

Number 2, Margaretenstrasse

A Novel

by

Eduard Count von Keyserling.

[Translated by John B. Rutledge]

[LIST OF CHARACTERS:

Lothar von Brückmann, central character, scion of wealthy family, convert to Socialism

Count Bylin, aristocratic friend of Lothar

Lydia von Brückmann, Lothar's mother

Doktor Falzl, socialist theorist

associates of *The Future*, a progressive publication

Rotter, member of its editorial team

Amalie Remder, piano teacher

Branisch

Professor Klumpf, senior member

Oberwimmer, member of the group

Feitinger, teacher in a boys' school

Lippsen, member of the group

members of a more radical group that publishes *Solidarity*

Tost

Satzinger

Heyser

Kehlmann

Lemke

Zweigeld family: Herr Zweigeld, Mathilde; Gisela, their daughter

Franz Benze, a public defender

Clementine Würbl, step-daughter of Frau Würbl, owner of the building

Mietzi Hempel, a chorus girl

Tini Tuma, daughter of the caretaker of the apartment building

Gerstengresser family: Herr Gerstengresser; Leopold, the son; Elsa and Ella, the two daughters; Frau Franziska Gerstengresser

Racher, a student

Lois Chawar, a petty criminal and unemployed worker]

[NOTE ON USE OF TITLES:

This translation retains the typical Austrian use of titles and honorifics, particularly with regard to the title *Doktor*. A *Doktor* is anyone with some sort of doctoral degree, including the doctorate of law; the term is not reserved for physicians. It is used by characters in the novel as a term of respect even when the speaker may not be certain whether the person has a doctoral degree or may simply wish to show respect.

Herr (Mister) and *Frau* (Mrs.) and *Fräulein* (Miss) are used to remind the reader that we are dealing with a German-speaking culture.

CHAPTER DIVISION:

Keyserling's 22 chapter divisions are reproduced in Roman numerals. Chapter numbers following the Projekt Gutenberg version are given in square brackets.

FOOTNOTES: All footnotes are added by the translator as an aid to an English-speaking reader. Anything in square brackets has been added by the translator.

CHART: The chart (below) showing the occupants of the '*Dritte Stiege*' is based on the chart in de.wikipedia.

Floor (American system)	Occupants of ' <i>Dritte Stiege</i> '	
5.	Gerstengresser family: Franziska, Ella, Elsa, Leopold (Poldl)	Editorial offices of <i>The Future</i>

4.	Hempel family: Mietzi, Toni,	Lothar von Brückmann, member of editorial staff	Amalie Remder, piano teacher
3.		The Zweigelds: Theodor, Mathilde, their daughter Gisela	
2.		Frau Würbl, owner of the building; her stepdaughter Clementine	
1.		Caretakers, the Tuma family, their daughter Tini	

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I./[Chapter 1]

The first night Lothar von Brückmann spent in Vienna was not blessed with refreshing sleep. The exhausting trip from Geneva to Vienna, the arrival at night, the tribulations at the train station and finding a place to stay were simultaneously exhausting and exciting. These activities continued in his dreams and gave him no peace. He did not wake up until late morning the next day. He knew it all too well; arrival in a strange place, negotiations with inn-keeper and waiter, moving into an unfriendly room in an inn all made him melancholy; he felt abandoned and elderly. Usually, however, the next morning in such a place brought a mood of anticipation and the joy of living.

He stayed in bed, the cover pulled up to his chin. Bright sunshine pierced through the yellow curtains. Little patches of light trembled on the red and white carpet. From outside one could hear the rattling of wagons, the music of a barrel organ, and the ringing of the bell on the horse-drawn trolley.

“Number 2, Margaretenstrasse,1” Lothar mumbled to himself: “Second, third, or fourth floor; where was it? But no matter, I’ll figure it out when I get there.” He yawned, stretched out his legs, and looked for a cool spot for his cheek on the pillow. “I would prefer the second floor. You can be just as efficient on the second floor as you can on the fourth. Oh God! It would certainly be the fourth floor. Rotter had never paid any attention to such insignificant things – wide brimmed hats² and attic apartments. As if a decent apartment were an inherited societal evil.” A good boy, this Rotter, with his handsome face and the impetuous way he had of engaging with people. Lothar looked forward to seeing him again. He sat up, seized by the desire to start the day.

It was already ten thirty in the morning when he stepped out onto the Kärntner Ring.³ The sun beat down on the pavement and made the dust that filled the air gleam. The thin chestnut trees along the Reitallee,⁴ the houses, and even the vibrant blue sky—everything glistened attractively as if it had been sprinkled with gold dust. The smell of hot asphalt in the air also seemed pleasant to Lothar.

He sat down in a narrow strip of shade cast by a linen awning over the door of a

café. There he had breakfast and pondered.

Right in front of him was a trolley stop. It was the intersection of several yellow trams. There were calls and whistles; the conductors nodded and smiled at one another. A corpulent old woman with a heavy basket climbed into one of the overcrowded cars. Her red face laughed as she mercilessly pushed people aside; and they laughed too, laughter that could be heard out in the street; even the driver laughed. In one of the other cars was a blond, round girl, buttoned up in a summer jacket, holding onto the straps with one hand and holding a folder in the other. She stood there, her head inclined a bit and laughed cautiously; behind her, leaning on the railing of the platform stood a young man and eagerly whispered something into the blond locks that fell upon her neck.

“How happy they all are!”

Right beside him the horse-drawn carriages plied their trade. The coachmen had abandoned their vehicles and had gathered in front of a tavern. A waiter's boy brought great stems of beer out to them. They drank and yelled, poking each other and laughing, just as people do when they feel at home on the street.

“What makes them all that way? But wait! Here comes somebody who isn't laughing. Indeed not. He's looking down angrily and is in quite a hurry; he's worried and has to take care of some unpleasant business quickly.”

And yet.... The man stopped beside a flower girl on the corner, took his time in selecting a rose, and said something. It must have been something funny because the girl giggled; then he put the rose in his buttonhole and kept moving.

“If you have the time to stop and buy a rose and stick it in your buttonhole, then your worries are probably not too serious and you're not really in a big hurry.”

Indeed! That's how Lothar had imagined it, that's how the master in Geneva had described it. “The people you will be teaching love an easy and merry life; they like to laugh, and they seize anything good and pleasant in this world boldly and without hesitation. Don't forget it.” Lothar thought he understood his task clearly and he understood that this task was indeed **his**. If he was to lay the groundwork for the great theory and the great deed, then his theories would have to be friendly and cheerful. No problem with that! The state of the future was supposed to make men happy and cheerful. Frankly, however, until now the doctrine had had rather a dark visage and had spoken of blood and iron. But he wanted to demonstrate that not a shred of all that was beautiful and gay would be allowed to disappear; rather, these benefits would be distributed among all the people. Rich, new sources of pleasure would be opened. When the Viennese heard of a future like that, their mouths would water. He was already imagining lead articles and began to tap on the table with a large coin—he wanted to pay and get started on his work.

As he waded through a mass of humanity on Kärntnerstrasse,⁵ he was still so deep in his own thoughts that he was mumbling to himself. “You simply cannot torment people with the prospect of a difficult transitional period; they have to see the beauties of the ultimate goal.” The master said: “You, Brückmann, you have soft, elegant hands, you can treat the Viennese with kid gloves; that's what we need.” He would not be found wanting! And he was tired of hate-filled speeches anyway. What had to be shown was that the Great Holy Cause also had a beautiful and humorous aspect.

Escaping the press of the Naschmarkt⁶ he turned into the quieter Margaretenstrasse. There was the house he was looking for: a large, rectangular building with two entrances at the corner of Margaretenstrasse and Wiedener-Hauptstrasse. Crossing the spacious courtyard he saw—across the way—that over **that** entrance was a sign saying “Dritte Stieg.⁷” Soon he was in a hallway that was only partially lit by a window that opened into an interior courtyard. It was an apartment building with a handsome, wrought-iron handrail that wound its way up, with generous curves, through four floors above the ground floor. On the lowest step there was a wooden bucket full of water; next to it lay a wet rag; and a girl was leaning on the newel post. Lothar asked her where he could find the caretaker. The girl's arms and legs were bare: her skirt hardly reached her knees and the sleeves of her yellow camisole were rolled up. When Lothar asked his question, she raised her head and looked at him quietly, her dark, clear eyes peering beneath the black and curly hair that hung down over her forehead. “What business do you have here?”

“Rooms have been taken for me on the fourth floor, I believe, with a certain Frau Pinne,” Lothar replied. “Hm,” the girl thought for a second, at the same time stuffing some pieces of dark bread into her mouth, pressing it onto her thick, red lips with the flat of her hand. “Yes, yes, go on up. It's the first door on the left,” she said. “What's going on, Tini?” said a woman's voice from the caretaker's apartment. “Nothing,” Tini said. “Frau Pinne's lodger is here.”

Lothar observed distractedly the way the girl leaned indolently on the post, calmly and comfortably displaying her naked brown skin. “I'll find my way,” he said then, touched his hat and started climbing the stairs slowly. When he reached a curve in the staircase he looked down through the empty space at Tini, who kept on stuffing bread into her mouth and was looking up at Lothar, her head bent back. Viewed from a distance her eyes seemed wonderfully large and black.

On the fourth floor Lothar rang the bell at the first door on the left. The door was cautiously opened a bit. “Who is it?” asked a voice without revealing its owner. “Brückmann, von Brückmann,” Lothar announced. “Rooms have been rented for me here.” “Oh yes.” The door was opened and Lothar stood before a little old woman in humble clothing. Her head was wrapped in a yellowish scarf; her small waxen face was covered with wrinkles and pock marks, her eyes lusterless and yellow. Her whole appearance looked ancient and weather-beaten, like something that had been much neglected and had gotten old without being cared for, and on which wind and weather, dust and rust had taken an unmitigated toll.

“Are you Frau Pinne?”

“Indeed I am. I've been waiting a long time for you. Jesus! That fellow, your friend, was in quite a hurry. The lodger could be here at any minute. That's what he said. I've had the rooms ready for four whole days.” She shuffled ahead of him in her soft shoes into the next room. “This one here,” she explained, “is the bedroom, a very good room. The curtains are new and so are the slip covers on the chairs.” The rooms were clean and spacious; the walls were covered with yellow wallpaper, the furniture almost new, and—something Lothar thought more important—light pierced through the two windows in each room, creating golden tablets on the floor.

“So this is it!” Lothar said and set about in his neat and careful way to organize everything. The old woman stood in the doorway and watched. “Do you live here alone?” Lothar asked, trying to start a conversation. But the old woman was not pleased by the question. “Yes. Why would I need anyone? Who should live here with me?” And with that she turned away sullenly and left the room.

Lothar kept on working enthusiastically. Not until the room had taken on the appearance not just of an apartment, but of **his** apartment did he allow himself to rest a bit. He pulled one of the chairs over to the window, stretched out in it, and lit a cigarette. The first cigarette he smoked in an apartment was a sign to himself that he had taken possession of the place; this action was usually accompanied by a festive, or at least a reflective, mood.

The courtyard below was full of morning light; opposite the building was a café, and he could hear the clinking of billiard balls. In front of it was a fountain; its spout was decorated with the Blessed Lady and Child in stone. Tini was leaning against the fountain; Lothar stared at her back and the heavy burden of black curls on her neck. She was talking to a lanky, broad-shouldered boy wearing a blue duster. His whole red and beardless face laughed. Tini had to tilt her head back to look at him..

“This courtyard scene,” Lothar thought, “will accompany me through the little snippet of life that has been apportioned to me. That Blessed Mother with her gray stone face, the noise from the café, the swarthy girl—I will see them at all times of the day. They will sink into my thoughts in the gentle and meaningful way things that surround us do; and they will resonate in the experiences that I bring back from the streets, and will refresh my soul.”

The unsteadiness of his life up until now made Lothar become sentimental when he moved into a new place. Perhaps this new environment would even become a home to him. This might be just the quiet corner that he sometimes longed for. In such moments—as had often happened before—he always had memories of his childhood, memories of an existence that was wrapped in old familiar spaces, memories so vivid that he was frequently deeply touched.

II./[Chapter 2]

The Brückmanns belonged to one of the oldest families of the East Prussian landed aristocracy. For the most part, they were good stewards of the land, good hunters, good horsemen; they were handsome, broad-shouldered types with thick blond beard. In general they did not spend much time in school. They married young, took over an estate, or entered military service. No one could ever remember that a Brückmann marriage had remained childless. Normally there was a litter of seven or eight children, with the result that no family was ever able to accumulate much capital. The best that they could do—bringing industry and hard work to bear and giving thought to good fertilizers and animal husbandry—was to live in the style of their station in life: to have a decent house, to have good horses, to drink a bit of red wine, and to acquire a few silk dresses for the women; and, when it was time, occasionally to spend a winter in Königsberg so that the daughters might have an opportunity to find a husband. However,

very rarely could the Brückmann girls wangle an engagement.

No bad marriage had ever been contracted within human memory; and so it was for that reason that the marriage of the second son of the Berlow Brückmanns was considered one of the most unfortunate events in the family's history. Lothar von Brückmann, senior, formed an alliance with a singer in a dance hall, a Polish woman in reduced circumstances, who had ensnared him in Berlin. The family broke off relations, forced him to leave the area, and wanted nothing more to do with him. He moved with his wife to Dresden, and there a son was born to him. But the marriage was nevertheless not to last: Frau von Brückmann, with her overly large brown eyes and hair that seemed almost gray, left her husband and son and disappeared with an American insurance agent.

Meanwhile, there had been a second unusual event in the Berlow branch of the Brückmanns. Fräulein Lydia, Lothar's elder sister, had become engaged to a certain Baron Taufen from the Baltic provinces at a ball in Königsberg. It seemed that God was trying to compensate the tried and tested Brückmann family with a bit of good fortune.

The Baron died after a brief and childless marriage. The Baroness inherited his fortune and lived on his country estate, managing it circumspectly and energetically. When she heard about her brother's unfortunate situation, she wanted to take in the child herself. And so it happened that little Lothar went to live with his aunt and was brought up there. His poor father, however, died when the boy was barely ten years old.

Lothar spent his youth in a small country home located deep within a pine forest. And here it was that his thoughts reverted later in life whenever he felt deserted and homeless. Then he could feel the strong wet smell of the forest once again, and once again experience that troublesome feeling—half enterprising spirit, half fear—that once overcame him when the pale northern light of summer outlined the forest in chiaroscuro, and whispered in the bushes and the black branches, as if it were planning a thousand pranks.

Things were quiet in Lydia von Brückmann's house. The Baroness had almost no intercourse with her neighbors. She devoted herself to running the farm, and daily rode around on her old, shaggy white horse. In the afternoon she met with her people in the large, dusky parlor; she asked about their affairs, gave advice, and recommended medications; occasionally she nodded off. During the winter, around seven in the evening, a lamp was brought in. Lothar then had to read a French book aloud. Outside the windows the pine trees rustled. Out in the hall the manservant and the maids walked back and forth and stamped their feet on the tiles to get the snow off their shoes.

During the summer the boy was seldom at home. He sat at the edge of the field with the goose boy; or he stood beside the coachman and watched the coach being washed. It seemed to him—later he would not be able to say it—that life there consisted of eternally staring into the blue summer sky and of drinking in the smell of fir needles warmed by the sun, of kicking an ant hill and of mindlessly looking out onto the fields as evening settled upon them; or of listening into the distance where Lettland girls were singing their songs.

A private tutor was hired for Lothar. However, learning did not come easy for him. The tutor declared the boy to be untalented and unable to concentrate. The Baroness felt that the paltry results did not justify the expense of a tutor, so Lothar was

dispatched to the city. It was only with great difficulty that he was able to finish his studies. Systematic learning was simply not his cup of tea. At the same time he was constantly plagued and distracted by a strong desire for entertainment. When he went to university, he gave in to this desire somewhat recklessly. He joined the most illustrious fraternity, he drank and pursued women, and was beloved as a comrade and admired as a fraternity brother. He went from Bonn to Göttingen, from Göttingen to Leipzig,⁸ but wherever he went, he knew how to play a respected part in his social circle. However, he seemed to forget that time was marching on, that he was getting older, and that his social successes would hardly be something that would always be able to fill up a life. And, indeed, he did begin to have a certain sense of exhaustion and emptiness. There were times when life could not be loud and colorful enough for him, but they were matched by days and weeks in which he withdrew into himself. Then he would affect a bitter and skeptical attitude towards life in general. The overly refined and high-toned entertainments which he normally sought were then repulsive to him. He laughed at his social class, his comrades, and even his blond girlfriend from the opera, and said: society as it is now constituted offers only very meagre pleasures, and expressed such strange and heretical opinions that his friends were seriously concerned about him. In a mental state such as this, only a small impetus was required to give his life a new direction, since he had thorough exhausted the possibilities until now.

One evening in Leipzig Lothar was sitting at Haufe's⁹ with Count Bylin. They had known each other in Bonn and were celebrating their reunion. The count was considered an excellent companion—no one knew exactly why. But it was simply uplifting to sit in an inn across the table from this handsome man with his long blond mustache and eyes that were always half concealed by his eyelids and who wore bespoke clothing from London and who exuded the pleasant smell of one of Atkinson's¹⁰ fragrances.

The gentlemen were working on their second bottle of champagne. Lothar became very lively, talked a lot and loudly, while the count in his quiet, empathetic way listened. Meanwhile, a new guest had come into the room, a large, broad shouldered man in a worn-out gray coat. His bald pate made him seem elderly even though his face was still young and red with large, almost coarse features. He walked up to the table where the two were sitting, sat down, and ordered food and drink.¹¹ Bylin strafed the new arrival with a cold and tired gaze. Lothar looked at him with hostility, then turned away and the two continued their conversation as if there were not a third person in their presence.

“You will find,” Lothar said, “that student society has higher ideals. Here we have not only religious, but also Socialist connections.”

“Ah,” the Count said distractedly as he observed the man at the end of the table. The latter was pleasurably devouring a hazel hen and was laying the cleanly stripped bones next to his plate on the table cloth. The Count found this interesting, and smiled hardly noticeably.

“Lazy good-for-nothings, these self-appointed missionaries to society,” Lothar continued, “chastity and propriety are, I think, expected of students, but these people; at the same time, however....”

“This is wrong,” said the stranger in a calm, creaking voice, “there's no connection between moral values like that and Socialism.”

Lothar blushed, but pretended as though the stranger had said nothing and continued on nervously, “At least that's what I hear from well-informed sources.”

“There's no truth in it,” interjected the stranger again.

Lothar wanted to react, but when he saw that Bylin was smiling, he forced himself to smile as well, but he became more derogatory in his description. “These people are really desperate! Take yesterday, a wild-eyed crusader came and attracted quite a number of people; he was some kind of Russian nihilist.”

“He is German,” the stranger interjected.

“It is a shame that ideas which in a certain context could be useful, are so discredited by their representatives. Some fellow, who has been in trouble with the police in his own homeland or was in trouble with the law, or has stolen something or falsified exchange rates, then suddenly feels the call to address the youth of this country....”

“That is slander,” countered the stranger, “simple slander. The man of whom you are speaking has cleaner hands than most who dare to pronounce judgement over him.”

“Who asked you?” roared Lothar. The severity of it stunned him. “Who gave you permission to take part in this conversation?”

The stranger turned a bit pale, but then replied quietly: “It is my duty to speak up when I hear an honorable man—who, in addition, is a friend of mine—is so crudely calumniated.”

Lothar had gotten to his feet and stepped up to the man.

“Yes!” the stranger continued calmly, “believe me, you are not worthy to untie the shoelaces of the man that you are permitting yourself to deride.”

“Sir! Such language!” Lothar erupted and raised his hand against the stranger, but someone grabbed his arm and forced down with such strength that Lothar stood there bent and contorted as if nailed to the table and unable to move. He made no attempt to free himself, numbed as he was by anger and shame. Then the Count butted in: “Come, now, gentlemen....” And Lothar was again free. He didn't understand what Bylin had said; the feeling that he was about to cry constricted his throat.

“My name is Doktor Faltl,” the stranger said.

“Very well!” said the Count. “I shall permit myself to pay you a visit tomorrow in the matter of Herr von Brückmann.” Faltl was about to say something, but Bylin interrupted. “This is not the right place for negotiations. Until tomorrow, Doktor, if you please.”

The stranger shrugged his shoulders and left.

The gentlemen sat back down at their table. The Count smiled. “Such stupid business. How could you allow yourself to get so heated up?” “That man's face simply outraged me,” Lothar replied. “Yes, well... Who knows how he got in here. And how neatly he ate those hazel hens!” Bylin laughed. The insouciant air with which Bylin spoke about the whole affair calmed Lothar somewhat. Certainly it had been a stupid thing to do. When it was time to leave, however, Lothar found it difficult to be separated from his companion. He feared that if Bylin had not been there, the whole thing would seem much more serious. And so it was. The whole evening Lothar was in a very bad

mood; he was filled with shame and revulsion. How foolish it had been to behave like that. And why had he voiced opinions about people he didn't even know? And it wasn't even his own opinion that he had repeated; rather, it was just cowardly talk, intended to please the Count. Perhaps the stranger was right, after all, to speak up against it. And the whole vulgar scene. Damn!

[Chapter 3]

Bylin appeared on the following day and had this to report: "I went to see the fellow. He will in no case agree to satisfaction by use of weapons." "I thought as much," Lothar said bitterly. "After all, he is a Social Democrat. That kind of satisfaction would be against his principles. He explained it to me very carefully, well presented and interesting—he's a smart fellow."

"Fine. But what are we to do now?"

"Otherwise, he was quite cooperative in finding a way to resolve this unforgivable affair and we must strive to be flexible. Doktor Falzl is ready to admit that he went too far in his remarks; he is ready to take back his words and he expects the same from you."

"You mean, that's all?"

"Yes," Bylin laughed, "not entirely proper. But, mon cher, if you want my advice, then you should accept this offer. After all, he is the one who was insulted. He seems not to place a lot of importance on that. There's really no way that we can make anything good come of the situation. If he is satisfied with this method of resolution, *tant pis* [too bad] for him, and we can be rid of the matter without any scandal. If you agree, then we can meet this afternoon at four o'clock at the café and take care of everything then and there."

Lothar was not entirely happy with this turn of events, but Bylin was probably right, the best thing to do was to put a quick end to the whole business.

But it was remarkable that Lothar was uneasy all morning in anticipation of meeting with his adversary. He couldn't get the stranger's face out of his mind: that strange quiet in the man's coarse features during the encounter, the disgraceful trembling as he was leaving. Lothar arrived at the café before the agreed upon time even though he considered that to be bad form. Soon thereafter Falzl appeared. He wore the same tired old gray coat and a broad-brimmed felt hat. He bowed hastily and clumsily. He sat down at the table across from Lothar. Lothar said nothing and waited. Falzl seemed self-conscious. He rubbed his kneecap with the flat of his hand and stared out ahead as if he were thinking about something. Finally he began to speak, rubbing his knee and staring ahead all the while.

"Your presence here, sir, I take as a sign that you accept the suggestion that I made to your friend this morning." Lothar nodded his head. "If so, then I will start by expressing my regret that my language yesterday was so crude." He paused, looked questioningly at Lothar, and knitted his brow, which gave his face a childlike and at the same time somewhat disdainful look. "I don't know..." he began again, but Lothar interrupted him: "That being the case, I also take back the injurious remarks I made about you." Both were silent for a while. Lothar imagined that Bylin, in his shoes,

would simply have made an contemptuous bow and left. That would have been proper. And yet he stayed. His curiosity about what the strange man in front of him would do or say held him back. Faltl smiled, and turned again to Lothar: "I know that in your circles matters of this kind are treated according to certain rules. But since these rules are completely unknown to me, I hope you will not take offense if not everything customary in such cases is said or done."

"Oh, it's not all that important in this case," Lothar demurred.

"Of course! Ultimately what really matters is that the person giving the offense has the intention of making amends. And that **is** my intention. I could not agree to the suggestions that your friend made. My basic principles are so completely different from those of our society that I cannot conform to them, particularly in a case of societal customs such as this, which I find bizarre. Besides," and in so saying his face looked benevolent, even merry, "anyone who has the good fortune of being free from the restrictions of society and can follow his own convictions would never want to take even the smallest step backwards. And yet I am really not satisfied with my behavior yesterday. Not that I defended my friend—that was my duty, after all—but it was wrong for me to go to that particular restaurant. I had been forcing myself to live with certain deprivations for a long time and I had just completed a difficult project. So I said to myself, you can allow yourself a treat. I wanted to have the most pleasant time possible. But it was the wrong thing to do. I simply don't fit into a place frequented by bankers. It was unjust of me to sneak away quietly from my comrades to have a private feast." He stood up: "But let me detain you no longer." He made a second hasty bow and left.

Lothar sat there for quite a while just thinking. This man had impressed him. He regretted that he had ruined the "most pleasant time" that the man thought he had earned. What sort of project could he have been participating in? And then that phrase: "anyone who has the good fortune of being free from the restrictions of our society" conveyed a pleasant breath of freedom and freshness, like a sea breeze.

He could not get the thought of this new acquaintance out of his mind. His life up until this point had been lived to the fullest, but here was something new, something completely different—and that was exciting. From now on he frequently went to that café, just to see Faltl. It was just a whim, like any other, he told himself. He sat down in Faltl's presence, exchanged a formal greeting with him, handed him the newspaper or asked for one; occasionally he exchanged a few words with him, but nothing more. And yet, he found it entertaining to observe Faltl. He tried to learn something about the mysterious activities that surrounded Faltl and which he suddenly found—he had no idea why—so interesting. People frequently came to talk to the Doktor: young men with broad-brimmed hats and long hair; older men with rough hands in their black Sunday jackets. Faltl whispered to them, listened intently to them, and was decisive in his responses: "Leave town immediately." "Come to the meetings." "Tell the comrades that I agree." Among the people who sought out his advice was someone Lothar knew, a student who lived in the same house as Lothar. He had often met this good-looking young man with blue eyes and a reddish Jesus beard on the floor; he knew that the man was an Austrian and a Social Democrat and that his name was Rotter. The young man's accessible friendly nature led Lothar to talk to him occasionally. Rotter was always up to

something secretive, about which he would speak only allusively; some comrade was always expecting him somewhere. "So, he's one of them too," Lothar said to himself and sought out the young man. That was how he learned that Faltl was the guiding light of the party, that he had come here from Frankfurt am Main because important things were happening in Vienna. "What a guy!" Rotter said. "He's fantastic! He knows how to maintain strict discipline. If you want some advice from him about what to do, then he gives you an agenda for the whole year that contains everything that you need to do. He's fantastic!" A program like that was exactly what Lothar needed because he had no idea what to do with himself. Strict discipline, a circle of comrades who held together through danger and stress, important things being undertaken—those sorts of things attracted Lothar.

He began to study economics and Social Democratic theory and propaganda enthusiastically. In his heart he was already determined to let himself be convinced of it. He began to see Rotter every day. Rotter, for his part, began to see that a conversion was going to happen and he was proud to be the instigator. Then Lothar began to pay visits to long-haired comrades in their garrets; he spent long nights drinking tea with them; he dreamed of the state of the future; he wore broad-brimmed hats and consorted with tradesmen and workers. But he had difficulty gaining access to the leaders, the older and serious members of the party. He was not actually made privy to the party's secrets and was not used in any serious projects. When he asked for Faltl to give him instruction, the latter quizzed him carefully and said: "The main thing is for you to continue studying economics diligently. We need people who can write; perhaps you will be one of those. Lothar saw that he was viewed with a degree of distrust and that was a source of annoyance. He bluntly broke off all his previous relationships and paid no attention to the mockery of his former colleagues; rather, he delighted in making his sentiments public. At the same time, he felt that the obstacles which prevented him from being fully accepted into the party in Leipzig could never be overcome. Therewith he decided to go to Geneva, to the wellspring of the Great Theory. It was there that martyrs for the holy cause from all over the world gathered to form a kind of high council of the party.

In Geneva Lothar finally received instruction in the most sacred part of the Great Theory. There he found a group of men who had suffered greatly for their convictions and whose bitterness towards the existing order of things was only increased by their disgruntlement as refugees and exiles. These men, all of them possessed of a strong desire to do something important for the cause, had been condemned to a relative state of inactivity in Geneva. Their contribution to the effort was limited to promotion and encouragement, and their impatience for Armageddon was so strong that they pursued the instigation of others with impetuosity. The air was constantly thick with expectancy. They were certain that they stood at the eve of world revolution and that created in them a state of nervous fever. No matter what was attempted and completed, it was only preliminary; it filled out the time until the stupendous moment would arrive. It was here that Lothar's education was completed. He learned to regard the existing order of things as morbid. He almost succeeded in believing in the state of the future, to expect it, and in his thoughts, at least, to feel its presence. His model and master, an old revolutionary,

who had been in Geneva for many years and who kept listening to hear the call once again, was accustomed to saying: "You see, we have only one job to do, and it is a bloody one, full of hate, destructive, and we have only one respite, namely, to imagine ourselves in that time when the battle will be fought. The present provides work for us and for that reason it is ugly and difficult; any refreshment and pleasure we get has to be borrowed from that future." And so they sat around on Saturday talking about that joyous Sunday in the future, and that was their whole life.

And so it happened that the comrades in Vienna sent a deputation to the Master, seeking advice about an important matter. No progress for the Cause was being made in Vienna. Clubs of anarchists, which would not submit to party discipline, were gaining influence over the populace; everyone went his own way. Among other remedies to cure this condition, the idea had surfaced of publishing a journal in which the theories would be presented in a moderate form and would attack the existing order and would lay the foundation for an organized political party. They could thereby exert influence on a wider circle and get people accustomed to the principles and the views of the party. Difficult though the enterprise was, it would nevertheless be blessed by good fortune. The means would be found. Surprisingly, the police granted them permission to publish without a quibble. The Master himself expressed his satisfaction with the plan, gave them his blessing and recommended Lothar as a member of the editorial team. That, then, was how Lothar came to be in Vienna: as a staff member of *The Future*. Thus he had a calling in life and one so challenging, he thought, that it could not be accomplished in the span of a lifetime. He now had something to do for the rest of his life.

The courtyard beneath his window had emptied of people; the strong smell of meat frying rose up, and from the open windows came the sound of rattling plates. It was time to go to the Red Horse Inn¹² and have the mid-day meal with Rotter.

III./[Chapter 4]

The small outdoor space of the Red Horse Inn was filled with people and sunlight. Only with difficulty was Lothar able to make his way through the tables and chairs, the grape ivy and the oleander bushes. The room was filled with officials and their wives, officers, students, and actors. The waiters groaned under the burden of the heaping plates they carried back and forth. Lothar had to take a seat at a table where an older man and a young lady were already seated. It occurred to him that his very appearance caused a stir. People looked at him and asked under their breath, "Who is that?" At Lothar's table as well the young lady whispered: "There's someone new. Must be a stranger." Lothar found this annoying. He certainly supported the idea that people should live as if they belonged to one big family; still, when he went to an inn he did not want to feel like a stranger interrupting a family gathering. So it was all the more welcome when he saw Rotter's slim form slipping through the narrow aisle formed by the tables and heading towards him, waving his broad-brimmed felt hat from a distance. Before he reached Lothar's table he had to greet all sorts of people. On one side, a "The pleasure is all mine"; on the other, a simple "Hello!" Soon he was standing in front of Lothar; he laughed in a way that showed all his teeth, embraced Lothar with both arms and kissed

him on the mouth: "Hello! Greetings, brother. Well, here we are together. I was expecting you. The others were making me responsible for your not coming. As if I were the one pulling your strings. That's all over now that we have you." He was still the same impetuous and loquacious boy that Lothar knew from Leipzig. "Jesus! What a lot we have to talk about! And the things that are going on here! But more about that later." Suddenly he bowed toward the old man seated at the table: "Good day, Doktor! Certainly is hot today. Hello, Remder. How are you getting along?" At the same time he extended his hand to the lady.

"Well, thanks, Rotter, as usual," she replied. She was a tall, slender girl, who was surely close to her thirties. Her pale face had regular, sharp features. The dark brows above her brown eyes were so close that the slightest twisting of her forehead made them touch. When speaking she held her narrow lips at a slight angle. "Come, Father," she said, standing up, "it's time to go. Please say hello to your dear wife, Rotter."

The old man with the red face and hedonistic, bright eyes would evidently have stayed longer, but followed his daughter against his will.

"Good that they're gone," Rotter said, "now we can chat."

"Who was that Doktor?" Lothar asked.

"Oh him! He's not actually a Doktor, at least I don't think he is. His name is Remder. He lives in your building, by the way. He used to be a broker, but there was some sort of unpleasantness and he lost his position. He incurred a lot of debts. I'm sorry for his daughter; she's a clever, upright girl. She supports herself and her father by giving piano lessons, because anything the old man makes as a copyist in a lawyer's office is immediately squandered away. Yes, she's an extraordinary girl, that Amalie Remder, and one of ours, a woman of the future."

"She asked to be remembered to your wife—are you married?"

Rotter laughed. "There have been so many changes. Married? Well, call it what you will. As we understand it, yes. I wrote you about Peppi!"

"Yes, I know. She's from Styria and works as a housemaid."

"That's the one. She used to be a cook, and a good one at that. For about two years we got together every Sunday. That sort of thing is necessary in our profession. Work, your comrades, the party, all of those things are nice and perhaps the most important thing, but you do need some recreation, right? At least once a week. And the fact that we met on Sunday, you know, that's just an old habit from childhood. Peppi couldn't have come on another day anyway. And when a girl like that thinks about you all week in her quiet kitchen, well that has its own kind of satisfaction, you see."

"I can well understand. And this girl....?"

"Wait a minute. Things got even better. Peppi got pregnant. It wasn't an easy time. Girls get so excited over something like that. She had to board with a midwife. You can imagine how much money that cost me. And when the child was born—a beautiful girl—what was I supposed to do? Well, Peppi moved in with me and I have been very happy. Things are quite different now. I get good things to eat and she replaces lost buttons on my shirts. But you'll see! Believe you me, when you have lived the kind of life we live, you will find yourself looking around for something like what I have. Absolutely necessary." He held up, having grown overheated with enthusiasm for

his subject matter, and looking at Lothar with beaming eyes, he laughed childishly: "It's true, brother. You just wouldn't believe how good her dumplings are!"

Lothar had to laugh too and he began to feel quite comfortable as he observed his friend's enthusiasm. "You did the right thing," he offered. "The more we are forced to broaden our field of activities, the more necessary it is to have a some small, peaceful place where we can creep back to just to collect ourselves."

"That's right, brother!" Rotter interjected, happy to see how sympathetically Lothar viewed his personal circumstances. "You've got to have a little place like that as the center or resting place, just like a spider's web has a center from which it spins its web. And that's our point of view as well. You know, the family seen as the primal cell, and it spreads out from there."

"How are things going in the editorial office?" Lothar interrupted.

"There is a whole lot to talk about," Rotter said, looking carefully over his shoulder. The space had emptied. A few stragglers sat drinking the last sips from their beer mugs. Over in a corner the waiters and the busboys were taking their mid-day meal and a few sparrows had gathered around some of the empty tables. "We'll go over there around three this afternoon and I'll introduce you. You do know, don't you, that the editorial offices are in the building where you live? I planned it that way. Don't you know any of them?"

"Yes, I do. I know Lippsen; he was in Geneva."

"Yes, right. Lippsen!" Rotter laughed. "He's still the wonderful odd bird that he was. He lives in a nice house and has an easy life and keeps making pointed comments. He lives a bit too well.... Well, fine, but when you have the kind of convictions that he does, you should live a bit more modestly. I tell you, the fellow has silk curtains and huge lamps. But no matter! It's a trivial issue. He still is a rare fellow, and his wife is a real angel."

"What about the others?" Lothar asked, "Klumpf, Branisch?"

"Oh, Klumpf is phenomenal, he will enchant you. Anything that he touches takes on vitality, poetry. He gives our enterprise an aspect of nobility. At times, though, he's a bit **too** noble. Everything bothers him. And he talks well above the common folk; he's always quoting Plato and it's too theoretical. He can't forget about being a professor. And if someone isn't really clean or shows up drunk, then Klumpf gets offended. It goes against his grain. But his heart is as innocent as a child's. He's an angel—no, really an archangel: that's how I imagine him," he added with some hesitation. "Now, Branisch, on the other hand, he's a fire-brand, a man of iron. He is our general, our organizer, a kind of Lassalle.¹³ When he speaks to the people, it really grabs them; they have to do whatever he says. If we didn't have people like Klumpf and Branisch, then nothing would get done."

"I've heard a lot about them," Lothar said, "but there's one more that I don't know."

"You mean Oberwimmer!" said Rotter, laughing again. "You don't know him? In a way, he's the one who got the whole thing rolling. But you wouldn't know it from looking at him! It's amazing what he can get done. He knows how to manipulate the police and officials like chess pieces, but he looks like a girl. No one thought they'd give

us permission to publish a journal. But he said they would allow it and they did. Heaven only knows how he did it. He knows how to insinuate himself with workers and how to talk to higher government officials.... And he's always funny, always ready to go for a drink. I've tried to stick close to him. The two of us have been, so to speak, the only ones with our feet on the ground in the club. Klumpf and Branisch are way too abstract in their approach. In his political views Oberwimmer is the most left-leaning of all of us—and perhaps he's right. Purely negative stances are also not without benefit for the cause. They have a lot of influence, and it would be important, to get their But I can't explain it all to you here. The waiter is already pricking up his ears. But one thing I can say, we can't act superior to the other political clubs. Come on, let's go to the office and you can judge for yourself. Waiter, the check please!”

* *

The editorial office of *The Future* was located in the fifth floor of Number 2 Margarethenstrasse. To get to it you had to walk down a narrow hallway. On one side of the hall one looked through open doors into a friendly-looking room with white wallpaper. An old woman, her wrinkled face framed by a lace bonnet, sat in an armchair at the window and warmed herself in the ray of sun that fell on her and the potted plants on the window sill. She was dozing, her head leaned back. At her feet sat a frail sixteen-year-old girl on a stool; her thin flaxen hair was tied in a slight knot at her neck. She had her pale dissolute face planted in a book from which she was reading aloud in a plaintive voice that sounded like a lullaby. “That's Frau Fliege—we rented the rooms from her,” Rotter explained. “A courageous old woman, our *Future* widow, as Oberwimmer calls her. Let's turn right here.” The editorial offices consisted of two rooms, both of which were on the courtyard side of the building, so that all the light coming into them was pale and gray. In the middle of the first room stood a large writing table surrounded by chairs. At one window there was a small table; at the other, a stand-up desk. A large lamp with a green shade hung from the ceiling. A sickly-looking copyist sat at the large table in the middle and wrote, while Oberwimmer sat on the high stool at the stand-up desk; he was of medium size and very carefully dressed, his face that of a young boy with myopic gray-blue eyes, red cheeks and lips, and an abundance of short blond curls. He was dictating something to the copyist in a high-pitched voice, turning on his stool towards the others in the room: “The state has acknowledged its responsibilities towards the poor. Did you get 'acknowledged'? Now I ask....” When Lothar and Rotter entered the room, Oberwimmer stopped and nodded to them with a smile from his seat. “Ah, the new brother. Hello! We've been expecting you for the longest time.” And he extended his weak, white hand to them, a diamond ring on his finger.

“I'm going to stop working on the article I'm doing now. It's not worth much, but it has to be done. The others are in with Klumpf and are waiting. I'll be there in just a minute.” And he turned back to the copyist, “Now I ask....” The room next door was the private office of the editor-in-chief and it looked comfortable. There were heavy, dark curtains on the windows. In one corner there was a bust of Plato, in another, a bust of Socrates; a copy of Raphael's “The Disputation”¹⁴ hung on the wall. The room was full

of tobacco smoke and people were talking loudly. When Lothar entered the room the voices fell silent and a tall man who had been sitting on the sofa stood up to greet Lothar: "Finally, the Long-Awaited One is here! We were beginning to feel a void. My name is Klumpf. That's Branisch and Lippsen."

Lothar had recognized Klumpf immediately; he was exactly as he had imagined him: a tall, slim figure, his face the color of ivory with finely honed features; his full beard and his hair were black, his elongated eyes were gray, surrounded by long lashes. His eyes had that gentle, moist glow that one frequently sees in women. That was exactly how Klumpf, the Plato of the party, was supposed to look. Branisch too stepped forward to shake hands with the new arrival. "He looks like an aristocrat," Lothar thought to himself. His tall, powerful form was surmounted by a small head with short curly hair. On his bronze-colored face his eyes peered out from under a powerful forehead, clear and piercing like snake eyes; his close-clipped dark blond beard was parted at the chin.

Lippsen, an old acquaintance, reached up to shake Lothar's hand without getting up from his seat. He was a gnome-like, short man, his shoulders a bit too high; he had protruding blue eyes tucked behind round eyeglasses and unruly reddish sprigs of hair on his upper lip and piles of unkempt hair on his head. He sat in his armchair and made a sarcastic face: "Well, what's the old man in Geneva up to," he asked, "is he pleased with what we're doing?"

"He still hopes," Lothar said, "to see great things come from the undertaking. He asked me to bring you his best wishes. And he gave me some bits of advice to take along."

"All right, out with them then!"

"He seems concerned that we are becoming too tame."

"To what extent?" Branisch objected.

"He thinks that we shouldn't even think about being diplomatic out of fear that our journal will be suppressed. We think that we can help ourselves by being moderate and restrained in our publication. But the party and the people will only be thrown into confusion if we hide the truth and appear to be moderate. If you're going to tell the truth, then you ought to tell the whole truth."

"It's well and good to preach from Geneva," Branisch interrupted, impatiently. "I have described our plan clearly enough to Geneva. Our goal is to lay out the theoretical side of the message in an accessible form. That is the immediate goal. Whatever happens in the daily news should be presented from the point of view of our theory. We don't exclude the possibility of criticism. But if we were just going to proceed in the style of those gentlemen, we could save ourselves all that effort."

"Yes, indeed!" Lippsen added, "if we wanted to write in the Geneva style, we would only have one reader, the public prosecutor, and he's not even a subscriber."

