded ideals? Who am I or who do I think I am, Jonah on his way to Tarshish?

Come, let them lie. Let them rest from their labors, let the city crumble around them like Nineveh on the banks of the Tigris, desert owls and screech owls rest on her ruins, they hoot in her windows, and ravens hop on her thresholds –

I came by bus, via Potsdamer Platz, Checkpoint Charlie, the Topography of Terror. A bit of scenic time travelling, to start where they ended: House Three of Plötzensee Prison, the House of the Dead, crouching beneath the furry midwinter sky, silent, tense, breathing in troubled sleep. Listen: echos of footfalls in empty halls –

But there is nothing here, just a shed in a courtyard. Just heaps of snow like dirty styrofoam, and the wind, an iron broom sweeping in straight off the Siberian plains, through this post-utopian landscape of industrial estates, wholesale warehouses, allotment colonies west of the Berlin-Spandau Canal and north of the Autobahn 100. Here everyone was a stranger, no matter where they came from: the Soviet Union, occupied Europe, the Fatherland itself. Or Milwaukee, Wisconsin, like the woman in cell 25: Mildred Harnack-Fish, wife of Arvid Harnack, who is said to have copied out Whitman's poem on Lincoln's death in her last hours. From memory, of course. It's useful, knowing stuff by heart, when you find yourself in confined circumstances, where all you have is what you brought with you, and it wouldn't be your pockets where you'd start looking.

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd

And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,

I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring –

They probably gave her a stack of letter blanks: precious paper, normally meted out one sheet at a time, and ruled, to facilitate the censor's work by limiting the amount of words a prisoner could write to a loved one. She would have been allowed to write all she wanted though. What did it matter? Her outpourings would seep away unnoticed. Or should they have let her write to her family, to America?

So there she sits, on a low stool, with the bulb burning, burning, day and night, shooing away the language of her executioners with an American poem, German words buzzing in her head like blue bottle flies. Soon the old cobbler will appear with his scissors, the wooden clogs and grey *Kittel* for her walk to the shed. She has heard of him, all the women have: He cuts off your hair before they cut off your head. It's a complex machinery, the legal system, many small wheels have to whirr faithfully for the whole to work. Of course, losing one's golden tresses might be considered a minor inconvenience, under the circumstances. But ask yourself, mull it over: Why would her hair be in the way? Will the blade be that blunt?

She is long past wincing. She is crying, effortlessly, steadily, a Niobe who has never had any children: a blight, turned into a blessing by events.

Which means things could be worse. She tells herself that she can live with having to die, it's the loneliness of these last hours that's killing her. Does she look back? Does she look for meaning, for the figurative red thread in the deadly knot?

All words reveal their true source now: the hangman's dictionary.

She sits on her stool, holding an orange. A parting gift from the canteen operator, brought to her by the prison chaplain. Decent men, those two. They pity her. They hope the fruit will comfort her, maybe take her back to her childhood in Wisconsin: a school girl, fairy tale blond, thin body wrapped in her sisters' discarded clothes like in the threadbare robes of royalty in exile. Daydreams of chivalric adventure, of songs in rose bowers, literary fame. Up turns a stranger, a jurist and economist-to-be, blown over the Seven Seas by a Rockefeller Fellowship: her brother in spirit, his hair fair like hers, a questing knight's golden helmet. O for the transforming powers of the imagination! Of nature, poetry, romance. Of violence. Yes. Quite a transformation. Rock to dust, bones to water. She has been crying forever, it seems, her tears almost oily, the residue at the bottom of her cup of sorrows.

The Prison Chaplain stands by. Harald Poelchau: He does not try to offer vaporous comfort. He has just told Mildred Harnack that her husband is dead. Naturally, she wanted to know how he died, and he has told her, although in truth, that is impossible. Death aims at the animal, the wordless core.

Besides, Poelchau was not present at the execution. He was barred from entering the shed. A novelty, this. Until December 22, 1942, it has always been the Plötzensee Chaplain's right and duty to accompany the condemned to the last: to stand with him before the black curtain, which suddenly flies open; the guillotine is revealed; the executioner's assistants grab the victim, shove him to the ground and onto the instrument; the blade rushes down, the head drops, blood gushes, the legs kick and send the wooden clogs flying.

This is not how Arvid Harnack died though. Last summer, at the crest of the wave of arrests, prisoners from a Sachsenhausen satellite camp were brought in to fit the shed with a steel beam, to which eight butcher's hooks are attached. Again and again, Poelchau's mind has since returned to that number. Of the eleven men and women that were executed on December 22, five died on those hooks. Not simultaneously, though, of course not; Poelchau might almost be tempted to say: God forbid. Arvid Harnack, Harro Schulze-Boysen and the others were led into the shed one by one, at intervals of five minutes exactly. Whereas for the guillotine, three are deemed sufficient. Poelchau has not approached Röttgers about this abysmal difference. The executioner lives in Moabit, he runs a carting business on the side. His assistants are butchers' apprentices. It helps with the job, knowing about vertebrae.

So, Arvid Harnack in his last hour was calm, composed, almost serene. This is what Poelchau says, as he must recount the story once more, and every time as if for the first time. He tells Arvid's widow: At your husband's request, we recited Goethe's *Prologue in Heaven*: the part about the Sun's ancient song among the fraternal choirs of the spheres, the thunderous completion of his predetermined journey.

Knowing the verses by heart, they spoke them in unison, prayerlike. In earlier days, Poelchau would have

stayed on afterwards, and he does not mention now that he didn't. But he did make it back in time to walk with Arvid across the courtyard, like he had with Harro Schulze-Boysen, who had gone first.

,Libs and Harro,' says Mildred. ,Did they get to see each other again?'

Poelchau says, ,No.'

She nods. Her wedding ring, the state will melt down. Arvid's last letter, she has entrusted to her cellmate, who was brought to Ravensbrück concentration camp this morning.

My dearly beloved heart –

Mildred knows the letter by heart. Arvid's words are safe, they will stay with her until the end. What she has lost is his familiar hand.

Do you remember our first serious conversation? It has been my guiding star ever since. Do you remember Picnic Point, when we got engaged? I sang with joy the next morning in the club ... The strain of our work did not make our life an easy one, and sometimes we were in danger of being crushed, but we stayed who we were, living human beings. I realized that in full when the big elk appeared before us this year – before that, you had risen from the sea like a goddess. My deepest wish is for you to be happy when you think of me.

When I think of you, I am.

Arvid

1

Mildred Fish and Arvid Harnack, 1926 to 1932

Lake Mendota, Wisconsin, June 1926

So: A morning in early summer, forever after endowed with mythical force. They have rented a canoe. The water is calm, intensely blue. They are making for Picnic Point, the tip of the peninsula along Lake Mendota's south shore. They are both paddling, with him in the stern. Her back is slender, straight yet supple, effortlessly poised. From time to time, she half turns her head, pointing out some landmark, or a jumping fish. The first time he saw her, she stood in front of a class, reciting something he didn't understand. It was his first week on Campus, and he had stumbled into the room by mistake. With a small nod, she acknowledged the interruption. He should have attended Professor Common's lecture on the history of labor in the United States, but hesitated to leave. The young lecturer turned her head this way and that; light streamed in through the high windows; the sun gleamed on her very fair hair. He still could not make out what language she was speaking. It sounded a bit like English, but obviously wasn't. Then it came to him that it must be old Greek. The sound was just a disguise, the costume of a familiar friend: The Iliad. He was startled, delighted, filled with sudden confidence. The lecturer's voice was soft, yet precise; her strange pronunciation lent fresh glamour to the ancient war.

As the students filed from the room, he approached her to apologize for the disturbance. Recognizing his

accent, she answered him in German, to which he replied in English, to which she responded in German, until their exercise in politeness made them both laugh. Her eyes were large; her manner, frank. He asked permission to accompany her to – well, wherever it was that she was going next.

This is their fourth meeting. They have pulled up their boat, and spread their blanket under a tree. The Point is private property, she says, but trespassers have always been tacitly tolerated; it is to be hoped that it will stay that way, even though the new owner is turning the old farmhouse into a mansion. She talks easily, confidently, with intelligence and wit. Her shawl has a pattern of roses, faded to shades of dusty mauve from having been laundered too often; he has gathered that the family is poor. Her parents separated when she was twelve, at her mother's request, as she emphasizes defiantly, as if this might serve to protect someone. Her mother raised all her four girls by herself. Her father froze to death in an empty horse stable, 1918 at the end of the Great War.