"They should just cool their heels," Branisch said. "We're doing an experiment. But the people in Geneva are haunted by the idea that someone somewhere might be merely lukewarm."

Oberwimmer had appeared at the door and immediately threw himself into the conversation with vigor. "Yes, yes, we have often talked about that. Branisch's views and mine are a bit different; but there certainly is danger in striking a bourgeois tone. For

one thing, it puts people off and makes them distrustful.”

“Where do you get this 'bourgeois tone'?” Branisch cried. “Who's going to do that? The tone can be as egalitarian and popular as you want and still avoid giving the public prosecutor something to go after; otherwise, the whole undertaking doesn't make any sense.”

“It's a matter of style,” Lippsen suggested.

Rotter, sitting on his stool, had become agitated and was dying to express his own opinion. Now he began speaking so loudly that he drowned out Oberwimmer, who also wanted to say something. “I don't think the people in Geneva are completely wrong. I know from experience that if you always keep thinking 'What will the public prosecutor say about this?' it dampens your enthusiasm and limits your productivity. We want to speak to the people as brother to brother. Which can't be helped by concealing our ideas.”

“No,” Oberwimmer said, “I am in favor of being a bit cautious in our tone. After all, there is a kind of language that is only understood by party members and which seems entirely innocent to people on the outside. The content is what counts and on that we can't hold back.”

/[Chapter 5]

Branisch stood up and stretched to his full height and began to speak in a cutting, metallic tone. The others fell silent immediately. “Now that the first issue has already been printed, this is not the time to be debating about the fundamental principles of the undertaking. I would have thought that we were in agreement about that before we even began. We were supposed to found an official party organ that would take a stance against the so-called 'peoples' newspapers', these democratic and reformist papers that declare their love of freedom on the front page and on the back page praise crooked stock market projects, usurious banks and lotteries. It was supposed to be something that everyone could turn to who wanted to know the truth. That was our first goal. A second goal was pedagogical, to get the masses used to seeing things from the party's point of view. A subscriber who gets his news from our paper should regularly and gradually be brought to see the world in the light that we present it. Those, I think, are the principles that should govern us.” He paused and waited. Since no one said anything and Lippsen only muttered “Certainly!” Then he continued: “I just wanted to make that clear. These are the rules that we impose on ourselves and they are firm. The articles we publish are reviewed by the editors with those principles in mind. Our friend Rotter can give free reign to his enthusiasm; we in the editor's office will smooth over any points that the public prosecutor would find too prickly.”

Branisch sat down, and made a face that showed clearly that he regarded the matter as settled. And so it seemed to be since there was no more conversation on the topic.

“What did you ask government permission for earlier?” Rotter asked Oberwimmer.

“Me? Oh, that.” he replied. “I wrote a critical commentary on the report of the Labor Safety Board. Before I forget about it.”

“Why did you need to ask about that?”

“Hmm,” Oberwimmer said smiling shyly. “I confirmed that the state fully recognizes that certain social evils exist. Then I asked, what is the state doing about them?”

“Christ!” Lippsen growled and the tufts of hair on his upper lip bobbed up and down. “That's what I would call an innocent question! It's doing nothing at all—if you really want an answer. Any child knows the answer to that. It—the state, that is—will tell you this: Social evils? **What** social evils? It's all relative and as long as everyone is not badly off, and we, the capitalists, the factory owners—the meat and potatoes of the state—aren't doing so poorly, thank God!”

“That's exactly how it is!” Oberwimmer said, and blushed. Lippsen interrupted him: “You'd be better off sending the copyist out to get us some seltzer than asking questions like that.”

“He's already left,” Oberwimmer replied, “he went to get me some cigars. But wait, I'll step over to Frau Fliege and ask her to send Lini.” And he hurried away.

“Our first issue comes out today,” Lothar said, turning to Klumpf, who had been smoking and staring at the ceiling all the while. He startled as if waking from a dream. “Yes, indeed,” he said, “didn't you know that? We should be getting the first copy around six o'clock. We're all waiting for it. It's peculiar how much importance a piece of paper can take on. I think of our first issue as a living being because so much life depends on it.”

“Actually, when it arrives, we ought to have some wine to toast to it,” Lippsen observed.

“Of course!” Rotter cried, “a consecration, or—wasn't there something like that in antiquity?”

“Not that I know of,” replied Lippsen. “But it doesn't matter. Where has Oberwimmer gotten to?”

Just at that moment he returned. “The old lady held me up. She had just had a dream about Empress Marie-Anne¹⁵ and wanted to tell me about it.”

“We have more important things to deal with, there just isn't any wine. Now, when the first issue arrives....”

“I hadn't thought about that.”

“Yes, but we really do need some wine. If only to drink to our fraternity with Brückmann. We really can't keep on using the formal 'you' with him.”

Oberwimmer thought for a bit. “I've sent Lini and the copyist out. I'll just go myself.” And he was soon gone again.

“So if the first issue is out,” Branisch began in the serious, pedagogical tone, “we need to start discussion of the next one. Oberwimmer wrote a critique of the report issued by the Labor Safety Board. Good! I wrote a piece on housing conditions for farm workers. What else do we have? Perhaps you have something,” he said to Lothar, staring at him with his snake-eyes.

“I was thinking about an article about how free time will be used once there is a

fair distribution of labor.”

“How do you mean?”

Lothar was a bit intimidated by Branisch's interrogative gaze—now he had to show them what he could do. “I've been interested in this issue for a long time. Since in the future we will only have workers, everyone will then have more free time to enjoy the fruits of labor.”

“The three hour workday—that's not new,” Lippsen interjected.

“Take a normal day and subtract the time that everybody needs for personal business, for his family, or for study, and you still have a significant amount of time left....”

“For slacking off,” Lippsen said, completing the sentence.

“Yes, you could put it like that. I'm trying to describe how each hour of the day will look in the state of the future. What will the citizen do for pleasure and recreation in such a state?”

“Very nice!” Klumpf added. “I have often dreamed that I lived in such a time. I can tell you what life on the streets will look like then. The long working day with everyone on the job will no longer exist. Your arms and legs will feel a healthy tiredness as you saunter down the street—and that street will feel cheerful and festive. People will go walking arm in arm, and when I pass by them, I'll catch a word or two of their conversation; and I know what they'll be talking about, because whatever they're working on will be my own concern as well; everyone will be doing things in his own way, but we will all know that we're doing the same work and that there's one single concern that binds us. Oblique red sunbeams will shine on all the satisfied faces, on the heads of children....”

“Excuse me, Klumpf, but you're dreaming,” interrupted Lippsen. “But why did you say 'oblique' red sunbeams?”

Klumpf smiled. “You're probably right. But I can tell you where the red sunbeams come from. In my hometown, up in Swabia, I can still see a certain image of Saturday evenings in my childhood: the street, people pouring out of buildings, the evening sunbeams, the church bells. The highest honor I can pay the social state is to cloak it in this beloved image.”

“But the church bells don't fit in the picture,” objected Rotter.

“Why not?” Klumpf replied, reflectively, “why shouldn't something so beautiful be part of it? If the bells don't ring in the Sundays, why couldn't they announce the beginning of the joyous part of the day? Why should we banish those pleasant feelings, which we now call devotion or introspection? Quite the opposite! There will be more time for such things than there is now. And the beautiful edifices, which now serve the purposes of religion, will be in the service of a new kind of devotion. Great men will communicate their thoughts to the people in such places. For the Greeks the academy, the stoa was a place of enjoyment. So, St. Stephen's Cathedral can become a place of renewal for us.”

In his mind Lothar could see Klumpf, with his mystical face, standing in the pulpit of a cathedral preaching his flights of fancy to his listeners in his soft, deep voice.

“That will be fine for some people,” Rotter said, “but for the great mass of

people....”

“The masses can drink beer, as they do today, but from the state-owned brewery,” Lippsen growled, “and go bowling at the state-owned bowling alley and talk politics; nothing of that will be taken away.”

“Just as the state will take control of labor, so too will it direct the recreation of its citizens. When the state begins to organize social life, sociability will naturally be increased; there will be fewer opposing interests and more cooperation, and that creates bonds between people. No one will have need to slip away to a hiding place for recreation for a bit of fun; instead, there will be huge open-air spaces where a whole nation can live side by side.”

Rotter slapped Lothar's leg. “Brother, let's get started!” The desire to see the happy, social state up and running made him impatient and set all his limbs trembling.

Branisch, for his part, also wanted to get back to an examination of Lothar's article, but he was interrupted by the noise of a crowd of people storming into the room. At the head of them was Oberwimmer with a basket full of bottles of wine; behind him came Lini with seltzer, then the copyist with cigars, and finally a delivery boy bringing the first issue of *The Future*.

“Well, there is it: the future,” Oberwimmer announced.

All of them surrounded the boy. Everyone wanted to have a look at and touch the paper, which was still damp. “Fabulous!” “Very decent!”

“Let's have Klumpf read his lead article to us,” Lippsen suggested. “That would be a kind of consecration like Rotter was looking for.”

“No, first we have to drink to the occasion,” cried Oberwimmer, filling the glasses. “Long live the future—cheers! Lini, here's a glass for you. And you, boy, drink up. Brückmann, brother, to our friendship.

“Quiet, everyone, Klumpf is going to read,” Branisch commanded.

Everyone took a seat. Lini, the copyist, and the delivery boy stood up along the wall, their glasses in their hands. Oberwimmer had stepped out to take a bit of wine to Frau Fliege.

Klumpf read aloud. The article dealt with the problem of happiness in the upbeat and somewhat fantastical way that was peculiar to Klumpf. The constant search and striving for happiness, so the article said, assumes that we know something about such a condition. The fact that the ideal condition has not been achieved yet does not prove that it was unrealizable, rather that the ways that had been tried hitherto were not the right ones. Misery is as old as humanity itself. Indeed, what standard do you use to measure the age of mankind? And who can say how much longer mankind will survive. The years of blossoming, of maturity are still to come. Mankind has taken a wrong turn and it must turn back, but then what? True, but society is afraid of change. Then he went into detail about how the social doctrine, based on the knowledge of what happiness consists of—innate in the human being, provides the means to achieve it. The right means **have** been found. Then the article dealt cautiously with breaking away from all that currently exists and pointed out that the new social economic doctrine provides the only certain foundation upon which a new way of life and a new society could be built. Finally, there was discussion of the purpose of the publication itself. It was to give advice, to teach,

and always to point a way out of the labyrinth in which humanity was lost, and all the complaints and suffering of the oppressed were to be documented in its pages.

“Let us examine your wounds and study your suffering, my poor dear oppressed brothers. Oh, if you knew how ardently our hearts burn with sympathy and how the thought of your empty lives spoils every pleasure for us, you would turn to us trustingly. Just believe that these pages speak to you as the voice of a friend; our hearts, sore from your pain and suffering, beat in sympathy with yours.”

Klumpf paused for a moment, touched by his own words. The others sat there still and pensively as if they could still hear his beautiful, deep voice. Lippsen had drawn both his feet up under him on the chair, his eyes closed behind his thick glasses, and thus curled up, he resembled a scruffy, but contented tomcat. Rotter was so enthusiastic that he was leaning forward, his eyes sparklin as if he wanted to speak and take action. Lini, her hands wrapped around her wine glass, leaned reverently against the wall. Next to her, the delivery boy had eyes like saucers, tipsy from the wine and the solemn voice of the reader.

Lothar stood up. It was stuffy in the room and the air so thick with tobacco smoke that you could hardly tell who was who. He walked to the window and leaned out. The narrow courtyard below, surrounded by tall buildings, looked like a deep well in twilight. It was surely just about sundown, pale red clouds hung on the rectangular scrap of sky above the house-tops, and a bit of red light shone into the narrow space between the buildings. From the bottom of the well came a song, plaintive and sour. An old woman stood there, bent over a bucket rinsing lettuce leaves. In another corner of the courtyard two workers were busy nailing up boxes under the supervision of a fat man who, cigar between his teeth and his hands in the pants pockets, was issuing orders in a creaking voice. The tap-tap-tap of the hammers sounded so ordinary and indifferent, the old woman's singing actually annoying. Those poor people down below had no idea that up above were men intoxicated by sympathy were making ready a celebration of humanity!

“Let's go down to the street,” Oberwimmer cried, “we can get a breath of air and then have dinner together. We're celebrating a birthday today, after all.” So they adjourned. Passing through the hallway, each one of them called out “Good evening, Frau Fliege!” to the old woman in the next room and she nodded politely and answered, “Good evening, Herr Doktor.”

IV./[Chapter 6]

Frau Würbl, the owner of the house, and her step-daughter Clementine lived on the second floor of the building. The windows of the large room opened out onto Wiedner-Hauptstrasse and in the evening they stood wide open, because both mother and daughter liked to watch the goings-on on the street at this time of day. Frau Würbl sat in her armchair, her feet up on a footrest and wrapped in a red blanket. Her corpulent body was paralyzed on one side. Her spongy, pallid face always bore a look of discontent, the lower jaw was always slightly in motion as if she were silently scolding someone. She

stared out the window with pale, dull eyes. Across from her sat Clementine, very slim and laced into a blue and red checked summer dress bedecked with gilt trinkets. She was crocheting. From time to time she dropped her work onto her lap so that she also could stare out the window, seriously as if preoccupied by something.

The room might once have been quite dignified. There were a few expensive cabinets from the previous century in it; the chairs were covered in yellow silk; a bronze clock sat on a mirror-table. Because Frau Würbl could move only with difficulty, she liked to have everything she needed close at hand. And so among the nice pieces were things usually found in a bedroom: pillows, wash basins, underwear, and these compromised the character of a salon, which the room otherwise would have had. Twilight had already begun to spread into the room, even though it was still light outside. Noise from the street streamed through the open window and filled the space in which nothing seemed to move.

Every evening at this time, the street was at its liveliest: people were dashing about, some leaving work in the city and heading for the suburbs, others rushing in from the suburbs to avail themselves of the pleasures of the city; the trolleys were bursting at the seams, bells jingling; the coachmen raced around like mad; the maids, glass mugs in their hands stood on street corners talking with their boyfriends and even the ordinary working folk had a carefree attitude as they slapped each other on the shoulder and ripped their hats from their heads; and at the same time the bells of the Paulaner Church¹⁶ rained down their growly tones. Then it was that both women sat still amidst the numbing noise, drank it in, and bathed in it. They needed this powerful breath of life from the street. Yet the old woman looked down at the scene angrily and critical. She found the people there to be slovenly and silly; but she enjoyed being annoyed. And Clementine had not given up completely on experiencing something herself; indeed, every day she expected her big event, and with every step she heard on the stairs she thought it might be coming, and with every noise at the door. But so far, her sharing in the lively pleasures of those below was but small comfort.

She was already 37 years old and felt that she was becoming thinner and more peaked. And her life had begun with so much promise! She was the only child of a rich financier and his beautiful wife, who had been a famous singer. But she could remember that splendid time in her life only vaguely since she had been very young when her mother died. She was sent to a girls' school and grew up there. Clementine looked back on her years at the school as a blessed period in her life. Herr Würbl, it was said, suffered from mental problems after his wife's death. He continued to pursue his financial affairs vigorously, but he withdrew from society. The household was managed by a Bohemian cook, and she did so strictly and loudly. Then one day the rumor began to spread in the building that Herr Würbl had become engaged to his cook. The new Frau Würbl bought herself fine silk dresses in brilliant colors and reigned over the household with decisiveness and extraordinary arrogance. Herr Würbl, by contrast, became ever more quiet and dull until one day he suffered a stroke. He was found dead at his writing table in an armchair, his golden pencil that he was about to use to do some calculations so firmly clasped between his teeth that it had to be broken to remove it. His will assured Frau Würbl the right to income from his significant estate.

It was just at this time that Clementine returned to her parents' home. Initially she was firmly resolved not to recognize her stepmother and made some initially tried to act cool and superior towards her. Frau Würbl responded to this behavior so rudely and ruthlessly that there were acrimonious scenes between them. For a whole week the people in the courtyard could hear constant yelling and screaming of two excited women's voices. Gradually, however, it got quieter up there because Clementine had been conquered. She had no funds other than those her step-mother allotted her. Resigned, but still very embittered, she got used to the circumstances and accommodated herself to the evil old woman. Her only hope was that someday a man would come and rescue her. Now she was 37 years old and he hadn't come yet! She had neither male nor female friends. Who would want to socialize in a house ruled over by a common cook who could not even speak proper German? Only a chance event could alter the situation. That much she could hope for! And how frequently marriages are made by chance, and Clementine was on the watch for any such event. She carefully observed any young man she happened to meet on the street; she took an interest in any lawyer she met in court, any actor she saw on the stage. My God! All the other girls could get a man. The two feckless maids employed by the Würbls had new boyfriends every week. And how many couples she saw walking hand in hand on the street and even in the apartment building! In the evenings, it was a mad-house: all the girls were in such a hurry to get out on the twilit street that they hardly took the time to fasten their hats with a pin or to put a scarf on their head. This made her feel heavy at heart. She couldn't bear to look at the sour face of her stepmother or the boring room encumbered with wash basins and pillows, so she threw herself into the tumult on the street below and allowed herself to get stirred up by all the cries, bells, and the sound of footsteps. For a moment she could believe she was part of it all.

Night fell. The forms on the street became less clear. The sky above the roofs turned pale and glassy. The lamplighters walked down the street and everywhere little pale yellow flames began to glow. Soon Clementine could no longer distinguish anything. As people rushed by under the lanterns, they were illuminated for a moment, then they disappeared just as quickly. Noises and steps seemed all the louder when they issued from darkness, a constant scraping and clattering.

"Tini, close the window, it's getting chilly," Frau Würbl suddenly said. Clementine stood up and sighed. She carried out this command "Tini, close the window" every evening with bitterness. She closed the window and it seemed to her as if she were always closing herself off from the happy world outside.

Frau Würbl went to her bedroom to lie down. The evening meal was brought in. Clementine sat near her stepmother's bed and crocheted. The maid who removed the china was thoroughly scolded by the housewife; that was the evening's entertainment. The tall, blond girl was indifferent to the scolding, as if she didn't even hear it. Clementine herself truly did not hear it because she had grown so accustomed to it.

The doorbell rang. Clementine knew that it was Beckrath, the broker, who was accustomed to come at this time; nevertheless she always awaited this moment with anticipation because she always hoped it might be someone else and that something interesting might have happened. However, when she heard the man blow his nose

loudly in the ante-chamber, she began to crochet all the faster and didn't even look up when he entered the room and said "Good evening, ladies."

The broker was a small man with a pot belly; he had a closely trimmed gray mustache on his upper lip and his reddish brown toupee had been recently freshened up with a curling iron. He pulled his chair up to Frau Würbl's bed and rubbed his hands together. "And how is our health today?" he asked.

Frau Würbl only nodded to acknowledge his courtesy.

"Our affairs are doing well," the bank officer continued, "I invested the tidy little sum that you entrusted to me—quite nicely too."

With effort the lady turned over in her bed toward the officer and asked, "But is it risk-free?"

Beckrath giggled. "You'll see, madam," and he pulled some papers from his breast pocket and tried to explain the nature of a certain stock to his client, and did some figures. From time to time Frau Würbl retrieved a key from under her pillow and gave it to him to go to the chest where she kept her money at the head of her bed or to take out papers or to put some in.

Clementine paid no attention to any of it. These procedures happened so regularly every evening that it was like the ticking and striking of a wall clock that she completely ignored. She bent her head over her work, hair parted in the middle with high-piled braids. She moved the needles so quickly that the gilt trinkets on her dress jangled lightly. Sitting beneath the yellowish light of the petroleum lamp, her pale, too high forehead, her pointed white nose and her lipless mouth clenched, she looked dry and extremely calm, like the ill-furnished room, like the old woman with her dull white face lying motionless on her pillows, and like the fat old man, who with a soft fat voice added up columns of figures and rattled his papers.

And yet, at the same time strange images coursed through her mind. She wondered how it would be if she were to find her stepmother dead in bed. It would have to happen someday. That was an event she could be fairly certain of. She would lie there just as now, only her face would be a bit yellower and her jaw motionless, while, she, Clementine, would then be free....

"Well, Fräulein, aren't you going to say good night to me?" she heard the old broker say.

"Please do excuse me, Herr Doktor Beckrath, I was lost in thought," she said quietly and stood up. "I'll light the way out for you." She picked up a candle and walked with him out into the antechamber. There he stopped, smiled and squinted.

"Well, madam, I wanted to ask about the matter we had spoken of earlier. Perhaps you have had time to think it over!"

"No, Herr Doktor, I haven't any idea. Please don't talk about it any more."

"There's no harm in asking," he said, a bit annoyed. "You really should give it some thought. My own feelings have not changed." He smiled again and bowed. Clementine merely raised her eyebrows like someone who was quite bored and said only, "Just go now, Doktor!" Thus they parted.

The broker had once asked for Clementine's hand and ever since then he brought the matter up again and again. It almost made her sick. The idea of marrying that old

man with all those numbers and his additions never entered her mind, which was more firmly fixed on all the young people she encountered in the apartment building. She certainly did not consider this business with Beckrath to be a love story; it hardly ever counted as a marriage proposal, although it was the only one she had ever received. With a sigh she went back to her bedroom and lay down. But sleep was long in coming; her untapped reservoir of lust for life gave her no peace. She listened to the footsteps from the street and heard wheels rolling. The front door bell rang and she heard how the caretaker shuffled in her slippers to answer it. It was certainly that girl from the fourth floor. It was too early for it to have been Mr. Pinne, one of the renters. Above her she could hear a constant stomping and scraping, a confusion of voices, and a waltz being played on a piano. Zweigeld, the lawyer, must be having a party again. They had dances twice a week. Clementine could not abide the Zweigelds. The wife was so arrogant that she passed you by as if you were nothing, and they were so noisy that many nights Clementine could not sleep. Oh, God! Yes! Finally, something important was going to happen for Clementine. In every human life something important happens—at least once. Perhaps tomorrow!

* *

There was indeed a party going on in the Zweigelds' apartment. The Zweigelds were celebrating the seventeenth birthday of their only child Gisela. They had been dancing and there was food. The attendees were already a bit tired from all the activity. In the lawyer's room the older men sat at a card table, with champagne glasses close by. In the salon the wife sat on the sofa at the round table and reigned with her ladies. There were also a few gentlemen, such as Professor Lagus and Representative Littchen, who had joined the ladies so as to enjoy spirited conversations with Frau Zweigeld. She looked particularly good today. Her long face with its strong regular features was slightly reddened. There was a red bow in her black blond hair and her Rubenseque figure was tightly laced into a satin dress. She was busily embroidering and, in her own superior way, directed the conversation. She, as an intelligent woman from Prague, despised Viennese sociability and wanted to show them what a proper, intellectually significant salon really was.

A bit further removed, in a corner, the young ladies sat on a long sofa and the young men surrounded them. Gisela was the prettiest among them. She had a small face with soft features; her neck and round shoulders and her arms all had the same even rosy color, like a child's. Her eyes were bright blue; she wore her hair in the English style and it was blond, a decidedly yellow, shining blond. Tonight she was wearing a rose-colored dress with roses in her hair. She was carrying on a conversation with Benze, the young public defender, who was sitting next to her. They were speaking quietly with one another and it was not the steady flow of polite conversation, but rather a halting and hesitating back and forth as one does with people with whom one is well acquainted and when one wants to say more by the tone than by the actual words. Herr Benze was mad

for Gisela's beauty tonight; he was thoroughly in love with the girl.

“So, you're going to be speaking in public day after tomorrow?” Gisela asked.

“Yes, indeed, day after tomorrow.”

“Are you never shy? At least for a moment when you're just getting started?”

Benze laughed: “No, not any more.”

“I would love to see you speak there.”

“I doubt that your mother would allow it.”

“That's just the thing! Mama would never allow it. Papa would sooner. Emmy Lagus has been there.”

“Hearings like that are not suitable for young ladies,” he said seriously.

“Why not? You're always saying how wonderful your profession is. Why shouldn't we be allowed to see something beautiful?”

“Of course it is beautiful. But still it deals with the rough and dark side of life, and we like to spare our wives and daughters the acquaintance with things like that.”

“Wives and daughters?” Gisela repeated with a laugh.

“Yes,” Benze said, blushing. “Wives, daughters, sisters—especially ladies of our society.”

“So you wouldn't permit your wife to attend?”

“No. I don't know,” the young man repeated, a bit confused as he looked into Gisela's clear eyes.

“I don't think that's fair,” Gisela said. “After all, a woman wants to participate in her husband's successes. She will not be grateful if you ask her to stay at home.”

/[Chapter 7]

The conversation around the table had gotten loud and lively. Professor Lagus was talking about student demonstrations against a certain professor who had expressed anti-German sentiments in the City Council. Lagus spoke with great satisfaction about this because he was pro-German and was happy to see misfortune befall his colleague. “Their sentiments are correct, it's just that their mode of expression is not acceptable,” he said.

“But you cannot expect young people to be calm and moderate in their demands,” Frau Zweigeld replied. “I was glad the incident happened—yes, dear Professor—I was overjoyed. I see how even in Vienna the Germans allow themselves to get carried away by a serious and noble passion. And I don't care about a few panes of glass at that professor's house.” She spoke quickly and heatedly and her pretty brown eyes flashed, as they always did when the nationalities issue came up in conversation.

“Certainly, madam—it is delightful,” interjected Representative Littchen, carefully stressing the word. “But, throwing rocks at windows and whistling in a seminar are not the proper weapons to choose.”

“What would you have them do then?” Frau Zweigeld asked impatiently.

“There are other means, madam,” the professor growled and laughed a bit embarrassedly, while Littchen, who sat next to his hostess, leaned over to her and said,

trying to curry favor: "I can assure you, madam—and no doubt you will have heard this in my speech yesterday to the Imperial Council—that I am completely in sympathy with the sentiments of those young people and I share, to a certain extent, their outrage; after all, I was once a student too! In my day a professor would have been in quite a pickle if he dared to show sympathy for the presence of Czech immigrants here in Vienna! But, in any case, we representatives cannot praise diversions such as these when they occur. That's why I said in my speech yesterday that I much regret some of the things that are going on in the university and I advised the students not to bring the rough and tumble of ordinary politics into the sacred halls of academe."

Benze had grown distracted in his conversation with Gisela; Gisela had to try to get his attention several times: "But Doktor, you aren't listening to what I'm telling you."

Suddenly he jumped up with a quick "Excuse me" and approached the group sitting at the round table. "If you will excuse me, Herr Doktor I cannot completely agree with your point of view," he began.

Littchen looked up in surprise, smiled ironically and asked in a friendly manner, "Well?" as if speaking to a child. The hostess, however, dropped her needlework and looked up at the young fellow countryman with encouragement and hope.

"It seems to me," Benze continued, "the representatives are putting too much emphasis on the unacceptability of the means of protest used by the students to show their outrage and too little emphasis on the outrage itself. All parties in the matter are trying to pour water into the students' wine. Believe me, Doktor, the wine was already too weak to begin with. A professor at the University of Vienna has dared to openly support the Slavization of Vienna—that's what it's all about. Do the students not have the right to drive out a professor they don't want to study with and who seems reprehensible to them? Scholarship is important to them, but German culture is even more important. We students from Prague would have treated such a professor very differently. In Prague the Germans are a close-knit group and the atmosphere is very serious there, but I have been pleased to see here in Vienna that the spirit of 1848 is re-awakening. While German culture is being attacked so bitterly from all sides, this is not the time to judge every expression of outrage from an aesthetic point of view. If people in Vienna continue to make sure that things run smoothly—good manners and *Gemütlichkeit*—then one day we'll wake up and find ourselves living in a Czech city. The students understand that. It takes a wedge to split a tree trunk."

Loud bravos resounded from the gentlemen's room and the host of the party stepped up to the toast the speaker: "Very well done! Here's to our future Representative Benze. You are right! We Viennese won't let themselves be led down the garden path for too long. We're better than you Prague folks think. My wife always finds something about Vienna and the Viennese to complain about."

Representative Littchen smiled sourly at the young politician. Excesses like this annoyed him, but he did not show his displeasure because the hostess seemed to be very pleased with Benze. She extended her hand to him and said "You're always so brave." The other young gentlemen as well had left the ladies to participate in the success of their colleague.

When Doktor Benze had jumped up so quickly from his chair, Gisela had watched

him in astonishment. He cut quite a figure as he stood so straight at the round table, shaking his abundant dark hair off his forehead, and yet it put her in a bad mood. She raised her eyebrows sullenly and slowly walked to the window. On the table stood the flowers that had been given to honor her special day. She stuck her face into a basket full of roses and violets and it cooled her. She felt suddenly heavy at heart. She stood up straight again with a start and went back to her friends. "Come on," she said quietly, "it's boring here. Let's go to the other room." The girls all got up; they understood immediately that this would be taken as a demonstration against the young gentlemen, who had forsaken them for politics.

The door curtain was pulled shut, Emmy Lagus sat down at the piano and played a waltz and the girls began to dance. They laughed and made noise, firmly resolved to be merry. Soon, however, the curtain was pushed aside and the blond head of young Littchen, a tall intern at law with glasses looked in. "Jesus! They really are dancing without us!" he complained to the gentlemen pushing their way in behind him.

Emmy Lagus jumped up from the piano and placed herself in front of the door. "Sorry, entry here is forbidden; this is a private party."

"But surely one can be introduced," Littchen said.

"No, no!" cried the girls, "there are enough of us here by ourselves."

Nevertheless, the gentlemen forced their way in. Gisela looked into the other room. Benze was still standing beside her mother, he had a serious look his face and seemed to be talking enthusiastically.

"If you want to take over by force," Gisela finally said, her gentle voice sounding a bit thrilled, "then we will have to retreat to our fortress."

"Yes, let's go back to our fortress!"

And once again the girls clasped hands and swirled away, back to Gisela's room. There they sat down out of breath. At first they laughed happily, then they began to listen to what was being said in the other room.

"Now what's going to happen?"

Gisela had sat down on the bed with her friend Emmy.

"What's the matter? You look so troubled, sweetie?" Emmy asked.

"Oh, it's nothing," Gisela said and gave her friend a signal that the other girls weren't supposed to hear. They sat there silently next to one another for a while; Emmy, with her tangled black hair, her fine, pale little face and her overly large gray eyes, was a dark contrast to Gisela's lighter, rosier form. Then suddenly they felt the need to hug one another and kiss.

The others thought the game was lasting a bit too long. Little Elfi Meyer, round as a ball, who could not bear to be without a gentleman even for half an hour, stood at the door eavesdropping. "Just listen," she whispered, "now they're dancing without us. That's an outrage. We certainly won't go back out now." At the same time her hand was already on the door handle.

"No, we're not going to go out," Emmy commanded from the bed.

Alice Littchen sat in front of the mirror, looked at her pale face, and sighed: if this game continued any longer, she would certainly become melancholy, she felt certain.

It was a relief for everyone when Frau Zweigeld stepped into the room: "Well,

girls, what are you doing here? Why have you withdrawn?"

"The gentlemen want to talk about politics," Emmy cried, "and we're having a good time here."

"Go, go, children," Frau Zweigeld reassured them and smiled, "I'll make sure you get what's rightfully yours."

She swept back into the hall, followed by the girls. A "reconciliation waltz" was arranged. Benze leaned on the door and waited for Gisela, but she declined to dance. "Thank you, but I really am tired."

"Yes, I can imagine so," he said, wisely and sympathetically, at the same time trying to look

Gisela in the eye, but she looked up at the chandelier.

It was already late and the party broke up. When Emmy said goodbye to Gisela she whispered: "What you did with that waltz was the right thing to do."

When everyone had left, Herr Zweigeld walked through the rooms which were still brightly lit. He was pleased with the way things had gone that evening. His wife had looked splendid; one could be proud of such a woman; and his daughter—what an angel! He was grateful to both of these beloved creatures, so he kissed his wife's hand and kissed his daughter on her forehead. "Well, my child, did you have a good time?" "Yes, Papa, it was very nice!" "Seventeen years! What an old child I have now!" "Yes, Papa, quite old!" He laughed heartily at that, then stepped in front of the mirror, as he sometimes liked to do. He was pleased to see what a fine figure he cut in his black tailcoat. His face, warmed by the wine, looked particularly youthful today; his blue eyes were shining; he twisted his blond mustache to a point and ran his hand through his hair, curled for the occasion; in the evening you couldn't tell that there were a few strands of white mixed in with the chestnut brown. "I'm going to bed," he announced: "that's probably the best thing for you to do too!"

Frau Zweigeld was in the habit of putting her daughter to bed herself and she put up her hair. She did not like the hair styles the girls wore nowadays. She thought that young girls should wear their hair neatly parted in the middle and that was why she took care of Gisela's hair herself. Gisela sat on a low stool at her mother's feet while she rolled the beautiful golden strands of hair onto curlers.

"I was really happy with young Herr Benze this evening," Frau Zweigeld said while she was working.

"Happy, Mama? Why were you?"

"Because he's a nice young man who stands up for what he believes in and the truth is important to him. No Viennese would have stood up so heatedly to a bunch of older men like that. But he takes everything seriously. We need that kind of brave audacity."

Gisela smiled, but it was a peculiar kind of smile that just as easily could have turned into crying. Frau Zweigeld noticed it and began to speak of other things. "The Littchen girl insists that you should get rid of your tresses."

"Then I'd like to wear my hair like Emmy does."

"Dear child, Emmy always looks unkempt. It all hangs down over her eyes."

"But it's charming on her."

“No, my dear, I just can't permit it. I think we'll stay with tresses. You know how much I love your beautiful tresses.”

“All right, Mama. I'll keep them as long as you want me to. Only when I'm an old maid, then you'll have to allow me to cut them.”

Frau Zweigeld laughed: “We still have a bit of time until then!”

Gisela laughed too, but a bit petulantly.

“All right, we're finished now. Go on to bed,” Frau Zweigeld said as she laid this treasure of youthful beauty onto her pillow behind the bed curtains. “Good night and sweet dreams.”

“Good night, Mama!” Gisela hugged her mother and began to cry.

Frau Zweigeld stroked the cheek of her child silently—tucked her in and went to her bedroom.

There she found her husband already in bed, buttoning up his nightshirt at the neck. “Well, dear,” he said cheerfully, “did you put the child to bed? She seemed a bit keyed up.”

“Yes, she was. She cried too. All the hubbub makes her nervous.”

“Oh, well it will all be over tomorrow,” Herr Doktor Zweigeld concluded and stretched out comfortably in his bed.

Frau Zweigeld sat down at her vanity and put on her nightcap. “There's something I have to tell you...,” she began somewhat hesitatingly.

“What is it then?” Herr Zweigeld asked. This was an uncomfortable beginning of a conversation he thought would be about his efforts to be elected as a representative for a precinct in Bohemia—and he had done almost nothing.

She kept on looking thoughtfully at the mirror and brushed the hair on her temples, which were in no way in need of brushing. “I think we have to ready ourselves to accept the possibility that young Benze will ask for Gisela's hand.”

“Goodness!”

“And what's more, I think the child wouldn't be completely disinclined...”

“Goodness!”

“In any case we have to be prepared for it.”

“I can get prepared very quickly. If the boy wants her, fine. He's a fine young man. His financial situation is, so I believe—satisfactory. I'll make some further inquiries tomorrow.”

“That would be the very least, if only”

“Better is better,” growled Herr Zweigeld from under his blanket.

Now that she had put the matter so bluntly, her mother's heart began to feel heavy. How could it be that her child, a pure, bright being that belonged entirely to her and which she guarded with every breath and every thought, lay in the next room and was crying out of love for a stranger? Thus life began to torture even a child's soul with its miseries and dark passions. And if Gisela really loved him, what was left for her, the mother? With a sob Frau Zweigeld got up and slipped into bed. She was just about to put out the light and cry silently for a bit. “Listen,” she said after the room was already dark, “the best thing would be for us to take a trip with the child, to Switzerland or

somewhere. Later, in winter, we can let events take their course.”

“A trip, then?” replied Herr Zweigeld. Then it occurred to him that they would have to borrow money for it. But, after all, it was only a suggestion, no reason to get upset about it. “Well, if you think so. We'll have to give it some more thought,” he added. “Good night.”

* * *

Now all was quiet and dark throughout the building. Then around one in the morning someone pulled the chain on the doorbell. Tini hurried to the door and opened up. Fräulein Clementine had made a mistake; it was only the girl from the fourth floor, who was coming home with the salesman who lived on the fifth floor. “Good evening!” Tini said and laughed. The girl rushed to the stairway without saying a word. The young man followed her slowly. He had to give Tini some hush money so that she wouldn't tell any tales out of school. They stopped on the fourth floor and kissed, not saying a word. Then a door closed carefully and stillness reigned once more.

V./Chapter 8

The regular editorial work was supposed to be done by Brückmann and Klumpf since the others were fully occupied by their other activities. Branisch was always out of town, 'struggling,' as he said, 'to build a strong, united party' out of all the little clubs, societies and associations; this united party would then bind them all into an irresistible mighty stream. Lippsen had his nice house and his family and was a lawyer. But he didn't frequent chambers very often; Rotter, his assistant-in-training, took care of most of the business. Oberwimmer claimed to be very busy. He was an engineer by profession, but no one had ever heard of any sort of structure that he had worked on. He had a nice house in Penzing, a very pretty young wife, and two blond children. All those things, and, as he said, political agitation prevented him from spending more time in the editorial offices. He, like the others, only asked for moments when they could chat.

As early as ten o'clock Lothar went up to the fifth floor and sat down at his desk to review the correspondence, reports that had been sent in, and the essays. His head was still a bit thick and Lini was asked to get him club soda. They had spent a lot of time yesterday drinking at the beer garden in the Prater.¹⁸ Lothar very much enjoyed having a narrow circle of free-thinkers, bound by their common work and their common isolation. Conversation never faltered: the whole world lay before them, ready there to be dissected, criticized, re-built in a new and glorious fashion. The round table under the linden trees, which dropped their white blossoms into the beer glasses, stood like an island amidst the hubbub of merry and well-scrubbed people who knew nothing at all about the great future that was being planned here. The six men sat together like a little band of adventurers who have dared to enter a foreign country, holding fast to each other and yearning to do great deeds. – Then, when things had quieted down a bit in the Prater and the waiters began to stack the chairs on the tables, they had wandered out, arm in

arm, to see how the moonlight looked on the Freudenau.¹⁹ There Oberwimmer said something foolish about the re-distribution of the division of labor, out of which a disagreement had developed that kept them occupied until sunrise spread over the blue mist of the city and the milk carts began to clatter through the streets. Branisch, who had an aggressive way of arguing because he was always so sure he was right, maintained that it should be thus and so. That just spurred on the resistance. Oberwimmer especially liked to oppose him; then Lippsen had to add his marginal notes about that because he couldn't get used to taking Oberwimmer seriously. Klumpf didn't take part in the back and forth of the argument, but whenever a pause occurred in the conversation, he presented his view. Without taking into consideration all that had been said before, he painted for them a picture of his vision. From the time that he had been a lecturer at the university he was used to having an audience in front of him, and so for that reason he took just such a position in front of his comrades now as well, standing dark and thin in the moonlight, and his solemn voice rang out into the night....

In the quiet of the low-lit editorial office Lothar felt quite comfortable. He enthusiastically organized the articles that had been sent in. There were reports about the sum of misery in the great fortresses of capitalism. "Oh my God! Those poor people," he mumbled to himself. Involuntarily he remembered Klumpf's phrase: "Hearts wounded by your suffering." Indeed, he could say that of himself; he could have cried about those poor unfortunates, living out their dull lives of scarcity; sacrificing their wives and children in order to line the pockets of some avaricious Jew. There was something uplifting in this commiseration; he was at peace and proud to feel it so intensely and genuinely.

The door squeaked a bit. Klumpf walked out of his room, heading towards Lothar, his pale face even paler today than usual. "Good morning," he said, "I wouldn't have expected you to be at work so early."

"I just couldn't lie in bed any longer. How about you? Have you been here very long?"

"Since seven o'clock. I don't need much sleep." But when he sat down next to Lothar's desk and puffed on his cigar, he looked decidedly tired and stressed.

"What a tale of misery!" Lothar said, pointing to the letters.

"True enough," Klumpf said warmly and his eyes got darker from excitement, "I could hardly bear it. It weighs upon us like a bad dream."

"Here's a report from a glass factory and another from a tinplate foundry—it's like walking through Hell with Dante. You call that a life? And why must it be that way? You have to ask yourself, what sort of power is it that binds all these human beings to torturous conditions. And to think that they still believe in such a power!"

"Exactly!" Klumpf repeated. With one leg crossed over the other, his arms resting on his knee, he spoke in a low voice and deliberately: "That's it exactly! I'm sure you know Plato's allegory of the cave and how the prisoners lie motionless in the cave and believe that the shadows on the walls of the cave are reality. If just one of them was freed and brought out to the light, he would recognize how miserable he and his brothers have

been, that it was just shadows that they took for reality. He returns to his brothers in the cave to tell them what he has learned. That's how it is here. These poor people who wrote the letters believe that things can't change. Their lot was assigned to them by a god, who bound them to lives of misery. Then more and more enlightened thinkers descend to them and tell them that this god, this fate, this power that they believe in is nothing but shadows and that there is a world of reality in which everyone has the same rights. If only they would unite and rise up and say 'We know!' then the great deception would be over."

"And the employers," Lothar interjected, "who could understand them?"

"Oh, them!" Klumpf interrupted, peering with his girlish eyes at the little clouds of smoke rising from his cigar. "Away with them," and made a motion with his hand as if he were pushing something aside.

There was a knock at the door.

Lothar said, "Come in," and the door opened half-way and the dark eyes of Tini, the caretaker's daughter, peered in. They could hear the girl speaking in a low tone, then finally a tall, powerful young man thrust himself into the room, but stayed circumspectly near the door and looked around. Lothar recognized him as the worker who had spoken to Tini at the fountain. "Are you the gentlemen with that new paper?" he asked with a Slavic accent.

"Yes," Lothar replied, "What can we do for you? Come on in."

The fellow made his way slowly through the room, looking down at his boots in embarrassment because they were so ragged that his toes were showing. Then he sat down on the chair that Lothar offered him, his knees wide apart, his hands stuck in his folded-up cap. He was a good looking man. His huge body was generously padded with mountains of muscles; the shabby little coat that he had bought somewhere in the Jewish Quarter²⁰ threatened to burst apart like a spider web at the slightest movement. Short red hair covered his round head like skullcap. But his greenish eyes revealed in this otherwise youthful face something old and worn with care; he glanced around uncomfortably.

Lothar began to interrogate him. "How may we be of service, dear friend? Are you a factory worker?"

"I am Alois Chawar," he replied, "and indeed I am a factory worker; I've been in lots of 'em; that's just it. Now I can't find any work at all."

"Can't find work? From the looks of you, anyone would be willing to hire you. Are you married?"

"No," he laughed, then forced himself to be serious again and his voice took on a sorrowful, singing tone. "No. How could I get married? I can't even feed myself." He sat up straight in his chair, wrapped his hands tighter in his cap, and, eyes fixed on the lamp above him, began to narrate volubly and monotonously as if he were reciting something from memory, "It's about the permit, sir... and here's how it happened. Back home in Bohemia I was a blacksmith's assistant. I was the dog to his master. Work, work, and more work, and nothing to eat. It wasn't humane, you know, sir. When I protested about this, he drove me away and he refused to give me a reference, so none of the other master smiths would take me on. So I went to work in a factory, a wire factory.

Jesus! What a life that was; working all the time for low pay. It wasn't humane. Some gentleman from Vienna came and said the same thing: it's not humane. Ten of us got fed up with it and we said to the others that they shouldn't put up with it either, but they kept on working. The rest of us left, but everywhere they ask for your references—without that you just can't get work. Here in Vienna I can't find any work at all, sir, and nothing to eat. I live in conditions not fit for a human being, and the police want to deport me, and I have heard that you gentlemen are very kind.” He fell silent, sighed, and stared at Lothar watchfully. Klumpf had gotten up and left the room while the man was talking.

“So, because of a work stoppage you can no longer find any work, right?” Lothar asked, and considered what they ought to do. “Where do you live now?”

The worker cast his eyes down and seemed to think about an answer. “If you need me for anything,” he replied, “just ask Tini, the caretaker's girl, and she can find me. Tini knows me and she can tell you whether or not what I have said is true.” And he looked around for the girl, who was standing in the hall with Frau Fliege.

“We'll have to see,” Lothar said, a bit uncertainly. “I'll have to make some inquiries about how we could help you. You'll have to come back.”

Out in the hall Rotter's voice rang out, “Good morning, Frau Fliege, are the gentlemen inside?”

“Yes, but what's your hurry, Herr Doktor?”, the old woman asked.

“Oh, there's some real news! It's a major scandal! Things are about to take off. And he rushed in to Lothar, his felt hat pushed back and swinging his thick cane in the air. “Hello, brother! Have you heard the latest? Oh, I see. You have a visitor.” He stopped and observed the worker sympathetically.

“This poor man,” Lothar reported, “has turned to us for help. He can't get a job because he participated in a work stoppage....”

“We know all about that,” Rotter interrupted. “The bosses are getting organized too. It will be a war without mercy. We will see who is the stronger. What? A guy like that can't get a job?” Rotter began to size up Chawar's powerful arms. “A fine state of affairs when something like that is just going to waste. Tell us about it, my friend.”

Chawar began to tell his doleful tale again: “Back home in Bohemia I was a blacksmith's assistant, but you know, sir, we lived like dogs....”

But Rotter cut off the report: “It's always the same old story. Things are going to get better, you can bet your life on that, my friend. What have you decided to do, Brückmann?”

“He'll come by again. I'll have to think it over.”

“Naturally! Help has to come from somewhere. So, goodbye then. You can count on us.” Rotter offered his hand to Chawar; he just wanted him to leave because he was busting to tell the news.

The worker moved backwards towards the door; his face took on an angry, sarcastic expression and he submissively said, “But I haven't had anything to eat today ... it's not humane.”

Rotter pulled out his coin purse: “Here, take this, friend. It's enough for a breakfast. And make sure you don't lose the strength of your arms—that would be a great shame. Soon we will all have enough work to do. Goodbye.”

Chawar retreated with Tini, who was giggling.

Frau Fliege stepped behind the door and freed her right ear from the white hood that covered it so as to be able to hear Herr Doktor Rotter's news better.

“Now listen to this,” Rotter began, “but where is Klumpf?”

“In his room,” Lothar answered. He seemed not to like that man.”

Lothar laughed, “That's the way he is, he finds a fly in every bowl of soup. He's too nervous. But he's got to hear my news. Klumpf! Klumpf!” he called and beat on Klumpf's door with his fist.

Klumpf appeared, “What is it then? Good morning, Rotter.”

“Oh, big things are in the works!” Rotter replied, “come on, the coast is clear. Didn't you like the man that was just here?”

Klumpf made no immediate reply, but began to walk back and forth in the room and smoked. Finally he turned to Lothar with an embarrassed smile, “True enough, I didn't like him, your man. It's just a prejudice and not to be taken seriously, but I can always tell whether I can gain power over the person in front of me, that is, whether he will be able to understand that which I would like to impart to everyone or whether he will remain outside my sphere of influence. And then—the man was lying. It didn't sound like something he had lived through. In any case, since Brückmann was there, I could leave.”

“Ridiculous,” Rotter concluded. “But listen up, big things are happening in the world.”

“Branisch wrote me today about the work stoppage in Brunn,²¹” Klumpf said. “He doesn't seem to have much control over the movement.”

“Of course, of course,” Rotter interrupted him. “That's in all the newspapers today. They're breaking the windows of the factories and want to destroy the plants. Our colleagues from the 'Community' have gotten involved. The police arrested one of them in the middle of his speech. It was the blond Bohemian man we saw at the Café Lothringer. But I'm not talking about that. Things are getting serious with the bakers' movement, getting very serious, and we need to be prepared, otherwise our brothers from the 'Community' and from 'Freedom' will take over and we'll be left holding the bag.”

“‘Community’?” Lothar asked, “isn't that the club that publishes that secret paper?”

“Yes, it is,” Rotter said, “that's what we call the people from the Café Lothringer because the paper certainly is their work. It's a small, but very energetic club. They're what it's all about today,” he said, and turned to Klumpf, “I just spoke to Tost....”

“Tost? Him? He's an unkempt young man,” Klumpf countered, obviously distressed.

“It doesn't matter whether he's clean or dirty,” Rotter continued impatiently. “He means a lot to those people. About the coming events—and events are going to happen—Vienna is simmering and the business with the bakers is important. Can you imagine Vienna without bread? So, in view of the coming events, they want to talk to us because those of us who are right-thinking have to pool our strength. So for that reason he has asked us to take part in one of their meetings at the Goldenes Fass²² at the landing.

Lemke—he's like their Branisch—said the same thing formally to Oberwimmer. Well, what do you think, Klumpf?”

Klumpf stopped walking and made a painful face. “It's hard to get along with those people.”

Rotter was annoyed at this. “We can at least try. All these divisions among us is certainly not a blessing for our cause. You know that Branisch would also like to combine all the individual clubs into one large party. Little brooks form a great river, as he puts it. So 'Community' has a great advantage because they're trying everything and they're cooperating. We sit here in our editorial offices....”

“I'm not saying that you shouldn't attend,” Klumpf interjected.

“Just us?!” Rotter boiled over, “No, **you** should go, Klumpf, you're the most important person!” Then he adopted a gentler, flattering tone: “Come on, go with us. We're counting on you. You know exactly how things go with you: you'll go, you'll turn their heads, and they'll do whatever you want them to. Something **has** to be done. Writing is a wonderful thing, but we need to **do** something,” he cried, and hit his walking stick so hard against a chair that a cloud of dust rose out of the upholstery.

“Yes, we must **do** something!” Klumpf repeated, stretching out the words.

Suddenly he would have to leave the field of dreams and move to the reality of action, and that was counter to his nature. “Fine, I'll go then, if you demand it,” he retorted, “but nothing will come of it. Our basic principles are too different. Those fellows are seeking disorder for the sake of disorder, confusion for its own sake. We've often seen disorder, confusion, and collapse, but the right thing never arose from it. People need to know why they are destroying something. It all depends on knowledge, on *episteme*.²³ That's our goal. The people need to clean house, to set aside the old ways and seize the new. Those fellows don't understand that.” Klumpf had gotten excited about this. His voice assumed its accustomed soft, expressive tone and he gesticulated with his slender, white hands.

“All right then,” Rotter interrupted, “tell them that. Save it for them. So, you're going. And Brückmann will go, of course. That's good. Now let's go take a good look at the bakers. Those poor fellows have been treated like dogs—dirty sleeping quarters, nothing to eat, not enough sleep, and ridiculous wages. We've got to get justice for them, with—what was that word, Klumpf?—with *episteme*.”

VI./[Chapter 9]

It was seven o'clock in the evening when Rotter and Lothar pushed their way into the overcrowded trolley car. The humidity was oppressive. The air in the streets was as thick as in a stuffy room. A cloud of yellow dust lay over the crowd of people in the Ringstrasse; on the far side of the banks of the Danube the mass of foliage in the Prater was a limp, dull green.

Further on, where the houses became smaller and the streets grew more narrow, it looked like a small town. Gone was the hustle and bustle of the big city; here one heard the noise of children fighting for a place at the fountain, the noise of dogs biting

themselves, and women beating mattresses. People pushed one another, scolded and laughed with one another as friends do. The open-air pubs were full to overflowing. The street smelled of roasting meat, limestone, and beer. Everywhere doors and windows were thrown open to allow the heat of the day to escape, like the owners who stood in front of their houses in their shirt sleeves with unbuttoned vests.

Rotter poked Lothar and pointed to a man sitting in the opposite corner of the tram. His thin face with its large hooked nose and thin black beard was not pleasant. Long, thin hair fell down and covered the collar of his brown sweater; a broad-brimmed felt hat covered his head. It was the perfect picture of an artist in difficult circumstances. "He's also going there," Rotter explained. "Feitinger. He's one of ours, and one of Klumpf's greatest admirers. He teaches at a boys' school and is worried to death that his supervisors might find out about his relationship with us. Because he has nine children, you know. But his views are very incisive and thorough-going. He's going to send us an article soon." "Hm. He does look somewhat bitter," Lothar observed.

They had ridden down Landstrasse-Hauptstrasse and had gotten off at Baumgasse so they could take the Rabengässchen, then Erdbergerstrasse in order to get to the narrow and dark Budengasse. The tavern Zum goldenen Fassl was the last house in a row of small old houses and abutted a huge factory building that was three times its size. They crossed through the yard, an untidy area where men in work clothes sat at blue-covered tables drinking beer. To one side sat a pale woman peddler, her box full of colorful neckties beside her, eating a bowl of goulash. A rooster and two hens wandered among the tables and chairs, clucking quietly as if bored.

They went into the house. They found the proprietor at the bar, a flabby, pale man with a large head who wore an apron over his tailcoat.

"Good evening!" he said quietly. "You gentlemen know the way—just go up the little staircase. You gentlemen are later than usual."

"Yes, yes," Rotter whispered hurriedly, but in a friendly tone.

Just at that moment Feitinger appeared too, having been forced to take a circuitous approach. He greeted the proprietary secretively with a gesture: "Schindler!"

Rotter led Lothar up a dark wooden staircase. Suddenly they found themselves in an attic. Lothar stopped and squinted. After the darkly-lit pub and the darkness of the stairway, he was surprised by the lively golden light that seeped in between the joints of the roof tiles, filling the room like a bright rain. "Yes, it was here," Rotter said and tripped over a water bucket. "What a damned rat hole!" A door opened and a pale woman appeared, accompanied by two plump children who clung to her skirt. Behind them he could see a kitchen illuminated by that same sharp-golden evening light.

"Good evening, Frau Schindler. We're to meet with the gentlemen, but I can find my way."

The woman pointed silently to the door opposite them, her face assuming a look of vexation and mistrust.

They stepped into a large room with a low ceiling. People were talking loudly. Clouds of tobacco smoke filled the air. The curtains had been pulled to and there were lit candles on the tables. Just opposite those entering the room sat Klumpf on a sofa, chewing on a cigar, pale and reflective. Beside him sat a tall man with a military

mustache and brown hair that stood on end—Lemke, the leader of “those people,” as Rotter said. His face, with the up-turned corners of a sergeant's beard, had something hard and boastful about it. Next to him sat Marbe, a master turner²⁴, chomping on a pipe; his beard hung down to his belt. Still others had gathered around Klumpf: there was a young man with long blond hair and the reddish beard of a sailor; finally, there was an old man whose thin, white hair was spread over his bald pate like a silver web. His small, congested face wore a continuous grimace. The wrinkles in his face were in constant motion, meeting together then separating again. Just at that moment he was speaking and the others were listening.

A group of people in the corner by the window was even louder. Oberwimmer sat on a bed at a low table, overheated and keyed up; next to him was Tost. Lothar had met this strange man a few times before and he found him interesting because the life of hunger and misery that he obviously led had left a distinctive mark on his appearance. His skin color was unhealthy, flirting with gray; a thin, tangled beard thrived on his lip and chin. His soft, black hair looked uncombed and stood up straight on the back of his head, but then arranged itself in strange wads over his narrow, high forehead. His gaunt figure was covered up to his neck by a buttoned-up coat that didn't fit him, his shirt collar concealed by a black scarf. He was a tireless reader of newspapers in the café. He sat there from early afternoon until late at night; he drank coffee with frothy milk and began to read, usually standing under the gas light, one hand buried in his hair. Once he had finished a newspaper, he hobbled over—his boots had worn down at the heels—to get another one. He kept his coat closed with one hand out of concern that someone might detect some secret of his clothing. The waiters served him poorly and treated him badly, while he always approached them with an arrogant and sarcastic mien. That was his expression today as well sitting next to Oberwimmer, who was talking to him insistently. Two other friends, whom Rotter did not know, belonged to this group; one with a harelip, which gave his face an unpleasant, mocking expression, and a young man, whose pale face displayed features of remarkable regularity. He wore a rough woolen coat open in front revealing a not very clean shirt of coarse material as well.

Finally, in the other corner of the room stood a card table where three men had sat down, their beer glasses before them, to play taroque,²⁵ cards in hand so as to give the meeting an appearance of innocence in case the police paid a surprise visit. Kökert, the pharmacist, was there—he was, according to Rotter, “one of ours”—very well dressed, his hair parted in the middle and a well-groomed full beard. There was also a red, apoplectic spice merchant from Neubau,²⁶ and Remder, who lived in Lothar's building.

“Let's sit down with Klumpf, looks like serious conversation there,” Rotter decided and stepped up with a loud “Good evening!” Most of them startled a bit at the sound; the spice merchant began to shuffle the cards, but when they recognized Rotter, they all laughed.

Klumpf was glad to see some of his people, “Come on, sit down with us. Our friends haven't met our new colleagues yet: Brückmann, this is Master Marbe, Lemke, our student Racher, and Doktor Satzinger.”

Satzinger was the short old man who had greeted Lothar with his eyes closed and face puckered. He found this interruption most unwelcome because he wanted to

continue speaking.

“Please sit down, gentlemen, take a seat. Yes! As I was saying, I consider the employers' association to be a blessing—haha! You'd be amazed at what I call blessings! We're not going to have thin-soup compromises any longer. It's going to put the people right in our hands, people who have no choice other than—revolution.” He let that last word resonate, puffing up the wrinkled skin of his face like blowing into a glove.

But Lemke interrupted him. “Since everyone has arrived, I think we should get right to the heart of the matter—we won't be disturbed here.”

Then Feitinger and the proprietor appeared as well.

“It's good that you're here, Schindler,” Lemke cried. “Now we can get down to business. Lock the doors.”

But the proprietor disagreed. “Why?” he asked. “That would only arouse suspicion.” Couldn't he look after his customers? Perhaps it was a birthday party. What could the police have on him? “If you just remain seated, gentlemen—then everything will look fine, very private. My wife will bring some beer.”

And indeed the pale woman from earlier did appear with beer. She showed the same resigned, disgruntled face as if she were thinking “I want nothing to do with your foolishness.”

“Good,” Lemke began anew, and used both hands to curl the tips of his mustache upwards. His voice was as penetrating as a brass instrument and he was constantly changing its emphasis. “The gentlemen here—a new club—are seeking contact with us. The idea is that we should unite and march forward together. That's all right with me. But we will first have to have some discussion about our basic principles. We don't have to go into detail. But we do need to know to what extent we can count on each other. The first thing that comes to mind is the bakers' strike, a good occasion to unify. The timing is good for all of us, isn't it? I'm sure we all want to see the work stoppage drawn out as long as possible. What?! No disagreement? Well, of course not because this small protest can be the beginning of a larger movement or **the** larger movement. That's what I told them. These people have the croissants—and therefore all of Vienna is in their hands. But they need money. And so I ask you, are you gentlemen ready to work with us for that kind of goal? Do any of you have means to that end? The bosses are already making plans to solve the problem half measures. If we don't offer the bakers some help, they will capitulate. That's what I think. Let's see what Doktor Klumpf says about it.” Satisfied that he had spoken his mind, he emptied his glass of beer in one gulp and looked towards Klumpf expectantly.

Klumpf bent his head down towards the table. His face took on an air of suffering and he calmed his voice as he began to speak: “Our means are quite limited. Our party organization here in Austria is so loose that in the case of work stoppages there are more that need our help than we can find the means to support.”

“I know all about that,” Lemke cried. “I'm only asking what can be done in the immediate instance.” Red spots began to show on Klumpf's face and he became quite animated.

“I understand what you mean. We certainly want to help them, insofar as it is within our ability. After I have talked to the comrades I'll get back to you tomorrow with

specific information about the extent of our finances. Certainly. Glad to do it. But I would caution you not to get your hopes too high.”

“Impressive!” Lemke said ironically.

“What do the poor fellows want?” Klumpf continued. “They have been exploited by their employers in a rough and brutal way. They want to force them to give them better treatment and materials advantages. And we must do whatever we can to help them reach these goals. But I would like to prevent any misunderstandings. Is this the kind of stuff out of which the great movement—the revolution, as Doktor Satzinger says—will be made? Do these people have any idea what it is that **we** want? They're looking for a bit more comfort, a few more kreuzers in pay, and a bowl of soup. Once they get what they want, or if they get only half of what they want, then they won't have any interest in our goals or the fate of this society. Therefore, our task is merely to prevent them from being completely defeated and from having to return to their misery without having accomplished anything.”

Satzinger laughed, drumming on the table with his fingers. “That's good, that's good. So let them get nothing.”

“And if it's only a partial victory,” Klumpf continued in a higher voice, “then they will get used to winning and will come to see that they do have power. Nothing is served by getting them all fired up by telling them they are the ones who will bring about the Great Matter. They don't know about the Great Matter. And, gentlemen, we need to be on guard against confusion at all costs and against a revolution by the ignorant. Once the oppressed recognize their power and their need for a great upheaval, then they will see things clearly, and rise up, confident of victory, calm and noble. Our duty is to spread the Theory. This work stoppage is, I think, only an occasion to educate them. We need to teach the oppressed how to win.” He stopped talking and leaned back. His face still bore an expression of seriousness and pain; he looked no one directly in the eye, but rather gazed over the heads of those present towards the ceiling.

/[Chapter 10]

There was silence in the room. But the countenance of each man revealed a certain tension. Each one wanted to say something, but hesitated, looking around the room, waiting to see if someone else might start. Only Satzinger giggled his soft, dry way and walked his wrinkled fingers across the table like two stiff legs. “Victory, victory!” he said. “But for what purpose? Hunger is the best teacher. When they get hungry, they'll find courage—hee-hee.”

Finally Feitinger began to speak as well, staring at Klumpf with bright eyes full of enthusiasm. “Nice, very nice! Knowledge about freedom is the actual goal. The oppressed will rise up and cast off their shackles. A wonderful thing! But it needs to hurry up. How long shall they remain miserable?” He could not continue because Lemke butted in. Lemke's sharp voice overlapped Feitinger's hoarse voice as if he had not been listening to him, and he spoke so rapidly that the words tripped over one another.

“That's nice, very nice! That was in your newspaper. I read it. That's the new

gospel, I take it. Everything calm and orderly. Everyone learns his part, and when everything is ready, people will get together one day and do the thing. Yes, yes. How well I know that. For that you need committees, and a treasurer, and a president. Like they have in the German empire. And if anyone behaves disruptively, he'll be reprimanded like Most and Hasselmann²⁷ were. They're just playing at being cabinet officers and are wasting the time away. Let them do it if they want to. Time will tell which method proves more effective. You want the people to **understand**? Hah! The wearer knows best where the shoe pinches. But it's our job, you say, to put together a general indictment from all the individual complaints. The bakers can just go to hell if they don't serve my purposes. There you have it, sir, that's it exactly! You sit around in your offices and dream up new methods: 'It should be like this or like that.' No, gentlemen, that's not how it's going to work; we who live among the people know that. And you who work on a paper that the police granted permission to publish will never learn it. And you can't stand the bars and the bordellos—too dirty for you. You'll never be able to teach the people philosophy, but you can teach them to understand their own pain: 'They're treating you like dogs, or worse! Don't let them get away with it!' That's something they can understand; that's a message that will sink in. Of course the police don't like it.... But it doesn't matter. We wanted to know how far you gentlemen are prepared to go along with us in the case at hand. That question, it seems, has now been answered.”

“We were expecting more,” the student Racher began, blushing, and with a thick tongue that got in the way of his speaking. “We were hoping that you would join us openly and decisively.... Together we could.... The separation...” But he got confused and Lemke had to complete his thoughts.

“Indeed! Racher expressed the hope that all of us had. But Doktor Klumpf showed us what separates us. You stand for work with statutes and committees, we stand for working with individuals and warfare to the bitter end.”

“Our goal is the same,” Klumpf said, trying to be conciliatory, “and that's a good thing. We can march separately but strike together. The path which you gentlemen are taking is not mine, I don't deny it. Confusion, incitement, and destruction does nothing but poison the spirits of the ones we're working for and makes them useless. But, let everyone do the best he can in his own fashion,” and he made a gentle, but dismissive motion with his hand.

“Prost, Doktor, Prost, our friend!” Feitinger cried enthusiastically and clinked glasses with Klumpf: “Here's to the future! And to knowledge!”

From the rear of the room a deep, rough voice made itself heard. It was the man with the harelip. He thrust his way to the front, his thumbs tucked in the armholes of his vest; his dark, twisted face looked angry and distorted, as if his split lip were causing him pain, and in speaking it became even more distorted. “I would like to know who these gentlemen from *The Future* actually are. What do they advocate? How much should we trust them?”

“Kehlmann, why such a vitriolic tone?” murmured the ever-cheerful Satzinger and kicked the speaker in the shin.

But now was the moment when Rotter could speak. He had waited long enough

for it and now he spoke forcefully and angrily: "We have not come here to give an account of ourselves, I think. Anyone can find out about our views by reading our publication. The purpose of this meeting is consultation, not to find out what we believe. And, by the way, I don't know the man who just spoke, I have no idea what opinions he holds. But I also know that Lemke would not invite anyone who was not deserving of our trust. If brotherly trust and tone are not to prevail here, then clearly we cannot work together."

"Of course!" opined K okert, the pharmacist, from the card table, "if you want to be international, then you have to adopt a certain tone of sophistication."

Then Oberwimmer threw himself into the conversation: "What's going on here? Why such cutting words? Of course we don't need to give an account of ourselves, but neither do we have anything to hide. Didn't we get together to speak our minds? Kehlmann will present his views as well. We you know, we have our newspaper and we are entirely committed to that. The masses need to know... Klumpf, you tell them, you have a way with words, tell them that bit about knowledge."

"I've already told the gentlemen that," Klumpf quietly declined to speak.

Lemke had gotten up and was walking around the room without paying any attention to the conversation. Only when Tost began to speak did he stop and knit his brows together.

Tost, running his hand through his hair with one hand and holding his coat together with the other, spoke very quickly and as he spoke his dry lips trembled in a smile of superiority: "There's one other question that I would like to pose to the members of this new club. They can either answer it or ignore it, that's their right. I have read about their political stance in the pages of *The Future*. And—it's nothing more than the standard, official Social Democrat line. Nothing more! In the very first issue there's an essay about happiness."

"There they talk about the idea of happiness, which mankind is supposed to possess innately. It smells of mysticism to me. Is this idea supposed to be a kind of god? It almost seems that it is. In any case, that's what the masses will get from it. But that would be wrong. There is no mystical knowledge of a concept of unhappiness. The social state results from natural developmental laws. Luckily we're free of god. But why do we need this ghost of an idea? It only confuses people." He fell silent and waited for Klumpf to respond to the challenge, but as Klumpf only kept on smoking and made no effort to respond, Tost became angry; he cried with a shrill voice: "We don't need that kind of thing, no Platonic deadwood. And innate intuitions? What do we need them for? I have enough intuition in my belly, which wants to be filled, and in my arms and legs, which need a decent bed, and that part of me that wants a good-looking woman. And without any innate ideas, I know that others are stealing these things from me. I don't need an 'idea' to know that it's my turn now and that others must be driven away. Why do we need this 'idea'? That's only god in disguise. It's all too familiar..."

Since Klumpf made no reply himself, Rotter felt obliged to do so: "If you will permit, I really must protest. You did not understand the article. There's nothing about god in the article, not even a mention. There's a difference between ideas and god. Why not talk about ideas? Haven't you read Plato?"

“No,” said Tost, his vexation showing in his voice, “Plato was an aristocrat.”

“We're all aristocrats!” Rotter then cried out, “All humans are. But ideas have nothing to do with god.”

“In any case,” Kehlmann observed, “there a whiff of mysticism in it. God keeps sneaking back into it from all sides. Nor do I like this idea business either. Why use such elegant words? We have to be on our guard against god stuff. Every new word has to be carefully checked from all sides, like a hay wagon waiting to be weighed, in case something has been hidden in it.”

Then the fat spice dealer stood up to deliver his opinion solemnly. “What's with god? He was abolished as of the 1872 Social Democrat conference in Mainz.”²⁸

“Do you believe in god, then?” Racher asked and looked directly at Rotter.

“No, certainly not!” Rotter replied, “Of course not. But an idea is not the same as god. Ideas are.... Well, they're nothing really....”

“If something doesn't exist, why talk about it then?” Tost spat out.

The conversation now fell into different groups. The gentlemen at the other table sat back down on their bed. Lemke carried on a low-voiced, polite conversation with Klumpf. The gentlemen at the card table, tired of all the drama, had started a new round of taroque. Rotter quietly filled Lothar in on those present. “Satzinger? They say he used to be a pharmacist in Hungary. He has a doctorate in chemistry. Then he was in America for a while. He's a mysterious character who plays an incredible role here. Tost teaches Italian. He barely gets enough to eat and is bitter as a pill.” These quiet conversations, the calling of bids and calling suits in the card game and the occasional clinking of beer glasses gave the whole assembly the appearance of a normal middle-class birthday party.

But once more there was a disturbance on the bed. Kehlmann had jumped up from his seat, red in the face, his mouth wide open; he spoke loudly and pounded on the table: “Ruining the substance of the future, poisoning the citizen of the future—what kind of talk is that? Where is this 'substance of the future'? Is that us? Is the working class of today perhaps the middle class of tomorrow? Hah! There's nothing there to ruin. We are manure, and that's all. We're here to decompose so that the citizens of the future can develop. Our task is to make sure it happens quickly and completely. There is nothing about the current generation to spoil: it is there to clean house. The final rampage must come in which some people are eaten, and others eat until they burst their sides. That's when there will be space for the future.”

“Kehlmann!” Lemke thundered: “You're drunk. Please don't talk any more.”

“Why?” said Oberwimmer, throwing himself into the middle of things. “We're all by ourselves here and we can speak our minds. Leave him alone. And what does our friend Heyser say to it all?” he said, turning to the man in the coarse wool coat.

“Me? Oh, nothing! I don't care about all this talk,” he said and stared at Oberwimmer with his gray eyes, which were so bright and transparent that they looked almost white.

It had gotten very noisy in the room again; everyone was talking at the same time. Feitinger made a speech that no one listened to. Satzinger laughed so hard that he got out of breath. “Fertilizer, manure—ha ha!—the bankers and aristocrats are expensive manure—guano. We starvelings are just cannon fodder, hee hee.”

The gentlemen at the card table were arguing about a five-point card.

Klumpf stood up, he wanted to leave. Then the others were ready to break it off; no one could stand being in the hot, smoke-filled room any longer.

“Dear Doktor,” Lemke said and shook Klumpf’s hand vigorously, “I want to give you an opportunity to present your ideas to our people. There’s nothing more I can do. We will see who appeals to people more....”

Oberwimmer wanted to have one more drink with Tost and Kehlmann downstairs: “You might prove important for us,” he whispered to Rotter, “Tost was drunk today....”

Feitinger hung close to Klumpf’s apron strings: “Let’s stick together today, Doktor, my friend!” he pleaded.

VII./[Chapter 11]

They walked along the alley in silence. Everyone except Feitinger had removed his hat because it was so sultry and sticky, and involuntarily they bent their heads back, looked up at the roofs which lay under a thick and moist layer of air. They were looking for the night sky behind it so that they could feel a bit cooler.

They reached the trolley on the Hauptstrasse. The trolley car was empty and Feitinger perked up. He sat down close to Klumpf, lighted a cigar and said, “We can talk here without being disturbed.” The others, however, did not seem inclined to chat and so only the teacher spoke, quite fluently, strongly underlining certain words: “I can’t tell you, Doktor, how much every single thing you say gives me new encouragement! God knows, I really need it. The whole week long I am plagued by pretentious swagger, buffeted, and suspected. Even daily bread is a problem. And for all my efforts I get only disrespect and rejection, never a promotion! To be sure, what do the sufferings of a single individual matter? The most important thing is the common good! But, when you get down to it, the peoples’ misery really is made up of individual suffering. And sometimes you just run out of patience. But you, Doktor, you have cleared up all the doubts I had, you have explained why I hate. It’s because hate is a necessary thing—just as love is. The right kind of hate is ethical. I don’t mean the smoldering hate of those people we just met—but rather hate that hates because it loves—magnanimous, beautiful!”

Rotter poked Lothar and laughed quietly. Klumpf, however, startled out of his thoughts: “Oh!” he said with a look of concern, “I am quite familiar with those people. Many of them pretend to be honest workers, true! But I know for certain that their ways are not mine.”

“It was just too soon,” Rotter said, “the way these people passed themselves off as a party and asked us to show our identity cards. When they are the very ones who separate themselves with all kinds of secretiveness.”

“They have been able to gain influence,” Klumpf remarked thoughtfully. “A lot of their activity is on the dark side, but I know them! Nevertheless they did confuse me a bit today and made me think about about what it’s like when someone shows you a bit of truth that you have overlooked. Lemke may very well be right that I don’t take any risks and that I don’t know the people. But his mockery was unjust because it certainly isn’t

fear that has held me back. It's just that I haven't discovered anything dangerous—as he says—to do. Really! Perhaps there are things that I could do? Did you all hear what he said? He challenged me to present my program, or rather, my basic principles, as he said, to a small gathering of workers that he's used to speaking to, and to defend them against his. I suppose that's a test of courage,” he added with a smile and shrugged his shoulders.

“Excellent!” cried Rotter, “we need to show them....”

“**That** I know for sure,” Klumpf began anew and his voice trembled a bit, “but concern for my own safety never kept me back from doing anything. To place one's freedom or life on the line for the cause, I think, would be the easiest thing in the world; much easier than constantly struggling with faintheartedness, vulgarity, and lack of success. If going to prison would help the cause—or, indeed, if my life were at stake, then I would count that as a genuine profit at little cost. Is that all? Well, here I am....” He spread his arms wide and for a moment the light from the street light illuminated his martyr's face with its dark, agitated eyes.

“I know the people very well,” Rotter added. “Brückmann and I go the café at the landing every Saturday. That's about all you can do.”

“Doktor,” Feitinger said eagerly, “do you know Stiller the metal worker who has defended himself so well in court? What was it he said? 'I'm trying to educate my comrades because that makes us strong.' He's an unusual man and has a lot of influence. We can find him over there in the new building at the Auge Gottes²⁹—I'll take you there.”

“Fine. Wherever you want to go,” Klumpf replied and looked with yearning over to the leafy covering of the popular park, from which sweet smells and the sound of a waltz drifted over to them. It would certainly be nicer and cleaner there than here in this dark street that led away from the center of town.

Klumpf and Feitinger got out at Bergstrasse, while Rotter and Lothar continued on to the old city wall.

Café Zapp was located on the ground floor of a long, dark tenement building. Above the door hung a half-red, half-blue lantern. Red curtains on the windows had been drawn. Tobacco smoke thick as fog hung over all the objects in the hallway. Even inside the bar Lothar could at first make out only the little flames of the gas lights in the veil of smoke. There was a thrum of voices and he was struck by the oppressive heat. Rotter wove a path through the small wooden tables. All were taken, most of them occupied by workers in blue dusters, and many of them were already loose-limbed and drunk. Cards were being played at a few tables and there was hefty argumentation over the games.

“You gentlemen will have to take a table in the next room,” said a female voice. A buxom waitress stood in front of them, dressed in a shiny red satin jacket. Her high-piled and tangled hair left only a small portion of her pale, gray and smoke-covered face visible. Her eyes were outlined in black and her lips as red as those of an inexpensive doll.

“Certainly, Fräulein,” Rotter replied, as if a lady were standing in front of him whom he wished to court. “We would be grateful if you could find a spot for us. Business is booming, so I see.”

“It's because it's a Saturday,” replied the pale, disgruntled creature and led the gentlemen to a side room which was just as crowded, loud and dirty as the first one. Only a large and gleaming marble-topped sideboard distinguished it from the first room; the proprietress of the café sat by the cash drawer. She was a plump old woman with a wig a bit too large for her that framed her pale, soft face like a shapeless bonnet. Dressed in black silk with a gold chain around her neck, rings on her white fingers, she sat in a mahogany niche as if in a dignified middle-class oasis amid the wild carryings-on and was constantly writing figures in a large book, the only solid ground amidst all the noisy tumult before her, which she despised.

“How do you like it?” Rotter asked, pleased with himself. “Here you have the common folk, even Lemke can't dispute that.” Lothar stared thoughtfully at the mass of people which moved in front of him in a yellow haze.

“I don't know,” Rotter continued, “whether Klumpf could learn anything here or not, 'for the sake of the subject,' as he likes to say. Look! There's one of our revolutionary bakers over there. His cap is still white with flour. He must still have some money left because he's gambling and losing, it seems.” And he pointed to a nearby table where four men were playing cards. It was a baker's apprentice, still young. His soft, beardless face looked sick and lifeless. He was missing a front tooth and that ruined the appearance of his otherwise handsome mouth.

He held the dirty cards with both hands, his gaze glancing from one player to the next and he bit on a cigar stump out of sheer nervousness so hard that it squeaked. Next to him sat a young woman wrapped in a blue shawl wearing a hat with a shiny new satin veil. Her peaked, copper-colored face bore the same tense expression as that of the young man, except that he twitched nervously each time a card was played.

Two of the other players were workers in blue dusters; the fourth was a thin little man with sunken cheeks; his small blue eyes were outlined in red; he wore a bandage around his face as if he had a toothache. He talked a lot and teased his serious young partner; he ordered beer and played as if he were not paying attention. This set seemed to attract attention: a row of kibitzers stood around the table.

“They'll never catch him cheating,” Lothar heard someone whisper. The little man kept on talking with a high penetrating voice.

“Sure! Our bakers, they're sons of guns, they'll teach them a thing or two. Hah! They'd better look elsewhere if they want to slave-drive someone. Hey you, you owe me a sechserl.”

The woman reached under her shawl, pulled out a tobacco pouch, took a ten kreutzer coin out, and placed it in the hand of the baker's apprentice.

He looked it over carefully, then hastily pushed it across the table, biting down hard on his cigar.

“It's truly outrageous,” Rotter philosophized, “that these poor people, who are brutally tormented all week long, have no other pleasure than this, I tell you, just this. What wretchedness!”

“Wretchedness is not the right word,” Lothar replied, “just look at how they bend the cards in their hands, then slap them down on the table. Their lust for life and their passion has been stored up and now must be expended in a single night. Look at that

one! He's raving. That's his wretchedness!"

At a table off to the side a man in a blue duster sat with a liter of beer before him. He was already quite drunk; he had red spots on his face, his nose was blue, his eyes small and moist. He supported himself languidly on the table top with his arms. His beat-up hat was pushed back. He smiled and talked to himself continuously; occasionally he laughed so hard at his own words that he put both hands on his stomach so that it didn't shake so much. Eventually merriment got the better of him; he pounded on the table with one hand, punched his hat in with the other and let out a shrill yodel.

"Well, of course," Rotter said and laughed, "that's all they have."

"No," Lothar said, "it's because all this lust for life is compressed into a single night that the pleasure becomes so powerful, animalistic, if you will. They don't have time for rhetoric. But they do have that power and urges within them, and I admire them for it. By the way, look, there's that man we met!"

Chawar stepped into the room with Tini, the caretaker's daughter. With hesitating gait and a swing in her hips, she followed the fellow, as such girls do when they are just following along. Chawar sat down at a table that was already fully occupied since those present seemed willing to create room for him, perhaps out of fear. He tapped on the table slowly with a coin, ordered something to drink for himself and his girlfriend and began to speak loudly. Tini sat next to him, supporting her head with both hands, studying those present. When she noticed Lothar and Rotter, she poked Chawar and motioned with her head towards them—the fellow smiled and made a deep bow towards them.

"That's right," Rotter said, taking up the previous topic again since he eagerly entertained other people's ideas. "This lust for life has to be given a proper place; that's what I think too. How much energy is simply wasted here. They drink and play cards for one night; that's the only thing this society offers them. If you consider for a moment..." Rotter raised his voice, became more sonorous in his declamation because he noticed that an elderly man who previously had been watching the card game was now listening to them. "This thirst for amusement cannot and should not be suppressed. It is human."

The man next to them took his pipe out of his mouth, bowed toward Rotter and observed: "Indeed, sir, once a week a man's got to have a bit of fun, don't you think? But it doesn't depend on getting drunk and having a brawl." He smiled, spit, and then stuck his pipe back in his mouth with an air of satisfaction.

"That's exactly what I'm saying," Rotter replied enthusiastically. "But when I see what goes on here.... Do workers really find refreshment here, in this rat hole?" he added quietly so that the lady at the till couldn't hear it.

"If you can't find anything better, then you just have to put up with it," the workman said calmly.

"That's the point exactly, my friend, that's it!" Rotter cried, and was truly in his element for now other people were listening in and even the card game halted. "The worst is good enough for you, who struggle the hardest to get by. The others, the parasites, can't just make do—nothing's too good for them. Society doesn't give a thought to creating a place where you could really recreate and refresh yourselves. One evening in a bar is thought reward enough for a week's work. No, my friends! You just

can't say if we can't get anything better, then we'll just have to put up with this. There **is** something better, you just have to demand it..." Rotter had gotten into the mode of an orator and gestured broadly with his arms, but was interrupted by the thin little man at the card table who was annoyed that the game had been disturbed.

/[Chapter 12]

The man forced his way to the front: "Making demands doesn't always get us anywhere. The bakers have been making demands for some time now, as the gentleman says. Ask yourselves whether anything has come from it. Ask Masing here." He turned towards the baker's apprentice sitting at the card table, but his chair was vacant. "Where is Masing?" he cried. "And the girl is gone too." There were giggles all around.

"He's probably waiting for you," people said.

"That's a leftist for you! And he still owes me money." The incident now captured everyone's attention.

Rotter had to pause and sit down in disillusionment. "The devil take them and their cards," he muttered.

Another group of loud people thrust its way into the room, unwashed fellows making a lot of noise and all shouting at the same time.

"Look! It's the brothers. They're back from the meeting," said the older workman next to Rotter.

"Yes," someone else volunteered, "it's been decided now. They won't give in and anyone who keeps on working had better watch his back."

The lady at the cash drawer looked at the new arrivals warily and conferred quietly with the waitress.

All eyes were now on the new customers and they were well aware of it; they demanded that they be given seats and beer; they were the heroes of the day; pale, arrogant heroes whose tattered clothing was covered with a mixture of flour and dirt. They formed a circle in the middle of the room and drank from a tall glass that held three liters of beer.

"They've paid for that one," the waitress reported to her boss, "but it was hard getting the money together. They had to empty their coin purses to get find enough money between them."

"Don't serve them anything else unless they pay in advance," the lady decided.

Rotter had once more found a subject to be enthusiastic about. "There they are! Can you hear them? They won't give in. Fräulein, Fräulein! I have some money. Take those men another big glass like that. Tell them it's from a friend. Those poor boys, let them drink as much as they want."

The 'poor boys' were in good spirits and carried on a lively conversation. Even though everyone present could hear, what they were talking about nevertheless remained unclear. It seemed as if they were expecting someone who was going to be roughed up. This someone needed to be taught what happens if you don't go along with the group. A few girls joined their party. One of them stood out for her beautiful, slender figure and her pale, narrow face which was almost covered by blond hair light as a cloud under

which her eyes gleamed, fiery and blue. She had positioned herself behind one of the baker's apprentices, a reedy, dark boy who looked like a Jew. She wrapped his curly hair around her fingers and smiled.

"Drink up, Pepi!" the boy said and handed her the glass.

She clasped the glass with both hands and lifted it to her lips.

"That's enough!" the others cried. "That girl can outdrink all the others.

Enough!"

But Pepi kept on drinking without putting the glass down. When someone else took the glass out of her hand, she was annoyed and said "He doesn't care if I drink," and started twisting the boy's hair around her swollen, red fingers again.

Then Chawar stepped into the group, glass in hand: "Hello, comrades."

"Oh, it's red-headed Schabber,³⁰" one of them said.