Arvid's own father drowned himself in a river in 1914, a few months before that war was to begin. Of course, such similarities of biography are just random coincidences, endowed with substance by the needs of romance. Arvid is fully aware of that; he is a rational person, no gushy fool. But there are other, deeper, consonances. Under Professor Commons, Arvid researches the history of pre-marxist socialism in America, or utopian socialism, as Marx would have it. Mildred wants to teach literature, she says, but not in order to burden her students with more dead knowledge: The significance of education should lie in an increase in man of the consciousness that he is alive, and free to lead a life above the usual humdrum. A self-reliant individual has the power to change society, to help create a world that guarantees every person's inalienable right to participate in everything a community has to offer: work, art, joy, spiritual growth. Socialism has done good service in setting men to thinking how certain civilizing benefits, now only enjoyed by the opulent, can be enjoyed by all: That is from Emerson. The greatest country, the richest country, is not that which has the most capitalists, monopolists, immense grabbings, vast fortunes, but the land in which there are the most homesteads, freeholds — where all men have enough — a modest living— and no man is made possessor beyond the sane and beautiful necessities: that is Walt Whitman.

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!

Allons! through struggles and wars!

The air smells of grass, and faintly of the lake. It is a pleasant smell, tinny, clean. The water makes soft, smacking sounds, like an infant with epicurean tendencies. Mildred has packed a small lunch of apples and eggs. In her white dress, in the dappled shade, she is a painting the name of which he cannot now remember. Possibly Monet. Birds in bold colors sit in the tree above them: Cardinal, she says, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch. He tries to commit their names to memory; already he has stopped wondering what they might be in German. He knows she thinks that they have met at an inopportune moment: she is trying to get over some heartbreak, some twit that has left her for somebody else. He does not think it prerequisite to overly brood on this. He can easily imagine her laughing and chatting with his mother and sisters. He wonders how one can be completely at peace, and simultaneously, almost wild with joy.

He will marry her. The intention, considered, and considered again in the nocturnal silence of his dorm room, reveals itself to him here in the sunlight as fact. All that is needed is for her to say yes. All that is needed is for him to ask, and he will, today, now, within the next moment.



Mildred?

And she will say yes.

Yes yes yes yes!

He inhales deeply, overwhelmed by a radiant sense of urgency.

They marry on August 7, 1926.

7. August 1932

Hasenheide 61, Berlin-Neukölln

Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn · des solt dû gewis sîn ·

She found the poem on her desk this morning, next to a bouquet of roses that Arvid put into a tin for scouring sand. The vases are not yet unpacked, any more than the boxes of books the men dragged up here to the fourth floor the day before yesterday. What does it take for a place to feel like home? In their last abode, the tiny, idyllic apartment in the Waldsiedlung Zehlendorf, birds sang in front of their windows, and in the evening they always went for a run in the forest together. But on their return, they had to beware of Schulze, who as often as not would jump out of his den in order to assail Arvid, who doesn't keep it a secret that he despises Schulze's savior Adolf Hitler.

Here in Neukölln, people greet with their fists like decent folks. Mildred stands in front of her wardrobe. Not that it's a matter of great importance which of her worn robes she will wear today, but trivial things need deciding as well, and this is their sixth wedding anniversary. A moment of singular balance: They have now spent quite exactly the same amount of time in her country as in his. From now on, as Arvid has rather ruefully pointed out this morning, proportions will relentlessly shift to the detriment of America.

But it was always understood that they would live in Germany. Mildred isn't homesick, not at all, she is American through and through: a pilgrim, a descendant of pioneers who set out to settle an unknown continent, and never did she feel closer to this legacy than on that June day in 1929, when she herself first set foot on the soil of an unknown land.

That Arvid was there, on the quay in Bremerhaven, after all those months they had spent apart, reversed the arrow of her journey, turning her trip abroad into a homecoming. Also, he had thought of a special treat for her: Before they would resume their studies in Jena, he would take her to the Black Forest.

This was Germany as she had imagined it, the country of fairy tales and poetry: The woods were filled with medieval mystique. White fog lay like gauze over evening meadows. They picked wild raspberries on the walls of castle ruins, dined on smoked ham, rye bread, and drank beer from old steins. In country inns, they slept under feather beds, with geraniums in window boxes. In one village, they discovered a museum for clocks, where mechanical cuckoos indicated the full hours at vastly different times. Every day, Arvid presented her with some new, wonderful word: Mondenschein. Morgenfrische. Wanderlust. Weltschmerz.

In America, he had sometimes been arrogant, and quick to take offence, whenever he felt that the cultural superiority of Europe was not taken for granted. Here he was calmer, less sarcastic. He had often roamed the Black Forest with his father, the Goethe scholar Professor Otto Harnack. When he thought of his father, this was how he remembered him: walking stick in hand, dark raincoat billowing behind him, and on his head an artist's floppy hat, that his wife had given him.

They had met in Rome. Clara had taken on a job as governess in Florence, in order to be independent from her parents, who were less than happy about their daughter's plan to become a painter. Otto was twenty years her senior, an idealist, a melancholy man at odds with reality.

„My mother likes calling him a Tasso-Natur,“ Arvid said. „You know, Goethe's play. I want to be free in thinking and in poetry! / In acting, the world limits us enough. – I always sensed his relief, when we finally passed the last houses on our hikes, and the woods closed around us.“

From their bench, they could see the summit of the Feldberg behind the sea of treetops. Mildred took Arvid's hand. He squeezed her fingers.

„I want to think it was like that for him at the end,“ Arvid said. „When he stood there, on the banks of the Neckar. When he decided to take his life. That he wasn't desperate, but glad to lay down the burden. At least he did not have to witness the war, and its bitter aftermath Our catastrophic defeat. My father loved Germany above all else.“

She let a moment pass, then said, „And your mother got you through the war.“

„Not just us.“ He laughed, shaking his head. „She constantly took in all sorts of needy strangers. Single mothers, impoverished widows. Scrawny children, that slept in her laundry basket, or in the drawers of her dresser. As if the four of us had not been trouble enough. But as you say, women probably draw their power from sources not even available to us men. Well, you'll see. You'll soon get to know her now.“

„I hope so much that they will like me,“ Mildred says. „That they don't have silent misgivings because I'm American.“

In Clara Harnack's garden house in Jena the table was set for coffee and cake. Arvid's sisters Inge and Angela had come to examine her new sister-in-law, even sixteen-year-old Falk had been set free from his boarding school in Weimar. He had no memory of his father; in everything he did, he looked up to his older brother, who had now brought home this exotic wife.

„Mildred, do you know that Arvid was arrested in Croatia as a Hungarian spy? He had floated down the Drau on a raft, to meet Stjepan Radic. Do you know Radic? The Croatian peasant leader.“

Inge, the older of Arvid's sisters, laid a hand on Falk's shoulder. „Maybe Mildred is not quite as delighted about her husband being a former prisoner as you seem to think, Falk.“

Everybody laughed. Falk blushed, but did not relent. „Why, what about it? He escaped, of course, with arms smugglers, across the Black Sea to Turkey.“

‚Well, maybe it wasn’t all that dramatic,‘ Arvid said. ‚And Mildred knows these stories of course, Falk. But yes, I was hoping for a meeting with Radic. I thought I might learn something from him that could help us, here in Germany. He fought for an independent Republic of Croatia, citing Wilson’s right of a people to self-determination, until he was murdered by a Serb fascist last year.‘

‚Arvid fought for Germany, as well,‘ Falk said. ‚In Upper Silesia. He ran away from home to join a Freikorps.‘

‚Not that he had much of a chance to commit anything heroic,‘ Clara Harnack said. ‚He was not eighteen yet, so they sent him back to me straight away.‘

‚Our Mother is a pacifist,‘ Inge said. ‚She even traveled to the Women’s Peace Congress in The Hague in 1915. She was lucky she wasn’t imprisoned as a traitor to the war effort.‘

‚It was the same everywhere in Europe,‘ Clara said. ‚Our governments wouldn’t issue us passports, England suspended ferry services, the French couldn’t make it at all. But the Americans came, despite the submarine war in the Atlantic. Not that we made much of a difference in the end. But at least we proved that women could maintain mutual friendship, even in times of hate between nations.‘

‚That terrible war,‘ Inge said. ‚Did you read Remarque’s novel, Mildred, All Quiet on the Western Front? I can lend it to you, though only in German, of course.‘

They went on to discuss Brecht’s Threepenny Opera, the revolutions of 1848 and 1918, Henry David Thoreau’s protest against the Mexican War, the building projects of Bruno Taut, German descendants of radicals in Mildred’s hometown Milwaukee, and the sad fate of the American negroes. Was it true that these poor people had to use separate railway cars and buses? That if you sat down with one of them at a restaurant table, both of you would be refused service?