"When comrades are in trouble," Chawar continued, "then Chawar doesn't stand on the sidelines. Here, drink!" and he offered his glass to the person sitting closest to him. At the same time, he wrapped his arm around Pepi and pinched her side, which she acknowledged with a gentle smile.

"You certainly can drink," Chawar said amiably.

"If there's something **to** drink," Pepi replied.

"Why shouldn't there be something to drink? Here!" and he offered her his glass. "Comrades, move closer together. We need some space. Fräulein, a beer please." The effect of this call was that room was made for the big Bohemian. Legs apart, he sat down and pulled Pepi onto his lap and began to act like the most important person in the room. "Ha! Comrades, you showed them a thing or two. Let them knead their own bread for change!"

Tini had remained sitting at the other table, her head with its burden of black hair supported by both hands. Nothing in her facial expression revealed what was going on inside her. She watched almost sleepily, seriously, but her eyes, fixed on Pepi, seemed to get larger and darker.

There was tension in the air in the bar. Everyone was listening to the bakers' conversation, and everyone was expecting something, expecting someone who needed to be roughed up. The lady at the cash drawer whispered something to the waitress about the police.

Then there was a hubbub at the front door. The bakers listened and laughed. Chawar cried: "Let them come on in. Anyone who works when others are going hungry has to pay for beer. That's only fair!" He tottered to the front door and others followed him. The door was kicked open from the outside and people tumbled into the room backwards and they seemed to be pulling something behind them. The crush at the door got even greater. Everyone was shouting. The lady at the cash drawer stood up behind her table and called for the firemen, for the police.

Rotter, intoxicated by the noise and tumult, stormed into the middle of the crowd. He stood there and spoke: "Brothers! Stick together. This is not where you'll find the enemy. Save the strength of your outrage for something else!"

Suddenly, Lothar stood in the middle of the throng—how, he did not know. Nor did he understand what was going on. There was a fistfight at the door. He saw Chawar

draw back his arm, but he was pushed back: "What do **you** want? This is no concern of yours." Then a figure emerged from the tangle of humanity, stripped of his, dressed only in pants. Raised above the heads of the others, this thin, naked body with its pointed shoulder blades and spine seemed strangely pale among the blue dusters and the shabby coats. His pale, young face was distorted and he cried, then he disappeared into the crowd only to reappear again pale and convulsed.

"That's not right, they're going to kill him," Lothar said aloud.

"He's one of the boys who decided not to strike; they found him next door and brought him over here," the old worker from before explained.

Someone standing behind Lothar let out a laugh, a screeching, spasmodic laugh. It was Tini. She was standing on a chair, hands propped on her sides, studying the tumult beneath her with open, searching eyes. She had unpinned her hair and it fell in black strands down to her belt. Her whole body trembled and moved under her thin blue dress. She stamped her feet in excitement and leaned over, as if ready to leap into the fray herself.

"Jesus! They're going to kill that poor boy!"

Lothar felt a hot surge at the sight, his hands formed fists, incited the girl's passion.

"Jesus! They're going to kill that poor boy!" said another voice next to Lothar. That was Pepi with her patient, pale face, standing there sighing with her hands folded over her stomach.

Tini turned around when she heard that exclamation. Her whole face was twitching. She closed her mouth and her lips turned white. She shook her black mane off her forehead and, hastily leaning down, she grabbed the girl standing next to her by the hair. The girl screamed. Tini lost her balance and the two women rolled over each other on the floor covered by Tini's hair as if with a dull, dark veil.

"Girls, what are you doing?!" Lothar cried.

But they wouldn't let go of each other, and Tini kept repeating in an outraged voice from deep within her throat: "Snakes, snakes!! Are you still going to sit with Lois, tell me?"

To Lothar it felt like a raging mad-house enveloped in yellow tobacco smoke. Even Rotter, still standing on the table, had been changed; he was wound up, his hat pushed back, and kept screaming for unity and admonishing them to form a unified front against the common enemy.

Lothar too was caught up in the frenzy, he had to do something, something powerful; all his limbs were trembling. With not a thought in his head, he stormed at the pack of men in front of him: "Let the boy go. Are you a bunch of animals?" he cried.

"What does **he** want," replied one of the sturdy fellows and drew his arm back to take a swing at Lothar.

But Lothar grabbed him: "You shouldn't torment that naked boy there, listen, listen!" he repeated and with all his strength threw the fellow to the floor. Then he took a deep breath. How good it felt!

Suddenly the crowd at the door got quieter. They retreated back into the room a bit. Someone slapped Lothar on the shoulder. It was Rotter. "Come on," he said quietly,

“they're already here.”

“Who?”

“The police! There's nothing more we can do here. Oh, the rascals, the scoundrels!”

Lothar allowed himself to be pulled along to the door at the opposite end of the room. When he looked back, he saw the lady with the tired face at the cash drawer standing up behind her mahogany rail, with a triumphant and bitter look on her flabby face.

Once outside, they hurried towards the city. Rotter talked incessantly, gesticulating wildly with his arms. All the excitement had stirred up speeches in him that now had to come out: “You can't found a state with animals.... And how are you any better than animals? Everyone is just looking for an opportunity to take down his brother. Weren't you just speaking about brotherly love? I'd sooner look for brotherly love among wolves than among you!” Oh, he spared them nothing. He opposed them boldly and relentlessly.

Lothar too felt the need to say something. And so they marched along beside each other, both speaking but neither listening to the other.

At the Ferdinandstor, as the Burgplatz lay before them, brightly lit by moonlight, they both suddenly fell silent. Lothar felt chilly. It was quiet, cold and empty here. The gravel paths, the small chestnut trees, the long row of windows in the Burg—all was white in the moonlight except the two equestrian statues in the middle of the square, opposing each other like gigantic, ink-black shadows.

Rotter laughed—and then added wistfully: “Oh, oh, it's sickening!”

“And yet,” Lothar said, “some things are beautiful.” And he thought back to the figure of the raving girl at the bar.

When they turned off Graben onto St. Stephen's Square they saw two haggard figures standing in front of the cathedral. They recognized Klumpf and Feitinger, who were lost in contemplation of the building. Klumpf spoke vividly and pointed to the tower, which stuck out from the dark mass of the lower structure into the moonlight.

“No!” Klumpf said, “people will not be able to imagine something like that in the future. Once humanity has solved its big problem, we won't build things like that anymore. Buildings of the future will spread out horizontally on the earth, clear, firm-footed, happy. This building expresses too vividly our constant struggle and our yearning for things not understood and therefore too exalted. Just look, Doktor, those dark masses pushing off against each other and weighing each other down. Sad and macabre. And that spire—it rises from out of the struggle like a fairy tale, but it can't climb high enough, it can't be light enough, not transcendent enough. It doesn't relate to what's beneath it. There you have a perfect representation of irreconcilable opposites! One part is heavy and suffering, the other transcendent and mystical. The ideal does not dwell in an earthly body; rather, it rises independently above it. But in the future we will still love these beautiful monuments to a time when mankind still was searching for that which we shall already have. Just as we continue to love our own childhood, right? In childhood we are surrounded by a dark world that we don't understand; it terrifies us and we anxiously seek our way through it. And if we think about beauty that we're hoping for,

then it's a fairy tale, all light, ethereal, like that spire.”

“Well said, very true!” Feitinger commented. “As long as we are ignorant, then everything seems a legend to us!”

Feitinger's interjection startled Klumpf out of his dream. He noticed Lothar and Rotter and extended his hands to them.

“Oh, there you are! We have had quite a nice evening. I got to know a few workers whom I found quite sympathetic. I have rarely felt as hopeful as I do today. Let's go to a café and I'll tell you about it!”

VIII./[Chapter 13]

Sunday morning had dawned so hot and dazzling over Vienna that one could hardly keep one's eyes open without being blinded, nor open one's mouth without getting a throat full of dust. The courtyard at No. 2 Margaretenstrasse radiated so much heat that passers-by from the Hauptstrasse onto Margaretenstrasse hesitated under the gateway before daring to enter the hot area. Nevertheless, the occupants of the house carried on. There was life on all the floors. The cooks returned from the vegetable market,³¹ bearing the produce in their skirts. Shopkeepers' clerks, dressed in their Sunday best, stormed down the stairs, whistling a tune as they went in search of Sunday pleasures. From early morning on people played billiards in the café behind lowered yellow straw curtains.

It was lively on the fourth floor as well. Fräulein Würbl, her gold baubles jangling, hurried to mass at the University Church, while Frau Pinne, returning from mass at the Paulaner Church, wheezed her way up the steps. There were noises behind the yellow doors: rattling dishes, the buzz of voices. Occasionally a door was opened and a piece of clothing was tossed into the outer room.³² The smell of bouillon and onions suffused the whole floor.

Up on the fifth floor where the Gerstengresser family lived, there was a lot of activity. Herr Gerstengresser, who worked at the telegraph office, was off today and when he didn't have to work, the family went for an outing in the country. He couldn't imagine how one could use free time any differently. The girls were off today too. Ella didn't have to go to her job at the post office, nor Elsa to the café where she was a cashier. They were going to have their mid-day meal earlier, and for that reason Frau Gerstengresser had started cooking at eight that morning. Herr Gerstengresser, wearing an old linen coat over his worn-out shirt, slippers on his feet, went from one person to another, and was sent away by all. “Franziska!” he admonished his wife in the kitchen, “Get a move on. We don't want to be late.”

On mornings such as these Franziska was usually prickly and snippy: “Where's the fire? What's the hurry?” she said. “And who will be the one to grumble if the meat is tough?”

Herr Gerstengresser slipped away quietly and went to his daughters' room. “Girls, shake a leg! Your mother has dinner almost ready.”

But the girls too sent him away. “Father, don't come in. You can't come in now!” Ella was a bit on the heavy side and Elsa was just lacing up her corset. It took all her

strength.

“I’ll go wake up Poldl,33” Herr Gerstengresser decided. “Good heavens! He’s still in bed!”

Leopold Gerstengresser was in fact still in bed; he turned his face to the wall and didn’t stir, which annoyed his father.

“What’s this? Where were you yesterday? Whoever heard of such a thing! Just go back to sleep, we’re going to leave.”

“Go on!” came a retort from the bed.

“What’s wrong, are you sick?”

“Yes. I have a headache.”

“I don’t doubt it. If you spend the whole night rambling around. That kind of life is shameful and I won’t stand for it. Go ahead and get up and you’ll feel better. Don’t be such a good-for-nothing! Did you think we would wait dinner on you?”

“Go ahead and eat,” Leopold said, annoyed.

Herr Gerstengresser shrugged his shoulders. What’s wrong with the boy? Recently it seemed that he had changed a lot. Was he sick? He was often seen with the girl from the fourth floor. True, but there was nothing unusual about that. Maybe it would be a good idea to have a talk with Herr Punzendorf, the head of the silk-ware firm where Leopold was employed as a salesman. But he wouldn’t know anything more than what he sees from behind his desk at the store. Herr Gerstengresser sighed. Poldl was a good-looking, spirited boy and he would be glad to see the boy happy, happier than he himself had been in life!

Frau Gerstengresser stuck her overheated face through the door: “Get up, Poldl,” she cried, “We’re having apple strudel today. And you, old man, you could start getting dressed. Otherwise, we won’t get away on time.”

Yes, the woman was right about that. Herr Gerstengresser went to his room, sat down in front of the mirror and began to shave his sunken cheeks. “Ella,” he called, “give me a bit of your pomade.” He wanted to comb back his shaggy gray mustache that was beginning to cover his teeth.

The girls were dressed and ready and stood in the main room around the set table and waited for their mother to bring the food in. They themselves could touch nothing for fear soiling their fine clothing. It was only by incredible effort that Ella had been able to force herself into a dress with a red pinched waist and she still wasn’t satisfied. She thought she wasn’t thin enough.

Elsa, the cashier, had gotten overheated trying to lace up her sister’s dress. She herself was not troubled by Ella’s problem since her fine-boned thin frame slipped easily into the tightest corset and the tightest bodice. Her tightly curled hair made her head appear almost too large for her body. Her face with its wide-open round eyes bore the expression of patience and exhaustion of a harassed cashier, and yet it could suddenly appear merry and child-like when she laughed.

“Isn’t Poldl coming with us?” Elsa asked. She went to the door of her brother’s room and looked into the room. “Poldl, the food is ready.” No answer. “Come on, Poldl, please go with us. We have a better time when you’re there.” He did not stir. Elsa left again. What was wrong with Poldl? She was extremely fond of her brother and worried

about him. Was it Mietzi on the fourth floor who was to blame for everything? Such a stupid girl. And what was she after? Poldl was the best-looking boy in the whole ninth district, so why was she still tormenting him? Did he need money? Well, today Elsa had nothing to give him, even if she wanted to. Leopold had told her such an amazing story; he told her everything. Last Sunday an elegant man at the Theater an der Wien³⁴ had offered to take Mietzi to the Hotel Sacher.³⁵ Mietzi didn't accept, but she always held it against Leopold that he didn't take her himself. But where was the poor boy supposed to get the money to take her to such a nice place. There was no help for it. The best thing would be for him to break up with the stuck-up girl.

Mother brought the soup in. "Go ahead and eat," she said, "I have to go do my hair." Herr Gerstengresser came in wearing his Sunday coat and freshly shaved. "Poldl really is not coming," he added seriously. "There's something wrong with that boy. I'm going to have to set things right."

"But if he's sick," Elsa objected—she was always prepared to defend Leopold.

"Ridiculous!" replied Herr Gerstengresser. "It's something you pick up at a beer hall, I'm sure.

"Couldn't he just have a headache?"

"Oh, go on...."

Ella didn't take part in this battle. She sat stiff and straight in her chair and ate her soup, carefully holding down the bows on her breast with her left hand so that she didn't spill anything on them. She knew that there was a certain testiness in the air when they were about to take a ride into the country. What was the sense of working all week only to fight on Sunday? She had gotten her way and the family was going to Weidling instead of Vöblau³⁶ as her mother had wanted, since her boyfriend from the post office was also going to Weidling. Nothing else mattered to her, and she shoved one bite after another into her mouth—indifferently, as if she were dropping a letter into a letter box.

"Mother, come to the table," Herr Gerstengresser called out.

"Looking like I do here in the kitchen, I can't be seen by anyone," was the indignant response from the next room.

Ella was already at work on the apple strudel.

"Why aren't you eating your apple strudel?" the father asked Elsa.

"I don't want to," was the short reply.

"Maybe you're sick too?"

"Yes, I picked up something at a beer hall." And with that she stood up, picked up the plate with the strudel on it and carried it in to Leopold. Perhaps he would eat it when he got up.

Finally they were ready to leave. Sitting sideways on a chair, Mother Gerstengresser ate her portion of the mid-day meal, while the daughters sat in front of the mirror putting on their hats.

"Onward, onward," Herr Gerstengresser urged.

Poor Frau Gerstengresser had to wolf down her strudel after she put on her hat and before she put on her scarf.

"Just take it with you," her husband said, his patience at the breaking point. Now they were all headed downstairs, all of them serious and all of them annoyed with each

other.

Leopold heard the noise and scolding of the departure, then the door was closed. There were footfalls on the staircase, then quiet. The sun shone blindingly strong in the room, the buzzing of the flies at the window was unbearable. Leopold buried his face in his pillow. He didn't want to see the light. Today was going to be awful and he could not find the resolve to start it. And when he lay there thinking about nothing, a thought went through his head that disturbed him. He looked around. Something had to happen. Over there, near the door, hanging on a nail, was the handsome, brown summer topcoat he normally liked so much. But today he couldn't bear to look at it. He sank back down into the hot tangle of his bedclothes.

One thing was sure: he did not want to go through the torment that he had experienced the last two Sundays again. Oh God, what a curse it is to be poor! And why on earth did that silly girl get the idea of being an extra on stage? He had taken her to the theater too often and the pretty clothes had turned her head. But how peaceful and wonderful it was when the two of them just sat together in a high balcony of the theater, close together, lost among the many other people there! And then, later, when they went walking, arm in arm, to a quiet little garden just outside of town, then a cold meal, a piece of torte, and a few glasses of wine were enough to make them happy. But now when Mietzi appeared on stage in some daring costume looking as beautiful as an angel, then she certainly was not thinking of Poldl. Instead, she was casting glances back at the old men and officers in the loges who were looking at her with opera glasses. And after the performance when he waited for her in Dreihufeisen-Gäßchen, an officer came up to her and whispered something in her ear. She pretended to be outraged, but she was nevertheless changed. She tormented him with tales of her triumphs. Yesterday a count had wanted to take her to the Hotel Sacher; today a baron has promised to give her some jewelry. This beer garden was too small for her. At a certain store she had seen a very pretty cape. And so it went. And he, the poor boy, had no money at all recently. Mietzi noticed it and was annoyed about it. No, she was moving away from him, he was sure. If earlier he had loved the girl, now her theater costumes and successes just drove him mad. Oh, if only he had money! Stupid money. Old bankers with curved noses and pot bellies, they had money to burn, and he, dashing Poldl, who really understood how to enjoy life, had to go around with empty pockets. An injustice on the part of fate that cried up to heaven.

With a groan he turned over on his other side. And then suddenly he remembered a terrible experience he had had at work. A fat woman wearing a red silk hat over her blond curls and jewelry like a bouquet of small gold berries stood before the counter. He could see it as clearly as if she were standing beside his bed. "I would like to see some silk shawls, some of the really large ones." Leopold brought out some of the expensive shawls from Lyon, one box after another. The lady could not decide what to buy and her indecision drove him to distraction. He was already in a bad mood because Mietzi had told him that she was going to appear on stage that night and he didn't have a single kreutzer to pay for a theater ticket. The store on Unter den Tuchlauben³⁷ was so dark that the gas lights had to be lit. The lady was still digging through the pile and Leopold told her the prices: "18 gulden; that one's 25, and a nice piece it is, too; that one would be

30.” The lady decided to come back another time. “Very well, my respects, madam.” All his effort had been in vain.

Greatly annoyed, Leopold began to fold the shawls and put them back in their boxes. And something new happened to him: all those prices kept running through his mind: 30, 25, that comes to 55. What a Sunday that would be! The girl at the till was making change for a gentleman. The two other salesmen were helping some ladies at a different counter. And how it happened Leopold could not say exactly, but two of the shawls found their way under his jacket. And next they were in his overcoat hanging by the door. How strange and alien it all was! He, a th... No, perhaps it was just a dream, and there was nothing in the overcoat. And if that was true, then nothing had happened. He could return the items to their place the next morning. But in any case Sunday was ruined. But no matter. Now he was ready to get up. Things would straighten themselves out. Right now there was no need to think about such things. Pale and tired, he nevertheless got up. As carefully as ever he combed one curl over his ears, turned his mustache upwards, and put on a tie. This somewhat jaunty look flattered him, he thought. It would be impossible for Mietzi to leave a good-looking boy with big blue eyes like him in favor of an old Jewish banker! Now he was ready. He reached for his overcoat and noticed that the pockets were stuffed, so he only placed it casually over his arm and left the house.

/Chapter 14

He sauntered towards the city, not in any hurry. The air that Sunday was hot and glistening again and it felt good to him. The sun burned down on this black Sunday jacket, his formal hat pressed down on his forehead, all around sun-warmed people were hurrying about with nothing to do, absolutely nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. In this festive atmosphere, in this rush to find pleasure, having to go about with no money in his pocket was simply hell on earth! He stopped for a moment on the Stephansplatz and thought for a minute: should he head towards the Hoher Markt³⁸? No, definitely not! He wanted to walk along the quay; he felt he had to do something that was fun before he made a decision. He walked on with lighter steps. The terrible thing could at least be postponed for a while. On the boulevards along the Danube he checked out the usual Sunday servant girls. He leaned against a tree and smoked a cigarette, then he went to the garden café of the Hotel Metropole.³⁹ How nice it was here. Shirtless boys lay around on the banks of the Danube and smoked stubs of cigars. Workers were sitting there too, their hands wrapped around their knees, sleepily watching the river flow by. The red dress skirt of a girl from the Iglau and the blue trousers of a soldier peeked out from some green bushes. Down on the water the bell of a small steam ship was signaling for departure, its drumming rising above the constant hum that permeated the banks. And over all this activity the trees cast their shadow; but below, in the full light of the sun, lay the Danube, a broad band of blinding light.

How good it would be to sit here with no problems weighing down upon you. The next thing he would do, Leopold decided, when all the unpleasantness was over,

would be to begin a Sunday here. But today there was something else he had to do, some hard work. That he needed money was incontrovertible. Later he could make restitution, he would earn money somehow. "Waiter, the check please!" He laid the overcoat over his arm carefully and hurried out.

The Hoher Markt lay in front of him, practically deserted and yellow from the sunshine. A few women selling fruit huddled together near the gate to the town hall. Two boys were playing in the fountain. Leopold hesitated. He was anxious about crossing the large open space. Across from him loomed the black hole of the Jewish Quarter. There in the dark shadows things were stirring. A broad-shouldered man stepped out onto the square, his dimpled hat pulled down over his face. He had a red beard and wore a long, gray-green coat. He shielded his eyes and looked over to Leopold as if he were expecting him.

"I just can't do it!" Leopold said to himself, and yet in the same moment he had already started walking straight towards the man there on the corner.

"Do you have something?" the latter asked.

"Yes."

"Let's see it." The man led him along the Judengasse, then turned right, into a courtyard, and stopped: "Show me."

Leopold pulled out the shawls and handed the man the package without opening it. The man inspected the merchandise carefully for what seemed like an eternity to Leopold. Not far from them sat an untidy woman on the stone steps nursing a child; on the other side two dark-haired boys were squatting on the floor playing with a paper boat in the gutter. Oh God! How sad, and how ugly it was was! Would he ever get back to the clean world?

"How much do you want?" the man asked and stared searchingly at Leopold with his clear, syrup-brown eyes.

"Forty," Leopold responded quietly.

The man laughed: "Forty? More like ten, but I'll give you fifteen."

"Not a chance!" Leopold cried. He felt like striking the Jew. "Do you think I stole them? I need some money, that's why I'm selling them."

"Fine," said the man. "Just wait here, it'll be all right to wait here."

So Leopold was alone. He was overcome by a dull sense of desperation. But what did it matter now? He was already up to his neck in the mud. The paper boat in the gutter stopped floating: it crashed into an onion that was rotting there. The baby began to whine; a ray of sun poked through some sort of split in the twilight of the courtyard laying a merry flicker of gold in the reddish wig of the Jewish woman. How far away now sunny, well-cared-for Vienna seemed, how endlessly far away the bright figure of Mietzi! If only she knew where Poldl was now and what he was suffering for her sake!

The man returned, accompanied by a second man, a Jew, black as coal, who seemed to be a bit more important since he was wearing a morning coat and a gold stick pin. "I hear you have some silk shawls," he snarled, "show them to me. What do you want for them?"

"I already told you that," Leopold replied petulantly.

The Jew shrugged his shoulders. "Forty gulden—that's ridiculous, you'll never

get that much, young man. I'll offer you twenty-five gulden. I'll pay that much so that you'll come again when you have something to sell. Here, take the money, it's a good offer."

Leopold took it. And when he held the dirty bills in his hands, he flushed with joy. It was done! Now he was free! He touched his hat and ran away.

As soon as he had the Jewish Quarter behind him, he slowed down a bit and took a deep breath. Now he belonged to clean and tidy Vienna again and had nothing in common with that sinister Jewish cave. No! He just wanted to forget it. And now, on to Mietzi!

* * *

Mietzi had stayed home alone. That had taken a lot of effort and many a bitter word. But Mietzi had taken a stand and uncivilly declared: "You can do whatever you want to, but I'm not going with you."

Every Sunday there were unpleasant scenes at clerk-copyist Hempel's household. Both father and daughter had plans and wanted to sneak away quietly. But poor Frau Hempel, who worked tirelessly all week long taking care of the house, sewing clothes, and complaining that her husband and her daughter spent money in search of pleasure, wanted to have a share in the fun and spending as well. She was pushing for an outing into the country, but was having trouble implementing her plan. Kati had disappeared before the noon-day meal. Toni refused to take part in the outing. She had promised a girlfriend to go to the Prater with her. "No one in the world believes in 'girlfriends,'" Frau Hempel said sarcastically. Nevertheless Toni put on her expensive blue hat—a sore spot for Frau Hempel—and left. Mietzi just wanted to stay home, but gave no reason for it: she just didn't want to go out. "Why? But when I want to do something, then no one wants to," Frau Hempel complained. The others knew very well why Mietzi wanted to stay home, but Mietzi's thespian endeavors were being carefully concealed from her mother because she would have been decidedly opposed to them.

"You probably don't want to go either?" she said with a threatening glance towards her husband.

"Yes I do, Pepi, why not?" he replied, a bit embarrassed. "A ride out into the countryside, but perhaps it's too hot to do it today."

"Too hot! Yesterday and the day before—it wasn't too hot for you then. But where were you? But when I want to do something, then it's too hot."

"I'm not saying we can't go, Pepi. Don't start yelling." Herr Hempel saw that there was no escaping it today.

And so they left. Herr Hempel monosyllabic and downcast, his wife angry and overheated.

Mietzi, dressed in only a red slip and a fancy white bed jacket, stretched out comfortably in her father's big armchair, put up her red-stockinged feet on another chair, and waited for evening. If she was going to be on stage in the evening, then she had something like fever in her blood the whole day and she couldn't focus on anything; she

just had to sit still and think about the brightly-lit theater, the people—that sea of flesh-colored dots that reached up to the ceiling—and about the hot, sticky air—half gas, half perfume, half cosmetics—and about the crinkling of her satin outfit, and the bright, admiring eyes. The orchestra began to play, the audience clapped and shouted.... Mietzi rubbed the tips of her feet together, shuddered a bit, and batted her eyelashes.

The doorbell rang. Mietzi startled. Who could it be? She crept to the door and looked through the peephole. Oh, it was Poldl, just who she was hoping for. Nevertheless she asked, “Who's there?”

“Just open the door,” Leopold cried, “everybody else has gone, the supervisor told me.”

Mietzi pushed the bolt back and went back to her chair to stretch out.

Leopold entered the room and bowed charmingly. “Good evening.”

Mietzi didn't answer, but just looked at him sleepily.

“What's going on? You aren't even dressed!”

“No, I'm not. Why should I be?”

“I thought we would go out together.”

“I wouldn't even think of it, not in this heat!”

“Are you sick?”

“No, I'm just relaxing. You know I'm on stage tonight.”

“Oh yes, of course, I did hear that.” Leopold then went up to Mietzi and kissed her on the mouth. She allowed it to happen as if she didn't notice it.

He drew his chair close to her, sat down and slowly removed his gloves.

“I too am going to the theater,” he began solemnly.

“I see,” Mietzi said and closed her eyes.

“Yes. I'll be sitting right down in front.”

“Oh really?” Mietzi opened her eyes a bit and smiled.

“Yes. And afterwards I'll come and get you,” he continued confidently, “and we'll go to Leidinger's⁴⁰ and get a private dining room, you know.”

Mietzi laughed. “That will be nice! A *chambre à part*.⁴¹”

“*Chambre à part*, hell,” Leopold repeated and thought, where does the girl get these new words!

Mietzi now opened her eyes fully to give Leopold a friendly look, “Come on, give me a kiss, Poldl. All right, now you can go.”

“What do you mean, go? I'm staying right here.”

“Please go. You know that I have to get ready.”

“Oh, you don't have to get ready for anything!”

“Of course I have to,” she said with some annoyance, “do you think I want to look like a scarecrow on the stage tonight? You can do whatever you want to, I'm going to take a nap.” She crossed her arms across her breast and closed her eyes.

But then she added, “Poldl, do you know those long blue silk stockings⁴²? Does your store carry them?”

“Stockings? No, we don't carry stockings.”

“They're beautiful. They come up over the knees. They're probably expensive though.”

“I should think so!” Leopold replied with a sigh.

Then both were silent. Mietzi really seemed to be asleep and Leopold looked at her steadfastly.

“You can put up with a lot,” he thought, “for a girl like that. You could become a... you could become just about anything.”

In the big black, comfortably upholstered armchair Mietzi looked very bright and child-like. Her round face rested a bit at an angle on one of her arms and was pinkish all over. Her short forehead was full of little curls that were so bright that they almost appeared gray. Her eyes were closed and Leopold was amazed at how long her lashes were, tipping up slightly at the end. Her mouth was almost too small, and half-opened, it revealed a row of small, pointed teeth. Her whole round figure moved just slightly, rocked by her regular breathing.

IX./[Chapter 15]

Mornings in the editorial offices were for Lothar a time for quiet and collecting one's thoughts. The room was quiet and dim. From next door he could hear Lini's monotonous voice reading *Frau Fliege* a novel from the newspaper supplement. Noise from the street, caught by the narrow light well, thrust upward, muted as if in a tube. Lothar wrote, read and smoked. When he threw himself completely into his work, it seemed to him that the future state, which would victoriously replace the old order, took on tangible form. Every morning he drugged himself with these ... visions.

About eleven o'clock there was a commotion in the office as the others arrived. Oberwimmer was the first. You could hear his high-pitched, cheerful voice from the hallway. “Good morning, Frau Fliege! Ah yes, the novel. Well, have you figured out who murdered the beautiful Mechthilde yet? No? That's too bad, but believe me, she's not completely dead. The supplement just wouldn't allow a beautiful girl like that to be murdered. They'll bring her back.” Then he walked in to Lothar, sitting pretty with his girlish rosy cheeks. “Hello! What's new? Have you got something ready?” And he dug around in the papers lying about. He read everything, took some notes, talked and asked questions sitting astride a chair. He laughed about everything and was amazed at everything. “You did a good job on that. Very nice! Where do you get that stuff?” He was also someone who never doubted and believed that their cause would be victorious without question. That made one feel good.

Then Rotter appeared with his briefcase under his arm, just coming from court still outraged by everything that he had experienced there.

Gradually the others made their way in: Lippsen, Feitinger. They all talked at the same time, sitting on the tables and window seats; the air was thick with cigar smoke.... Then suddenly, they all departed—it was lunch time.

The editorial office was left behind in disarray, as if a battle had taken place there; the chairs were out of place, some of them overturned; the floor was strewn with cigar butts and shredded letters; the tables were awash with papers, books, bottles of mineral water, and glasses. Above it all, hanging from the ceiling down into the blue tobacco

smoke, hung a lamp with a large, smoke-covered light shade, like a big bird of prey about to land on the battlefield.

Without making a sound, Frau Fliege slipped into the room wearing her felt slippers and straightened up. She wore plain horn-rimmed glasses and she read all the letters and documents that had been left lying around. She collected the scraps of paper from the floor and carefully tucked them into her pocket.

For the rest of the day Lothar went about his business. He had a lot to do, and that was what was satisfying to him. He no longer tortured himself with the thought that he was useless. But what to do now? He had to undertake endless walks through Vienna, aglow in the harsh sunshine. So he walked to the edge of the Margareten District to visit a worker, who in a gathering had allowed himself to speak passionately and refused to obey the chief of police. For this offense he had been sentenced to a few weeks in jail and was now in a great deal of difficulty.

At this time of day there wasn't much traffic on Margaretenstrasse. Shoemakers' boys⁴³ and business people slipped back to their homes; dogs lay on the sidewalk so lethargic that passers-by had to step around them; the second-hand shops, where old junk steamed and boiled in the heat of the day, exuded a smell of dust; salesgirls nodded off behind their counters. There was construction underway on Hundsthurm,⁴⁴ onto which Lothar now turned. The street had been covered with rotting boards. Clouds of dust rose like smoke from piles of rubble. Workers, covered with lime, stood on scaffolding and looked like white-washed statues against the clear blue sky. Below them women were carrying buckets of lime. In their discolored skirts and dirty carrying pads on their heads they were part of the chaos of boards, rubble and lime. Anyone passing by might accidentally brush them without noticing them. And if one of them laughed or cursed, then that person would be surprised to see these dusty objects come to life.

A little further on great factory buildings rose from the ground. Through the windows on the lower level Lothar could see the gigantic black arms of machines in motion; soot-covered men without shirts walked back and forth among the machines. There was clanking and hissing; hot air smelling of oil and coal escaped from the building—the bad breath of this sweating, groaning monster.

Lothar's goal was an old tenement building, which had been enlarged bit by bit so that it looked like a stork's nest to which the stork adds something new each year.

Lothar wandered around in the filthy courtyards. The wooden staircases with wobbly railings and the tiny apartments were crowded with women and children. The doors were all open because the air in the small rooms was so stuffy. Everywhere there was the same pale gray-yellow like old wood or old clothes, and everywhere the light fell through clouded panes upon pale faces.

“Does Franz Walke live here?” Lothar inquired and kept being handed along. Finally he found him.

Once again, it was a murky room with light, full of colorless, gray objects. And if any object did have a bit of color to it, like the red and white of a bedspread or blue upholstery on a chair, the colors always seemed like they wanted to die, so pale and dull were they. Franz Walke sat at his table, a glass with wine dregs before him, his head supported by his hands. His sick wife lay in bed. A seven-year-old girl was playing with

a doll on the floor. The worker greeted Lothar quietly with "Morning," without changing his position in the slightest, as if he were not curious about this visit and expected nothing to come from it. The brown skin of the man's face was drawn so tightly that it seemed the skin would tear on the sharpness of his eye sockets and cheekbones; but it expressed only sleepy relaxation.

"My friend," Lothar began, "I've just come from Doktor Klumpf. We heard about you and want to do something to help you. One has to be able to suffer for one's conviction, but we want to help our comrades out. Standing together in such cases is our most important principle."

The man's scruffy upper lip displayed a kind of laugh that wasn't very friendly.

"You don't have to worry. For the period of your absence we will take care of your family. You need to come by tomorrow and apply. Your wife is sick, so Fräulein Remder will visit her. Just keep your chin up, friend. You are not alone. If we decide to speak truth to the authority, then we can't be too surprised if the response is not exactly kind. And they still have the power...."

"You know what, sir?" the man began, suddenly pounding on the table with his fist, "I tell you that I was a fool. Yes, a fool. If I hadn't been drunk, I would never have said it. But Marbe egged me on and gave me wine to drink. I didn't know what I was doing. The chief of police could have yelled as long as he wanted, but I was going to speak my mind. So now.... Why did I have to say all that stuff. Who did it help? I acted like a fool. Now they're going to lock me up and after that the factory will lay me off. And I had it better than all the others: at least I had a livelihood. Why don't the others speak up? I had to be the dummy! Gentlemen like you, you can say what you want and it don't cost you nothing. But people like us should keep their trap shut.... What a fool I was!"

A voice from the bed in the corner, high and hoarse, said: "I told you so. You never should have gone."

"Shut up!" Walke thundered and pounded on the table so hard that the glass rattled.

There was a deep sigh from the bed and Lothar saw the sick woman's head in a white nightcap tossing restlessly on the pillow. Lothar felt himself seized by sadness and despondency. But he knew well what he needed to talk about: the Doctrine, but it now appeared to be so cold and empty compared to the raw power of the misfortune before him. And yet, with a quiet voice he began to say what he had to say. Walke was right. Opposition without any hope of success serves no purpose. One has to keep a lid on one's outrage, to hold out, and stand together, and work behind the scenes. Only then, when the party feels strong enough, then can it express outrage and can claim victory. We have to avoid unnecessary sacrifices.... The man listened in silence. The sick woman sighed occasionally and kept on rolling her head on the pillow. A quiet whispering had accompanied Lothar's presentation. It was the child who was playing with her doll, a thin, half-clad child whose white-yellow face and translucent gray eyes bore an childlike expression of the experience and understanding of misery. She was pretending that her doll, a wretched paper-maché creature with one eye, was lying in after giving birth. It lay in a wooden box wrapped in rags and next to it an unrecognizable thing made of rags

served as the child. The girl talked continually to the doll as a ray of sun pierced through the panes and cast a bit of flickering, blemished gold on the corner and the thin, pale legs of the girl and the nasty face of the one-eyed gravid.

“So be of good cheer,” Lothar concluded with the painful feeling that the words gave them no comfort. “Things have to get better; come 'round and see us tomorrow.”

Walke laughed in his unfriendly way once more, “Thank you, I will come. I don't know how all of this will turn out. I only know that it would have been better if things had stayed as they were and I had kept my big mouth shut! Good day to you, sir!”

As Lothar left the family he tugged at his red mustache both in reflection and in distress. There must be something wrong with the gospel he had just delivered in that room up there because even to him it had sounded so hollow. But he took comfort in Klumpf's idea of “knowledge”—the episteme. That was what was lacking and that was what they needed to give to people.

He went to the Mariahilf suburb to meet Rotter. Then there was a meeting of cobblers that he wanted to attend. Finally he would have to look in on the bakers.... And so it went until the evening began to paint the streets red. This was the hour in which all the comrades gathered in front of the café at the Elizabeth Bridge.⁴⁵ The entire staff got together and even Amalie Remder came directly from giving music lessons in town, notebook under her arm. They were all tired from the heat of the day's work. Each one buried his nose in the evening paper and exchanged only brief remarks which everyone understood as people do who understand how other people think.

City life had grown noisy around them. People streamed over the bridge shoulder by shoulder. Girls, holding their dresses gently with their left hand, their right arm in the arm of their boyfriends. Seamstresses and shop girls with their white paper boxes, workers, shopkeepers' clerks. In the rosy-red light of evening that gradually gave way to a translucent gray, Vienna relaxed in its old familiar way after the burdens of the day. Already there were a few pale stars above the dome of the Karlskirche and on the streets the gas lights were lit—though still dull and whitish.

/[Chapter 16]

The group of Social Democrats in front of the café became distracted and restless. Rotter jumped up: he had promised to go for a walk with Pepi. “See you in 'the Auge!'.”

“I'll walk with you for a bit,” Oberwimmer called.

Branisch too put down the evening newspaper, reached for his hat and was soon lost in the crowd. He disappeared that way every evening and no one knew what he did.

“Will you take a cup of tea with me today, Doktor?” Amalie Remder asked and suddenly looked at Klumpf seriously and angrily.

“No, dear friend,” Klumpf replied in a calm and friendly tone. “I'm going to the Theater an der Wien. But aren't you going to the restaurant today? All the comrades will be there.”

“Oh, no! It's better for father not to go out again today,” and her mouth distorted a bit as if she were smiling sarcastically. “Anyway, if you're going to the theater, then you'd better get going.”

“Yes, you always look out for me, dear friend,” Klumpf replied and moved on.

Lippsen watched him go, resting his chin on the handle of his walking cane, and winked with one eye.

“I never knew,” Lothar said, “that Klumpf was fond of the theater and especially that kind of theater. He doesn't seem like the type.”

“It depends on whether a pretty girl is involved,” Lippsen growled.

“How do you mean?”

“Well, the girl that we frequently meet on the stairway to the office is a walk-on there. He's having a look at her.”

“You mean, Klumpf is?”

“Well, why not? You can be ever so intellectual and still be attracted to a cutie like her. By the way, he lectured me about that girl—you know how he is. To him she has become the virgin of the future, the representative of grace in society, a Diotima.⁴⁶ At least that's what he wants to make of her. I would be happy if it quickly became an ordinary, mortal relationship, because otherwise, such odd-balls often make dangerous leaps. But on the other hand, when a little Viennese mouse like that starts gnawing at the heart of a philosopher, you never know what will come of it! No one can escape the fate of being human. And despite it all, he has never spoken a word to the girl. She is supposed to intuit his love, I believe.”

“Lippsen,” Amalie said with a rough voice, “you have no heart. You certainly don't understand Klumpf. Good night.” And with those words she picked up her notebook and left. Her close-fitting dark dress with a small man's hat on her head and her energetic gait made her look peculiarly severe and foreign amid the casually sauntering crowd.

Lippsen wanted to say something, but remained silent even though his mustache twitched to show his meaning. Then he too left. “I'll be right on time at the Auge Gottes.”

“Good. Representatives from the Community will be there.”

“Bye.”

For Lothar a strange part of the day now began. He wanted to relax and he needed to. Darkness had set in. The foot traffic had all disappeared. In the park wherever there was only a tree and a park bench couples were sitting together. The air was still humid and there was the strong smell of acacias and linden. Lothar wandered restlessly around the streets, then finally sat down on a park bench in the Volksgarten across from a fountain. From among the few water lilies that had been planted here a mole cricket kept singing out the same bright, wet note over and over, which here in the crowd nevertheless sounded lonesome and forgotten by the world. A soldier and his girlfriend were sitting on the bench next to Lothar. They were holding hands; they weren't talking but instead were listening to the gentle song of the cricket. “Let's go,” the girl finally said. They stood up, nodded to Lothar and disappeared into the darkness of the boulevard.

“If you have a girl sitting beside you, it's enough just to hold the girl's warm hands and to feel the security that comes from the presence of such warmth. What one of them has to say to the other is so simple that it can be said merely by the gentle warmth of the

hands or by a look; and that is peace itself. You sit there heart to heart; and it's only so with your girl because you feel the other person. Otherwise you're both alone! Jesus! The fools who don't understand the sensuality of the simply having a girlfriend and feeling her presence; and therefore they despise it. There's more in that and it's more beautiful than all the talk in the world!" Lothar sighed. "Always thinking about the future, making fun of the state, listening to deep thoughts—it makes you tired." For at least an hour he yearned for those simple things that can be expressed by merely holding hands and is supposed to be more profound than most talk. And then suddenly he thought of Tini since nothing better occurred to him.

In the beer garden of the 'Auge Gottes' on Leimgrubengasse the comrades got together every evening around a long table on the deck as long as the weather permitted.

This garden with its blue-bedecked tables under the two linden trees seemed like a narrow, dim room; occasionally the flames of the gas lights singed the leaves and the trunks were covered with advertisements. When you sat out here, you forgot that you were in the open air; people were amazed to look up and see a bit of starry evening sky.

In addition to the comrades, the spot was frequented by small shop owners, householders, and government employees from the neighborhood. Quiet, upstanding people all, who had nothing to do with advancing the cause of Socialism, nor did they want to. Nevertheless they were proud to have a regular table for Social Democrats there. They knew their names and talked about any new person who showed up. This table, with its quiet and significant conversations, was an object of mysterious and enormous interest at the other regulars' tables where the philistines enjoyed it over a pils.