Arvid had warned Mildred: They didn’t tiptoe around divisive topics, the Germans. Certainly this held true for his family. Mildred looked at him: eldest brother, son, husband, leaning back contentedly, letting his loving gaze wander from one blond head to the next, held in place safely by the net his women formed.

So, has Mildred arrived in Germany? Does she feel at home in her husband’s country?

Mildred looks around her. Arvid’s roses, his poem magnanimously share their beauty with the bare room.

Dû bist mîn, ich bin dîn · des solt dû gewis sîn

dû bist beslozen · in mînem herzen ·

verlorn ist das sluzzelîn · dû muost ouch immêr darinne sîn ·

You are mine, I am yours, of this you can be sure, you are locked into my heart, the key has been lost, you will never escape –

Translating destroys the binding spell, of course. Learning a language is a strange thing. You try to master it, to establish your domination, but even as you celebrate your first triumphs, the language begins to rebel. It

won't accept your concepts, it will not provide exotic new clothes for your worn ideas.

dû bist beslozen · in mînem herzen ·

verlor'n ist das sluzzelîn

When Mildred recites the verses in her mind, the tenderly mischievous dungeon master appears before her, who wrote these lines at the time of Emperor Barbarossa. She demands of Mildred to merge with her. She gives her a choice: Change! Or stay forever a stranger.

But tonight Arvid and Mildred will speak English, as they do when they are alone. Friends from Madison are in town: Ernest L. Meyer, a columnist for the Capital Times, with his wife Dorothy. And Arvid has invited Egmont Zechlin to join them, who just spent quite some time in America thanks to a Rockefeller scholarship.

„German wine and German song“, says Egmont Zechlin, eyeing Mildred's arrangement of roses, glasses, and a plate with fine sandwiches from the restaurant downstairs. „What rare luxury, in these spartan times. I mostly eat at the American church, baked beans and bread for fifty pfennigs. Of course, the poor folks in the tent settlements cannot even afford that. They boil offal and bones, and pour the broth over stale bread. And things don't look that much brighter in America, either. Mildred, you'll excuse me?“ Egmont Zechlin throws off his jacket in a fit of rather premature abandon. „It's really unbearably hot today. That's something I liked about your country, Mr. Meyer. The informality. Well! Let's raise our glasses to our hosts, and their jubilee.“

Mildred passes the sandwiches around. Arvid leans over to Ernie Meyer.

„We met in Marburg, Dr. Zechlin and I. We both worked on our habilitation dissertations. Are you still sufficiently familiar with German customs? If you want to become a professor in Germany - “

„Who says anything about wanting?“ Zechlin says. „Dr. Harnack is not given any choice. Everyone in his family is a professor. Very important people, German professors. Very highly regarded. To this day, the portrait of Harnack's great-grandfather Professor von Liebig graces the windows of grocery stores, to vouch for the quality of the products.“

„Zechlin – please. Only because Liebig invented a meat extract.“

Dorothy Meyer, slim, dark, in a sleek modern dress that Mildred has quietly admired since their arrival, is floating from window to window.

„Your new place is really very nice, Mildred. Such a splendid view, of the city, and the park. And this,“ she has stopped in front of the sideboard, over which one of Clara's paintings is hanging, „this is an extraordinary picture.“

„My mother-in-law did it“, says Mildred. „It shows the shifting dunes on the Curonian Spit, in the Memelland.“

„Memel is now part of Lithuania,“ says Egmont Zechlin. „Thanks to the Treaty of Versailles, that separated it from East Prussia. Without referendum, mind you. Well, I guess the results were foreseeable, and not to the liking of the Victor countries. In West and East Prussia, more than ninety percent voted to remain German.“

They could hardly dismiss that, not without exposing their constant talk of democracy and self-determination of the people as hogwash. But in Upper Silesia, where Germany won by only sixty percent, they simply ignored the result. So much for the League of Nations, and the glorious West. But I do not want to offend America as an associate power of the Entente. Guest rights are holy in Germany.'

,'Dear Zechlin,' Arvid says, 'Ernie Meyer's father was a native German. He was editor of Milwaukee's largest German newspaper, until Anti-German sentiment did away with it in 1917. And Ernie himself was imprisoned as a conscientious objector.'

,'Why die for the interests of big money?' Ernie Meyer, leaning back, long legs stretched out, nods towards Arvid. 'Nobody else benefits from wars, or the chest-beating jingoism that precedes it.' 17

,'Harnack, you yourself fought in the Freikorps in Upper Silesia,' Egmont Zechlin says.

,'Well yes,' Arvid says, 'for a few weeks. An act of romanticism really. We in the Freikorps did not see ourselves as soldiers. We were warriors, outlaws, revenants of the Black Legion, restaging the German Wars of Liberation. Also, civil life held no great promises at the time.'

,'That part at least,' says Zechlin, 'has not changed. Have you heard that the city is setting up tables and benches in the Arbeitsämter, so that the despairing masses of the unemployed may play cards, rather than beat up the civil servants?'

Dorothy is still looking at Clara's picture.

,'Have you ever been there? In this little village maybe, over there in the corner?'

,'That is Preil,' Mildred says. 'The fishermen and their families built it, after the dunes swallowed their homes. We haven't been there, but we really want to go. Some of these dunes are more than 50 metres high. Just imagine, living under such constant threat. During the day, you'd probably be too busy to give it much thought, but at night you'd hear the wind, blowing and blowing, and the sand, the sound of the sand falling on your roof -'

,'It's about time for it to settle down now,' Arvid says. 'Not only the sand, but the whole Memelland. In Jena, it leaned against the table of our one room, when we went to Gießen, it was temporarily returned to my mother, and even here in Berlin, its location changed already several times. It's time to make fast, find a little permanence.'

,'But how?' Ernie Meyer says. 'The multinational empires have fallen apart. So with this vicious idea of the self-determination of the people, how is Europe ever to settle down? Who's to do the determining? In places like East Galicia and Volhynia, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews have always lived door to door. The respective majorities try to prove their claim to this or that exact strip of land by giving themselves great sounding names, but The West Ukrainian People's Republic lasted for five months. Since the end of the War, thousands have bled in the Polish-Ukrainian war, the Ukrainian-Soviet war, the Polish-Soviet war. And the population of Western European countries is far from uniform either. As long as nation-states persist, the call for self-determination of peoples will inevitably equal murder.'

„But at least, most people can appeal to one or the other of those nation-state, and claim its protection,“ Dorothy says. „Except for the Jews. I was seven when we fled to America during the Bialystok Pogroms, Mr. Zechlin. In the 17th century, Bialystok was a residence of the Polish nobility, then it became Prussian, Russian, German, and now it is Polish again, part of the Second Polish Republic. The only reliable fact during all that time was and is its Anti-Semitism.“

„It’s true,“ Egmont Zechlin says, „that until recently, America has reliably provided a safety valve for any excess immigration from Eastern Europe. But now, with the new American quota system, refugees are again piling up at our closed doors. It’s understandable, Mr. Meyer, naturally you try to limit immigration from southern and eastern Europe, in favor of the more Nordic races. You try to keep the country white. But isn’t it too late for that anyway, with all your many Negroes, that you ferried in yourselves? I must say the way you treat them exceeds anything that we here call our Jewish Question. After all, one in three Grunewald mansions belongs to a Jew, while your negroes are not even allowed into every charity’s soup kitchens. My students are quite justified to doubt your claims of equal rights and justice.“

„I do not want to deny the many grievances in America,“ Mildred says. „But using the Negro Question to ward off foreign criticism is unacceptable. Though I must admit I recently compared the Nazis to the Ku Klux Klan in a letter to my mother, to make her understand that bad people exist everywhere. I defend America against the Germans, and Germany against the Americans. It is an impossible situation.“

„What will you do if Hitler becomes Chancellor?“ Dorothy says.

„That won’t happen,“ says Mildred. „The NSDAP may be the biggest party right now, but they’ve missed the absolute majority again.“

„They could only come to power through force,“ Arvid says. „And that, Hitler has ruled out, after his botched coup. He has vowed to win by strictly legal means, and the left will know to prevent that.“

„The German Left is divided,“ Zechlin says.

„The German labor movement is the most powerful and best organized in the world,“ Arvid says. „It will not allow in Germany a regime like in Italy, of that I am sure. Our real problem are the conservatives. The Nazis are forcing them ever further to the right. The Nazis are calling the shots without even having to be in power themselves.“

„They can always count on the police,“ Mildred says. „I saw it myself. The Nazis stood in front of the Karl Liebknecht House, and the police let them through. They protected them and beat the workers with rubber truncheons.“

„Have you in America heard of the Altona Bloody Sunday?“ Arvid says. „The Nazis were permitted to march through Hamburg’s workers’ quarter, and afterwards, sixteen workers lay dead. But it was not the SA that murdered them. It was the police. And what did the Government do? They used this scandal as an opportunity to deprive Prussia’s Social Democratic government of its power, restrict fundamental rights in Germany’s largest country, and declare any protest or resistance as illegal. I predict that the 20th of July will go down in history as a day of fate. Now that Prussia is divested of power, nothing stands in the way any

more of creating Chancellor Papen's authoritarian-presidential republic.'

,'But what should the government have done?' Egmont Zechlin says. 'Nearly a hundred dead and over a thousand wounded within a single month. It cannot go on like that, somehow order has to be restored.'

,'The ban on SA and SS should never have been lifted,' Arvid says. 'But of course, Papen had to show himself grateful to Hitler for tolerating Papen's minority government.'

,'That is what I mean,' Mildred says. 'The Nazis do not even have to come to power themselves. The extreme right is already the strongest force in this country. The government uses the success of the Nazis as a legitimation to advocate ever more extreme positions and destroy the republic. And these things have a direct impact on people's lives. Arvid's cousin Ernst von Harnack has lost his position as Prussian Regierungspräsident, as well as the Prussian Minister of Education Adolf Grimme. It was Grimme who signed my teaching assignment for last year. It will of course now not be renewed.'

,'So Berlin University will lose you, Mrs Harnack?' Egmont Zechlin says. 'I am truly sorry to hear that. Though it is generally believed in conservative circles that it is absurd for a woman to hold a university post while so many men are out of work.' 21

,'German men, too, dear Zechlin, and my wife being a foreigner. But her lectures were a great success. Her students collected hundreds of signatures, but the petition was rejected, officially for fiscal reasons, but really, Schönemann is behind it. The new head of the American Institute. A convinced Nazi. He obviously heard that Mildred had recommended Marx to her students.'

,'Well,' Egmont Zechlin says, 'but Marx really is not part of the American canon. Even though Walter Duranty in the New York Times seeks to convince America of the benefits of Stalinism. I hope he won't succeed. Dear Mrs Harnack, my apologies if earlier in the evening I sounded like I wanted to criticize your country. Let me say I loved America. It's a great place. I've visited cowboys and Indians, I learned to throw a lasso from a galloping horse – no, really, even with only one arm, Mr. Meyer. I lost the other one in the War. And I got a driver's license and bought a car. A very nice Jew helped me with the negotiations, so of course I got it quite cheap. I drove all over the country, and everywhere I met lovely people. Their rotten political and social system is not their fault, after all.'

,'Who do you think will win the election?' Arvid says.

,'I hardly dare to make a guess. Roosevelt does not seem to have a very clear idea of what he means with his New Deal, so maybe it will be Hoover again, despite everything.'

Ernie Meyer sits up. 'No way. Hoover will never be forgiven. He set the army against the war veterans and their families, just because they demanded what was rightfully theirs, the bonuses they had been promised. America will never forget those pictures of tanks and gas, and women and children watching their shelters burn to the ground.'

,'Well, you're probably right,' Egmont Zechlin says. 'In times like ours, people prefer anything to the status quo. That's why they vote for Hitler. To be sure, Hitler and Roosevelt hold quite different views, but they both seem to have the gift to inspire big, heterogeneous masses, and instill their opponents with a hate of great

vehemence.'

‚But Mildred,‘ Dorothy says. ‚You have lost your job. What will you do now, in these dire times?‘

‚I admit that at first, I was a bit shaken,‘ Mildred says. ‚But who knows, it might be a blessing in disguise. I’ll start at the Municipal Evening High School in September. It is an institution for adults, similar to our Evening High Schools. It might offer even better, more direct ways of promoting change than university. The downside is that Arvid and I cannot go together to Russia now, as I have already to start at the end of the month.‘

‚You’re going to the Soviet Union?‘

‚Didn’t you know? I thought Arvid might have told you. I’ll travel with Intourist, the Soviet agency. Arvid has to go with the Arplan, of course, he is their First Secretary, after all. Oh. Right. The Arplan. Arbeitsgemeinschaft zum Studium der sowjetischen Planwirtschaft. It’s really been a while since we last met! In the Arplan, they study Soviet planned economy.‘

‚We have strong ties to the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin,‘ Arvid says. ‚Bessonov arranged the trip for us, an embassy member. We will visit factories and model farms, and meet some high-ranking intellectuals. It should be very interesting. The Soviet Union is the only economy that does not suffer from the depression. Look at their great projects, the Dnieper dam, the railway construction. In the east things go uphill, in the west, down.‘

‚So why are they all coming to us, then?‘ Zechlin says. ‚Look at Charlottenburg! What do you see? Blinis, Balalaikas, Russian newspapers. You might think you were in Leningrad.‘

‚Arvid’s grandfather was born in Leningrad,‘ Mildred says. ‚Or in St. Petersburg, as it was then called. He was a Baltic German, a professor at the University of Dorpat in Livonia, Livland of course being part of Imperial Russia at that time. Oh, to be able to see it all! Have you watched the great Russian movies, Dorothy? October? Earth? Ironstone, Battleship Potemkin?‘

‚No,‘ Dorothy says. ‚Sorry, but I do not share your enthusiasm, Mildred. The Black Hundred and the League of the Russian People wanted to exterminate all the Jews in Russia. The infamous Protocols of the Elders of Zion that the anti-Semites everywhere in the world make so much of were first published in a Petersburg newspaper. I will not forget that.‘

‚Yes, Dorothy. But it’s all different now. The Revolution abolished all anti-Semitic restrictions.‘

‚You really believe revolutions change people? Let me tell you, you’re wrong. I should know. The Jewish socialist intelligentsia is so very fond of the uneducated masses, the exploited peasants, the poor laborers, but it is right there, in these strata of society, that the blind fury of the People starts boiling. You take the lid off the pot, and hell erupts.‘

‚Dorothy. Especially for us women, the Soviet Union has made undeniable, huge progress. Birth control, abortion, the right to work in any desired area, even work again after giving birth. Divorce is a matter of minutes. Men contribute to supporting their children, both marital and extramarital. Where else is there such

a thing? You're sure to say I'm a victim of propaganda. But that's why I'm going there. To see for myself.'

‚I am interested in planned economy,‘ Arvid says. ‚Capitalism is at the end of its tether, that's obvious. Even if we get back on our feet this time, the next crisis is inevitable. Capitalism inevitably produces periods of extreme decline and misery after periods of boom. So we need to develop alternatives.‘

‚But to go looking for them in Russia, of all places?‘ Egmont Zechlin says. ‚To transform Germany into a Stalinist state?‘

‚Of course not. You misunderstand me on purpose. Geographically, economically, and intellectually, Germany's role is that of a mediator between East and West. For this, it must break away from the paternalism of the western states. Here the Soviet model can help us. I imagine a planned economy that in all other respects offers the highest degree of individual freedom. We in the Arplan are not all Communists. There are National Bolsheviks, all kinds of revolutionaries and intellectuals from left to right. The debates are lively and almost always enlightening.‘

‚I'm rather worried about these blurrings between right and left‘, Ernie Meyer says. ‚I'm afraid they only serve Hitler. He acts the good German who protects his followers from greedy bankers and corrupt elites as well as the proletarian masses. He saves the nation from international financial Jewry and Communism alike, who both know no allegiance to country.‘

‚Sorry, Ernie,‘ Mildred says. ‚But that is just another mendacious insinuation of the right. I just read the biography of Wera Figner. She and the Narodnaya Volya fought against the Czar, for free elections, freedom of expression, a constitution. For twenty years she was incarcerated in the Russian Bastille. This courageous woman had to endure it that all her comrades died, one after another, and when she herself was finally freed, she couldn't get used to life anymore. What strength these people must have possessed, what strong love for their country! That's why we're going to the Soviet Union, Arvid and I. The Soviet Union is the only country that strives to give everyone work and bread, and treat all people equally. It is an extraordinary experiment in charity, and in a few weeks I can tell all doubters: were you there? No. But I was. I saw it all, with my own eyes.‘

November 7, 1932, Soviet Embassy, Berlin

‚Well, Salomon, that's something, isn't it.‘ The publisher Ernst Rowohlt and his best selling author are standing in the Red Salon of the Soviet Embassy Unter den Linden. ‚Red Smyrna rugs, white marble. Is that the done thing, for the fifteenth anniversary of the October Revolution?‘

Ernst von Salomon looks around the room. ‚What should the Russians have done? Tear down the wall coverings for being tsarist?‘

‚You're right, Salomon. That would have been truly barbaric. Those page boys are definitely from the Esplanade. What would you guess how many people are here?‘

‚A thousand? Maybe more. I must say the wives of the Soviet diplomats have really exerted themselves to the utmost. I see mink stoles. The German comrades, on the other hand, do look a bit austere.‘ 26

‚Certainly, Salomon. Thou shalt know them by their shabby suits. After all, they need to distinguish themselves somehow from the generals and capitalists, with whom they are united in their struggle for dominion over the cold buffet.‘

‚What a splendid example of capitalist democracy. Caviar and Crimean champagne for all who are unscrupulous enough to fight for the lion's share.‘

Rowohlt treats the massive young man at his side to an echoing slap on the back. ‚Well then, come, Solomon. Let's greet the Harnacks. – Dear Doctor. Gnädige Frau. May I introduce Herr von Salomon to you, the author of Die Geächteten. You might have heard of him.‘

‚Of course we have,‘ Mildred says, startled, smiling. ‚The novel about the Freikorps in the Baltic and Upper Silesia. A great success. We are pleased to meet you.‘

Salomon indicates a bow.