Lemke, Kehlmann and Tost were getting together with the "Futurists." Branisch had thought it smart to bring these people in more and had been able to establish a tolerable relationship with them. As soon as Lothar approached the table he noticed that something unusual had happened. People were talking quietly but excitedly. Rotter was red in the face and pounded on the table with his hand. Oberwimmer held firmly to the lapels of Tost's coat, whispering intensely. When Lothar sat down, they told him immediately: "The bakers have had it!"

"What? How did it happen?"

Lippsen had brought the news. "You ought to have been there," he said, angrily rolling his lobster-like eyes. "Those poor fellow, bleary-eyed, slightly drunk, waiting around on the street to see whether their bosses have finally realized that they can't get along without bakers, and if success isn't just around the corner. 'If we only hold out a bit longer, we can get what we want.' Then suddenly—tramp, tramp, tramp—the boys in blue marching in rank and file, spit-polished and well fed. And the street boys ran in front of them screaming, 'the Army bakers are here!' You just had to be there to understand what those rascals had in mind. If at that moment only one person had had the courage to start something, I don't know what would have happened. Hate was written all over their pale faces. Rocher felt the same way. He told one of the baker boys: 'Let's go hammer them!' But no! The poor fools are starved, too weak. The sheer power of the state seems insuperable to them. They had their backs to the walls—I could see it all. Now they're doing what the bosses want. They just couldn't stand up to the tramp-tramp-tramp of marching feet. Damn it!"

Oberwimmer laughed bitterly. "They forget that sound occasionally and try to take up with with the bosses. But at the first sound of boots they're back in their holes."

"I'd be surprised if that were true," growled Lemke twisting his mustache upwards.

"But it is true!" Lothar said sadly. He was thinking about Walke. "As soon as one of them tries to show a bit of backbone, he runs into the hardness of heart of the people at the top. It's like in an underground passageway: you walk along bent over until your back hurts, you just have to straighten up because you can't bear it any longer, but when you try it, you hit your head against a stone wall and you have to bend over again. That's how it is for poor people!"

"But if you have a very hard head, it might actually work," Lippsen remarked quietly.

Then, to Lemke's dissatisfaction, Tost picked up the thread. Even one glass of beer had an energizing effect on his poorly nourished body. There were round, red spots on this gray-white cheeks; his eyes were shining and he laughed a lot. "A skull is perhaps not the right tool to use. There are other means that pack a bigger punch. Ha ha!"

"Events like this are quite normal," Kehlmann yelled, drowning him out. "In the course of a disease the body is not just suddenly attacked. No, first there are little events, symptoms—I don't know what—until the illness gains strength and breaks the body down. And that it must do."

"I'm not so sure about that," Klumpf replied with his gentle sarcastic smile. "I don't have any use for sick bodies; on the contrary, the body should heal itself—and it should start as soon as the symptoms occur." At this Tost could only laugh coarsely and sarcastically. Kehlmann, however, with his deformed lip, snarled, and his words came tumbling out as if his twisted mouth were to narrow to allow them to escape. "You'd have to be blind to agree with an opinion like that. Heal itself? Ridiculous! As if that were possible! Just take a look around you. Can't you see how everything is burning with fever, that it's rotting and sick? If you don't believe it, just wait and we'll talk again in a few days."

"Kehlmann!" Lemke thundered, flushed with anger.

Kehlmann was more than usually agitated. He laughed hysterically, embarrassing and silencing the other people at his table. Only Oberwimmer spoke: "What do you mean? What's going to happen?"

Then Lemke said, "It's probably time for me to take Kehlmann back to his place. We can only speak figuratively here anyway. Let's save it for another time. I'll have a better occasion to work through these issues with Doktor Klumpf. Come on, Kehlmann! Goodbye."

The others left as well. Only Oberwimmer and Tost remained and the ordered another liter of wine.

X./[Chapter 17]

In the Zweigelds' salon the yellow silk curtains had all been drawn. Frau Zweigeld sat in the golden twilight. She had been reading a thick commentary on the

Bible for a while since it was Sunday. However, the air got a bit thick in the room; the roses in the glass bowls wilted in the hot air and exuded an intoxicating sweet fragrance and that was enervating. Frau Zweigeld leaned back on the sofa and stared out pensively. In the next room Gisela sat at the piano and sang Kücken's⁴⁷ song about the swan and the white flower. The clear tone of her child-like voice today was meltingly tender, Frau Zweigeld noticed. "He sings so sweetly, so quietly—and wants to die singing." It was just heart-breaking, and Frau Zweigeld's eyes teared up. Oh God! The human heart can never rid itself of a miraculous belief in something beautiful beyond words, something worth yearning for, but ... who really ever finds it?

Frau Zweigeld sighed. Though always tightly-wound and very collected by nature, she still had moments in which she gave herself over to her feelings without resistance, even to the softest feelings. Then her severe, ordinary face took on an excited and plaintive look—and she half closed her eyes. She thought back to the time when she too hoped for that unknown beauty, back in Prague, in that large, quiet house.

Then the whole world turned around the majestic old man who was her father. He was a judge in a regional court and an important figure in the German-National Party.⁴⁸ Mother and daughter sat in their living room bent over their needlework waiting to see whether Father might need one of them for something because he liked to talk about his work to his wife and daughter. Then he would leave his study, walk back and forth talking and explaining. Occasionally Mathilde would have to read aloud a section from some scholarly book or document. If they had company, then it was always ambitious young people who listened to Father devotedly, expressed patriotic sentiments themselves and showed a serious, but diffident respect for Mathilde. In the cool and orderly circle the Viennese lawyer Zweigeld appeared one day with his jokes, his winning laugh and his easy way of commenting on all the big and important issues. In the beginning Mathilde simply admired him; then she found him interesting. She began to sense the possibility of a sunny and happy life, and this young man whom she loved was the incorporation of that ideal. Oh, what a wonderful time that was! Her father had opposed the marriage because he had a low opinion of "Viennese frivolity." But the tears she shed and the battles she fought were sweet because they were in the service of a higher goal, a future she thought she could clearly see.... But now?

The door opened and Herr Zweigeld stuck his head into the room. "Mathilde, we still have a bit of time and I'd like to lie down for a while; then around five o'clock we can go to the Prater."

"Go ahead and lie down then." She straightened her shoulders, pushed back the strands of hair on her temples, and bent over the Bible commentary. She was now the quiet, majestic Frau Zweigeld.

Zweigeld went to his study, removed his coat and lay down on the chaise. He had drunk too much champagne yesterday and had a headache. It was pleasant in this room. Gisela's song wafted gently and pleasantly over to him. A few unpleasant thoughts ran through his head—money for orphans, a bill of exchange—but he quickly dismissed them. Today was Sunday so nothing could be done about them anyway. You need to think about business when you are completely rested, otherwise you'll do something stupid. "That's my principle," he murmured, yawned and stretched out.

The doors to the study were carefully opened. What an awful creaking sound those doors made. Zweigeld looked around. His servant stood there and looked at him anxiously.

“What is it, Joseph? Why are you standing there?”

“There's a gentleman here to see you, sir.”

“Today? A gentleman?”

“I don't know who he is. He said his name was Morgenstern and that he urgently needed to speak to Herr Doktor.”

“Did you tell him that I was at home?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You idiot! I've told you about that! But show him in.” Zweigeld arose in a rage, his hair standing straight up on one side; one cheek had sleep marks on it. But he sat at ease on his chaise and awaited the visit. Of course it would be something unpleasant, he had a premonition....

Finally an elderly, well-dressed gentleman with a large hooked nose, coal-black mutton chops and two black side locks hanging from his temples, entered the room. He apologized for the disturbance, but it was a matter of some urgency....

“Please, have a seat,” Zweigeld interrupted and pointed to a chair. He didn't like the man already.

When the stranger had seated himself comfortably, he pulled a paper out of a pocket and, holding it between his index and middle fingers, waved it around as he spoke. “I felt obliged to tell you, Herr Doktor, that I have bought this bill of exchange⁴⁹ from Rosenbaum and Co., er ... I had the pleasure of acquiring it,” he said, correcting himself.

Zweigeld's face turned red, but he only said, “Oh, really?”

“This bill of exchange,” Herr Morgenstern continued, “is due tomorrow. I said to myself, Doktor Zweigeld has his hands full right now and so it would be easy for anyone to overlook a date. So I thought to myself, you should go to him and refresh his memory of this little asset worth 10,000 gulden. He'll be glad you did.”

But Zweigeld didn't seem glad at all. He answered arrogantly and with annoyance: “Thank you, sir. But you have brought yourself here for no good reason. I never forget deadlines. I did not know that Rosenbaum had passed on the bill of exchange, but that doesn't change things. It doesn't matter whether it's Morgenstern or Rosenbaum.” And with that he stood up, quietly and imposingly.

The stranger was completely taken aback. “I beg your pardon if I disturbed you. But occasionally, I thought....” The poor man was quite embarrassed, which only made Zweigeld more distant and formal.

Hardly was Herr Morgenstern out the door when Zweigeld's arrogant attitude changed. He raked his hair with both hands and began to pace back and forth in the room like a mad man. “That's a nasty way to do business! Whatever gave Rosenbaum the idea that he could just pass the bill along? What a shylock! I was counting on being able to extend the time. But I know what this Morgenstern is telling me. How am I supposed to come up with the money? Just you wait, Herr Rosenbaum, I'll haul you into court on a charge of usury.” But where to find the money. He could probably once again take a little loan from the orphans' fund which he supervised. Indeed, there was no other way of

getting the money by tomorrow. It was disastrous in any case. His stewardship report of the account was due any day now because the board meeting was not far away. “Well, by then we'll think of something. Jesus! That Rosenbaum!” He threw himself like a heavy load onto the chaise and closed his eyes. A bit of sleep would be the right thing now. And how prettily the child sings and he sang along for a bit: “Oh, flower, white flower! Can you understand this song?”

He was just about to drift off to sleep when the creaking of the door awakened him once again. It was Joseph holding a letter.

“Hell! Can't a man have a bit of peace on Sunday,” he blurted.

“He asks for a reply,” Joseph reported.

Just what I needed! Angrily Zweigeld opened the letter with one rip of the whole envelope. “Who's it from? F. Benze. What does **he** want?” He read through the lines without paying a great deal of attention. “... a serious step ... I have searched the innermost depths of my heart....deeply-felt, firm belief.... Well-established situation in life.” Zweigeld rubbed his eyes. There was no doubt about it: the young man was asking for Gisela's hand. “Here's a fine how-do-you-do.” He stormed into the salon.

“Mathilde, Mathilde!”

Frau Zweigeld looked up quietly from her Bible commentary. “What is it? Is the coach already here?”

“Nonsense! Read this,” he said and handed the letter to his spouse—but he couldn't wait until she had finished reading it.

“He's asking for Gisela's hand. This is a fine kettle of fish!”

Frau Zweigeld read the letter attentively and—so it seemed to her husband—very slowly.

“He speaks of an adequate income,” Zweigeld said excitedly. “He will inherit 1,500 gulden from his father, so I hear. That's not very much. And what's his income? Hardly a brilliant match in any case.”

Frau Zweigeld folded up the letter, then stared so seriously that her husband was embarrassed.

“So tell me what you think of it.”

“Money is not really the driving issue here,” she replied and raised her eyebrows a bit, a sign that she was not pleased with her husband. “We are, I think, in a position to give our only child the means to establish a household suitable to her station in life.”

“Of course, of course!” Herr Zweigeld said a bit confusedly, “but the times are bad, and you never know...”

“The main thing,” Frau Zweigeld continued, “is what our daughter thinks about it.”

“The main thing!” Herr Zweigeld laughed. “I should think that what the parents think would be more important. That's the rule in matters of this nature.”

“All right. What do you have against Benze?”

“That's not what I'm saying. And of course we will have to ask the child what she wants.”

“All right then!” With a sigh Frau Zweigeld got up and both of them went to the door to Gisela's room and listened. She was no longer singing, just playing the melody of

the song with one hand, slowly and plaintively.

“The poor child!” Frau Zweigeld whispered and the corners of her mouth twitched. “She’s sitting there so quietly and has no idea of what’s going on and we’re about to rush in and overwhelm her with alarm and turmoil; and a new, perhaps a dark fate!”

Zweigeld looked at his wife in amazement. “How on earth is she always able to come up with exactly the right words for every occasion?” he thought to himself. At the same time, it occurred to him that his suit was still a bit untidy from his mid-day nap and that this was not appropriate for the situation. He rushed to the mirror to put it in order. When he had finished that, his wife had already gone in to Gisela and had closed the door behind her. “Hmm. What’s the rush?” he muttered, disappointed. But actually it was all right with him. Let the women talk themselves out and later he could dispense his paternal blessing. Walking back and forth in the room, he began to formulate the wording of this blessing. Then something important occurred to him. He rang for Joseph and ordered him to bring a bottle of champagne immediately—Roederer, 50 of course.

Meanwhile Frau Zweigeld had stepped up to Gisela and laid both her hands on her shoulders.

“Is it time to go?” Gisela asked.

“No,” Frau Zweigeld said and in that “No” Gisela must have heard something special because she looked up in amazement.

“Has something happened, Mama?”

“Happened, my dear? Yes, something has happened and it concerns you.”

Then Gisela noticed the letter. She blushed and her hands, reaching for her mother’s hands, were cold. Both said nothing for a while—excited and a bit uncertain about what to do. Gisela heard her father pacing in the adjacent room and the canary at the window began to sing.

“Come,” said Frau Zweigeld and drew her daughter over to the sofa. Gisela knelt beside her mother, her face distorted as if ready to laugh or cry. “Yes, something has happened, something that directly concerns you. Doktor Benze has written to your father asking for your hand. Think for a moment, child, what that means. Your father and I do not want to influence you in any way....”

Gisela hid her face in her mother’s lap and said quietly, “Yes, yes, Mama.”

“Yes?” Frau Zweigeld replied incredulously and a bit annoyed. “What do you mean ‘yes’?” Gisela did not want to raise her head, but rather just nodded her head in her mother’s lap. “Dear child, you cannot possibly have decided already. Perhaps I simply didn’t understand you. What we’re talking about here is the most decisive step in your life. It means leaving your parents’ house and forming a relationship with a man about whom you know relatively little. Please consider this step with all the presence of mind you can bring to bear, my....” Gisela began to cry and sob so that her whole body shook.

Frau Zweigeld became impatient. “What are you crying about? There’s no reason for that. Come sit beside me. Your father and I have nothing against Doktor Benze. Just the opposite! All I want is for you to think the matter over thoroughly.”

Gisela had to get up and take a seat beside her mother. There she sat and said pitifully: “I want to stay here with you and Papa.”

/[Chapter 18]

Frau Zweigeld didn't like this answer either. She raised her eyebrows and tugged nervously at the lace on her dress. It was clear that the girl didn't have a grasp of the situation, she could see that; and she felt sorry for her overwrought child. "Look, my daughter," she said softly: "This business has come upon both of us a bit quickly; it's easy to lose your head; yes, for me too. I am old now and I can organize my thoughts quicker; That's a good thing because a mother must think for two. I know very well what's going on in your little head. Everything is topsy-turvy and you don't know what you really want. So it's good that your old mother is there; for seventeen years now I have been reading your heart and your head as piously as a prayerbook. So let me say then that the first Yes that you uttered was the right thing and, God willing, it would be the best for all of us. Don't you think? Or should we ask for some time to think it over?" Gisela shook her head almost imperceptibly. "So the matter is decided then!" Frau Zweigeld kissed her daughter and sighed. "I'll call Father in."

Herr Zweigeld embraced his daughter: "God bless you." Then he called her Frau Doktor Benze.⁵¹ "It never occurred to me," he said, "that this virtuous and solid man from Prague would ever form an alliance with our family. Here's how we will proceed: I will write to the aforementioned, he will come and I will lead him into the salon where you'll be waiting for him; then we'll leave you two alone."

"Why? Where will you be?" Gisela asked.

"I don't know. Did you ever hear of such a thing?! These ladies want to get engaged and married, but Papa and Mama can't go too far away. No, you'll be alone, you'll talk about whatever concerns you. Then I'll open the doors and give you my blessing...."

"Again, Papa? You have to have given it already."

"Oh, right! Well, you can't have enough blessings. A coach will be ready in front of the house and we'll drive to the Prater so that people can see what a fine catch you've made. Act Five: a dinner with champagne. So, now get yourself tidied up, my little victim, because we can't keep that young man waiting very long." And with that he left.

Gisela, left alone, stood in the middle of the room and thought about it all. Should she put on a different dress? And her mother, who normally had something to say about everything Gisela wore—where was she? What had she done that caused them all to withdraw from her? She was close to tears, but she got hold of herself nevertheless and sat down in front of the mirror looking a bit angry. God! She had imagined it all so differently.

Then Marie, the old cook, waddled into the room. "Jesus and Mary! Something like that thinks it can get married!" she cried. "My best, most heart-felt wishes for both of you. God bless you, my child!" She embraced Gisela and kissed her hands. "But you haven't spruced yourself up yet. Pick another dress, maybe the pink one, or at least put on your pearls—wait, I'll put them on for you." Gisela let the old woman have her way. It was comforting to have those wrinkled old hands taking care of her. "So, now you can

go out, sweetie—I still have to go to town.”

Her mood much improved, Gisela went into the salon. Her mother sat at her sewing table sewing. Her face looked serious and melancholy and her eyes were rimmed with red. Gisela stopped at the door. She was seized again with the awful feeling of being deserted by her own people—and somehow of being guilty of something herself. Frau Zweigeld raised her head, allowed her gaze to fall on her daughter, and, so it seemed to Gisela, remarked dryly and with obvious dissatisfaction, “Oh, I see—you've put on your pearls. That was hardly necessary.”

Gisela turned crimson. “Well, Father said... Marie...,” she stuttered.

“Oh, I see...” was all that Frau Zweigeld could muster and returned to her work.

Now Gisela was **so** ashamed to be wearing pearls she could have torn them from her neck. She understood her mother thought it not appropriate for a young girl to adorn herself for Doktor Benze. She sat down on the sofa sadly, folded her hands on her lap and looked down. How unhappy she was! Father was probably right when he spoke of her as a poor victim.

When she looked up again, her mother had put her work away and had directed her beautiful brown eyes, shining with tears, at Gisela. Her heart then melted too and she rushed to her mother and threw her arms around her.

“God bless you, my dear child,” Frau Zweigeld said and held her tight. Then the doorbell rang.

“There he is,” said Frau Zweigeld. “Just be calm, child. Things will work out. I'll go greet him.”

How often had Gisela spoken with Emmy Begus about the moment in which one got engaged! Now here it was and Gisela found that in her conversations she had always overlooked the fact that in the moment the old familiar surroundings would still be there. She had imagined an ocean of feelings and excitement. But now there they were, the familiar, welcoming chairs, the sewing table, her mother's thimble; all these things prevented Gisela from behaving significantly differently—better mannered and more poetic—than she normally did when she moved among these things. Indeed, how was she supposed to behave? She heard the scuffling of feet in the next room. Her father said something; someone answered. It **was** he. Then she could hear her mother's deep, metallic voice. Someone pressed on the door handle. She put her hands together. She froze in excitement.

Then they appeared. Doktor Benze wore a long, formal jacket and had a serious and solemn mien. It struck Gisela that her father led him by the hand, like a child.

“You requested him, so now I'm bringing him to you,” Doktor Zweigeld said.

Gisela stepped forward to meet her intended and offered him her hand, which he kissed. “Oh, yes, of course!” she thought.

Then her father began to speak again, now in a dignified and reverent mood. “Dear children, I call down the blessing of the Most High upon you, or rather **we** do. You will not take it amiss, my dear colleague, if it is with a certain amount of anxiety that we hand over our most precious possession to you; and further, if I may say so, we will continue to watch attentively over the future of our precious jewel. Make our child happy; our trust is in you. We welcome you as a son.” He embraced Benze and Gisela;

the mother too kissed her future son-in-law on the head; everyone was quite touched. Behind a half-opened door Marie stood sobbing.

“Good! We will leave you alone now,” Doktor Zweigeld said, taking up his cheerful tone again, “let's allow an hour for you two to say to each other what you have to say. The coach has already been ordered. Child! Don't look so worried; the Doktor isn't going to bite you. Let's go, Mother!”

The couple now stood alone in the middle of the salon which the afternoon sun filled with a robust golden color. The canary began to sing as if his breast were about to burst. The noise of the Sunday street added a merry note.

“Oh my God! How wonderful it all is,” Gisela thought to herself. “Now what's going to happen?”

Benze began to speak: “Oh, Gisela, I can't express how I feel. My happiness and good fortune make me clumsy, but I'm sure you understand.”

Gisela felt her body flush and tears constrict her throat. This keyed-up young man had such an effect on her. How fast he was breathing, he who otherwise seemed so calm and self-confident. What could she do to show him she loved him? “Won't you please sit down?” she said quietly. Then she thought, perhaps she shouldn't have said it, but now it was done, so she went to a chair and sat down.

Benze remained standing in front of her and began to speak again, but now calmer and more fluently: “I'm sure I don't have to tell you all that has gone on within me in the past few hours. If I had thought that you didn't know my true feelings, then I never would have dared to come to you. But I thought I knew you would not refuse my love, and that you know... and so.” He sat down beside her and took her hand. “Isn't that how it is?”

“Oh, yes it is!” Gisela replied. She blushed but looked at her fiancé directly. She no longer felt shy. She felt so comfortable with her hand in his. Now she was again sure that she was dear to him.

“One more thing,” he said, “there's one thing I need to hear.” And his voice sounded sweet and mysterious. “You... you, my dear have meant a lot to me for some time now.” Her clear, girlish eyes looked at him kindly.

Gisela nodded a bit and then added sincerely: “At first I was discouraged. I thought maybe I'm just imagining it all and nobody really cares about me.”

“How could you, my poor angel! I would hate to think I had made you suffer, even for a moment.” He embraced her with his arms and kissed her on the lips again and again.

Gisela allowed this to happen without protest, though she was a bit shocked. When he released her again, she shuddered, then straightened herself up. Those masculine arms that surrounded her and that black mustache touching her lips were so amazing and strange, that's probably just how it was. But it was more comfortable just to sit there hand in hand and to look each other in the eyes and to listen to how beautifully and emotionally he spoke.

“Yes,” he said, thrusting out his chest a bit as he did when he wanted to speak solemnly and convincingly, “when I consider all the difficulties and ugliness I have to deal with in my life, things that are just part of my everyday work, and then something so

pure and holy—like you—comes into it, then it seems to me that my life itself would have to become pure and holy.”

“Jesus!” Gisela cried in shock at being called 'holy.' The life he spoke of, with its daily tasks, which she was now to share, offered the promise of feeling completely secure and protected.

“You see,” Benze continued, “I have often said that I love my profession, and you will come to love it too. When a man and a woman are so closely bound as in marriage, then how could the man's profession—part of his soul, really—remain foreign to the wife? You won't have to run from court to court and listen to tales of criminality—that's my part. But you will consecrate my profession; you will love and support the noble and beautiful aspects of it. You will be there to remind me that revulsion at wrong-doing and impurity must be balanced by sympathy, justice and love. Those are the driving forces of a public defender's profession.”

“Love?” Gisela repeated thoughtfully. “Can one really love terrible criminals like that?”

“Yes, to a certain degree,” Benze replied, a bit pedantically. “The things that we hate, for example, and being disgusted by criminal acts—those things the defender feels just like anyone else; and perhaps he ought to feel it even stronger. But when he makes his skills available to the criminal, he does it with the awareness that retributive justice can only punish when all the things that point toward the accused's innocence have been brought to light. Justice should never take anyone by surprise. Rather, it says: defend yourself as well as you can; if you are guilty, then I will nevertheless be stronger...”

“Good heavens! They're talking about jurisprudence! Ha ha!” said Herr Zweigeld, standing in the doorway and laughing. “What an odd couple we have here! But time is up. The coach is already here. It's time to show your lawyer-fiancé something of the city.”

During the ride Herr Zweigeld was quite cheerful, while Frau Zweigeld was withdrawn and introspective.

That made Gisela also somewhat shy; she felt a certain sense of guilt towards her mother. But outside on the Ring things were too merry for anyone to feel depressed.... The boulevards were full of people walking, the outdoor cafés all full. The smell of acacias wafted over from the city park.

The coachman drove so fast that the ribbons on Gisela's hat and her curls fluttered in the breeze. “This is nice!” she said and smiled at her serious fiancé.

Herr Zweigeld was in his element. He greeted people all around and pointed out people they passed by name. “Oh, that's young Herr Schauber with his Hungarian horses. Beautiful! Gosh! That little flower over there is Rosi, Isn't she elegant though! And over there, the German ambassador. Now, pay attention, there's His Majesty.”

The coach now coursed over the sand of the large boulevard. There was music in the air, the sounds of an orchestra, a barrel organ, game stalls. When they passed by the beer gardens, the peculiar smell of the Prater wafted their way, a mixture of leaves warmed by the sun, and beer.

Herr Zweigeld was beside himself with delight. He talked constantly and laughed so that one could see all of his white teeth. “Coachman,” he said, “what kind of driving

is this? Remember, we have an engaged couple in the coach.”

“Theodor!” admonished Frau Zweigeld sternly.

The coachman laughed, urged his horses on, and chased up and down the boulevards like mad.

Gisela was delighted. She understood her father and like him felt the need to do something that was fun. And the passers-by understood him as well. They stopped and watched the coach and smiled benevolently.

“But Theodor! How can you be so childish? What will people think!” Frau Zweigeld scolded.

“Well, let them,” replied her husband innocently, “if I have fun doing it.”

He instructed the coachman to stop between two outdoor cafés.

“So now listen to the concert.”

From the place they stopped they could hear music from both cafés at the same time, a wild cacophony of notes. In one, a Hungarian band was playing a czardas; in the other a military band was playing a waltz. The nervous, restless humming of the Hungarian violins struggled valiantly against the crushing tones of the trumpets.

Gisela stood up in the coach and laughed loudly. People stopped beside the coach and laughed with her: they caught on to the trick immediately. The sun cast a reddish glow over the trees and made the beer glasses glow; it cast little flecks of light on people's Sunday clothing and filled the air with a reddish dust.

A bundle of gas balloons had escaped from a seller on the corner and now drifted slowly above the crowd, a green and red chariot sailing ever higher into deep blue sky. People bent their heads back to watch and laughed, children shrieked in delight; and the clash of competing drums, trumpets and violins added to the scene.

XI./[Chapter 19]

Lothar stood in the entryway of the building, whistled softly to himself, and waited for Tini, who had promised to go to the Prater with him. Others were standing there in the twilight room as well and all of them were impatient: they tapped their boots with their walking sticks or whistled to themselves to relieve their boredom, and all of them perked up when someone came down the steps.

Then Tini arrived, serious and shy. She was securely covered in a wrap and walked up beside Lothar without saying a word.

That was exactly what he wanted! Walking around with a girl at this time of day, to sit on a bench somewhere—it was just a part of Vienna in the evening.

“Let me take your arm,” he said as they walked along the grounds near the Wien. Let's just have a good time today. Let's do everything there is to do in the Prater.” He bent down to her. Here in the darkness between the bushes he could see her rows of white teeth and that she was laughing. With her arm lying heavily on his arm, she took big steps as if she were in a hurry. Lothar talked about this and that without ever getting a response from her. It was not until they reached Praterstrasse that she loosened up, and by the time they had reached Prater-Allee she was chatting in her deep, veiled voice: “If it weren't for my mother,” she said, “I would come here every evening.”

“And now?”

“Now I can only come once in a while. What can she do to me, after all?”

“Who do you come with?”

“By myself.”

“Not with that worker, what was his name? Chawar, right?”

“He's the one!” Tini shrugged her shoulders. “Yes, sometimes I go with Lois.”

Now they saw a row of brightly lit booths before them, many little stalls flickering in the darkness of the surrounding field. In the glow of the gas lights and the mirrors strange figures moved around—wax figures with rosy cheeks, a monkey next to a cockatoo, and a man with a lily-white face, lips much too red and a pointed cap. The merry-go-rounds whirled incessantly. All of this cast into the summer night like strange and adventurous toys, surrounded by the still, black night.

“That one over there with the mirrors is the best one,” Tini said, pointing to one of the rides.

Since it was a weekday, all of these amusements were nearly deserted. The only people about were a few unemployed maids, prostitutes, soldiers, and shopkeepers' clerks.

The people working the merry-go-round were sleepy, as if they were oppressed by the triviality of their tinsel-covered stall and repetitive waltz rhythm.

A man growled distractedly at Lothar and Tini: “You and your lady should just try it once, sir,” and was amazed when his invitation met with some success.

Tini made a serious face, chose a white horse, and perched herself upon it. She was the only rider. Lothar stood to the side and watched. The ratcheting waltz music started up again and the horses, the mirrors, and the beaded tassels began to turn.

Lothar began to get a sense of boredom and excess. All of this frippery on an ordinary, quiet work day seemed senseless and shallow. He wanted so much to have a good time with his girlfriend. But now he felt that he no longer knew how to do that. He seemed to have lost the capacity simply to enjoy life, and it felt like a serious and important loss. Even Tini looked out of sorts sitting on her horse! What could her offer her? She was probably missing Chawar and the others who better understood her and, indeed, life itself.

Now she came whizzing by again. Her straw hat had fallen onto her shoulders. A lock of dark hair fluttered above her forehead and her eyelashes twitched. She smiled at Lothar. No, she hardly looked out of sorts now.

Now she came around again. She had dropped the reins and crossed her arms over her breast. Her face was slightly flushed. Her lips were open and she had a wild look in her eyes. It seemed that the girl was focused on a strong passion within her breast and it shook her to the core. She didn't look at Lothar and that annoyed him. Yes, that was the trouble. The strength, heat, and wildness that occasionally glared from her eyes—that he wanted for himself, it ought to belong to him.

When the ride stopped, Tini showed signs of impatience: “Let's keep going!” And it started up again.

Lothar had gotten dizzy from watching the whirling brightness and from the tension of waiting for those dark eyes to sparkle as they spun by.

“All right, let's move on!” Tini finally decided and jumped off the horse. “Next to this one there's one with a railroad car and I've never ridden on it.” Her hair hung down over her face and she laughed like a child.

Then they tried the carousel with the railroad car, then a Russian ferris wheel,⁵⁴ then a ferris wheel with passenger cars that looked like boats. Tini just couldn't get enough of all the motion.

“Now what?” Lothar asked.

Tini pushed her hair away from her face and began to laugh long and loud. “As far as I'm concerned, we could do this all night. I could sleep all night on the carousel and in the swings. But now I'm dizzy and really thirsty.” She raised both arms and stretched herself.

At the White Rose Inn people were dancing. A military band was playing in the hall that opened out on the garden. Tini and Lothar sat down under a maple tree and ordered beer.

“Was this the place where you went dancing before?” Lothar asked.

“Yes it was! I've been here before,” Tini replied. Her face had again taken on a worried, attentive expression. “But—I don't dance very well,” she added. Then she suddenly blushed—powerfully, covering her face from her face from ear to ear with dark red. “You probably don't want to dance with me, do you?” she asked.

“Oh, yes I do,” Lothar said hesitatingly, “but let's finish our drinks.”

Tini lifted her glass obediently and drained it in one draught. “All right, let's go.”

As a matter of fact, Tini did not dance very well. She put all of her considerable weight onto her partner's arms and when they turned, she pulled both of them along with her. Bending her head back a little, she focussed completely on her partner.

Lothar felt her gaze resting on him like something hot.

“Let's rest for a bit,” he said, out of breath. Dancing like this was an effort for him.

Tini dried her forehead with her handkerchief and made an angry, bored face. She was annoyed that the dancing was over so quickly.

Then Chawar appeared, doffed his cap and asked Lothar for permission to have a dance with the girl.

Tini gave no sign that she knew the man, but once he had put his arm around her body, she stuck out her lower lip, pouting.

Chawar danced with knees bent, and the worn-out heels of his boots made a lot of noise, but he had his partner firmly in his power. He easily threw the large girl back and forth and Tini gave in with obvious pleasure to this power which recklessly turned and whirled her. Her face took on a serious, almost pained expression. She was once again silently listening to that inner voice from before.

Now Lothar was annoyed. They just wouldn't stop. He walked out onto the terrace. There was light from the gas lamp, but it was pretty empty out there. The air was heavy with the smell of linden blossoms mixed with the smoke from the dance hall. “Pew!” Lothar muttered and shook himself. He would have preferred to leave. Inside they were still dancing. When he looked inside he saw Chawar's red hair and Tini's black pigtails. Whatever the reason—and he didn't want to think about that—this girl had to be

his no matter what, of that he was certain.

Then the music stopped. The noisy throng headed out into the open air.

Lothar looked for Tini, and when he didn't see her outside, he looked for her in the dance hall. But no one was there. Now he became impatient and wandered around the building and went out on the terrace again, then back into the hall. At that point a man walked up to him, a manual laborer, and said, "Excuse me, are you looking for that girl? She went out the back way with red-headed Chawar just after the dance."

"Yes, yes, thank you," Lothar replied. With red-headed Chawar? Of course! Why hadn't he thought of that? Now he could leave.

On the dark, quiet boulevard he found it a relief to be in clean air again. He stopped, took off his hat, and took a deep breath. God! What did it all mean? Nothing! A very ordinary, silly event.

Back in his lodgings he found that his rooms were full of cool night air. It was comforting to be back in his organized world. He leaned out the window. The courtyard was deserted and dark, guarded only by the long dark figure of the Blessed Virgin on the fountain.

How did Rotter put it? "That gives you peace of mind." Can you get peace of mind from what goes on in the Prater? In his mind he saw the dark figure of the girl again. He was shaken by yearning mixed with anger. And that Bohemian, in that dirty bar! It was just too messy.....and yet despite all his braggadocio, it was those people below who were the strong ones, the care-free ones. Life was there for those who know how to seize it. And he, who didn't even know how to have fun, had to stand on the sidelines.

With a sigh he lit his lamp. Today he felt like someone who had been disinherited. A letter from his old aunt lay on the table. She wrote him regularly four times a year when she sent him his annuity:

"Dear son! I have sent a quarter of your annuity by Jürgensohn. I hope it gets there in good time. I am, thank God, in good health. I haven't even had the usual pain in my feet this summer, only occasionally and I have been able to attend to work. The hay harvest turned out poorly this year—it was too dry in May and if the clover doesn't grow as it should, then the poor animals will have a bad time of it this winter. Right now we're harvesting the rye. The rye this year is only middling. We've had a lot of insect damage too. The grain crops, especially on the fields that run down to the brook, are more promising. You might like to know that old Kathrin has passed away. She took care of you when you were a boy. I miss her a lot. With the young girls nowadays you only get frustration. They run after the boys and don't want to work. Farewell, dear son. May God protect you. Your dear old aunt prays for you every day

I. v. Taufen."

Lothar found these simple lines quite touching and felt better after reading them. The farm. He could easily have lived in the country, without theories; he would have understood the earth without thoughts. And when he lay down to sleep, he dreamt for a

long while about those times long ago. He lay in the grass near a brook. Everything around him gleamed in the midday sun. The dead tips of fir trees at the edge of the forest shone like metal, and above him in the deep blue sky the falcon ranged and gave voice to his sharp, plaintive hunting cry over and over.

XII./[Chapter 20]

The performance at the Theater an der Wien had ended. It had rained all evening and now a strong wind was driving the clouds apart. Amid the gray, dissolving clouds a few small, faint stars appeared in the sky. The wet street gleamed in the light like ice. A few coaches halted in front of the entrance to the theater on Dreihufeisengasse. Dark figures leaned against the wall and against street light poles. Some of them stood there motionless under their umbrellas smoking cigars and in the darkness you could see a red glimmer. Others paced back and forth impatiently and stared up at the row of lit open windows above them where animated shadows scurried about; there was constant giggling and scolding spread out and the hot summer air mixed with fragrances of musk and opopanax.⁵⁵ Figures in disguise slipped out of the doors and disappeared into the coaches or they walked along the sidewalk with halting bird-like steps until one of the men waiting for them joined them, then both of them merged under an umbrella and went their way.

The area was soon empty. The coaches had left. Only one figure was left standing under a lamppost looking up at the windows. It was Leopold Gerstengresser, who was waiting for Mietzi. He had been standing there for quite a while; he tapped his umbrella on the pavement and chewed on his lower lip. He had not been able to attend the performance tonight. He had not gotten away from work quickly enough, or rather, he had not been able to take care of some business in the Jewish Quarter in time. The thought that other people would be able to see Mietzi in her short skirt, her tight-fitting clothing and pearls in her hair and he could not caused him unspeakable pain. He missed the performance yesterday as well and Mietzi had come back home two hours after it was over. There had been some sort of scene at the Hempel residence, so his sister Elsa had said. And now she was late: what did it mean? Christ! It was so unfair that one man be made to suffer so! And at the store they were beginning to suspect something; he felt quite clearly how thick the air had become. His colleagues were whispering among themselves, and the head was talking about doing an inventory. Sooner or later something terrible was going to happen. From the windows above there was bright laughter. Was it Mietzi? Could she laugh like that when he was suffering? A boundless sadness covered the shadowy square with its yellow gas lamps. Now and again a drop of water splattered on the pavement. That brought tears to Leopold's eyes, although he did not know why, and it made him think of death. It would be better to die than to live like this! Across the way he heard someone cough. A man in a long overcoat was standing next to the exit of the theater. "A fellow sufferer," Leopold thought.

Then there was some movement in the doorway. A gray raincoat and a little white head appeared. "It's Mietzi, thank God!"

She looked around and Leopold rushed up to her. Strangely, the man in the long overcoat approached her, took off his hat, and extended his hand. Mietzi drew back, and Leopold heard the bright, sharp laughter that Mietzi let loose when she was angry. Leopold didn't understand what had transpired. Then he felt his girlfriend's arm in his.

"Let's go," Mietzi whispered.

"What's going on?"

"Never mind. I'll tell you about it later," she said, pushing forward.

Leopold had booked a room in the Blue Crown Hotel⁵⁶ further down on Magdalenenstrasse and had ordered an evening meal. He wanted to have Mietzi all to himself. His love and jealousy had increased to the point of rage. He could have killed the girl, rather than hand her over to the old geezers in the loges.

"Where are we going?" Mietzi asked.

"To the Blue Crown," Leopold replied somewhat anxiously. "They've set up everything for us." So far, Mietzi had refused to go to a hotel with Leopold, but today she said nothing and just sighed deeply.

The little Blue Crown Hotel is one of those dilapidated old houses that lie along the Wien River. The doorman stood at the entrance, a cigar between his teeth and slippers on his feet.

Leopold asked for the key to Number 7, effecting a debonair tone.

"Oh, it's you!" the man said disrespectfully and slowly led the couple up the stairs.

Leopold knew only too well how much Mietzi would hate this crude person, the dark stairway, and the smell of onions that wafted their way. Why didn't she say something? Usually she wasn't so reserved when she didn't like something.

They were shown to a roomy chamber. Two lit candles stood on the round table in front of the sofa. In one corner of the room stood a bed, a vanity in another corner.

Leopold called for the waiter and complained that dinner was not ready yet, then he turned to Mietzi. She was still wrapped in the shawl and coat and sat on the sofa staring into the flame of the candle.

"Well, sweetheart, how do you like it here?" he began cheerfully.

Mietzi did not answer. Her face was quite rosy. A few moist curls hung down over her forehead and she had completely forgotten to wipe the make-up off her eyes, which made them appear larger and gave them a strange and excited look.

"So tell me. Don't you like it?" Leopold repeated rather miserably.

"Oh!" Mietzi said, "I'm not thinking about that at all. Here or somewhere else, what difference does it make?"

"What are you thinking about then? What happened? Who was that man there at the theater? What did he give you?"

"Oh, him!" she said with one of her short, angry laughs. "Well, my dear, do you know who that was? He is the servant of a count."

"A count," Leopold repeated without emphasis, trying to appear calm. "What did he want from you?" he added, casually.

Instead of answering him, Mietzi took one of the candles and stood in front of the mirror, peered closely into the mirror and began to observe it carefully, first from one

side, then the other, now her eyes, then her teeth. She took a step back, raised her eyebrows, and made a solemn, melancholy face, as her arms sunk to her sides.

“Oh, now she thinks she's some famous actress!57” Leopold thought dolefully, sitting at the table with his head in his hands. Something strangely cute had come over the girl ever since she had taken up with the theater. He found it charming and painful at the same time, yet it distanced Mietzi from him.

She returned to the table slowly and threw herself down on the sofa.

“Don't you want to tell me about it?” Leopold asked with some annoyance, but when he looked up he was shocked because Mietzi's blue eyes were full of tears. It was no longer the melodramatic face of an actress, but Mietzi's whiny little face. He pulled the girl close. “Why are you crying? Have I done something to you? Come on, tell me, and I'll help you.”

Mietzi shook her head. “You poor dreamer, how could you help me! Nobody can help me!”

That made it even worse for Leopold. “At least you could tell me about it. It was yesterday, right? Something did happen. Your mother knows all about it.”

“Yes, it's my mother. Jesus! Was she ever angry. She found out that I'm working in the theater,...and since I came home a bit later yesterday, she called me... no, I can't say the word. Oh, Poldl, I'm so unhappy!”

“So why were you late getting home?” Leopold explored.

“That's just it. The count—you know—the old man in the lowest loge on the left.”

“Oh,” Leopold said, “the one with the yellow wig and the dyed mustache, that tom-cat?”

“Yes, him. He really is a count. What was I supposed to do? The others talked me into it, so I went with him.”

“Where did you go?” Now Leopold was also close to tears.

“To the Hotel Sacher,” Mietzi replied with a hint of pride in her voice.