‚Dr. Harnack has joined our house as well,‘ Rowohlt says. ‚He's an economist, an expert on the Soviet Union. He's just returned from the east, so I suggested he write a book about his experience.‘

‚Yes, Rowohlt does that,‘ Salomon says. ‚He suggests things. Didn't he suggest and suggest to me to turn my experiences into a novel? But only in Moabit did I finally find the peace and quiet necessary for true art.‘

Salomon makes no secret of his past. He has served a number of prison sentences: the last one for a faked attack on the Reichstag building meant as provocation of the government, the most spectacular one for his involvement in the assassination of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau, when he was sentenced to five years, but prematurely released.

‚The sin of bigotry is the one you can not accuse me of. I have never concealed the fact that I consider the liberal state incapable of overcoming the ideological division of the nation. It cannot rise above petty party quarrels, much less enforce the building of the new collective spirit that's so desperately needed. And yesterday's election has given me little reason to revise my opinion.‘

‚But the rise of the NSDP seems to be stopped, at last.‘ Sergei Bessonow has joined the group. ‚The Nazis lost 35 seats.‘

‚That's right, Mr. Bessonow!‘ Rowohlt rubs his hands. ‚If the Comintern did not devote all its resources to annihilating the moderate Left, we might soon be governed by a coalition of Communists and Social Democrats. Pardon, Communists and social fascists, I should have said. Well, let's drink the anniversary of the revolution.‘

Bessonov, invariably polite, beckons to a pageboy carrying a vodka carafe. ‚And may I ask how you liked my country, Mrs. Harnack? I believe we have not met since your trip to the Soviet Union.‘

‚Ms. Harnack has ventured out into wild Siberia all by herself,‘ Rowohlt says to Salomon.

‚The Soviet Union is strongly in favor of gender equality and women's rights,‘ Bessonov says, ‚I am confident

Ms. Harnack felt safe at all times.'

,'Absolutely,' Mildred says. 'I was very impressed by the great successes of your country. Of course, much remains to be done.'

,'Of course. Russia under the Tsars was an infinitely backward country, impoverished and oppressed. Time, patience and hard work are needed to raise our cultural level to those of countries that have been happier in the past.'

,'That was explained to me. I have to admit that I was a little bit upset at first. These women at the train stations, in Ukraine. We never stopped for long, but they stood in droves on the trains, wailing and weeping, and held up their children to us, as if they begged us to take them from them. Such wretched figures, and the poor little ones too weak to keep their heads upright. It looked for all the world like they were starving.'

Bessonov sighs, he raises his hands. 'There you have it. These people do not shy away from anything. In their obstinacy, they prefer to give away their own flesh and blood to strangers, rather than contribute to building our new state. You see, dear Mrs. Harnack, under the Czars these kulaks were rich. They were landowners who fed on the sweat of their slaving serfs. We expropriated them in the name of justice to distribute their land among the exploited masses of landless people. But until today they refuse to cooperate.'

,'That is exactly what our guides from Intourist said. I do understand all these evils are a legacy of the past. The seeds of the future need time to sprout. And they will. Everywhere in the country, I noticed the joy of the people, the confidence, the optimism. Everywhere, we met with openness and hospitality.'

,'How nice to hear that from you, ma'am. I trust that our two countries will find a way out of the great hardships of this time.'

2

Libertas and Harro Schulze-Boysen, 1932-1934

November 9, 1932, Berlin

Europe was the world's clock. It stopped.

A great phrase. It came to Harro when he jumped off the bus at Rosenbaum Jewellery and Watchmakers. The phrase is true, but more than that, it has momentum, rhythm: dada da dadada - daDA. Harro Schulze is striding across Leipziger Straße. He thinks of himself in the third person, in classic narrative form: Harro Schulze, tall, lean, angular, wearing a tuxedo and evening shoes though it is only late afternoon, is on his way to Café Adler on Dönhoffplatz, to attend a meeting with the supporters and readers of his magazine.

That's right, dear sirs and madams, ladies and gentlemen, esteemed readers: at the age of 23, Harro Schulze is the publisher of his own magazine. Call it chance, call it fate, call it a preordained course of events: It just so happened that Harro was in the right place at the right time. Franz Jung, political activist, writer, expressionist artist, founder of a match factory in the Soviet Union, and initiator and owner of the Opponent had to leave Germany in a bit of a hurry, over a problem with an illegal transfer of Reichsmark to France, for

the purpose of building a garden city by Corbusier. Which only goes to show what the System is for: prevent innovation, suffocate personal initiative, block bold ideas. So for the sake of friendship and the advancement of political truth, Harro decided to keep things up.

He jumped at the chance to abandon his studies. He never had any real taste for law. Who would, considering the state of country's legal system? Harro is proud to say he has found his vocation. His parents should be pleased. Instead, they are worried. They hold a formal education to be indispensable, by which they mean an academic degree, and Harro hasn't even trained as a newspaperman. It's their age, their generation. They are baffled by modern life: its insouciance, its vagaries, its cheerful heartlessness. In tumultuous times such as these, formalities are expendable. His mother of course, not being familiar with the writings of Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, or José Ortega y Gasset, can hardly be expected to grasp the splendors of blithe unconcern.

But Harro keeps his patience, he takes pains to explain: Call it the voice of God, of conscience, of imperious need, but everyone hears within him the summons of his own will and need, his own innermost commandment. A man, faced with the threat of amounting to nothing at all, will seize the chance to risk everything with a flourish of contempt.

Though as a matter of fact, Harro's magazine is doing just fine. Finances are still a bit tricky, but that is only to be expected, given the country's overall economic blight. Still and all, Harro is not out to amass any riches, though he trusts that by the end of this month, he will have come by a little cash. Opponent Groups are springing up all over the country. Meanwhile, could his parents send him forty-five Marks for telephone and rent? Maybe another five for public transportation. Fifty for food wouldn't come amiss.

Away with the letter, into the box on Dönhoffplatz, and on with waving coat laps, past the fountain already protected against the coming frosts, and through the doors into the warm and smoky Café Adler, where the Opponents are already waiting for him: students, artists, utopian poets, activists of the Youth Movement, a good dozen people nursing small beers, half empty cups of coffee.

Regine Schütt has kept a place for him by her side. The robber girl, pretty, a great buddy, and not normally dumb, only she has improvidently fallen in love with Harro.

To be honest, it's Harro's fault, too. He has not stopped this development early and firmly enough. Then again, why are women so thick? Can't they comprehend that a merry fencer is infinitely more attractive than a gloomy lump of clay?

But there are more important things to consider. Tonight's topic is *Volk oder Gesellschaft?*

What constitutes a community: persuasion or passport? What is a nation: One people, growing out of one common root, bound together into one single, unique body, through language, history, tradition, and above all, origin, through blood springing from one single fountainhead? Or a mixed population, loosely knit, detached from traditional and sentimental values, an organization without generally accepted or binding norms, held together by impersonal relationships and practical concerns?

It's a tune everyone is whistling, a theme taken straight out of one of the bibles of the Youth Movement, the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' tome *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.



Tönnies is Harro's great-uncle on his mother's side. His great-uncle on his father's side is Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, responsible for the pre-war buildup of the German Imperial Navy, its Commander during the first years of the War, founder and leader of the far-right Fatherland Party, and a staunch supporter of the concept of Peace-through-Victory, until Germany's disastrous defeat.