The Sacher! That's what Leopold had been afraid of all along. Mietzi could not resist that sort of thing. Then she continued her story, but quietly, almost whispering: “Yes, the Sacher! It's really nice there. We had a little room decorated in blue with silk covers on the chairs, silk curtains, a chandelier and it smelled so good there. I liked that part a lot. We drank champagne and had dinner. At first I only laughed at the old guy, he does look like a tom-cat, it's true. But later, dear Poldl, I just can't tell you, I was too disgusted. You wouldn't believe the things he did! He kissed me. I can't stand the sight of my own face anymore because of it. Yuck! I just couldn't stand it, so I grabbed my wrap and left. I couldn't sleep the whole night because I was so frightened of the old man and of myself as well. No, I'll never get over it. And then there's Mother. What am I supposed to do? I'd just rather die!” She covered her face with both her hands and sobbed. “And now Mother is waiting for me. Just look at all I have to put up with for your sake. I'd be better off dead.”

“Put up with for my sake?” Leopold objected. “Did I set things up for you to go to the Sacher with the old man?”

“What? You're starting in on me too?” Mietzi retorted and sobbed even louder.

Then he began to comfort her. Yet in all her story there was something that gave

him satisfaction. Mietzi was no longer the adored girl reigning sublimely above him, unapproachable in her own happiness. If things weren't going well for her, then she was closer to him and he could confide in her about his own suffering, and he could show her how much more he suffered for her than she for him. Lovingly he stroked her blond hair and kissed her wet eyes. "It'll be all right, Mietzkins! What can your mother do to us? Oh, if you only knew all the things I have done for your sake, you wouldn't even mention your stories to me."

"Oh, you!" Mietzi cried and stood up, outraged.

Leopold too became so tender and melancholy that he lay his head against his girlfriend's breast as if he were going to cry as well.

Mietzi was amazed by this and it piqued her curiosity.

The waiter opened the doors and brought in the evening meal and that interrupted the conversation for a moment, but as soon as he had gone, they did not immediately resume their conversation, but rather silently picked up their knives and forks. They were served a good piece of schnitzel with rice and roasted potatoes, Linzer torte and a bottle of Ruster Ausbruch.⁵⁸ Both of them were hungry and bent their overheated and downtrodden faces over their plates and ate. Not until the schnitzel had been consumed and Mietzi had begun to break off little pieces of the torte and to stuff them into her mouth did she look up and say, "What was it you were talking about earlier?"

Leopold pushed his plate away. Now that he thought about it again, it took his appetite away. "There's a whole lot to say," he said.

"There really can't be all that much," Mietzi said, distractedly nibbling at her torte, "Not really anything that's so important."

Leopold laughed bitterly and tossed down a glass of wine. "Not that important? It's more important and worse than you could imagine. It was all for your sake and yours alone that I did it. You say, you wish you were dead. I, dear Mietzi, can only wish that I were two times dead. Drink up, sweetheart, you're going to need your strength."

Mietzi became a bit apprehensive when she saw her beloved so serious and troubled. Obediently she emptied her glass, licked her lips carefully like a cat and looked shyly at Leopold. For his part Leopold re-filled the glasses slowly and disconsolately and then spoke in a low voice, hoarse with emotion. He couldn't bear the burden alone any longer. He explained to her how he, out of fear of losing her and out of desire to please her and to be worthy of her, ... how he had borrowed some shawls at work. And it had continued. He was afraid that people at work were beginning to notice something was amiss. It was all bound to come out when they did the store inventory if he couldn't come up with the money to put in the cash box. And then—a cold chill ran down the poor boy's spine—the consequences of his actions suddenly became clear to him and he shook with fright. Mietzi too turned pale.

"Oh, Poldl, you shouldn't have done that!" she whispered. She immediately understood the consequences of "borrowing."

That was too much for Leopold. "What!? How can you say such a thing? Who do you think I did I did it for? Yes, go ahead and despise me for it. And when they have taken me into custody, you'll know then for whom I am suffering." He turned away from her and buried his face in the pillows of the sofa.

Mietzi didn't mean it that way. Her frivolous little heart was about to burst out of sympathy, a kind of sympathy that made her miserable and brought tears to her eyes. "Come on, Poldl, I didn't mean it that way. I just meant how can you get enough money by the end of the month?"

"If I only knew!" he responded from the pillows. "I wanted to write something for the newspaper, but I can't get it done. I've spent whole nights agonizing over this, but as soon as I take pen in hand, the ideas just vanish."

Mietzi nodded sadly, "Well, what else can you do?"

Leopold didn't have any idea. In desperation he shrugged his shoulders, "It's over! Come on, let's drink."

So the poor children lifted their glasses and drank.

"What do you mean, 'over'?", Mietzi asked and leaned her head of Leopold's shoulder.

The wine made her a bit dizzy and she was overcome with lethargy.

"Well, just over. What can we do?" he added softly. "It's better just to die, don't you think? Did you see that story in the paper yesterday about the two lovers? They also went to a nice hotel."

"I know," Mietzi whispered and shivered at the thought.

"Don't you think we could do it like that? Both of us are unhappy, right? You're in love, you embrace one another, then die."

"Yes, Poldl, that's the only thing left for us."

"True, it's all we have left," he confirmed. Then they both drank their wine in silence. Outside it had started to rain again and the raindrops pattered on the window panes. Mietzi was chilly. She snuggled closer to Leopold and then asked anxiously, "How do you do it?"

"Oh, that's easy enough," Leopold replied. "Cyanide is probably the best thing, but it's hard to get. But my father has a bottle of opium at home left over from when he was sick. There's enough for both of us in it. Next time I'll bring it with me."

"Sure, next time," Mietzi said quickly. She wanted to die because she was so unhappy, and yet there was some comfort in thinking that there would be a next time. She embraced her beloved with both arms, "It's already late," she said shyly. She was thinking about the way home, and yet it seemed almost impossible to think about going home in darkness and being alone in her room now that they had made plans to die.

"It's raining," Leopold said and bending over her he whispered, "Just look, nothing matters any more."

No, nothing mattered. So they stayed together...

Like two frightened children they pulled the blanket over their ears. Outside the rain continued to pound and the light of the street light pierced through the curtains and cast a trembling yellow ray of light on the ceiling. Oh God! How heartbreakingly sad it all was! They clutched each other firmly and so, wrapped in each other's warm arms, they felt rather secure against all the hostility that surrounded them and from the terribly strange thought of death that had arisen in them.

Dressed in her violet satin dress, Frau Zweigeld rustled around the dining room and around the long, festive dining table slowly and seriously. "Has the gentleman still not arrived, Jeani?" she asked one of the two servants who had been hired for the day, two handsome Viennese boys who combed two strands of their shining blond hair forwards over their ears like blinders.

"I just heard the doors open across the way, m'am," they answered simultaneously.

"Ah!" And she hurriedly betook herself to her husband's room.

"Finally you're here!" she began, rather worked up. "The guests will be here any minute and you aren't even dressed.

"Has even one person arrived yet?" Herr Doktor Zweigeld asked. Then he turned his back on his wife to hang his overcoat on a hook.

"No. But you can't wait until...."

"There'll be plenty of time," he interrupted and then turned back to her.

"What has happened?" she cried in a fright.

"Oh, nothing. I just had to run around and take care of some business," he said, but at the same time he looked pale and distraught. He plopped down in an armchair and began tugging at his mustache, lost in thought.

Then Frau Zweigeld went up to him and looked at his face in concern. "Are you sick?" she asked sympathetically.

That annoyed him. "No, I'm not! I told you, I'm just tired. There so much going on in my business affairs, and now this dinner...."

"But you wanted it yourself," Frau Zweigeld said, smiling her calm superior smile. And she stroked her husband's wavy, slightly gray hair with her hand as one would a boy's. "You're just nervous. The party will be a distraction for you. You always feel better after something like that. Go on and change clothes, it's late." And with that she left him alone.

Herr Doktor Zweigeld stretched, turned his head back and forth as if it were hurting, and muttered under his breath, "Idiots, those damned idiots. Nine thousand gulden. It's a mean trick, and there's no way I can dig up that much!" He began to swing his arms about. How was it possible that he, the elegant Doktor Zweigeld, could not come up with nine thousand gulden? But they had pained faces, some of those men who tried to get the money from him today. Like fat old Mayer who owns the leather factory whom Zweigeld had stuffed with truffles and champagne all these years. Such an incredibly stupid affair. But the money simply **had** to be found somewhere.

He jumped up and began to change clothes. He relished dipping his face repeatedly into the cold water and rubbing it vigorously as if he could wipe away all the sorrow and the disturbing thoughts. And actually the face that rose from the basin did look younger and more cheerful. The youthful appearance of his face was only increased by his choice of clothing; when he finally had on his tailcoat and stood before the mirror and carefully placed a handkerchief in the pocket of his vest, he was again the elegant Doktor Zweigeld and looked as if he had never in his life had had concerns about the humiliation of not being able to pay a debt.

Doktor Benze had been waiting in the living room a long time for his fiancée.

Finally she appeared and stood at the door with a reproachful smile. Today she was wearing her bright blue silk dress and bright red azaleas in her hair, and because she knew that she was particularly attractive, she was curious to see how her fiancé would react when he saw her. His face was embarrassed and serious and he stiffly kissed Gisela's hand and led her to a chair. "Please have a seat. I've been waiting for you here so that we could say what's on our minds before the people come."

"Has something happened?"

Benze walked around, taking short steps, and brushed back his hair with his hand as he was wont to do when he had something important to say. But he stopped when Gisela asked that question. "What? You don't remember?" Then he smiled, being moved by it. "I wanted to ask your forgiveness for the intensity of my speech yesterday." And he extended his hand to Gisela.

But she jumped up and wrapped her arms around him and laughed with abandon. This obviously annoyed Benze because he just stood there stiff as a stick. "How silly you are, sweetheart!" Gisela said. "I really have no idea what you are talking about. You were too intense? Towards me? When was it?"

"You don't remember our conversation yesterday about various nationalities?"

"Oh yes, now I know. We were talking about the Czechs. You were saying that you hated them all and I said that the Uhlan⁵⁹ at the Concordia Ball⁶⁰ last winter had been very nice and that there surely must be good people among the Czechs. And that annoyed you, didn't it?"

"Yes, it did," Benze said, a bit regretfully. "I allowed myself to get carried away. I just can't stand to hear talk like that. Always trying to be impartial will be our undoing. And when our wives, who have the privilege of indulging in feelings, also start being impartial... But never mind, I should have been able to control myself. Forgive me."

"But Franz, I only said it to tease you a bit. There's nothing to forgive."

That, too, annoyed Benze. He wanted something to be sorry about. "You can never joke about matters of that sort. But I was angry when I left you yesterday and I'm sorry for it."

"Oh, you poor thing. You must have been really angry. But just think: I never even noticed it. All right, now I understand: whenever something like that happens, then your arms get so stiff and hard that they don't bend the right way—like now—and that's how they were yesterday. But it's all over now, right? I'd rather hear how you think I look today."

Benze found Gisela very pleasing, but he was still stewing and was withdrawn and stubborn. He had been man enough to recognize his fault and to beg Gisela for forgiveness. And now the whole thing was supposed to be unimportant, and that annoyed him.

This interchange was interrupted by the arrival of the guests. First came Professor Lagus with his long blond Wotanesque beard and his exaggeratedly teutonic appearance. Next to him was his daughter Emmy, small and delicate and not at all teutonic. Her dark hair flew in obstinate disorder all around her head, fell down to her eyebrows and made her face seem even smaller. She had used *poudre de riz* [rice powder] to whiten her face and her gray eyes contrasted strongly against it and the contrasting little red strips of lips

were surprisingly lively, making her face look charmingly wraithlike. Emmy was always at odds with the fiancés of her friends; she laughed at their expense and flirted with them. She lost no time in turning her attentions to Doktor Benze.

“I take it you are not edified by our arrival here, Herr Doktor,” she began.

“Why do you say that, Fräulein? We were expecting you.”

“Even so. But from the hall it seemed to me that we were intruding on a very intimate conversation.”

“Our conversation was indeed a bit serious and for that very reason it was good that it was interrupted,” Benze said and bowed sarcastically, which Gisela was sorry to see him do because she knew that Emmy would find it ridiculous.

“So, you were having an argument?” Emmy cried, her eyes flashing.

“No, my dear Fräulein, we can't offer you the pleasure of that this time.”

“Me of all people! By the way, if I had a fiancé, any time he wanted to start an argument, I would ask him to go for a walk by himself. You don't get engaged so that you can be bored.”

“How fortunate for us,” Benze remarked pointedly, “that not every young man is treated precisely as his fiancée thinks he should be.”

That annoyed Emmy. “You act as if we did nothing but think about our fiancés, dear Doktor. We never think about them. It just occurred to me when I saw you.”

The room was filling up with people. Doktor Littchen arrived with his tall son and his anaemic daughter Alice. Herr Mayer, who owned the leather company, arrived with Elsi, whose cheeks were so red; with her intensely brown eyes she tried to hypnotize the Littchen boy. Others came as well and there were quite a number of guests.

Herr Zweigeld stood at the door greeting his guests as they arrived. He placed some importance on saying something funny to each guest. Nothing about him gave any hint that among the gentlemen whom he received so kindly were certain ones, such as Herr von Mayer, who earlier had made a pained face at him.

The two servant boys opened the doors to the dining room and announced that the food was ready.

Frau Zweigeld, accompanied by Doktor Littchen, led the procession. Herr Zweigeld followed with the pale, sad-looking wife of the tall congressman. The other couples then followed them.

Herr Zweigeld was charming, as always, indeed, even more charming than usual, or so his wife thought.

She was amazed to see his dour mood change so quickly into a free-spirited cheerfulness. Initially he devoted himself completely to the lady seated next to him. Sad little Frau Littchen, who in the presence of her famous husband, seemed to have forgotten how to smile, now smiled faintly at Zweigeld's funny stories, but he carried on so that Frau Littchen had to put her napkin to her mouth so as not to laugh aloud. Having succeeded at that, he turned next to the rest of his company.

Frau Zweigeld also noticed that he was drinking a lot. One of the boys was constantly re-filling his glass.

Beside her Doktor Littchen gave a lecture on required reading in schools and ranted bitterly against the church and the clergy. She wasn't listening closely, and when

the moment came in which she had to say something, she laid her hand gently on Littchen's arm and said: "I think, dear Doktor, that if we all just stick together...."

On the other side of the table there was a serious discussion, led by Doktor Benze and Professor Lagus, which the persons sitting closest followed attentively. It had to do with a the suicide of a well-known broker.

"What amazes me," the professor said, "is that a man in his position was not able to save himself. You would have thought a man like that could have gotten together the money he needed quickly. And yet...."

"That's a positive sign for Vienna," Doktor Benze remarked heatedly. "To cover for a man like that, to save him, as they say, would be to say that there is no end to deceit and exploitation of the public. I greatly regret that this man escaped having to answer to the courts."

"Because you would gladly have defended him," Doktor Zweigeld interjected. His remark sound more sarcastic than humorous.

"You're wrong there, dear Papa." Benze now became very emphatic. "Under no circumstances would I have undertaken to defend this man. Yesterday I took on the responsibility of defending a young clerical worker who diverted money that had been intrusted to him and he confessed to it. That's a completely different case."

"But you still owe us a better explanation, my young friend," the professor objected. "Far be it from me to make excuses for this unlucky broker, heavens no! But he was a human being, careless, imaginative; perhaps he needed a lot of things and was active socially; business was booming and he didn't quite have a handle on it and before he realized that, the mistake had been made. We should feel sorry for him, but we shouldn't throw stones."

"You're pardoning him," Benze retorted, "but for this individual I have neither pardon nor sympathy, only disgust."

"But the clerical worker with sticky fingers, him you are willing to defend," Herr Zweigeld remarked, impatiently biting off the head of a roast bird.⁶¹

"As you please," Benze countered, quite wrought-up.

/[Chapter 22]

Everyone was listening to him. Most of them were not very positively disposed towards him; only in the eyes of his mother-in-law did he find some agreement.

"My young employee is in almost the same situation as the broker."

Young Littchen hissed at this: "It's **exactly** the same position. He went astray because his need for pleasure left him no peace. The only difference is his youth, which made it more difficult for him to resist the negative influences of his surroundings and the limited number of joys of life that were open to him, and finally it was the environment—the city—where chasing pleasures is the watchword of the day."

"The poor boy!" Doktor Zweigeld said sarcastically. "He only wanted a bit of champagne and a truffle or two for himself. So what else could a poor man in this wicked world do, except"

"Fine. In that case the broker at least...." Benze objected.

But his father-in-law interrupted him. “Oh, come now! What do you know about it? Someone who has a large bank account, thousands of business deals going, he can't always be so exacting in keeping accounts. It's very easy for something to happen.”

“Taking someone else's money is easy enough, I suppose?”

“What does that mean? He took a little bit of money out of this or that account—of course he always intended to make it up later.”

“That's exactly where the guilt lies. If he were an honest man, he wouldn't touch someone else's money.”

“There are accepted business practices....”

“Well there shouldn't be. And because men like Holzer in a position as broker adopt such business practices when people in positions of authority speak of them as pardonable, for that reason, I say, there are ameliorating circumstances for my youthful clerk. He was living in a poisoned atmosphere.”

“Save your rhetoric for the jury and spare us!”

The father-in-law and the son-in-law were arguing so vehemently that the others fell into an embarrassed silence .

Frau Zweigeld looked at her husband with shock and amazement.

When his eyes met hers, he blushed, laughed self-consciously and said: “I'm just defending poor Holzer, nothing more. It's just that people who live in such complicated circumstances cannot be judged by the moral code young people are taught in school. If young people set themselves up as the Council of Aeropagus⁶² in matters of morals, who could survive judgment by this classroom morality? Of course this is not a cheerful topic. Let's leave our dead brokers in peace. Let's move on to something that's not as tough as old leather.”

Frau Zweigeld breathed a sigh of relief, even though the malicious and sarcastic smile on her husband's face didn't please her either.

“Where does the saying 'tough as leather' come from?” Herr Zweigeld began, and everyone hoped that the mood would lighten up. “Herr von Mayer, you are the one who should know that.”

“Me? Why?” the factory owner asked, raising his overly large red face, framed in silver by his hair and beard, from his plate. “Why should I know that?”

“Well, because you make all sorts of leather products.”

“Oh, I see!” Mayer responded.

“But note that I'm not saying that everything you produce is leathery.”

“Ha ha!”

“So, where does the expression come from.”

“I have no idea—dear Doktor Zweigeld....”

At first people laughed, but Herr Zweigeld got so wound up in this aggressive word-play that this too became unpleasant, and just at the right moment Professor Doktor Littchen tapped on his glass to propose a toast to the young couple, the host and hostess, and the glory of the Viennese salon. Then dessert arrived and finally the moment Frau Zweigeld was yearning for when she could bring the evening to a close.

Originally she had intended to have her guests stay a while longer that evening so that the young people could dance a bit. But now she made no mention of it and people

said their goodbyes.

When the guests had departed, Herr Zweigeld went into his room and shut the door behind him. Frau Zweigeld had to see to the servant boys.

The young couple sat in the living room near the open window and cooled their heated cheeks.

Suddenly Gisela broke into a smile and asked: "Aren't you going to ask for my forgiveness again?"

"Forgiveness? What for?" Benze said somewhat uncertainly.

"Because you were so vociferous against my father."

He stiffened his spine and said: "I was only voicing my convictions."

"Why did you have to voice your convictions, Franzl? And your convictions are so hard-nosed and uncompromising. It sounded like you were trying to triumph over him, and that annoyed him." And so saying, she took his hand and pressed it to her cheek.

"There are things that have to be said," he responded solemnly. "There are views that one is duty-bound to oppose."

"What Papa said wasn't so terrible, if I understood it correctly. That poor man! What he did may indeed be awful, but now he's dead. If you want me to lean on your arm, please don't hold it so stiff. I think it's nice that Papa doesn't like it when people speak ill of that man. Since he wanted to die, he must have been very unhappy. What good will scolding do? I don't see the point of being so terribly judgmental. 'You're bad; you're good for nothing. We're going to have to lock you up.' A lot of people have enough trouble already and if you call every unhappy individual a rascal, then life is too sad, too unfriendly and too cold."

As Gisela was slowly expressing these sentiments, her gaze was fixed on the moon-lit Virgin on the fountain down in the courtyard. Benze's face also began to look a bit softer and concerned. The arm that Gisela was leaning on was no longer stiff, but now trembled slightly.

Since Gisela said nothing further, Benze said gently, "Gisela, are you really afraid of—how did you put it?—these cold and unfriendly points of view?"

She hastily looked up at him, her face again transfigured by a smile. She clasped the lapels of his tailcoat and pulled him down to her so that he had to kneel, and with her face quite close to his, she looked him in the eye and said: "You're asking me if I'm afraid of you, little Franz, who is so serious, so stiff, so dour? No, of him I am not afraid. I chose him because he was serious and stiff and nothing can be too important for him, nothing too pure and fine." She clasped his head and kissed him on the mouth, and her fingers messed up his carefully-parted hair. "You just can't annoy Papa, I can't stand that. Jesus! How you look. Just like Emmy. And I should be afraid of a head like that?"

Doktor Benze allowed all of this from her and the wild curls over his forehead gave his face a boyish look that flattered him.

Frau Zweigeld rushed through the room. For a moment she startled when she saw the bridal couple bathed in moonlight. What a pretty picture it was! If only these children's happiness remains undisturbed! She herself did not know what it was she feared. She went in to her husband.

The room was completely dark. Doktor Zweigeld sat crumpled up in his comfortable old chair.

“Theodor, why do you have it so dark in here?” she asked, but received no answer. Then she went over to him, sat down beside him, took his hand: “Are you ill?”

“Me? Not at all. What gives you that idea?”

“Yes, you are. Something has happened!”

“Things happen every day.”

“You were so forceful at dinner, so peculiar.”

“Franz's inappropriate moral sermonizing annoyed me.”

“But his views are entirely reasonable and even noble.”

“Nonsense! Who made him the arbiter of morality?”

“That's not what's wrong,” Frau Zweigeld said, continuing to explore, “Even before dinner you were upset. What sort of unpleasant business is it that's bothering you? Just tell me.”

She had never before bothered about her husband's business affairs. But today, when he seemed to be so downcast, she accused herself of having neglected her duties towards her husband and resolved, in her brave way, to get to the bottom of the matter. She could tell from the rough tone of his voice and from the way he was tossing and turning in his chair that something was troubling him. And he truly did feel quite wretched. He could have cried—or struck someone. His wife's soft, reasonable voice stunned him and made him meek and melancholy.

“You shouldn't let business matters have such an effect on you,” she continued, “one takes care of business as well as one can and yet remains spiritually superior to it.”

The word 'superior' sent him on a tear. “Superior?” he responded quickly. “If you need 9,000 gulden and have no idea where to get the money, then it's difficult to be 'superior'.”

“Nine thousand gulden. Is it so hard to come up with that amount?”

“If it were easy, I'd have done it already!”

“Perhaps it just can't be done so quickly. You've got to give yourself some time.”

“But the money has to be there by tomorrow at four o'clock.”

“Why is that?” Frau Zweigeld asked slowly. Then she remembered something. “Four o'clock,” she repeated, then suddenly cried out as if she had seen a terrible sight: “The return payment of the loan from the orphans' money!” Her husband's hand, which she had been holding, suddenly turned cold and she let it drop.

“Yes, that's it,” Doktor Zweigeld said softly.

Now she completely understood what just moments before had seemed impossible. Now she was amazed that she hadn't noticed anything before this. She stood up, took a few steps in the darkness. Her voice sounded metallic and loud as she asked: “You couldn't come up with the money?”

“No.”

“And our—**my** money?”

“Our money?” was the emotionless sound from the chair.

“So, there's just not any money. So we've been bankrupt for a while, right? It

doesn't matter—the money has to come from somewhere. I'm going to ask Franz for a loan.”

“Him?” Doktor Zweigeld groaned.

But his spouse pushed back sharply. “You no longer have any right to be picky in this regard. It's a matter of saving ourselves and our child from the worst—from shame.” And with that she walked to the door. She had tried to contain herself, to be calm, but as she left the room her outrage reached the boiling point: “You had every reason then to stand up for Doktor Holzer today.”

The rest of the evening Herr Zweigeld's room remained quiet and the only sound that could be heard was the rustling sound of his body moving around in the chair next to the window.

XIV./[Chapter 23]

Branisch had returned and was giving a report. His comrades had all gathered in the editorial office, even the teacher's assistant, Herr Remder and Amalie were present. The latter sat at the window smoking a cigarette, offering her strong profile to the assembly as she looked down into the courtyard; it was as if she was paying no attention to the goings-on in the room as she blew clouds of smoke, holding her mouth at an awkward angle.

Branisch stood in the middle of the room, his hands resting on the back of a chair as he spoke. Arrogantly and as if full of the pride of victory he stood as imposingly as possible, holding his head with its handsome tyrant's face stiffly upright. He hissed the words quickly from between his white teeth. He reported about the defeat of the textile workers in Brunn. Indeed, it had been a total defeat. “I knew it would go that way,” he said, slowly stroking his beard, which stood out from his chin like two little flames. “When the socially conscious parties don't stick together and are so disjointed, it can hardly go otherwise.

“Of course, unity,” Feitinger piously observed.

“But we were nevertheless able to gain some advantage from these sad events,” Branisch continued. Then he went on to describe how he had been successful at explaining to the groups of workers there the reason for their defeat. “The only basis for success is a large, unified, disciplined party. They're starting to understand that. What we've been doing here in this office is beginning to have an effect. Can't you all feel how much our sphere of influence has grown? And how our little organization has spread out...? Just keep together, maintain an iron discipline, and we will become an irresistible force.” His voice rose—he stared straight ahead—as if he were looking at a crowd of thousands covering a field. Then he began to enumerate the tasks which were to be assigned to each one. He spoke of auxiliary funds, clubs, lists of club members, meetings, and the others were astonished at the quantity of well-organized, successful work that was assigned to them. Never before had they felt that their work was really powerful and significant.

Rotter was so excited about getting things done that he could hardly contain

himself. He too wanted to say noble things or at least dash off to do something important.

Klumpf shook hands with Branisch. "Thank you, my friend. You have reinvigorated this association. What would we be without you? Work is just what we need to make the goal seem less distant."

As Klumpf spoke, Amalie Remder slowly turned her face towards him and it took on an expression of gentleness close to pity.

Now everyone felt spurred on to say something.

From the corner Feitinger began: "Yes, that's it! We're a state within the state. The state of the future will grow out of the state of the past."

But Rotter shouted louder.

The most excited of all was Oberwimmer. He stood on a chair because Feitinger was so tall that he blocked his view; he opened his handsome blue eyes wide and said, "If only everyone could become aware of this single goal, then we wouldn't need to communicate by telephone or telegraph. The connection of one heart to another is more secure. We must have openness among comrades, that will be our salvation. There's no need to do everything in secret"

"He's still upset that gentlemen of the Community may be keeping secrets," Lippsen croaked between the phrases. But Oberwimmer could not be disturbed: he wanted to enjoy the rhetorical moment to the fullest.

Then Frau Fliege appeared at the door and announced: "There is someone here to see Herr von Oberwimmer."

Oberwimmer fell silent, his face turned pale and displayed a remarkable expression of terror and dread.

"What's wrong," Rotter asked sympathetically.

"Oh, nothing," he said, "it's probably just a letter from my wife. I'm coming, Frau Fliege." And he hurried out.

Finally the confusion of voices was just too much for Lothar as well. He too had been strengthened and ennobled by the hopeful depiction of the work to be done, but it was vexing as well. He went into the adjacent room and leaned out the window.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, the only time of day in which a ray of sunlight reached the inner courtyard, shielded as it was by a firewall. Tini in her short skirt was leaning against the wall, arms crossed over her breast, her head leaning back using her thick pigtails as a pillow.

Lothar was about to call to her, then he thought better of the idea. This view of the girl aroused unpleasant thoughts in him. He had been given something which he had so long sought after: a life's work. This dark-skinned girl was not going to keep him from it—no, certainly not.

There were loud voices in the hall. When he turned around, Lothar could see a short man with a blond beard and eyeglasses who was talking heatedly with Oberwimmer. His voice was hoarse and strained. "If you try to force me, then I can't take any responsibility. If you gentlemen want to take care of the matter, fine, I'll be only too glad to turn it over to you. But if I'm to be responsible for something, then I must have a free hand. Anyone who's not in on it will ruin everything. Why have you come

here?" The short man said something quietly—then Frau Fliege got into the conversation—until Oberwimmer interrupted her. "Fine, leave this to me. If I undertake something, then I carry through on it—but you have to leave me alone to do it." And with that he left them there and returned to the editorial offices. He was surprised to find Lothar there. "What? You're still here all by yourself?"

"Yes, but you look upset. Has something happened?"

"Oh—it's a family matter!" This family matter had so seized him that he looked pale and older than usual. But he attempted a laugh. "It's nothing. But it's terribly hot here. Come on, let's go down...."

* * *

It had been a strenuous day, but the time had been well spent. They had discussed things continuously and had made plans. In the evening Klumpf held a literary evening for workers which he had set up, and he had delivered a stirring lecture—finally they had spent some time drinking beer with some working folk. It was already late at night when Lothar, weary and nervous, climbed the stairs to his lodgings.

When he lighted a candle in his room he heard a rustling next to the writing table. He took the candle over to inspect and saw a dark form lurking there. "Who's there?" he called. Then two rows of white teeth and two dark eyes looked up at him and laughed. "Tini—is that you?"

"Yes, Herr von Brückmann!"

Lothar was silent for a moment and stood in front of her, not exactly in a good mood. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I'm here because of yesterday evening," the girl answered in a dusky, veiled voice.

Lothar turned away and sat down in a chair. "Just because of that?" he said, "What's there to talk about?" He wanted to appear calm and indifferent, yet there must have been a touch of testiness in his voice because Tini looked up shyly. She was still squatting on the floor, her arms wrapped around her knees and one of her pigtails reached down to the floor. "How did you get in here?" Lothar queried.

"I brought the wash in and just stayed here. My mother thought that I was out and locked the door. I just wanted to tell you, Herr von Brückmann, that you shouldn't be angry, it's all Lois's fault."

"I'm not angry. If you'd rather be with Chawar, it's none of my business."

"Of course! I know you don't care. But it's not true that I would rather be with Lois... but Lois, my God, I don't know how it happened, but I had to" Her beautiful face took on a wild, painful expression. She seized her pigtails with both hands and twisted them as if she were trying to wring them dry. "Jesus and Mary, what can I do?"

"Why do you have to, if Chawar wants to?"

Tini didn't answer, but instead scooted over to Lothar on her knees, took his hand and kissed it. "Oh God, if you would only keep me, just for yourself, then Lois could no longer tell me what to do," she whispered. "You did go to the Prater with me—just take me, and I will belong to you and he won't have any right to...."

And as she whispered these intense and plaintive words to him and stared at him anxiously with her round brown eyes, Lothar felt quite strange. Those eyes made him a bit dizzy and he took the girl's head in both hands and kissed it.

Tini blushed, and then said, also as if relieved: "Good. So now I belong to you, right?"

"Yes, girl," Lothar repeated, "let's try to belong to each other," and he pulled her up to him.

She then became calmer and serious, and went along with Lothar. She began to take off her clothes as if she were providing a customary and obvious service.

XV./[Chapter 24]

Elsa Gerstengresser had the afternoon off, so she used it to sit at the open window and sew a new trim on her best dress. No one was at home and that suited Elsa just fine. There was always noise in the café, so she was glad to have some time to recollect herself in quiet. Occasionally she dropped her work onto her lap and rocked her head with its cloud of untamed light-brown hair sleepily back and forth. A crass golden ray of afternoon sunlight pierced through the window and warmed her round, pale face. She was dog-tired yet she didn't want to sleep and lose her awareness of resting. "Today you don't have to take an order for coffee with or without sugar, you don't have to laugh at some lieutenant's joke, nor tease the doctor with a little tap to his nose; you don't have to argue with Pepi, you don't have to do anything, nothing at all except to sit here, breathe in clean air and warm yourself in the sun." That's what she always thought—and of the dullness of the inner courtyard with its dusty statue of the Virgin, the regular appearance of Tini, the caretaker's daughter, who perfunctorily washed a window. All these things seemed like the tranquility of a cloister to the pale, little cashier.

A footfall out in the hallway caused her to prick up her ears. That could only be Poldl. Why was he coming home at this hour of the day? Strange. She immediately had the feeling that something bad must have happened. And when Leopold stepped into the room looking pale and out of sorts, she called out to him: "Poldl, what's happened? Why aren't you at the store?"

"Because I have a headache and want to lie down," he replied in a tone of annoyance and went into his room. Nothing so terrible about that, Elsa thought to herself.

"Jesus! What a fright!" she murmured and raised the palm of her hand to her temple. Her afternoon of comfortable rest was over, however. Now she began to have unpleasant thoughts. There must surely be some trouble at the store. Poldl was too much changed.

Elsa admired her brother, had served him and obeyed him from very early on when they were small, untidy children and would go exploring barefoot in the dried-up beds of the River Wien. Even back then Elsa knew nothing more unpleasant than for Poldl to be in a bad mood, to be irritated or even suffering. She had grown up with these feeling of care and sympathy.

Just as Elsa expected, Poldl began to stir around 7 o'clock. He got up and got

dressed.

“He's probably going to the theater,” Elsa said to herself and sneaked up to his door. It was strange that something now stood between her and her brother and it made her overly cautious and almost anxious. She opened the door hesitatingly. Leopold stood in front of the mirror turning up the corners of his little mustache.

“Poldl, are you already up?”

“As you see.”

“How are you?”

“Better.”

“Are you going to the theater?”

“Perhaps.”

“If you need money, Poldl, I can give you a little bit.”

“No, you keep it. I ... I have some myself.”

“What?” Elsa stepped in closer because she thought she had not heard him correctly. It had never happened before that he declined her offer of money.

“Well, I took, I mean ... I don't need any money,” he said impatiently and turned away.

“Where did you get it? Today isn't the first of the month—and you go to the theater every evening...”

Leopold went red in the face. “I'd like to know what business it is of yours!” he yelled.

Elsa's knees wobbled and she had to sit down. It wasn't Leopold's vehemence that shocked her, but rather the wrought-up expression on his face. For a while she said nothing.

Leopold carefully tied his necktie, brushed his hat, and rubbed cologne on his hands—now he was ready. But he stayed at the window for a while, his back to his sister, as if he were waiting for something.

“Poldl!” Elsa said plaintively, “you really could tell me what's going on.”

“Tell you what?” he murmured.

“I don't know what,” Elsa continued. “I just want to know. Why have you been so crazy recently? And now it bothers you if I say anything at all to you. And Mietzi has gotten so snooty. Where is the money coming from? Why won't you just tell me? I can't do anything to you. I just want to know. What does it matter to you if I know?”

“Know what?” Leopold repeated stubbornly, but this time with a bit of uncertainty and his face was distorted in a whimper. His sister's words had moved him so that he would have liked to tell her everything.

“It's all that Mietzi's fault,” Elsa continued. “She doesn't care a bit about you—or about anyone else either. She only wants stockings and hats. She has no heart. And the only thing that satisfies that bad girl is to have a man under her thumb.”

“You think so? How do you know?” Leopold continued. “Suppose I told you that she never has a peaceful moment at home, that her mother beats her and her sisters scold her! And for whose sake does she tolerate it? She could have it a whole lot better. But it's **me** she likes. If only all you girls were like her! But because she has a pretty face, you jump all over her. You just pay attention to your head waiters and leave me alone.”

And with that he put on his hat and left the room bold and proud, clacking his heels on the floor. Poor Elsa was left behind very unhappy and she rested her head on the edge of the bed and wept.

Things were not going well for Leopold. Since Mietzi had become his, suffered on his account and wanted to die with him, all he could think about was his passion. In order to satisfy the girl's every wish, his "borrowing" from the store had become more frequent. It didn't make any difference since he and Mietzi were going to die anyway. But people at the store were beginning to suspect something, because the head had announced to his salesmen that if any discrepancies were discovered in the coming inventory and the guilty person could not be identified, then all of the salesmen were going to be let go. So now they all began to monitor each other. Leopold felt that he was under suspicion and that a catastrophe was about to happen. Nevertheless, he kept on stealing, because nothing in the world could keep him from sitting down front in the theater and watching Mietzi and being close together in a hotel and feeling their intoxication with each other.

Each time they intended to make an end of it, because Mietzi too seemed to take their suicide plans seriously. She was in that wonderful mood that girls get when they are in love for the first time. She loved Leopold and thought ill of herself. Life became threatening and burdensome, so it would be better just to die, as aristocrats do when they love one another. But each time they had a meal together, drank sweet wine and then had a warm dessert, then she became cheerful again. It was wonderful to be alive and in love! And usually Leopold had forgotten the bottle of poison so they had to postpone carrying out the sombre plan until the next time—but then "for certain."

The theater was still almost empty when Leopold took his seat at the end of a row in the parquet. Only in the galleries and in the standing-room-only areas had people begun to appear. The orchestra was tuning up. One of the ushers brought Leopold a program and handed it to him with a bow; he was a known customer. Now the sound of seats flipping down was becoming more and more frequent. There was movement in the loges. Ladies undid their wraps and appeared at the red velvet edges of the loge. God! How much the boy loved all of this, especially since he had been tormented all day by the terrible visions! The smell of the theater—a mixture of perfume, the gas lighting, and paper machee from the scenery—went to his head. That was the smell Mietzi had in her clothes and in her hair when she came home from the theater.

The music began, the curtain went up. And there was Mietzi, radiant in her fancy costume; and she stole a glance at him and smiled almost undetectably. Now all the painful images vanished. Leopold certainly did not think about Herr Punzendorf, or about the police, or the two shawls that were lying in a box in his house. The decorated hall, the noisy ballyhoo of the operetta, the red velvet he was sitting on, the pretty girl on stage smiling right at him—he needed nothing more to make his happiness complete.

As usual, Leopold awaited his sweetheart in the Dreihufeisen-Gäßchen and took her to the Blue Crown Hotel. As they were walking Mietzi asked, "Did you remember to bring the vial this time?"

No, this time he hadn't forgotten.

Once they were in the hotel, Mietzi immediately threw herself down in the corner

of a sofa, hands and feet hanging loose; she stared into the light and made an angry, serious face.

Leopold knew all about this. She was usually in a bad mood at the beginning; she always wanted her own way, and played hard to get. He had been so looking forward to this evening. “Come on, Mietzi,” he said gently, “take your coat off, the food will be here soon.”

“I don't want anything to eat,” she replied.

Leopold turned away. He was so on edge today that he balled his fists and tears came to his eyes. The food was brought in without a word. With a sigh Leopold sat down at the table and put a piece of roast sirloin on his plate. Then he said in a constrained voice because he was so wrought-up: “Mietzi, don't you want something to eat?”

“I'm going to eat,” Mietzi said, as if she had never intended anything different, and tucked in.

Leopold's mood altered for the better. After a while he asked, “So, what's new... at the theater?”

Mietzi shrugged her shoulders. “Oh, you mean her! What can she do to me? She thinks she can do everything! And her voice, Jesus! We've got a rooster at home that sings better than she does. But she is—a singer—and I am merely...” She suddenly became very upset. She threw down her knife and fork, leaned back in her chair, her face red all over, her eyelids twitched, her eyes gleaming like candles. She spoke quickly and easily, forgetting standard German, which she otherwise loved, in favor of the accent of her Vienna suburb, bubbling over with words and using broad gesticulations which she had learned from a famous singer. She had indeed been greatly offended. She had had enough. A lieutenant, who occasionally came backstage, had held a long conversation with Mietzi for a change. What could she do about it? She couldn't forbid people to speak, could she? Should the lieutenant only be allowed to speak with the old hen? They laughed a bit—nothing more—and the singer said as she walked by, “Don't be so loud in here, miss.” The stupid cow! Who is she to give orders? But worse yet was the fact that Mietzi had gotten a warning from the director and that in front of all the others. “If you don't know how to behave decently, my child, then we can't use you here any longer.” Poor Mietzi! Now she cried from shame and bit her own hand with her sharp teeth out of sheer rage. And then there was her mother! She had threatened that if Mietzi kept appearing in the theater or carrying on with Poldl, she would just toss her out of the house. And yet here she was again.

“Just forget about it!” Leopold said, tenderly and cheerfully at once. “It doesn't matter anymore now. What can they do to us?”

/[Chapter 25]

Mietzi stopped crying and looked up, a bit shocked and anxious: “Oh, yes! You brought the stuff, right? And what about you?”

“It's all over with me!” Leopold said with a shiver. “Yes, all over. But let's not talk about these things. They really don't matter to us any longer. Today let's just be happy one more time.” His voice was soft and he stared at Mietzi with such consuming admiration that it brightened her mood as well.

“You're right!” she added. “Did you really bring the stuff?”

“Yes, I did. Here it is.” He placed a small bottle on the table. “Here it is. Don't worry. Let's just eat and not think about it.”

Mietzi raised her eyebrows and said solemnly: “Let's not order a dessert today. You know that if we do, nothing will happen.”

“Whatever you want,” Leopold replied. “I did order a wine pudding because you like that. But we can just leave it.”

Mietzi bent over her plate again, but then she blurted out: “Put the bottle somewhere else! How can we eat with it sitting there?”

“Of course. I just forgot,” Leopold said and tucked it into his pocket.

The roast loin was good and when the steamed pudding was brought, they ate it as if there was no alternative.

Mietzi's cheeks turned red, she propped her elbows on the table and from the gleam in her eyes one could see that she wanted to laugh, although her lips still looked serious. “Listen, Poldl,” she began, “let's don't talk about our affairs. They don't matter to us any longer. The only thing that matters to us now is nothing.”

“Just listen to you!” Leopold was surprised at her macabre joke.

But Mietzi thought it was ridiculous and laughed loudly at it, so he laughed too. He would have laughed about death itself when he sat on the sofa with Mietzi in his arms, kissing her hot lips and drinking champagne. Even though they no longer had anything to talk about, they nevertheless entertained themselves so well that the waiter entered the room and asked the lady and gentleman to be a bit quieter because an old man in the next room was sleeping.

Later, when they retired for the night, Leopold put his little bottle next to the bed. But once again Mietzi made a child's face and asked him to “Put it away. I can't sleep with it sitting here. I don't like it. It'll be there when we want it.”