„What do you say about the result of the election, Harro?“

This from Kurt Schumacher, woodcarver and sculptor. At twenty-eight, he is a winner of the Grand Prize of the State Academy of Fine Arts, and has his own studio at the United State School of Arts. Solid Kurt, with his clean cut face, his pointed faun ears: He is a communist, but no blockheaded Party zombie. Harro does not have a best friend, of course not, he's no schoolgirl. But he is ready to be guided by others' colloquial needs. Why not let Kurt determine tonight's subject matter and talk about the Reichstag election?

„I didn't expect any great changes,“ Harro says. „So what if the Nazis lose a few votes, or one or the other party wins a few more? This so-called democracy was forced on us by the Victors, it did not grow organically from the people, so it's only natural that the parties don't represent the people's will, but the selfish interests of economic groups. What are political parties but a bunch of old men eternally scrambling for personal power and positions? They don't even begin to grasp the grand issues of our times. At best, they get on with their daily chores, like housewives so intent on doing the dishes, they don't even notice that the roof is on fire. What are our choices today? Capitalist chaos or Communist oppression. Homicidal nationalism or impotent internationalism. Parliamentarism or fascism. It's like choosing between cholera and the plague. Germany's situation is unique, so we need to look for unique solutions.“

„Germany's natural ally is Russia“, Kurt Schumacher says. „The Treaties of Versailles and Rapallo branded us both as Parias of the international community. To the victors of the imperialistic West, we are but another colony to exploit.“

„Even during the War, Uncle Alfred campaigned for a separate peace treaty with Russia,“ Harro says. „I am glad to say my Russian is improving.“

„Have any of you seen Earth?“ This from Elisabeth Hohenemser, who lives with Kurt Schumacher. She is a Graphic Designer, a year older than him. „I mean Alexander Dovzhenko's new film. We went to see it last weekend. We were so impressed. The heartlessness of those Ukrainian Kulaks! But really, it was the visual appeal of each single scene that moved us most. The beauty of it. Dovzhenko said in an interview that if he had to choose between beauty and truth, he would always choose beauty, as it had the larger, deeper existence.“

„Truth or beauty,“ Kurt says. „Beauty or truth. Another artificial juxtaposition. Like communism and patriotism. Or politics and art. Think of the great sculptors. Think of Veit Stoß, who was branded on the cheeks; think of Jerg Ratgeb, drawn and quartered by horses; of Tilman Riemenschneider, who had both of his hands smashed. They were forgotten, all memory of them was crushed along with their bodies. But they rose from the dead. Their works were triumphantly resurrected, and why? Because they mattered. Because they confronted the issues of their times. Because they were ready to die for what they had come to understand as the truth.“



Elisabeth, having heard this before, leans back, half-smiling, amiable, self-contained like Jan Vermeer's 'Woman Holding a Balance'. Harro leans forward, bright eyed, intent. The discussion is becoming quite lively.

„Capitalism is doomed, anyway. We are privileged to watch its last desperate twitches. People are about to shake off the yoke of transnational companies and the London City.“

„This whole economic crisis is really a crisis of Western civilization.“

„The Brits themselves are disgusted by their system, they are just too lazy to do anything about it.“

„The East isn't any better either. Germany first! Our national interests must take precedence over everything else.“

„Yes, but what does that actually mean? How do we best promote the good of the country? We must overcome nationalism, I say. Nationalism and socialism are incompatible, the interests of the workers are the same everywhere.“

„So are the interests of the industrial robber barons. They are way ahead of us. These gentlemen despise anyone primitive enough to love their homeland. Their only loyalty is to those they can sell their stuff to, even if it's weapons directed against their own country. And when they have ruined that, they just move their accounts abroad, and blame the workers and their excessive demands.“

„There you have it. That's what I'm saying. Nationalism and socialism are not at odds at all. Or national interests and our social needs are two sides of the same coin. Germany must free itself from the fetters of Versailles - the working masses must be liberated from exploitation. It's one and the same battle. Versailles and capitalism are both products of anglo-saxon world domination.“

„But wasn't Germany's reparation debt just eliminated in Lausanne?“

„So what? Now that they have grinded us into the dust, they can well afford to be magnanimous.“

„Fuck them, I say.“

Harro, happily engulfed in a multitude of views, multitude of voices, beckons to the waitress for more chamomile tea.

„While we talk, the violence on the streets is getting worse and worse,“ says Regine Schütt. „What Kurt said before, about the artists of old, sounded all very nice and heroic, but has not mankind progressed a bit since the peasant wars? People are dying on the streets every day. Should we not rather think about how to stop the slaughter instead of preparing for self-sacrifice?“

„Humanitarianism does not get us anywhere,“ says Harro. „Violence is getting worse, that's true, and I can't say I'm sorry for that. The mushy goodwill of pacifists will get us nowhere. Dreamers will only get bruised in the fray. Did I mention that I went to a NSDAP meeting last week? I told them I despised National Socialism as much as Communism, but most of all the bourgeois parties. That as soon as they'd be through with their leaders, we would all join ranks, and finally march on united, together.“

Kurt utters a yap of delight. ‚How did you get out alive?’

‚Well, it did get quite lively after that. The Police offered to escort me home, but I politely declined. Courage always impresses, I find. That’s what matters, personal disposition. Fascism, national socialism, capitalism, communism, they all deny the supreme importance of a man’s free will, his need and duty to become who he really is, in a permanent process of self-creation. Which is a product of decision making. That’s why I don’t care if people share my opinions. I don’t need affirmation, I need people willing to grow with me. Ardent, straightforward, high minded people. That’s what this country needs: a new elite. A new knightly order, springing up not from political parties, but from neighbourhoods, small communities, groups of manageable size that allow for the right people to be easily spotted. Groups like ours: That’s where a truly democratic state would find its leaders.’

On this note, the meeting is broken up, and the secret of Harro’s attire revealed: He is on his way to a ball, at the Academy of Arts. Their orchestras are quite passable. Animated, glowing, an avid dancer, with hapless Regine always by his side, Harro soon finds himself the center of another small crowd. Towards morning, they all drift on to an artists’ café, where two half-naked women perform a dance with a lascivious poodle. Enveloped by noise, smoke, laughter, the screeching of saxophones, a thought flits peacefully across Harro’s mind: tomorrow he will write to his mother, and treat her to a detailed description.

But of course, her Nazis will win. Strolling along Kurfürstendamm, on this last day of gray November 1932, Harro almost feels sorry for the elegant crowd behind the fogging glasses of Café Kranzler. There they sit and consume Berliner Weiße and cake, indifferent to the plight of the starving masses, unconcerned by Germany’s fate, insensitive even to the fact that their life style is about to be swept away by this new breed democratism had spawned: the petit bourgeois, eternally offended, disadvantaged, foaming at the mouth with resentment, ready to bring down the Republic that bred it.

So let the Nazis win, as they will anyway. A general strike will follow, an uprising of the masses, civil war, and then, inevitably, the real revolution. Then the disenfranchised and homeless will fight side by side with the youth groups for the nationalization of the means of production and all landed property. Harro has long shaken the dust of this rotten age off his feet. Harro is ready. He is a man of the future: healthy, happy, unfazed even by Hitler’s accession to chancellorship in January 1933.

Though there was no general strike, after all. Of course not, Harro should have foreseen it, what with six million people desperate for work. But history will run its course. The fight for true socialism lies ahead, with Harro at the forefront. He will continue to promote the unification of German youth, the merging of free thinkers of all camps. Together they will conquer the Hitler Reich from within, infiltrate it, penetrate it spiritually. He might have to change the name of his magazine though. ‚Opponent’ does not ring quite right any more, in this spring of 1933.

Ten weeks later, in April, a SA-Hilfskommando irrupts into the Opponent’s office. One of the self-appointed units of thugs that are roaming the streets: They smash the telephone and type writers, rip open cabinets, upend drawers, and force Harro into their car. A few hours later, Regine Schütt arrives on the scene, and alerts Harro’s parents in Duisburg.



His mother Marie-Luise takes the next train. She goes straight to Berlin's Chief of Police Magnus von Levetzow, and demands to learn the whereabouts of her son. Von Levetzow lifts his helpless hands. How should he know? Most likely Harro has disappeared into one of the wild concentration camps that have sprung up all over the city, in beer cellars, dancehalls, attics, barns.

And whatever are these ruffians thinking? How dare they hold captive Grand Admiral von Tirpitz' great-nephew?

Von Levetzow, a former admiral himself, vows he is deeply unhappy about all this. Of course he will instantly have Harro released, provided his mother can find him. So for two days, Marie-Luise wanders around Berlin with two SA-men, who knock for her on the gates of several hells, until Harro is located in a basement in Fürstenbrunner Weg.

„You should have seen the poor boy!“

Marie Luise Schulze, still in her coat and hat, has just this moment returned to Duisburg, and dashed straight away into her husband's study.

„You have no idea, Erich. Those barbarians. I was speechless.“

„Well, now.“ Erich Edgar Schulze, nephew of Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, Officer of the Imperial German Navy, former Captain of a Warship, and editor of the war newspaper ‚On the Coasts of Flanders‘, calmly regards his wife. „It was probably not all that terrible. Anyway, he seems to have recovered. He called me an hour ago.“

„Erich, you know the boy. He is brave. And would he talk on the phone about the SA?“

„Certainly not. But he sounded quite lively. Which I took to be a sign of relative well-being.“

„If you mean they did not cut off his head, just his hair, you are certainly right. They almost shaved it down to the scalp. And his back. Covered with welts from top to bottom.“

„Yes. He hinted at something like that. Something about running a gauntlet, but not to worry, he volunteered for an extra round. Whatever he meant by that.“

„That he was flogged. That's what he meant. And they killed his friend. Henry Erlanger, do you remember him? He wrote for Harro's magazine. A young man, admittedly with a distinctly Jewish nose, but god, he was certainly no banker! And Harro had to watch. He saw it all. And what does that Berlin chief of police have to say? Yes, ma'am, it is true, the SA can sometimes be a bit over-zealous. Those were his exact words, while our son stood there, covered in wounds.“

„My dear. Quite an experience. Here, let me take your coat, I'll get you a drop of wine.“

„Erich?“ Marie Luise looks up at her husband. „He'll let go of it now, won't he? This magazine. Politics. He will realize he has to find his way back.“

Erich Schulze nods.,First of all, he has to get away from Berlin, out of the limelight he likes so much. I talked to him, about the German Aviation School at Warnemünde. He is quite ready to go. I could probably get him enrolled right away.'

So: small town life, gossip, the world of military command-and-obey. It doesn't help when word gets around that Harro is favoured with the Gestapo's special attentions. Regine Schütt comes out to Warnemünde. She is desperate, frightened; some SA-man is after her, Sturmführer Zietlow.

And why has she brought the matter up yet again?

Regine Schütt despairs of herself. Why can't she be cheerful, talk cheekily about some subject or other? Robber girl indeed! Harro trudges through the sand, quite ahead of her. He is irritable, grumpy instead of cheerfully angry. How can the afternoon be saved? What was the last thing he said?

Please, Regine, what can I do for you? Go to Berlin and punch Zietlow in the face?

But it's not about her at all. Zietlow has threatened to hurt Harro. How can that be of no importance to him?

„Please, Harro. Let's talk about something else. How are your parents? Are they well?'

„Why, sure. My father is quite busy. He is liquidating the 'Opponent'. Oh, and yesterday someone dumped the content of my locker on the floor. So you see, I get bullied as well, if that is any comfort to you. I even know who it was. They make no secret of it. They don't need to. Apparently, my past has become known.'

There she goes again, she can't help it.

"That's what I am so worried about, Harro. Zietlow claims he could make your plane crash over Warnemünde.'

He stops. He smiles at her, now with a look she knows: cheerful with rage.

„Tell him to go ahead then. I wonder! Of course Harro Schulze wouldn't be sorely missed, but the plane? Public property? How will he explain that away?'

The important thing is not to cry.

„Harro, he's waylaying me. He follows me around, he dogs me as soon as I leave the house.'

„Get a grip on yourself, girl. I suggest you stay strong and let him do his worst.'

„You can't be serious. You don't believe I would ever do anything that might harm you.'

He stops her with a wave of his hand.

„No. Of course not. So what are your options? You will have to sacrifice yourself. Give in to him, and save my life. I do not see any third way out.'

‘We could marry, Harro. No, really. Harro, I want to be with you, have a child with you.’

‘Really, Regine, that’s asking a bit much. I am ready to let Zietlow shoot me out of the clouds for your honor, but lifelong imprisonment with blaring toddlers and fatherly duties - what do you want with me anyway? Take Zietlow. You will be better off with him. He will go far.’

But he can’t go on like this. He is miserably angry, completely stripped of power. Regine tells him that Eberhard Koebel has been arrested. Tusk, the legendary leader of the jungenschaft 1.11., who used to take his boys on winter camping trips to the Arctic circle: When he didn’t roam the north with the Laplanders, he lived in the Grey-Red Garrison, a large flat in Kreuzberg he shared with his boys. It was at the Garrison that Harro started his short career as publisher, when after the disappearance of its founder, the Opponent’s assets were frozen, and its offices sealed.

Gone. Lost. The Pleistocene. Hell has frozen over at least twice since. So don’t think of it, let it go, above all, quell resentment: this most corroding of ignoble emotions.

Regine comes out to Warnemünde again. She says Tusk has twice attempted suicide in his cell, Karl Otto Paetel is not allowed to write any more, Otto Strasser has left the country, Adrien Turel was killed in Paris. She is tearful, clinging; she begs Harro to marry her, impregnate her, protect her from her brown shirted suitor. Can’t she leave him alone, fuck this SA-halfwit, or let let the guy do his worst? Dying is the least of Harro’s worries: a fact that becomes increasingly obvious, and wins him the grudging respect of his comrades.

A sketch Harro has written for a social evening - something about Germany’s exit from the League of Nations, of which he fully approves - is a resounding success. The audience laughs, cheers, calls Harro on stage. It seems he is finally settling in, when the flight school is closed down, and Harro finds himself back in Berlin.

May 1, 1934, Berlin

He has been gone for less than a year. But the city has changed. The leagues of the Youth Movement have disbanded, or dissolved into various Nazi organisations. The trade unions are shattered. Political parties are banned; their functionaries and leaders have escaped to France, Switzerland, England, the Soviet Union, or disappeared into various camps and prisons. Well-known newspapers have disappeared from the kiosks. All public buildings, churches, parish and community houses fly the swastika flag. Harro’s inner map no longer matches reality. Bars and clubs like the Silhouette, the White Rose or the Eldorado are gone. The Gestapo has taken over the Stammtisch of the literati in the Romanisches Café at the Gedächtniskirche. Friedrich-Ebert-Straße at the Reichstag is renamed Hermann-Göring-Straße, Friedrichshain is Horst-Wessel-Stadt, Königin-Augusta-Straße in Kreuzberg is Tirpitzufer, in honor of Great Uncle Alfred. Harro’s table in Café Adler on Dönhoffplatz is deserted: friends have emigrated, are lying low, hiding in some backwater, struggling to keep their heads above the surface.

Harro finds a job at Göring’s Ministry of Aviation. It does not pay awfully well, but might offer some protection against the Gestapo. His duties, he tells his parents, mainly comprise the production of reports concerning the world’s perception of, and intentions towards, Germany and National Socialism in general, and in particular, all developments pertaining to foreign air forces, as far as disclosed, intentionally or

unintentionally, in their hazardously uncensored press.

In short, he has to read foreign papers all day. Harro is fluent in English and French, knows quite a bit of Russian, and speaks Swedish like a native, as he spent most of his childhood summers with one of the Swedish families, that after the War made it their business to feed up some of the half starved German kids.

In those bright, northern summers he also learned to sail. So on lonely Sunday afternoons he often takes a boat out onto the Wannsee.

July 14, 1934

It is a clear day, windy, the water dazzling, the sky very bright, with a sparkle of gulls. Passing quite close to an elegant little yacht, Harro hears bursts of laughter, the preliminary gasp of an accordion. Someone whoops, ‚Libs!‘, the name flies over the water, followed by clapping. He glimpses white clothes, the naked legs of girls. The accordion player raises her arm in mock salute.

‚Hey Pirate!‘

He waves back, flashing her a smile.

And that might be it. The Wannsee is no pond. Libs is in the company of friends: rich kids, hopeful heirs and their girls, with a few Russians among them for added zest. Harro is alone in his rented boat. Chances are they will make for different harbours, end up on opposite shores –

But as Harro walks up from the jetty, there she is: a girl of twenty, barefoot and in shorts, turning heads as she picks her way over the lawn, carefully avoiding the bees on the clover.

She looks up and sees him.

Someone down by the lake is yelling something.

Someone, somewhere, laughs.

‚Ahoy, Pirate,‘ she says. And smiles.

Her name is Libertas Haas-Heye. She asks for a cigarette, and he offers her one from his pack. They go down to the water and sit in the grass. Her hair is short and wavy, her eyes are slim, deep set, with a feline upwards turn at the corners. Her lips are full, with a perfect cupid’s bow. Everything about her is glamorous: She was born in Paris, educated in Switzerland; her father is a fashion designer; her mother, Viktoria Princess of Eulenburg and Hertefeld, Countess of Sandels, daughter of Prince Philip, Emperor Wilhelm II.’s trusted friend and, as the infamous Harden-Eulenburg-scandal would have it, his lover.