And so it was postponed.

* * *

It was just turning light when Leopold awoke. He stared at the room, which looked sober and a bit run-down in the pale half-light of dawn. Then his gaze fell upon Mietzi who was sleeping beside him, her cheeks red, her lips half opened, her face framed by a tangle of blond hair. At first he only had a vague, leaden feeling of something terrible and he couldn't orient himself immediately. But then there it was, stark and clear like the other objects in the gray light of morning. This was the day that he was never supposed to experience. He started as if struck by physical pain. The store...the two shawls in a box at home. The misery and the torment were back! In desperation he buried his head in the pillow and rolled it back and forth as if suffering from a toothache. “Oh, oh—how unhappy he was!” Then he hopped out of bed. The

shawls had to be removed from the box. How could he have forgotten to do that? He got dressed quickly, but soon he dropped his arms despondently, leaned on the window ledge, looked out and was lost in deep thoughts. If only Elsa were here she might be able to help. She would be sympathetic towards him and that was what he yearned for. Mietzi was stirring—she moved, then sighed, and still her lips formed that smile that sleepers often have. It's her! Leopold felt something like anger towards the beautiful girl sleeping so quietly there. Yesterday he suspected that she wasn't really serious about dying. But, what if he were to drain the bottle now? Then everything would be over. Mietzi would find him dying, he would forgive her for not having the courage to die alongside him. "Have a happy life, if you can—and give my regards to Elsa." And Elsa would come and the two girls would cry over him, and then what? No, he knew well that it wasn't going to happen—he simply couldn't do it. So there was nothing else to do but wait until the terrible thing happened, and it was near, he could just feel it. He was seized by a dull fatigue that made all his limbs feel soft and slack.

When he turned around he saw that Mietzi was sitting upright in bed, arms wrapped around her knees. She looked at him in amazement a bit shyly.

"Well, Mietzi," he said sadly, but she turned away and reached for her clothes.

"It's day already; I have to get home," she murmured.

Leopold smiled—and he was glad that he was able to. "Yes, Mietzi," he added, "it's another day. I really knew all along that..."

"What did you know?" she interrupted him in an angry tone. "Don't talk nonsense. You didn't know anything."

"Let's just drop it, sweetheart!" Leopold continued with the same sad leniency. It almost seemed to him that he was dying and forgave everyone.

Mietzi hurriedly got dressed without saying a word. It seemed that she was afraid of Leopold. She didn't get close to him and only cast worried glances in his direction. When she was ready, she said simply "Come on" and went out first. That hurt him: he would rather have seen her desperate and downcast instead of being so defiant. That only made him lonelier in his misery.

They walked along beside one another shivering. Only the noisy rattling of a vegetable cart or a milk truck occasionally interrupted the stillness of the streets. In the Technikerpark⁶³ strange figures were moving around under the sparse trees. It was people who had slept in the bushes and on the banks of the river overnight⁶⁴ and now were freezing as they came out of their spots. One of them was standing near a tree bathing himself, while another man with a pale, withered face sat on a bench dozing. A third man was walking around taking tiny steps to get his feet warm. They moved about in the morning mist like people who had gotten up too early in an empty and cold bedroom and are grumpy and monosyllabic as they set about to begin their day.

"Who are those people?" Mietzi whispered with alarm.

"Bums," Leopold suggested arrogantly, but he too was shaken by the horror of it. The man sleeping on the bench opened one eye and shot them a glance and his withered face twitched as if it were smiling. "These are citizens of a mysterious and dirty world—to which I too now..." No, he didn't want to complete the thought and speeded up a bit.

Mietzi stopped at the corner of Margaretenstrasse and Wiedner-Hauptstrasse. "I'm

going to turn down Panigelgasse,” she said and was about to go.

Leopold held on to her coat: “What are you going to do there?”

Mietzi blushed and said defiantly: “I’m going to Frau Rosenthal. You know that I can’t go back home.”

“Who is Frau Rosenthal?” he asked mechanically.

“Well, of course,” Mietzi replied impatiently, “she’s a boxkeeper at the theater.⁶⁵ What of it? She said that I could come to her any time I wanted to.”

“Mietzi, don’t leave!” he begged, whimpering.

“Get on now!” And with a jerk she freed her coat from his grasp, turned her back to him and started walking down Panigelgasse.

“Mietzi!” Leopold groaned. But she didn’t look back even once. Her pointed heels clattered on the pavement as she hurried along; and when her beautiful form in gray coat and blue hat disappeared around the corner, all of Leopold’s hope and even life itself seemed to disappear with it. “Jesus! What am I going to do?” he murmured; he pressed his knuckles against his temples and ran back home.

In the Gerstengresser household everyone was still asleep. As he went into his room she saw a person in white waiting for him in a chair. It was Elsa. She was asleep with her head sunk onto her breast and her face covered by her hair. “Oh!” said Leopold as if he had been expecting that. He closed the door quietly and sat down on his bed.

Elsa’s breathing was fast and loud and her arms moved around a bit; she sighed, then opened her eyes. She shook her hair away from her forehead, and leaned forward. Her face was pale as a ghost and she had dark shadows under her eyes. “Poldl—is that you?” she whispered, hardly audibly.

“I just came in,” he answered in the same tone. “Did something happen?”

“Yes, something **has** happened.”

“Was someone here?”

Elsa nodded. “Two men. Herr Punzendorf and one other. They came just after you left.”

“I see,” Leopold seemed quiet calm. “They probably wanted to have a look around—in my room?” he said, and pointed to the box.

“Yes, they did,” Elsa replied, unemotionally. “They opened the chest. They said it was in your best interest, and then....”

“And they found something,” Leopold said, completing her sentence.

“What are you going to do?” Elsa asked.

“What **can** I do?” he said. “Are they going to come back?”

“Well, of course.”

Then there was a pause in the conversation. Leopold felt as if he had been destroyed, all of his limbs hurt him and at the same time he felt a kind of relief. All the waiting and the anxiety were over. The terrible thing had now happened and a dull calm came over him. Mietzi was with Frau Rosenthal. The game was over. He stared at the floor and slowly twiddled his thumbs. Then he heard a rustling next to him. Elsa had scooted over from her chair and now knelt in front of him. Tears ran down her cheeks and she spread her arms out: “Oh, Poldl! How could you do something like that?”

“Just leave me alone,” he replied quietly, “nothing can be done about it now. I

just want to sleep, I'm dead tired.”

“All right, just go to sleep, “Elsa said and began to prepare things for him, closing the curtains and fixing the bed. “Here, Poldl, just lie down.”

Leopold stretched out comfortably and closed his eyes. “You won't go away, will you?” he said dully.

“No, I'll stay,” she said to comfort him, then sat down on the edge of his bed and held his hand.

“If only Mietzi had been willing, then everything would have worked out. She and I would have been at peace. But she didn't want to... and I didn't want to do it by myself either.” He spoke slowly and was already half asleep.

Elsa stroked his hand. “The things you say, Poldl! Things will work out all right. I'll take care of it. I'll go to Herr Punzendorf and beg him. I will always be with you, Poldl.”

“Yes, you're the one!” he babbled and smiled wanly.

XVI./[Chapter 26]

On his way home from a business transaction in the afternoon Lothar encountered Rotter. With his felt hat pushed back, and striking the pavement loudly with his folksy gnarled walking stick, he walked boldly down the street. “Hey there, brother!” Lothar called. “How's business?” Lothar stopped and smiled thoughtfully, but Rotter pulled him along with him. “Come on,” he said, “I'll accompany you. Today is the big day, this evening, I mean.”

“Big day?” Lothar said. “That is a matter of opinion. You probably mean the test that Lemke is setting up for Klumpf, right?”

“Or vice versa, old friend,” Rotter laughed with merry schadenfreude. “Let Herr Lemke show what he can do.”

“Fine! And when the assembled group of three or four workers or other people that support Lemke give a vote of confidence to Klumpf, what then?”

“That's exactly what we want!” Rotter said and looked at Lothar with a cheerful wink. “But what's wrong, brother, you don't look right to me today, you seem so.... well, bitter.”

Now Lothar laughed too. “Bitterness is part of our profession.”

“Indeed it is!” Rotter confirmed, “but that's different. I'd call that a healthy bitterness. It makes us cheerful and alert. Like beer, you know....”

“Yes, and sometimes it makes us drunk like beer does,” Lothar interjected.

Rotter admitted as much. “That too, brother! If you only knew how happy I am every day when I can put the documents aside and throw myself into the cause. I feel like a fish that has been taken out of the water and then thrown back in.”

“That must be what it is,” Lothar said reflectively. “You have a proper job, and when you've taken care of that, then you can turn your attentions to the great cause, and so it seems like a holiday to you.”

“Nonsense! I would gladly give up my regular job if I didn't have to earn money.”

“Sure. But suppose you've already decided to work for the future; the cause is enormous and it's not always clear. There's a certain amount of serious struggle required; and these conditions raise all sorts of doubt. But I think that it's good to have some work that's narrowly defined when you have a task that's endless.”

“That's just a fanciful notion!” Rotter said with a sweep of his hand through the air. “I just wish you could spend a day pouring over the documents. No, brother! It's precisely there where everything is yet to be accomplished that we begin to feel good! The methods, true knowledge, the application—all of these things we have to create. We're like gods—don't laugh—we're just like gods standing before the chaos with our idea of what to create—that's how it is!” In his desire to be creative he had spread his arms open wide. “Now that is real work!”

“Yes—chaos,” Lothar repeated less enthusiastically.

“You're in some kind of mood today!” Rotter exclaimed. “You must be sick. Chaos—of course! The old order is the chaos from which we have to create something that's just, and it's going fabulously. The future is being created.... the clubs.... I don't understand why you're in such a gloomy mood.”

They had slowly walked onto the Burgring. At the beginning of Babenbergerstrasse, where Rotter wanted to start towards Mariahilf,⁶⁶ they stopped. “Come on, let's sit down for a while,” Lothar said. “You can roll me a cigarette and speak your mind. There's something weighing on your heart.”

They sat down on a bench on the boulevard. The street before them seemed tired as the late afternoon light edged into red.

“Speak my mind?” Rotter said. “It's actually your turn to do that today. It would do you good. Klumpf, too, gets down in the dumps. I don't understand why. Of course every day you see something ugly or sad, even terrible. But why do you have to view it with so much *weltschmerz*? Of course you're angry—that refreshes you and makes you stronger—but anger is an emotion of the vigorous kind, as Kant says.⁶⁷”

“Oh, really? Kant says that too?” Lothar interjected.

“Go ahead and poke fun, old friend!” Lothar continued. “We have to use all available resources—even Kant.”

“It's very pleasant,” added Lothar, puffing out smoke from his cigarette and staring at the yellow tree tops of the Burggarten, “very pleasant to hear you talk like this. Keep on going.”

“Hell!” objected Rotter. “You act like I was some old piano that was supposed to play you to sleep.”

“No, no,” Lothar objected. “I really mean it. You are right and it's always pleasant to hear that someone is right, when you yourself have a bit of old Adam⁶⁸ in you.”

“What do you mean, brother? Tell me. Spill it all out!”

“Well, you can tell that human frailties are at work when you have certain doubts.”

“Everyone experiences that,” Rotter said to calm him.

“Then, further, I'm sometimes not inclined to think of the future and the socialization of work and things like that.”

“That's even worse.”

“Moreover, sometimes I feel repugnance towards the oppressed and the disinherited.”

“That's disastrous. Are you really sure that it's repugnance?”

“Yes—or something like it. Do you see that hobo sitting on the park bench over there? When I'm in a healthy condition I see him as an unfortunate person paying a high price for society's ills. Right?”

“Certainly!” Rotter confirmed. “Figures like that are like red ink underlining the failures of society and making them visible.”

Lothar looked up in astonishment. “Say, that's new! I've got to have that for our newspaper. Red ink—damn!”

Rotter laughed with delight. “It really isn't bad. But back to your condition.”

“When the old Adam in me kicks in,” Lothar said, continuing his report, “then I begin to notice that the poor fellow is rather dirty, and that he has a vulgar way of getting money out of me, and that he would cut the throat of any other hobo for a few kreutzer. In such moments the conditions are right for me to fall back into old habits.”

“This is getting serious!” Rotter said.

“I told you it would be! Further symptoms include a certain yearning for polished doors, for quiet, aristocratic houses that smell good inside, and for girls with good manners, and, as far as my thoughts go, that it just might not be so bad to live quietly, arrogantly, and comfortably, without worrying about the future.”

“Oh, no!” Rotter wailed, “if I didn't know you, brother, I don't know what I should think of all this!”

“So, you see!” Lothar said earnestly. “But calm down, it will pass. That's the old Adam speaking, the residue of a youth spent in indolence and erroneous opinions. You don't put off the old Adam and put on the new with losing a good chunk of life. That's the thing that make us all sick, you perhaps least of all.... We no longer have that strength in us to live passionately and instinctively or to act without regard for the consequences. What's going on inside us is a poorly functioning machine that can only be set in motion by a lot of mental toing and froing. The thing that burns within the people and drives them to all sorts of enormities which we don't understand, the power that drives them to love and to murder and which boils in their veins—of that we have no understanding, and yet we want to invent rules for them. Look, that sort of thing worries me. If only I could feel life as simply and warmly as well, as Tini, for example...then I would understand better what our job is.”

Rotter shook his head. “I don't understand all of that, it's too educ- ... and, forgive me, I also think that it's utter nonsense.” Then he laughed and slapped Lothar on his knee. “No, I know exactly what you need. You're right, we can't always live in the world of ideas—that's why there are girls.”

“I do have a girlfriend,” Lothar said distractedly.

“Oho! If you mean the dark one who was sitting with you at the window yesterday and was darning your socks, she's not right for you. What we need is a quiet, gentle blonde. Do you know Pepi? No, the dark girl is too wild, too powerful. I don't know what you see in her!”

[Chapter 27]

“We met one another by chance,” Lothar said reflectively, “and it's amazing, but she seems to thrive when she's around me; occasionally she seems to cling to me anxiously. And at the same time, there is a wild strength within her that she tries hard to suppress. Occasionally it flashes in her eyes, then just as quickly she turns back into the quiet, sleepy creature who wants to be with me and clings to me tenaciously. And you see, that annoys me because I want that wildness in her for myself, the unrestrained Tini that she suppresses when she's around me. It all goes together with what I was telling you earlier, about the strength to live that we have lost. But you said it was nonsense.”

“And that's what it is, brother,” Rotter said, and suddenly stood up. “Get rid of her, the dark girl.”

“I've thought about that too,” Lothar replied.

“Well of course you have. Goodbye. I've got to go now, but I'll see you this evening.” And so they parted.

Lothar went home, lay down on the sofa and closed his eyes. Thoughts were swirling around in his head today and he felt confused and unsettled. There was a rustling in the room. He didn't bother opening his eyes because he knew it was Tini.

She frequently came to him; sometimes just to sit at the window for hours without saying a word. But there were other times when she stayed away completely and avoided looking Lothar in the eye when she encountered him. This time too she had been gone for several days.

When Lothar opened his eyes, he saw the girl was sitting on the floor next to him, dressed in a blue dress, twisting her dark braids between her fingers. Her eyes sparkled restlessly. “I knew very well that you weren't sleeping,” she said and smiled.

“Where have you been so long?” Lothar asked.

The smile disappeared immediately, and her face turned warm and red. “Has Chawar been with you again?” Lothar asked quietly and as if uninterested. “You shouldn't do that. That man lied to us. He has been convicted several times and I fear that he's really a bad person.”

Tini looked up, batted her eyelids, and took a deep breath.

Lothar too straightened himself up. “Now we're going to see,” he thought, “what's really going on with her.”

But no! Instead, she said nothing and just pressed her braids against her mouth, and her eyes teared up.

“Did I offend you?” Lothar asked softly. He felt sorry for her, and when she moved closer to him and laid her hot face on his hand, he gently stroked her hair with the other hand. “Just forget about it. We want to be free of this person, right? If you really want to belong to me completely, then this fellow shouldn't be able to do us any harm.”

Her breast rose with a heavy sigh and Lothar's hands were wetted with her tears.

“Don't cry, Tinikins,” he comforted. “Let's think about other things. Come on, get up from there.”

She shook her head, she didn't want to.

“All right, stay where you are, if that's what you want.” Lothar spoke to her as if she were a child. “When you're not sitting at the window darning my socks, I miss you. I can work better when I see your dark head over there. That's true! But I should move out of this building and you should come with me. Your mother doesn't like you anyway...and I need you. You could teach me Croatian like you speak with your father. And there probably are things that I could teach you. We would be refreshing for each other and relieve each other's burdens.”

Tini made no reply, but when Lothar had finished she said softly: “What else?”

So Lothar had to say something more—about “how things would be.”

Then Lothar's doorbell rang.

“Now who could that be!” Tini cried angrily.

“It's some gentlemen who have come to pick me up,” Lothar replied and went out, leaving the girl in the back room.

It was Oberwimmer with Tost. In recent days the two had been inseparable.

“We've come to pick you up, but we're a bit early,” Oberwimmer said.

Lothar asked them to come in. He was not glad to see them because he did not like Tost.

Tost did not notice this—he was too socially awkward. In response to Lothar's casual remark: “Looks like we have an interesting evening ahead of us,” Tost simply made an arrogant face and said: “We hold events like this every month. I'm very happy that Doktor Klumpf has decided to speak. It's all going to become clear.”

“What's going to become clear?” Lothar asked, his curiosity aroused.

“It is our opinion,” Tost began in a pedantic tone, “that within our close circle of friends we must provide an opportunity—whether that's right or not I will not discuss—to get to hear views of the new club, which, rightly or wrongly, has attracted so much attention—from the most favorable side, I'd like to say; so that it can't be said of us that we distorted the views of others...”

“Listen, Brückmann!” Oberwimmer interrupted because he was afraid that Lothar would be annoyed with Tost. “Have we come at a bad time? I thought I saw something like a blue skirt behind the door.”

Tost broke out into such convulsive laughter that he got out of breath.

“It's the girl who helps me out,” Lothar said, but Tost did not quit laughing.

“That's just how Tost is,” Oberwimmer offered by way of explanation, “any talk of women and he begins to laugh. But calm down, man. What the hell is wrong with you?! A girl is nothing to laugh about. Or maybe you do have some funny experiences in that area? Why don't you tell us some of your stories.”

Tost turned red in the face and suddenly became serious. But Oberwimmer wouldn't let him off the hook so easily. “Come on, tell us! Would you know just by looking at this bloodthirsty fellow? Does he look like he's had a lot of romantic experiences and amusing ones to boot? All right, even Marat69 had his marquise.”

Tost chewed on his beard, annoyed at being teased. Finally Tost slapped him on the knee and said, “Come on, Tost, you're not annoyed, are you?”

Then he laughed at nothing in particular, looked at Oberwimmer in amazement

and was grateful as only a yellow, wasted creature such as himself can look to someone as rosy and cheerful as Oberwimmer.

But it was time for them to leave. Lothar asked the two men to wait for a bit and went to the back room.

Tini was still crouched on the rug. "Are you leaving?" she asked him. "Will you be away long?"

"Yes. I'll be away for quite a while—until late at night," Lothar answered in a kind voice and set about washing his hands.

"Until late at night!" Tini repeated. "And you can't stay here?"

"No, today I can't." When Lothar turned back around, he saw that Tini had gotten up on her knees. She was pale had an expression of anxiety and anger over all her features. Quietly and harshly she said: "But, what if... I told you, you **have** to stay with me tonight."

"It wouldn't do much good," Lothar replied with a laugh, "some other time."

"Another time won't do. No, it has to be tonight."

"It just won't work. What's wrong with you?"

"What about all those things you said earlier?"

Her words sounded scornful; nevertheless tears streamed from her eyes, transfiguring them with a wet shine as they slowly ran down her motionless face. "Then nothing will help!" she repeated. "No, nothing will! Jesus! What am I going to do? And I thought I would be safe with you!"

Lothar was getting impatient. He did not understand what the girl was so worked up about.

Oberwimmer called him.

"Tinikins, be reasonable. We can talk this through tomorrow." He gave her head a quick stroke and was about to go, but she held onto his hand, so firmly that it was painful.

"Stay!" she whispered—"because tomorrow...oh my God!"

Oberwimmer called him again.

Lothar freed himself from Tini's grasp. "You hear them calling me. What are you talking about? Don't act like a child. It just won't work tonight..." And as he left the room, he saw the girl spread out her arms in a gesture of passionate desperation, then she threw herself onto the sofa and buried her face in the pillows.

The men were already impatient and it was time to go. Down at the entrance there was a short, blond man who seemed to be expecting them.

Lothar recognized him as the man who a few days earlier had come to the editorial office with news for Oberwimmer about his wife.

The encounter seemed to put Oberwimmer in a bad mood. He wrinkled his brow and hastily stepped up to the man. "What is it this time? Are you looking for me?" Then they spoke quietly and animatedly with each other for a while. When Oberwimmer turned back to his comrades he was pale and morose, his features distorted.

"Please go ahead without me," he said hastily. "There's news from my wife.... I have to..." And with that he hurried away.

XVII./Chapter 28

It was sundown by the time Lothar and Tost began to climb the stairs leading to the attic of the Goldenes Fassl.⁷⁰ The large area was unevenly lit by rays of sun that seeped through gaps in the roof tiles. In the corners, behind the chimneys and the support beams, hung a few lanterns that gave out a meagre light. Chairs and tables had been stacked up there. Right under a skylight, the brightest spot, a kind of dais had been set up, made of boards. Nearly everyone was there. A few workers, dressed in their black Sunday jackets, sat reverently near their beer steins and listened to what Satzinger and Racher were telling them. Rotter had pressed the innkeeper Schindler and a worker into a corner and was giving them a lecture, while Feitinger was explaining his basic principles to a bankrupt cobbler and his pale wife. Off to the side Klumpf and Lemke were quietly carrying on a conversation. Amalie Remder stood at another attic window, arms crossed, and looked out over the roofs of the city. She startled a bit when Lothar came up to her. But her pretty face, normally so cool, seemed a bit wrought up today and more vulnerable than usual; she laughed awkwardly, saying, "It's pretty up here, don't you think? Oh! Some strange things are going to happen today!"

"Expecting unusual things," Lothar said, "is our calling, after all."

"You're joking, Brückmann," she replied, turning red. "The men think they have organized typical evening of presentations, but as soon as Klumpf begins to speak, they'll soon see what that means. I'm afraid that Lemke will really stand out if he doesn't change his views. You can't hear Klumpf speak without paying a penalty!" she said with a triumphant laugh.

"So you're expecting something like conversion and epiphany?" Lothar asked. "Just like it says in the Bible: they straightway went and had themselves baptized."

Amalie nodded seriously. "Yes, indeed. Conversions brought about by a powerful intellect always remain true to their original calling."

Then a bell rang. Lemke stood on the dais, called for order and began to speak very loudly, calling out to the assembly in harsh and staccato terms.

"As usual, we have come together today to discuss in strictest confidence the most important questions—I would even say questions of life or death—concerning the Party and our special association with each other. These are questions which unfortunately can only be discussed by secret societies. Today we have something very special to offer our friends. We all know—that unanimity, even in the basic principles of the Party, perhaps, or rather..." Here Lemke hesitated, made a grimace showing his annoyance, and ended with "Well, no matter." Then he continued his critique hastily, as if he wished it would soon be over. "An association made up of Party members—by which I mean the editorial staff of *The Future*—has recently aroused a great deal of interest and excitement. In order to make sure we are all on the same page within this circle of friends, and to prevent disappointments, misconceptions and misunderstandings, those Party members have agreed to participate in the meeting today and to defend their principles—I mean their **basic** principles—that's the right term—against ours, so that we can see how we relate to one another, because..." And here he looked at his notes and read the conclusion fluently

and with pathos. “That's because clarity is our watchword! The time of mystical obscurity, of camouflage, and secretiveness is past. Clarity and truth—that's what we want, and no matter whether it's coarse or even gruesome, clarity is what we want!”

“Very good, bravo, Lemke!” was the response from the dim corners of the room.

“And now I'll turn it over to our friend Tost,” Lemke said and left the dais as Tost hurriedly stepped up from the left.

There he stood; with one hand he held his coat closed; the other he raked through his hair. At first he spoke quietly and fast, eyes cast down. He told these friends that he did not intend to go into details today, but planned only to sketch for them the foundation upon which all their efforts were based, the primal truth out of which their social theory arose. He would lay out the truth for them without rhetorical flourish—but the whole truth, in all of its gruesome severity; for no matter how terrible the truth may be, humans must yield to it because it is stronger. Here he stopped for a moment and moistened his colorless lips with his tongue, and opened his eyes. Outside the sun was going down. A stream of dark red light penetrated through a skylight onto the dais. Tost's slender form stood in a blaze of purple glory. His unruly curls and thin beard seemed to be on fire. Harsh light fell upon his face and revealed all the lines and furrows that had been chiseled into it by his life of misery. Perched above him on a rafter was a gray cat looking down at the speaker with green, glassy eyes. The rest of the room had gotten dark so that Tost, bathed in red light with a cat above his head, stood there like a garish vision in the night. Whether it was the light or what he had to say, he became bolder, more heated, and made violent motions with his small, sickly hands; he spoke many a noble word with his growling voice, so much so that the cat stood up to have a better view of him.

“The history of humanity up until now has not demonstrated that mankind is steadily improving, nor that it is gradually approaching a condition of prosperity or of happiness step-by-step. Or have the centuries that preceded us bequeathed us anything to solve the problems of the distribution of goods and everyday needs or the relationship of one person to another, or of work? I see only three answers that the centuries have given us to the central questions of life: private property, separation by class into masters and servants, and capital. Three answers and three errors!” Tost laughed sarcastically and his whole mouth was filled with the red glow of evening.

“I will not speak of the fruits that these fallacies have borne—our hearts, bleeding with pain and outrage, know them only too well. Let me ask you this: is there a way out of this error? Is there a seed in today's society out of which a better time could naturally grow? No! History teaches us how humanity started down this fateful path and must continue on it, must burrow deeper and deeper into it until it reaches the pinnacle of misery, of inequity, of craziness and darkness—that is the goal! And the fact that there is such a goal is actually a comfort! Because it means that the fatal road we must travel is not endless, but is a cul-de-sac. There will be a zenith of misery and of error, and once it has reached that point the sad machine called society will falter and dissolve, and the path will open up for the truth.”

“And why is that?” Tost asked, and as if drunk on light and words, he opened his scrawny arms wide and his voice broke in excitement. “Why is it that those who see clearly must sit idly by until humanity draws the terrible consequences of its failure? It

will reach its goal, but could it not be spared this trail of sorrow, could it not be shortened? You've all heard about a kind of medicine that fights a fever by increasing it so that it reaches its breaking point before all the body's strength is used up. Perhaps we should take a lesson from that. The rate of societal decomposition must be increased. Let's make it possible for the poison to do its work as fast and powerfully as it can! Let's draw the consequences of society's error! All the misery that mankind will otherwise have to endure for centuries limping along the wrong path—could that not suddenly come about so that, in desperation and crazed with pain and anger, society tears down everything and reaches for something new and better?"

The sun had gone down. Tost spoke those last words in deep twilight and only the outlines of his rapidly moving limbs and the glowing dots of the cat's eyes on the rafter were visible. Then Tost fell silent. One of the workers called out: "Very good!" but the innkeeper asked for quiet.

"There are customers below us. We have to be careful." So the applause was faint.

"Oh, this is awful!" Amalie whispered to Lothar, "But Klumpf will find a solution."

Lippsen came up. His bizarre, gnomish face twitched in derision. "That was a poem!" he said. "It made cold chills go up and down their spines! The cobbler's wife was so scared that she held on to her husband's coat sleeve the whole time."

"I was frightened by what he said and the way he said it," Amalie said.

Lippsen laughed. "Yeah—he ought to be in popular theater. But Lemke is beside himself. This part wasn't on the program."

Then Klumpf mounted the dais and began to speak. In the darkness which covered that part of the attic his voice sounded excited and solemn.

"That a new time, a better time will come—Tost believes in that too. This belief unites us in hope and makes colleagues of us all. The history of mankind, as we just heard, is a history of disastrous errors. But is that really so? The knowledge of something better and a grasp of the truth—which all of us possess—is that not also part of mankind's history? We do clearly see our misery and our error. Moreover, we clearly see what causes us injury. Isn't this revelation part of mankind's history? It seems to me that error itself had brought us to this truth, as if truth had already broken through the cruel error that is driving us to the precipice. And—like Tost, I ask: why must those who see clearly stand idly aside?"

The dark quadrangle formed by the skylight above the speaker's head began to fill gradually with pale, silver light. The moon had risen above the roof-tops. A pale blue light began to coat the rafters and the cobwebs. In this light Klumpf's face seemed pale as a ghost. The cat had climbed down from its perch and stood with arched back on a little table next to Klumpf, who gently stroked the animal's fur.

"That which you do, do quickly. That is Tost's call to the 'destructive powers'—I don't know why. If I have started down the wrong path, and I know it's not the right way, then I turn around. And, my friends, all of us believe that, we all believe—even Tost—that we can see the goal towards which we must head. And if we only had the power, we would at this very minute write '*Finis*' to our terrible history and start making a new

history for ourselves. And let's not forget the number of the oppressed, the poor, and those who are deprived of all the earth's wealth! Is it really so hard to convince them that they have been cheated out of their share of happiness? As soon as the oppressed become aware of their strength in number and resolve to seek greater happiness for themselves and all mankind, then it will be clear that the strength of those in power is nothing but a superstition. The great transformation which we so desperately need is as simple as everything that is great, good and true. If we could only find the will to bring it about! These things are certainly worth fighting for, but if the people of the world who have been duped simply, quietly and calmly demand their rights, how could we speak of that as a struggle? Who would fight against such a superior power—against mankind itself! Let us attempt to build upon the knowledge and will that lies within all hearts; then the new will quietly but victoriously subdue the old, so that it can suddenly burst out, like the butterfly from the chrysalis. The salvation of mankind will not grow from the wild raging of a world order in decline, but will come, like divinity itself, in the gentle rustling of the wind.”

In spite of protestations from the innkeeper, the applause that followed this speech was very loud. Most did not really know what was so stirring about it, but the heart-piercing voice of that handsome, pale speaker excited them. The cobbler's wife wept.

Amalie was ecstatic. “That was wonderful!” she said to Lothar and took his hand. “That's what prayer will sound like in the future. Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to dwell in the pure heights like Klumpf! Nothing trivial or ugly can approach him.”

Tost wanted to respond, but Lemke brusquely held him back and announced to the assembly that on the next program he would counter what Dr. Klumpf had said. Then he asked if any of the comrades had anything to say. The cobbler stood up.

He was rather intoxicated and spoke inarticulately. He wanted to request that the Party do something to resolve the permanent crisis in southeastern Europe. It was their duty, after all.

“What an ass!” Lemke said, between his teeth.

The rest of them were not listening. Only the cobbler's wife listened reverently, as if in church.

Meanwhile Heyser had come in. He perched himself on an old barrel. Moonlight illuminated his frail frame in the coarse wool coat and his motionless pale face with too bright eyes. Taking no notice of his surroundings, he sat there smoking on a short pipe which he held with very black fingers. When Kehlmann and Tost approached him, he motioned them away with his hand.

For some time now there had been a confusion of sounds from the street—the rattling of wagons and the coarse sound of the fire department's trumpet.⁷¹ Now the white moonlight was mixed with a red glow.

“Fire!” someone yelled.

“That's right!” Heyser reported calmly, “the lumber yard next door is on fire.” Everyone was alarmed. “By the way,” Heyser said, “there were some policemen downstairs asking for the innkeeper.”

Schindler raked his hair in desperation. The cobbler was still standing on the dais demanding a resolution to the Oriental Question and for the Balkan states to be liberated.

“What shall we do?” whined the innkeeper, “I’m done for!”

But Lemke grabbed him by the arm and shook him. “There’s still the narrow staircase. Show us the way out. Don’t just stand there.”

The cobbler’s wife was vainly trying to pull her husband down from the dais: “Old man, can’t you hear? It’s the police. And there’s a fire next door!”

Everyone raced to the rear staircase. They were all in a hurry.

“Keep it quiet, gentlemen,” the trembling innkeeper begged.

Finally the floor was cleared. And the cat crept silently along a rafter and used the red light of the fire to aid in hunting mice.

XVIII./[Chapter 29]

The lumber yard at the corner of Budengasse and Teichgasse was on fire. The high-piled towers of wood formed enormous dark red open fireplaces and the flames met in the narrow aisles between them and leapt from one pile to another, thin and transparent as blue veils. There was constant crackling and hissing. People from the surrounding area stood around the yard where the firemen were working. Their evening slumber disturbed, they spoke sleepily with one another. There was not much left to be saved. One little wooden house right next to the lumber yard had been seized by the flames, and now stood there as if made of red glass, its rafters, walls and beams aglow with red light. The whole thing seemed transparent and was dotted with little points of gold.

“Did the people who lived there make it out?” Klumpf asked of a fat man, who stood next to him, sleepy and dazed by the light and heat.

“Yes, they did,” he said, “they’re sitting in the courtyard over there with their stuff. That’s about all they could get out. What good is a shack like that that’s gone in a matter of seconds!” he said and laughed angrily.

Not far from them, in a courtyard, was a pile of beds, chests, and household goods. A young woman sat on a chair. She was overheated from crying and rocked a child in her arms as she constantly scolded her drunken husband, who sat on a bed staring at the fire passively. Two older children squatted on the pavement playing with each other, calm again after the initial excitement. Next to them was a neatly dressed man who was calmly and carefully packing books and clothing into a suitcase.

“Look, there’s a fire over there too!” someone behind Klumpf said. It was Oberwimmer, who was pointing towards the Danube.

“Yes, yes!” said someone else—a stranger, “and there are fires in Währing and Sachshaus⁷² as well.”

“Damn!” Kehlmann remarked and laughed.

“That’s right,” the stranger added, “and you know who started them, don’t you? The Social Democrats. That’s what everyone says.”

“That’s the rumor,” Oberwimmer confirmed, “the whole city is in an uproar.”

Tost then had to enter the conversation. After his fine speech he was in fine spirits and he laughed so that in the fire’s light one could see all of his diseased teeth. “What

would be their interest in doing that?" he said.

"It would be possible though," Heyser said, turning to the stranger and looking at him coolly with his bright eyes. "But—**why** would they do it?"

The stranger looked aside as if he were afraid of the pale young man and withdrew.

The tiles on the roof now began to fly off the building with a clatter and people had to back off. In the courtyard the drunken man had lain down on the bed and gone to sleep. The lodger sat on his suitcase staring at the flames and the young woman had started to cry again and called out to passers-by how much she hated the Social Democrats, those devils.

Amalie Remder was holding on to Klumpf's arm and whispered: "Let's get out of here, I'm afraid."

He smiled and asked: "Who are you afraid of?"

Amalie pointed to Tost, Kehlmann and Heyser. "Just think of what he was saying," she said.

Klumpf nodded lugubriously: "Right. Let's go," he said then.

They had a long way to go through all of the side streets leading off the main roads and the suburb of Wieden. After the brightness and heat of the fire, the night seemed dark and cold. A fresh breeze shook the trees in the parks and swept the fallen leaves through the silent streets.

Amalie and Klumpf walked along in silence. Amalie would have been happy to talk, but all she could have talked about was Klumpf himself, and he was lost in deep thought, probably the kind of idealistic, sad, and yet so gently comforting thoughts that only he was capable of. She didn't want to bother him. Just walking along beside him made her happy. Indeed! He was the chosen one, the savior, if there was one! But she had frequently seen it in his handsome and serious face—alone in his lofty ideas he must feel quite abandoned. Life's pettiness and commonness oppressed him. He needed a companion to take care of him, to understand him, to smooth the path for him, someone who could bring a bit of love into the cool, sublime clarity of his soul. All of this she spoke in thoughts to herself and looked for the right words to express what she was feeling. It needed to come out—and she moved her lips silently.

They stopped in front of her house on Margaretenstrasse and Klumpf said a bit shyly: "Are you going to send me home so early, dear friend? I was about to beg you to offer me a cup of tea. Neither of us will find it easy to fall asleep this evening."

"Well, of course! Come on up," Amalie quickly responded.

On the stairway they met Amalie's father with two of his friends. They seemed surprised to see her there. "Where are you off to?" she asked.

Herr Remder was close-mouthed. "Look, child," he said with a thick tongue, "while you were away, some friends just happened to come by and we made ourselves some grog, just a little bit. We left the room in good shape. Now we just want to get away and go to a café for a few minutes...."

"That's fine," his daughter interrupted, "go on! In your condition you wouldn't want to be seen by our guest anyway."

"Child, what do you mean about 'condition'," he muttered with a childlike joyous

expression on his face. "Now Malie, if you have a few kreutzer..."

"Here you go!" She stuffed her purse into his pocket impatiently. She just wanted him to go, she was ashamed of him. But he bounded merrily down the steps in great leaps following his friends.

Amalie lit a small lamp in her room, got the kettle out, and began to make tea. She looked younger and more girlish than usual with her reddened cheeks, flashing eyes, and that gentle feature of her mouth that suggested the beginning of a happy smile.

"Here you are, Doktor," she said and pushed a cup of tea towards him, "it ought to be strong enough for you." She sat down opposite Klumpf and lighted a cigarette. Now she felt like talking. "I'm afraid you're going to have to tolerate my enthusiasm about the speech you made, dear friend, even though you may not want to."

"You approved of my speech, then?" Klumpf asked, stirring his tea distractedly.

"Approved?" Amalie cried. "Yes, the same way we would approve the hand of a friend who awakened us from a wild, oppressive nightmare." The speeches she heard had awakened in her the need to speak as well. "I'm not exactly sure what that man Tost said; it was unclear and yet alarming. It seemed to me that he was throwing filth on everything that I hold near and dear. Then you came along and cleaned and purified everything. Klumpf, with your leadership, right will surely triumph, even if what those people at the fire were saying were true. When you were speaking of the great work that lies before us, I felt great joy that I, that we women may also contribute. If I couldn't struggle alongside you, what would I have in life?" She took a deep breath. No, it really wasn't possible for her to say what moved her so deeply.

He said nothing, probably because he found her words womanly and confused. She too wanted to stop talking and leave him to his thoughts. She leaned back in her chair, her eyes gleaming and moist and fixed on this beloved man. The poor, great man. He looked so grief-stricken. He was suffering for the sake of the world.

Suddenly Klumpf looked up and quietly said: "She's been gone for two days."

"Who has?" Amalie asked.

"Her, the young woman from over there." He looked at Amalie awkwardly, searching for help. "I feel that I can talk about it with you, dear friend, you will understand me. I've only seen her a few times. Occasionally I went over to have Hempel, her father, to make me a copy of something. Or on the staircase. I've seen her in the theater too. But I've never spoken to her."

He propped his head on his hand, looked numbly at the light and spoke quietly of his troubles.

"But that doesn't matter! This young girl is something I need, just as we need beauty and youth. I believe that we belong together. I believe that if her beauty and youth were placed in my hands, she would become what she should become. But now she's gone. I don't understand why the happiness which so many others enjoy should be denied me. I simply need this girl so that I can keep on working. I have no other choice."

He paused. Amalie's features had resumed their usual severity; her eyebrows were in motion, forming a narrow dark line, and her pale lips were awkwardly askew, as if mocking. She shivered, got up and started walking back and forth in the room,

treading carefully as if she were afraid of waking a sleeper. Then she said, gruffly, without looking at Klumpf: “All right. What I can do?”

“You could talk to her.”

“Me?”

“You are the only one who could, and who would be willing to do it for me.”

Amalie let out an angry, sarcastic laugh. “It's for the cause, right? Otherwise we'll lose our leader? That little chorus girl with the pretty face could make an apostate of him?”

Klumpf spread out his arms. “Oh, it's not for my sake. But I don't want that child to be ruined. She is staying with a woman who is not going to be a good influence on her. I have the address here. If only she were happy, I could bear my own pain. But she will never be happy without me—and that is not superstition. Tell her that. Tell her that I'm willing to bind myself to her—today or tomorrow. Some priest that she believes in should tie the knot. Tell her... well, you'll know what to do better than I, but bring her to me.” He stood up, reached out his hand to her: “Won't you please, dear friend?”

Amalie turned her back to him. All she could manage to say way a rough “No” that sounded like a sob.

For a moment everything was silence in the room except for the gentle hissing of the teakettle. Finally Klumpf said in his usual mild-mannered voice: “Good night, dear friend. If I have offended you, please pardon me. That was not my intention.” And with that he departed.

Amalie stood up and listened. Only when she heard the exterior door below close did she begin to stir. She put the tea implements away with trembling hands, pushed the chairs back into place, and straightened everything up, then suddenly, as if overcome by tiredness, she collapsed into a chair.

“I need that youth and beauty.” He needs her! Was it really possible that he, Klumpf, the redeemer of society, was just like all the others? All the time he had been thinking about that little seamstress. He, who was supposed to change the world by his magnanimous, sympathetic engagement was only concerned with his own petty physical needs. Phooey! A comrade, a colleague who would understand him—that he doesn't need. No, he wants a little rosy-cheeked seamstress⁷³ and he can't continue his work without her. He needs a Mietzi Hempel to save the world! She began to laugh, so spasmodically that her chest began to hurt and felt like it was going to burst. And when the laughter crossed over into tears it was actually a relief. Her own tears calmed her. And after a while she was able to breath a sigh and say to herself: “Fine! I'll go see his little seamstress then, since that's what he needs.”

XIX./[Chapter 30]

Clementine Würbl was celebrating her thirty-eighth birthday. The festivities were, however, limited to a small wreath of flowers that the maid had wrapped around her soap dish and to a bouquet that Doktor Beckrath had honored her with. She hadn't been looking forward to the day anyway, for, after all, it was only an occasion to take note of how her thirty-eight years had flown by, empty and useless. Frau Würbl

frequently asked her daughter: “Tini, 74 how old are you today?” Despite her poor memory the old lady knew quite well, but the older she got, the more she liked saying unpleasant things to anyone and everyone.