Libs remembers her grandfather well. The prince was an aesthete and also, quite understandably, a melancholy man, a recluse more interested in poetry than politics, and somewhat given to bitter musings. To cheer him up was considered meritorious. So as a child, Libs would dress up, learn a song or a poem. Perform. Now she works for the movies: she is a Press Secretary for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s Berlin branch,

with her own place on Hohenzollerndamm. But her true home will always be Liebenberg Castle: her Grandfather's manor some fifty kilometers north of Berlin, with its homesteads and village, its forests, meadows, and lakes. This is where her mother lives, and where Libs spent the first happy years of her life, before her father whisked her away to Berlin, then bundled her off to Switzerland. Her parents separated shortly after her birth, so she grew up in a broken home, some might say: though she doesn't. It would be ridiculous, as long as she has Liebenberg.

Libs tucks a lock behind her ear and talks about horse riding. Liebenberg's woods and fens are fabulous hunting grounds: which is why Göring regularly invites himself over from Carinhall, his own hunting lodge in the Schorfheide.

Harro's employer, the Aviation Minister, High Commissioner for Nature Conservation, and Chief of the Reich's Hunters: He is good friends with Liebenberg's owner, Libs' Uncle Büdi.

„Can you horse ride? You should come out to Liebenberg. Lots of my friends do. Or we could go swimming. There is a mansion right by the shore of the Great Lanke. It's called the Lake House. It's beautiful. You can take a dip before breakfast.“

He looks at her. He says, „Do you have bathing suit with you?“

She throws back her head. „Naturally. I have it on, under my clothes.“

She starts to unbutton her blouse. He pulls his shirt over his head. The scars on his back offer her a first opportunity to touch him.

„And these?“

Her fingertip is cool, a butterfly's sting. He shrugs: just some thing between men. Some SA types made him run the gauntlet.

„As they had me in a basement, I could hardly win by knocking them out. Anyway, I've always preferred the foil to the fist. So after they had treated me to two rounds of their game, I offered to run a third time. Do a lap of honor, you might say.“

She exclaims. This is horrible. Awful. Magnificent. How could he have been so reckless? She says, „I thought they only did things like that to our enemies.“

He grins, baring his teeth. „Right. That's what I am. Their enemy.“

She is shaken. Everyone in her family is a Party member.

He says, „They applauded my little performance. They said that at heart, I must be one of them. A dubious honor that unfortunately I had to decline.“

But that's what she is: one of them. Of his enemies. Sitting there, just sitting next to him, by the lake in the sun, the structure of her whole life starts to shift in its joints. She very much wants to say the right thing. She

says, ‚I only joined after Hitler’s inauguration. After the torchlight procession. Were you there? It was breathtaking, wasn’t it. The enthusiasm. This feeling of the people coming together as one. It was a bit like the Girl Scouts in Switzerland, but of course much bigger, more solemn, more elating. As if something great and wonderful was going to happen.’

He nods. He agrees. ‚That’s what life is about. It isn’t about political opinions or party affiliations. It is about passion, intensity, exploration. Soul.’

She turns to him, glowing, her pupils huge. ‚Then you understand, Mr. Schulze. You don’t find it reprehensible that I joined the party.’

‚Not at all. Why should I? I was quite well acquainted with Otto Strasser before Hitler won the inner-party power struggle. Well, now that he’s butchered the highest ranks of his SA, even the last people who still harboured socialist illusions should have woken up. What was this so-called Röhm Putsch but a victory of the big corporations and the Reichswehr? At least the Führer massacred the last members of the conservative establishment as well. The exact same people who brought him into power in the first place. I call that a job well done, and a task taken off the hands of the future.’

Libs looks at Harro. She looks away again. The lake, the trees, the pier, a man with a bucket, a hopping sparrow: everything is sharply outlined, charged, endowed with enormous importance. She thinks of nothing at all, like having jumped, and flying towards the water. She says: ‚How is this going to continue?’

He shrugs. ‚We’ll leave all this behind us. We will step forward into the future together, Miss Haas-Heye, all of us, united across party lines. Why, only the other day, I ran into a group of Hitler Youth at a small theatre in Zehlendorf, splendid fellows, all of them, and as it turned out, former readers of my magazine.’

‚Your magazine?’

He waves it away. ‚Tempi passati. I’ll tell you some other time. Let’s put it this way: A strong current does not change its course just because it encounters an obstacle, it only temporarily leaves its bed. My time will come. Maybe I’ll be thirty-five or forty by then, but no matter, I’ll bide my time. Meanwhile we can always write and fight.’

‚Write and fight.’ She looks at him with wonderment. She says, ‚Do you know the story of Gustav Adolf’s pageboy?’

‚The novella by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer? It’s a long time since I read it.’

‚It is about a girl, who rides into battle with the Swedish king, disguised as his page. Nobody finds out, until the end. Only when she lies dead on the battlefield, side by side with her beloved King, her true nature is discovered at last. Her courage, her generosity, her strength. Courte et bonne, that is her motto. Do you remember? Courte et bonne. I really like that. I even wrote a poem about it once.’

‚You write poetry?’

Courte et bonne I want my life



Always full of passionate strive –

„Yes I do. Or try to.“

Fighting, falling, being defeated triumphs, fearlessly completed –

„Libs!“

Someone inserts himself sideways into their picture. They turn their heads in unison.

„Faithless girl.“ The speaker has a Russian accent. „We were looking for you. Richie wants to leave, are you ready?“

Libs shades herself, straightens up, extends her hand.

„This is Vanya. Mr. Vanya Morozov. There come Mucki von Bohlen and Halbach and Richard von Raffay.. The one with the hat. We came with Richie's automobile. What have you planned, Mr. Schulze? Do you want to come back to the city with us? I'm sure there's room enough. We have no plans made for the evening yet.“

„Thank you for the offer. Most kind. But I'll spend the night in the boat.“

„The boat! How wonderful. On such a beautiful, warm evening.“

„You can stay, too. Stay if you like, Miss Haas-Heye. I can't offer you more than sandwiches and tea though.“

No fanfare, no fire signal, no writing on the wall. Only a piercing awareness of being here, now, a feeling so pervasive that Richie's banter, Wanja's merry words do not even reach her.

„Yes“, she says. „I will.“

The next morning, wrapped in his towel, sitting on the deck at sunrise, she remembers something. „Yesterday was the 14th of July. The day of the Storm on the Bastille.“

He is amused. „It wasn't much of a storm, really. The commander handed over the fortress on request.“

„He was beheaded anyway.“

Her hair is still wet from their swim in the lake. The dawn lies on her face like a soft flush. He hands her his cup: no coffee, but herbal tea from his thermos. She sips, pursing her lips. He watches her.

„Cat,“ he says. „Show me your claws.“

She bends her fingers, strikes at him, hisses, in a little pantomime that has already established itself. There are also some other things he knows by now. He can apply them, getting results.

„Mew, cat. Mew.“

They marry on July 16, 1936, in the chapel of Liebenberg Castle. Exchanging rings, joining hands, stepping out into the sunlight together, to the cheers and felicitations of their guests, they are filled with wonder. Matrimony may be an outmoded convention, but their wedding is surely a spectacular first.

Libs' dowry money they spend on a car. They buy a small sailboat, a big radio. They move to a new flat, which they furnish with a modern table and chairs, antique chests from Liebenberg, drawings of friends. People are fleeing the Reich in droves, so wine glasses, carpets, all sorts of household items are cheap and easy to come by. People flock to their parties that they call picnics, which basically means the guests have to bring their own food and drink. All the Schulze-Boysens ever serve is tea, albeit in cups of transparent bone china. Sometimes they invite a writer to read from his work, or one of their guests chooses a text: a poem, a story, an essay, preferably something with a philosophical twist, to spark a discussion. People sit on sofas and cushions, lean on walls, perch on window sills. Then Libs gets out her accordion. She plays the Gassenhauer and Küchenlieder of Berlin's alleys and backyards: ballads, laconic or sentimental, about love and murder and innocent girls being horribly used, or taking brutal revenge: The Robber Bride, Death in Desperation, Lovely Maiden of the Mill.

,She yelled, be damned, you cobbler,

you black unfaithful goat,

He grabbed his knife and grabbed her hair

and cruelly slashed her throat.'

They laugh, they clap, they sing along. They clamour for more, and Libs gladly obliges.

,Her blood spurted towards Heaven,

Her body hit the ground –'

She shines. She revels in their attention. She cannot bear indifference, distance, aloofness. Everybody, everybody must love her.