Clementine raised her eyebrows and replied: “Thirty-eight, Mother. But you knew that.”

“Already thirty-eight,” Frau Würbl then said.

The windows could no longer be opened because the October air was too cold. And so evening broke upon them as early as five o'clock in the afternoon—in Clementine's view, the emptiest and saddest time of day.

Frau Würbl sat in the living room beside the oil lamp, moving her lower jaw as if issuing a challenge, and stared out with her sombre porcelain eyes. Clementine sat crocheting. The only time either of them spoke was when Frau Würbl thought of something bitter to say.

“Lina asked for the day off today.”

“I know, Mother.”

“And of course she will carry on all night.”

“I'm not sure she will. Perhaps.”

“Where is that jar of red currant preserves that you got out around noon today?”

“In the cabinet, of course.”

“Is the key still sticking out?”

“Just a minute..... Indeed it is.”

“Well that means that the girl probably finished off the whole thing.”

“Not so far. I just saw it a minute ago.”

“I don't believe it.”

Clementine shrugged her shoulders and all the gold baubles rattled. That was her way of having the last word.

“Is Doktor Beckrath coming today?” Frau Würbl asked after a pause.

“No, not today—as he told us.”

“He's has also started going to bars at night and carrying on.”

“I'm sure he doesn't go to bars.”

“Where else would he go? He seems to have given up on his plans for marriage. How old did you say you were today?”

Clementine wasn't going to answer this question again today. And so it went until Frau Würbl went to bed and there took her evening meal. Later she played Sixty-six⁷⁵ with Anna the maid.

Clementine kept on crocheting with a will. She didn't approve of playing cards with the cleaning girl because she thought it common, but occasionally she did take a look at the cards in Anna's hand, counted the tricks, and was delighted when her stepmother lost and then quarreled with her in Bohemian.

But today Anna was paying no attention because, as soon as her employers were asleep, she was going dancing at the Stiller Zecher⁷⁶ in the Prater.

Finally Frau Würbl shoved the cards aside and labored to turn herself over in bed to face the wall. Anna disappeared.

Clementine kept walking restlessly back and forth in her room for a while. The

inconsequentiality of her life troubled her more than usual today. She could have just cried. The best thing would be to lie down for a while. Lying in bed in darkness with the covers pulled up to her chin enabled her to direct her thoughts along more pleasant paths sometimes. She could think about encounters with Doktor Klumpf on the stairway; he reminded her of Hans Heiling.⁷⁷ Or that Herr von Brückmann, or about confession with the young priest at the Church of Maria Stiegen. But today one sound alone pounded in her ears: thirty-eight years! Just a few more years and she would be an old woman. Then it would be too late to experience a better side of life; after that she would just be waiting for the end and fearing death, just like her stepmother. Death! An entire lifetime of emptiness and after that, death! She clutched the pillows even tighter, she was afraid and forced herself to think of something different. No, a human life just couldn't be so terribly sad. She would certainly still experience something wonderful. With that thought in mind she went to sleep.

She might have been asleep for several hours before she awakened; she herself did not know what woke her up. It was a noise—or had she only dreamed it? It was still dark. Then, there it was again, that sound. It was the floorboards creaking, a dull, quiet sound; someone was going back and forth in sock-feet in the adjacent room. Then someone bumped into the table. She could clearly hear whispering.

Clementine cowered under the cover, not wanting to see or hear anything, because it certainly must be thieves in the next room, and if they noticed that someone was awake here, things would go badly for her. But where was Anna? She certainly was not at home! When one of the maids took off, then the other one was certain to sneak out that night as well. But keeping absolutely quiet in her state of anxiety eventually became impossible.

Adjoining Clementine's bedroom was a small, windowless area where tableware was stored. A door led from this space to the living room. Clementine resolved to slip up to that the door, which was half open, and take a peak into the living room. She could hardly believe that she found the courage to do it, but she nevertheless **had** to because the urge was stronger than she was. Trembling, she got out of bed and crept to the door.

The creaking and rustling in the next room continued. Then she clearly heard the door handle being slowly depressed. She was so afraid that she didn't dare look through the open door, but then to return to her bed was also dangerous. Shaking with fear, she knelt down, closed her eyes and prayed very mechanically. "Hail Mary, blessed art Thou among women...." It seemed to her that she caught sight of a light through her closed eyelids, and when she actually opened her eyes she saw a beam of light streaming through the room, ending at her stepmother's door.

Clementine no longer thought at all, nor did she feel anything; rather, she followed what was going on without moving, as if she were allowing the terror of a bad dream to run its course.

A form crept through the room making the same dull, humming sound she heard before. For a moment the beam of light caught it. Was it a person? There was a face, but half of it was darkened. Clementine saw a curved back, two long arms, and the whole thing swayed back and forth on silent soles as if performing some strange dance. Suddenly the beam of light moved and disappeared into Frau Würbl's bedroom.

There was no one in the living room, which was only partially lit by light from the streetlight that entered between the curtains and painted indistinct shadows on the floor.

“I could try to get away now,” she thought. She gathered all her strength. But how? Then something on the floor moved. One of those indistinct shadows rocked back and forth. Then the first one was back! It protruded into the room with no distinct shape, then suddenly a longish bit of shadow separated itself from the larger mass and headed to its upper end of the shadow.

“Oh my God! It's scratching its head!” Clementine shivered violently. She clenched her teeth so that their chattering would not be audible. “Now the only way out is blocked.”

In Frau Würbl's room someone was working quietly but intently; it sounded like someone was making a bed, then at other times like rats nibbling. How long it lasted Clementine could not say. Finally the beam of light appeared again and once again the form with the darkened face bobbed and weaved. Then someone whispered: “Shall we take care of the other one too?” That made her so frightened that she fainted on the floor.

When morning dawned Clementine awoke from her blackout but nevertheless stayed right where she was as if in a trance. In the living room all the furniture, the pillows and the wash basin were in their customary place in the irksome light of dawn. And everywhere reigned the ordinary calm that was normally so repugnant to her, and yet.... Something here had changed everything—behind the half-opened door, what was there? What had happened in there? Crouching motionless on the floor, Clementine stared at the door with eyes wide open.

Finally there was some commotion in the kitchen. The familiar voices of the maids became audible.

“Anna?” Clementine called.

The girl was surprised to find Fräulein Clementine there; indeed, she was obviously afraid of her, because she looked so strange.

Then Lina came to in.

“Something terrible has happened,” Clementine whispered.

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph! What happened?” Lina cried.

“She's gone crazy,” Anna said.

Clementine broke into sobs, and her efforts to report what she had seen seemed confused, as if she had a fever. “And in there,” she said, pointing to Frau Würbl's room, “there's something there, but I don't know what it is.”

The women huddled together in fright. No one dared to go into that room.

“I'll go get the caretaker,” Lina finally decided.

When they went into Frau Würbl's room, they found her, her head covered with pillows, lying in her bed, suffocated. The money chest had been broken into and emptied.

XX./[Chapter 31]

In the night that followed that discussion with her husband, Frau Zweigeld, in her

usual resolute and clever way, was able to gain complete clarity about the situation. She got him to confess and put it all together in her mind. They were ruined. Their fortune had been used up; they had been living far beyond their means. Herr Zweigeld had fallen into the hands of usurers; he had drawn on an account and tomorrow they had to come up with 8,00078 gulden—if shame were not to be added to their poverty. Oh, she concealed nothing from herself. Only Benze could help them put together this amount of money in such a short time. He had it and he would have to give it to them. That was the only way out, so for that reason Frau Zweigeld wasted neither time nor thought on how painful it would be to reveal the circumstances and to make such a request of her future son-in-law. But her family's honor had to be saved. That single thought possessed her.

She got up early the next day to begin work on this laborious chore. She seemed a bit tired as if she hadn't slept the night before, but she was completely calm. She performed her household responsibilities calmly and with determination. Then she sent the maid with a letter to Doktor Benze asking him to come to see her immediately. She wanted to get the matter taken care of while Gisela was still asleep.

However, old Marie woke Gisela up earlier than usual. “Child, sweetie! You need to get up. Your fiancé is here already. He's in the dining room with your mama and they've been talking over half an hour.”

“What could they be up to?” Gisela asked and sat up in bed. “Oh! They think they can finalize the plans without me. Quick, Marie, help me. They'll be amazed when I show up too.”

When Gisela was ready, she tiptoed to the threshold of the dining room. How pretty it was in there! Outside the October weather was raw. A fresh breeze drove the rain onto the window panes. Gray, muted light filled the room. The fire in the hearth cast a glow on the little white breakfast table. Frau Zweigeld sat beside the fire with her back to Gisela. Doktor Benze stood next to her, his hands propped on the back of a chair.

Gisela decided to sneak up on her fiancé and put her arms around him, but the unusual tone in which her mother was speaking froze her in her tracks. Frau Zweigeld was making an evident effort to speak calmly, but her voice shook. It seemed that her words, sharp and stern, barely concealed a sob.

“The issue here is not one of placing blame. You and I are not called to do that. The only issue is whether you can help us and whether you will.”

Benze was about to respond vehemently, but he tried to resist the urge; he pushed his hair off his forehead and rocked the chair nervously. But finally it all came out, soft and fast. “Whether I can help and will help? I have to, I have to. If ever there was a dilemma, this is it. My name and my honor are involved. I'm not thinking about the money of course. But I'm ashamed of my own cowardice. If we cover up what was done, then the public will be deceived. I know that I will be committing an injustice against everyone who places his trust in my office in the future.”

“Why all the fuss?” Frau Zweigeld interrupted. “It's not our place to concern ourselves with such issues.”

“Not our place?” Benze repeated and vigorously shook the back of his chair. “I am linked to Gisela, so a taint on her father reflects on me as well. And you're saying I shouldn't be allowed to pass judgement here? Please consider my situation for a moment.

The money, my God, that's hardly worth speaking about! I am young, I can earn money. I'll gladly sacrifice all that I own for Gisela's sake. But here in Vienna I have gained a reputation for vigorously prosecuting all shady business and corruption among people in our class. To do what you're asking of me will create a lot of enemies for me. The only thing that protects me is the unimpeachability of my name and my good intentions. And now I am associated with what your husband has done, I have become an accomplice."

"It would be better if you just stayed true to your convictions regardless, rather than to torture me with speeches like that," Frau Zweigeld said, now weeping.

"There's no way that I could do that!" Benze cried. "I'm sorry to make you unhappy. You know how deeply I respect you. Please don't cry. I'll have the money in your hands within an hour. But I think it's excusable for me to display a bit of emotion at the very moment that I am forced to deny all my principles. But I know that's what I have to do. I gave my word to Gisela and that binds me to that man and makes me part of what he has done, which otherwise would put a wide gulf between us for good." He wiped the perspiration from his forehead, took a few steps, then he caught sight of Gisela, who stood there pale, biting her lower lip with her teeth as if she could ease the pain that way. "Gisela!" he cried, "how long have you been standing there?"

"For a while," she replied and entered the room in her well-bred straight posture, seemingly calm. She began to speak rapidly as if she were in a hurry to say what she had to say before the tears came. "I don't know what has happened or what the thing with my father is. But it really doesn't matter because I am certainly going to stick with my father no matter what has happened. I belong to my father. And, Franzl, if you think that you are bound to me by your word, then I'll give it back to you. Here...take it." And she thrust out her hands with the childlike round fingers as if she were throwing some to her fiancé. "I'm giving it back to you, now you're free. I will not be separated from Papa. If you don't want to belong to him, then you can't belong to me either. Perhaps neither of us has a place in your world. And that's the end of it."

"Gisela—" was all the Benze managed to say, but she didn't hear it.

"No, Franzl! You can have your word back right now!" she cried as she left the room.

Old Marie sat in her little room knitting. The kitchen door was open so that Marie could oversee the work of the kitchen maid from her chair. Gisela sought refuge there.

"Marie!" she said quietly and out of breath. The old woman peered over the top of her eyeglasses and took a serious look at Gisela's excited face. Gisela first closed the door, then she sat down next to Marie. She could have told her everything, but she was engulfed by her sadness. Tears flowed over her cheeks; she put her hands over her face and sobbed.

Marie put down her needlework and began to stroke Gisela's blond hair. "Things will work out all right, baby," she said.

"I know, Marie. It's all right. It's all over, you know. I'm going to stay here with all of you. The other thing is over now. Things are back to the way they were, me and you." Her tears flowed more abundantly.

Marie shook her head. "Fine folks do such crazy and useless things and heartache is all that comes of it!" she thought to herself. But she said, in her calming way: "That'll

be fine. We'll all get along together again.”

XXI./[Chapter 32]

When Lothar went to the newspaper office in the morning he found Branisch talking to Klumpf.

“Great!” Klumpf said, “we were waiting on you. We have to consider things very carefully because we are, I fear, at a critical juncture.”

Standing in the middle of the room, wearing his hat and tapping with his walking stick on his boots, Lothar reported: “Tost, Satzinger, and Heyser have been arrested and are under suspicion of starting those fires. They found explosives at Satzinger's place and at Heyser's place they found the illegal printing press they use to publish *Solidarity*. Those are the facts. What they mean for us is evident.” Then all three sat and thought. The news was surprising and the consequences could not easily be ignored.

Then Klumpf smiled and jumped up as if delighted. “I have it!” he cried. “Can't you just see it—our article? This is the place where we can delineate our position clearly and precisely. The very fact that we **know** we are not involved in that kind of thing makes us strong. Those unfortunate fellows want to demonstrate that they have power. My God! That just creates problems for them! Power is precisely the thing we want to rid the world of. It belongs to the society of today—it's the natural consequence of it—they, not we, are associated with it.”

“Wonderful, really nice,” Branisch said nervously. “But we need to take some security precautions. We need to take a careful look at the documents in the editorial office....”

“The alliance with those people was a mistake, Oberwimmer led us to that. I also thought that they could be useful to us, and Lemke maintained that he could control the anarchistic elements in his group. But no matter, the important thing now is that we have nothing to do with that side of things.”

Klumpf, however, looked at the positive side. “All right, you take care of the other business, I will write our article. Oh, it's really going to set things off! Go on, go, leave me alone.”

Now Rotter arrived, in a sweat and upset. He started out by making hand signs to show someone was in the adjacent room.

“Who's in there? Just tell us!” Lothar asked.

“Be quiet! Don't talk so loud! It's Kehlmann. There, you see? What a lowlife. You know, don't you, that the others have been put in jail? And, he says, quite simply, we—or one of us at least—was the snitch. He said that to me loud and clear, there was no way of misunderstanding it. Oberwimmer is said to have known about the printing press. Tost had a bit too much to drink and revealed the secret to him. What do you say to all that? Did you ever hear of such a thing? The fellow is a fool! All of us, the whole staff of *The Future*—nothing but a bunch of informers. It's just ridiculous. I brought him here so he could repeat it. He wanted to come along. He said it didn't matter if he was arrested or not. You'll hear it from him soon enough. I just couldn't believe my ears as I was listening to him.”

While Rotter was blurting this out in a whisper, the faces of his audience soon revealed astonishment and something like disgust. Klumpf opened the window and leaned out into the gentle rain that was falling.

Kehlmann stretched out his arms to free his cuffs from his coat sleeves, then said calmly: “So that's how it is! That **is** a surprise. I wouldn't have expected trouble from those quarters. But we can't keep the man outside waiting any longer.” And with that he went into the adjacent room, followed by the others.

Kehlmann leaned in the window niche, his arms crossed over his chest, his narrow forehead covered with a clump of hair, his mouth twisted as if he were laughing. He greeted the men who entered the room with a barely noticeable nod of his head.

“Won't you please have a seat, Herr Kehlmann,” Branisch began politely.

“Thank you. I would prefer to stand,” he said, as if staring over the heads of those present.

Then Branisch began: “You have communicated news to Doktor Rotter about a rumor, which, as nonsensical as it sounds, nevertheless cannot be ignored. We are grateful to you for letting us know about it. Perhaps there is more that you can tell us...”

“Call it a rumor, if you please,” Kehlmann said, “or an allegation...”

“But an allegation has to be based on some sort of evidence, doesn't it?”

“I did mention to Doktor Rotter that there is some evidence. It's enough for me. What would be my interest in giving you the evidence?”

“As I understand from Rotter, you are accusing us, the editorial staff, of having aided the police in the arrest of your friends.”

Kehlmann nodded.

“All of us?”

Kehlmann shrugged his shoulders.

Branisch laughed coldly and ironically. “The unusual situation you and your friends find yourselves in explains very well what's happening right now: anyone who is being prosecuted sees a detective in everyone else. Our sympathy for you and your associates is genuine. You are accusing Oberwimmer, I'm told. He isn't here. I suggest that we go to his place. He will certainly be able to explain this unfortunate business. How about that?”

Kehlmann's answer to Branisch was a provocative laugh, his lips painfully distorted. “Yes, let's go from pillar to post. When I came to your office, I knew very well, this was not the best way to escape from Vienna. Ha! But I thought it would feel good to say everything to you face to face, but what good has it done? I'm thoroughly disgusted. I'd rather say nothing. But to go to that person and hand myself over to him.... What for? They'll have to arrest me right here in the editorial office of *The Future*. Ha ha ha!”

Branisch turned aside, his patience at an end, and said: “The man is a fool.”

But Kehlmann was just getting started, and he continued to speak quickly and loudly, interrupting himself occasionally with that rough and painful laugh of his.

“They'd better get on the move because I was about to head for the train station. But, were I to allow myself to be arrested here, it would be a service to our cause, and that would be to show precisely what role this, this ... bunch of starry-eyed idealists has to

play.”

It was amazing how calmly, almost with astonishment, they all took it in. Klumpf actually began to speak kindly to Kehlmann, as if to a sick person. “It sounds like you have a fever, old man. If you think you're in danger, then you'd better hurry. You've seen that your words have no effect on us.”

Kehlmann cast his eyes down and said in a calmer tone: “We always thought well of you, Doktor Klumpf. Perhaps you are also one of those who was deceived. But watch your back! Believe you me.... Anyway, this is pointless and I don't know why I'm wasting my words here...” he concluded with annoyance. “Just in case any of you don't know it, just ask at the police station what Herr Oberwimmer's badge number is. They're always recruiting for handsome and likeable fellows like him. Ha! It would be brilliant, if it weren't so despicable. Were you about to interrupt me, Doktor Branisch? You're absolutely right. Here in your office you have to take precautions. I'll be on my way now, if I can get out.”

He retrieved his hat and headed for the door, his legs stiff and straight, his head thrown back like a man with self-confident courage heads through a shower of bullets.

Rotter followed him out to the hall. He had a sense that he needed to say something further to this strange man, but he could not find exactly the right words. Frau Fliege stood in the hall knitting. In her frilly bonnet she looked serious and dignified and a bit dissatisfied because the stranger did not greet her as he passed. At the door leading out Kehlmann ran into Lini, who was climbing the stairs, overheated, with her pigtail hanging on her back. She was quite startled by the encounter and let out a little cry, stared at the man with the pointed polecat face under his hat and then turned her back to him with a giggle, which was her way of showing girlish embarrassment.

Rotter and Frau Fliege were standing at the window so they could see how Kehlmann would exit the building. Then there he was, accompanied by a short, blond man with eyeglasses who shared his umbrella with Kehlmann and spoke insistently with him. Two security agents⁷⁹ followed them out the entrance way.

“Hmm,” Frau Fliege said, “things don't look so good for him....”

“How so? What do you mean? Who is that man?” Rotter asked in shock, and clasped the old woman's hand. “Please tell me, Frau Fliege.”

She laughed. “But, Herr Doktor, please don't squeeze my hand so tight. These old hands can't stand it.... That man down below is the superintendent of police. Don't you recognize him?” Without making a reply, Rotter stormed back into the office: “He's been arrested. Right here at our building....”

“Are you certain of that?” Branisch asked sternly as if he were about to correct Rotter.

“I saw it with my own eyes. I don't know who I am any more. Am I an informer or not?” While Rotter kept striking the chairs with his cane in a rage, he reported what he had seen and the others listened without interrupting. Indeed, they too no longer knew what was going on all around them—or they did not dare to understand.

But when Rotter began to describe the short man Lothar flared up: “Blond and wears eyeglasses, isn't that what you said?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Are you quite sure that he was wearing glasses?”

“By God! I'm not blind.... The glasses aren't the worst part of it.”

“But it's bad enough.” Lothar had turned pale and tried to force a laugh.

“Well, old man, what can we do now? It's not something I'd want to go through again—the way Kehlmann stood there like Daniel in the lion's den.... And he sees us as the hangmen? Disgusting!”

Lothar shook himself. “It feels like I'm stuck in a bad dream where I'm an informer and the editorial office is the police bureau.”

“And our poor Oberwimmer!” Rotter added. “This is just terrible. I'm going to go see him. In difficult times you have to stick together.”

“Stop!” Branisch cried. Once again his face showed all the resolution of a determined general. “We don't have all the facts yet. You need to tread carefully. Perhaps Kehlmann is right after all.”

Those words send a cold shudder through the others.

“Branisch!” Rotter exclaimed, “you can't say a thing like that! Our Oberwimmer, a snitch?” Poor Rotter was so moved that tears filled his eyes.

But Branisch acted more solemn and determined than ever. “All right, Brückmann, why don't you accompany me when I go to see Oberwimmer.”

“What price can you put on friendship?” Rotter grumbled. “And why Oberwimmer? Why not me? Maybe I'm the one who's the informer.”

“Oh, not you!” Branisch countered and it sounded almost contemptuous. Rotter was annoyed too.

“Why not? If we're all going to start suspecting one another. Oh God, oh God, this is such a shame!”

Branisch shrugged his shoulders. “Yes, but we have to get to the bottom of it.”

* * *

About noon the sun began to penetrate occasionally through the uniformly gray clouds and the streets that Lothar and Branisch were traversing immediately took on a more cheerful aspect, sparkling with the water that bare-footed children were splashing all about. But then the wind came up and drew a gray curtain over the sun and the city once again looked dirty and sullen. A light rain crosshatched the scene with diagonal streaks as if an unsatisfied artist had wanted to cross out everything.

Lothar and Branisch, each leaning back in his own corner of the coach, steadfastly refused to speak. They hardly dared to speak their thoughts to themselves let alone some one else.

Only when they had arrived at Oberwimmer's house in Penzing⁸⁰ did Lothar remark: “You know, it really is strange that none of us has ever been in his house or met his family.”

“I'm sure there's some explanation for it,” Branisch said.

“Oh yes, of course! I was just thinking out loud....”

Oberwimmer's cottage lay in the middle of a large garden. Wild grape vines, now a bit twisted by the rain, surrounded the white house with their dark red tendrils. On the

grass in front of the house were asters and dahlias and a blue glass globe on top of a green post. Finally, there were children's toys on one of the steps—a doll and a cardboard horse, both thoroughly soaked by the rain.

Lothar rang the door bell and the door was immediately opened. A young woman stood there before them. Her round, childlike face was quite red. She wanted to greet the strangers in a dignified way, but her eyelashes trembled constantly and she had to bite her lip with her teeth to keep from laughing. Two children clung to her dress, a four-year-old boy and a six-year-old girl with blond pigtails and clear, gray eyes. The children pulled at her so that she could hardly stand.

“What is it, gentlemen?” she asked.

“Could we speak with Herr Oberwimmer please?”

“I'm sorry, but he is out of town. He left last night. But Jesus!” Now she genuinely laughed. “You must be Doktor Branisch. Pepi has a picture of you in his album. But please, won't you come in. Pepi has talked so much about you. Stop it now, Pepi!” This was directed at the son, who had finally succeeded in pulling his mother a step away from the door and was shouting for joy.

“Thank you. We wanted to see Oberwimmer on business. We'll come back when he has returned from his trip,” Branisch declined with solemnity.

“Oh no, please come in,” the young woman begged. “I don't know when my husband is coming back, but he would not be pleased if I just let you go away. You're his friends, after all, and it's raining so terribly now.”

The two men hesitated, but stepped closer. Lothar tried to think of another excuse to avoid this invitation, but Frau Oberwimmer already had her hand on the door handle ready to close it. She stuck her head outside a bit. The wind blew rain into her face and made the brown curls above her forehead flutter. She closed her eyes and laughed, “My, my, such weather! Jesus and Mary! Milli, just look who's lying out in the rain. Goodness! It's your Beate!”

The little girl rushed to the door. “My poor little Beate! Mama, I'm going to get her.”

“No, you can't.”

“But she can't stay outside either.”

Lothar offered to bring the doll and the horse inside. Beate was in a sad state—faded and soggy. Milli began to cry. But Frau Oberwimmer found it all so ridiculous that she put her hands over her face because she thought laughing out loud seemed inappropriate for a married woman. “It'll be all right, Millikens,” she said to comfort the child. “Beate is dead. Let's make a nice corpse out of her.”

“Mama!” Pepi cried triumphantly, his finger stuck deep in the softened belly of his cardboard horse. “Hans is dead too, isn't he?”

“Yes, yes. Just be quiet,” his mother said to shush him. “We'll bury him together with Beate. Please gentlemen, come this way.”

The living room looked untidy. The pictures had been taken down from the walls and were leaning in a corner. The table was covered with glasses, plates, and dishes and an older woman stood in front of it trying to dust things off. Lothar recognized her immediately as Frau Oberwimmer's mother—she had the same childlike face, the same

gray eyes, only duller and gentler.

“Mother,” Frau Oberwimmer said, “this is Doktor Branisch that Pepi talks about so much ... and”

Branisch added: “My friend Brückmann.”

“I just couldn't let the gentlemen go,” Frau Oberwimmer chattered on. “You have to take a glass of wine with us. The weather is so bad. Mother, can you get it for us? I know it looks terrible in here. Such a mess! But we're moving.”

“What? You're going to move?” Branisch asked.

“Yes, indeed. Didn't Pepi tell you? We've gotten a position over in Hungary. Pepi is there now getting everything ready, then he'll come back to get me and the children. The children were so sad when we sold the house—and I still could cry.”

“Didn't all of this come about rather suddenly?” Branisch asked.

“Yes, very suddenly.”

The grandmother brought the wine and began to take part in the conversation.

Lothar kept the conversation quite proper; indeed, he almost forgot when he had come and could actually laugh along with Frau Oberwimmer, while Branisch sat there silent and glum.

Finally they left.

“Pepi will be so sorry that he missed you,” Frau Oberwimmer said. “Especially since we've just gotten to know one another. Milli, Pepi, shake hands with the gentlemen.”

When they were outside in front of the coach, Branisch remarked: “So yes, it is true. Really hard to comprehend.”

Lothar made no reply. He was seized by a feeling of deepest sadness. The little woman and her charming domesticity and then this! Could it be? How can something so charming be associated with something so foul?

XXII./[Chapter 33]

Frau Tuma, the caretaker of the house, usually had a friendly smile, but today she looked distinctly worried. My God, she had trouble enough! Since those terrible events—upstairs, with the old woman—she had not seen a moment's peace. She had had to appear before the investigating magistrate, be sworn in and give testimony. How had the wicked people who murdered the old woman gotten into the house? How was she supposed to know? The building had several entrances and the courtyard was large enough so that someone could have hidden there. Then there was that young lady! Would the Tumas get to keep their job as caretakers? The young lady had been ill, but now things were going better. Frau Tuma wanted to go upstairs and make an appearance. But even if the young woman allowed them to keep the position, Frau Tuma wasn't entirely certain that she should keep it. There was nothing in this building but worries. What a building it was, too! Jesus and Mary! That old lady was right when she used to say: “A very bad apartment building, this one. Nothing but rabble here.” And that Gerstengresser boy now in prison. And the police were constantly in and out of the

Social Democrats' quarters on the fifth floor, searching and putting things under seal. The Hempel's daughter Mietzi had left. Phooey! Frau Tuma sighed deeply. And now she had to bear all of this alone because her husband kept creating new problems for her, and Tini—oh God, her!

When she climbed up to the fourth floor, she found Tini disheveled and her cheeks red; she was washing the floor. “What's going on here?” Frau Tuma thought. “Usually you can't get that girl to scour the stairs before Saturday and today is Tuesday.”

Tini startled when her mother came in, but she turned back immediately to her work.

“Why are you in such a hurry to clean the steps?” Frau Tuma asked.

“It doesn't matter whether it's today or another day,” Tini replied sullenly.

Frau Tuma rang the young lady's doorbell, then whispered in the hall with the maid who opened the door. Tini stopped working for a moment. The half-opened door caught her attention. She scooted over on her knees a bit closer to the door so she could see a bit better. And what did she see? Two narrow, tiny galoshes that belonged to the young lady, and a piece of reed rug, and Doktor Beckrath's hat. Then the door was closed. Tini startled again and trembled a bit; she closed her eyes and raised her hand as if she were trying to swat a troublesome fly: “Go away!”

Rain fell on the glass ceiling of the staircase in a constant whisper. Gray light filled the area. Once in a while a door opened or closed. There were footfalls coming down the steps. It was Fräulein Remder from the fourth floor wearing a man's hat as usual and carrying a music folder under her arm.

Herr Hempel bounded down the steps on his thin legs, and everyone could see from above that Tini looked expectant and serious. But her interest in working had vanished. Tini got up. Then an unknown man went up the stairs, rang the Würbl's doorbell, and disappeared there. Who could that have been? With her bucket in her hand, she waited at the door for the return of that stranger, and when he came, her heart beat stronger. His gaze brushed her fleetingly and since she was staring at him with eyes so dark and shining, he smiled back in a friendly way. She followed him down the stairs, watched him heading toward the exit. What had he been doing here?

Herr Hempel and Herr Remder were standing under the entryway and chatting. They were talking about the murder. “A nice thing to have happen here!” Hempel remarked.

“Yes,” Remder said, “he must have sneaked in and hidden somewhere.”

“Indeed! If this was my building, I'd hold the caretaker responsible for it. What's he there for anyway? You can't feel safe in your own bed any more.”

“Right. Terrible times we live in. Good day, Herr von Hempel.”

“Good day, Herr Doktor.”⁸²

“What a fool! Your house indeed!” Tini muttered between her teeth. She kept on standing at the foot of the stairs for a while. It seemed to her that she couldn't leave the spot today because she might miss something important if she didn't watch to see who was going in and out. And yet, just standing still in the hallway listening to rain pounding indifferently on the skylight couldn't not be tolerated for very long either. Before she knew it, her orderly thoughts disappeared, only to be replaced by unpleasant

dreams and visions of things that did not exist.

There it was again: the half-opened door, the yellow stream of light from a lantern; and in this light, a large, pale face surrounded by a lacy, white nightcap. It twisted its mouth, opened two dull, yellow eyes wide open. Then there was darkness again. Pillows being thrown about, then another sound, quiet, buzzing, dull. Tini closed her eyes and raised her hand as if to chase something away and said quietly as if begging, "Just get away."

No, she could not stay here. She went into the courtyard, breathed in the moist air thirstily, and let the rain cool her off. She began to braid her pigtails out of habit and sang a song to herself. But, there it was again. "Just get away!" she cried again and ran inside, into her room. She was cold and her head felt heavy. She wanted to lie down for a bit, perhaps it wouldn't find her then.

The caretaker's apartment consisted of one large room which also contained the cooking range, and a small, windowless antechamber. Here, behind a large crate, was Tini's bed. Tini dropped down onto the bed, weighed down by exhaustion. She wrapped herself in the covers. Here in the dark and quiet it was comfortable. She yearned for some long and sound sleep. Slowly her consciousness began to fade and the pleasant feeling of falling asleep cradled her, but then she sat bolt upright. It was as if someone were calling her name, quietly, but right next to her ear. The voice was that of Lois. The room was quiet, as before; it had only been the beginning of a dream, but even the beginning was enough to make Tini tremble. There could be no thought of sleep because she didn't want to dream. She lay in bed with her eyes open and listened to the distant sounds that drifted over from the stairway and from the courtyard. But, my god! The dreams still came, dreams that were a terrible revisiting of things over and done with and which could not be changed. Her lips burned. She reached for the water pitcher and drank with abandon, then settled back into bed and waited for it to return. And it did. "Just go away!" she cried and pressed her hands over her eyes, and twisted and turned as if in physical pain.

Then she heard her father come in. He was drunk and his footsteps sounded heavy and dragging. He dropped down onto his bed with a groan. Then her mother came in too. "So, you're back," she said, "what did the people up there want from you?"

Herr Tuma laughed. "The good thing is that they didn't arrest me on the spot. What do I know about the whole business? I told them that you and the girl weren't paying attention. You'll have to talk yourselves out of it tomorrow. It's a nest of vipers."

"I know it's my fault," Frau Tuma said, crying. "All a man has to do is sit around in a tavern, but I have to work day and night. But that's all right. Let them put me in jail. Then we'll see who'll do the work around here."

"Shut up!" Tuma thundered and threw a boot at her. She left with a whimper, but Tini sat up in bed. "What if I have to go before the district court? That would be the end. If I tell them, then Lois will beat me to death." She leapt out of bed, smoothed her hair down with trembling hands. She had to see people, to talk to people. Her head couldn't stand any more of this; she was having strange and terrible thoughts.

She went over to the Würbls. "Hello, Anna! I just came to see if you all were still alive."

“Oh, yes, we're alive all right—if you can call this a life.” Then the story of the murder was recounted in the kitchen for the hundredth time. “The young lady is still not well. I'm just amazed that she survived it at all.”

“How did the old lady look—under the pillows and all,” Tini asked with some hesitation.

“Jesus! You ought to have seen her! I'll never forget that as long as I live. Her eyes were wide open, her mouth all twisted like she was about to laugh.”

“I'd rather not think about it,” Tini said, her lips pale. “I think I'll just go...”

So she went back down and sat down at the entrance to the air well, combed her hair and watched as twilight climbed up the gray firewall. Along the row of windows in the apartment building gas lights began to flicker. Lots of people were coming and going. Dark figures were waiting down near the gateway and servant girls with their pitchers of beer came and went. The quiet was leaden and quiet submission overcame Tini. What good was struggling against it, she couldn't help from thinking about it and seeing it again and again! And now there was another thought the buzzed around in her brain: “If you, then Lois will beat you to death—and you **are** going to tell.” It was a circular pattern that played over and over in her mind.

Then someone walked past her and stopped. It was Lothar. He looked pale and out of sorts. He was about to say something, then turned away and climbed the stairs.

“That's that one! He's the one who's responsible for all this. He could have prevented it!” She was seized by the need to say all of that to him. It would make him sad, but he ought to know that he bore some of the responsibility. And, if she did tell him, then perhaps she wouldn't have to testify and to go to Lois. She heaved a powerful sigh.

Lothar sat at his writing desk, with a black-bordered letter in front of him. His old aunt's manager had written him that the baroness had died suddenly of a heart attack and had not suffered at the end. Lothar thought through this news. The death of his old aunt there in the solitude of the forest brought him the feeling of sad quietude.

She was right after all, his wise old aunt, to take refuge in a quiet corner of the world and to go about her day-to-day business. She had loved life right up til the end; she had always known what she should do with the estate. A beautiful and noble art.

[/Chapter 34]

When Tini stepped quietly into the room, he only said: “Oh, it's you,” then fell back into rumination while the girl sat down without a word and stared at him.

What his old aunt, amid her fir trees, in her quiet way had accomplished was really significant work. But what had he done? He also had thought that he had found his true calling and had been quite enthusiastic about it, just as one is enthusiastic when one has found one's soul after thirty years of unprofitable searching and then thinks that one has finally found it. Oh God! What great things he thought he could do, things so great that one lifetime would not suffice to accomplish them. And now? Now it seemed like foolishness, a misunderstanding, vulgarity, nothing. Nothing! “Hell!” he muttered and slammed his fist on the table.

Tini twitched her shoulders. She was very pale. Her hands were folded in her lap, her eyelids half closed as if tired.

“Well, Tinikins. You were right!” Lothar cried. He was so keyed up that he didn't know what he was saying. But he perceived the presence of this beautiful quiet creature to be a blessing. He knelt down in front of her. “What good are we lame, cold thinkers? All we do is make words. But you still have an irresistible strength. It calms and satisfies.”

“What **are** you doing? Please get up,” Tini objected, and opened her eyes wide as if she were afraid of something. But Lothar embraced her. “Look, I could learn a lot from you—if I still am capable of learning. You, and others like you, you are real people, you can still be beautiful and strong—and even happy—if you want to.”

Tini pulled away from him gruffly.

He laughed. “That's all right, Tinikins. I don't know what kind of mood I'm in today, but I have to get it off my chest, even if you don't understand me. Now I know ... we fools, we puppets of the police; we are the sick ones, yet we think we can help you who are healthy, and we can't begin to understand you.”

“Then don't laugh like that,” Tini said quietly.

“Are you afraid of something?”

“Yes.”

“It's all right. It's all over. It's just that things went so awful for me today. You were there just when I needed you. I wish we were somewhere far away by ourselves. I would split logs and carry water, you could cook. We wouldn't think about anything—we'd just live. Could you do that?”

“You're certainly talking funny today.”

Only now did Lothar notice that the girl looked like she was in distress.

“What's wrong with you, Tini. Is something bothering you?”

“Oh, it's nothing.” She covered her eyes with her hand. “There was something I wanted to ask you, that's why I came. But you're a bit strange today, I'm not sure what it is.”

“Go ahead and ask me anyway.”

Tini turned away and looked out the window. “I mean, it's just a question, I mean...sometimes you have to do what someone else wants you to do, right?”

“Yes, certainly. When two people belong together, then one of them pulls the other along.”

Tini stood up impatiently, went to the window, crossed her arms over her breast and looked out. “But then the one who has to obey can't be at fault.”

“Yes, he can,” Lothar answered slowly, as if searching for the meaning behind Tini's words. “Sure. If two people are so closely tied, then one shares in the other's guilt.”

Tini turned towards him, terribly pale, and beating the wall with her balled fist: “No, no, no! I'm not guilty. I was forced to do it. He didn't tell me what he was going to do; otherwise, I wouldn't have gone along, but as it was....”

“What are you saying? Girl, I don't understand you.”

“Jesus! He can't even understand me!” She took a few angry steps towards the

door, but then she stopped and her voice sounded angry as she said: "I couldn't help what I was doing. He just didn't tell me that he was going to kill her." She spread out her arms and collapsed in front of the sofa, burying her face in the pillows. "Nothing can help me now!" She whimpered softly and rolled her head around on the pillows.

Now Lothar understood, understood that something profound and terrible was taking place....

"You still don't understand," Tini complained again, in a gentle, melodious voice.

Lothar stepped up to her, laid his hand on her head: "Yes, Tini, I do understand."

What could he do, what could he say? He was overcome with sympathy so painful that it felt like a physical illness.

"Why are you telling me this, Tini?" he finally asked.

"Because I can't bear to keep it to myself any longer."

"Be quiet. We need to think about this. He ordered you, you had to do it, isn't that right?"

"I had to."

"You loved him so much that you were willing to do it for him, for Chawar."

Tini bridled at that: "Who told you that it was Chawar. I didn't say it."

"It was he or someone else."

Tini wiped her tear-moistened hair away from her eyes and straightened up. "It's still not too late," she said and went to the mirror to put up her braids.

"Tini, what are you going to do?" Lothar asked.

She looked at him and smiled in a way both pitying and scornful.

"Tini," Lothar continued, "how can I help you?"

"You, sir, you can't help me at all," she said calmly, bent over his hand, kissed it, and went outside.

As Tini went out the main gate, the street was covered in heavy fog that dripped onto the roofs. All around doors were being noisily shut. Tini walked down the Wiedner-Hauptstrasse and then onto the grounds along the Wien. The bushes on both sides of the narrow path were twisted by the wind and wetted by the fog. Tini was not afraid. It was as if she were dreaming: hurrying without a clearly defined goal, the fog-shrouded city with its mournful sounds and sad figures, and an uneasy feeling of mourning in her heart over something she did not clearly understand, but was certain that it must happen. She hesitated at the Karolinen Bridge as if indecisive, but then turned on to Invalidenstrasse and walked towards the Danube. A train passed over a viaduct casting a deafening noise into the rustling and whispering darkness; then its whistle sounded—long, shrill, tortured. Tini felt like screaming along with it just as loud and plaintively. But her hurried form scurried on through the fog. By now she had reached the banks of the Danube. The river was as black as ink. The lanterns on the Sophien Bridge cast crenelated strips of light on the water; they seemed to swim but made no progress. A moist gurgling rose enticingly from it. The smell of a marsh filled the air. At the Erdberger Landing Tini veered away from the water and strayed into small, narrow alleyways until she reached a deserted

construction site, a gray expanse of spiderweb in the blackness of the night. There was a house with a red lantern above the door. Tini leaned on a large rock and looked at the houses steadfastly. Then suddenly she shivered, wrapped herself more tightly in her shawl, crossed the square and headed towards the house.

She went through a glass door into a dark hall, from which she could see into the next room. A lady sat dozing behind a polished counter. Her face was white with powder, her hair piled high on her head. Her red-rimmed eyelids closed, then suddenly opened again, and her gray, dull eyes searched about. Voices could be heard from behind the red screen that divided the room.

As Tini came through the door, the lady at the counter startled and asked: "What's your business here?"

"Lois, the one with red hair. Is he here?" Tini responded, drawing her shawl over her face.

The woman raised her painted eyebrows disdainfully as if she wanted to say: "I care nothing about seeing you." Then she disappeared behind the screen.

Tini listened as Lois, thick-tongued said: "Me? What is it then?"

Shortly after that he appeared, a bit tipsy, his cap pushed back. He stood before Tini and observed her through squinted eyes.

"Tini?" he asked softly.

"Yes, Lois."

"What do you want? Is something the matter?"

"Yes there is."

Until then he had slouched like a drunkard, but now he stood up stiffly.

"Out with it then," he whispered.

"I just wanted you to know—Lois, I can't stand it any longer. I'm going to tell."

"You're a fool."

"I'm being called in tomorrow. I'm going to tell. I just wanted you to know."

Chawar muttered something under his breath that Tini couldn't understand. Then he added a bit louder: "Come on now. You're acting foolish. Stay here with us and I'll give you your part of the money later."

"No. No, Lois. I don't want to. I only came so you would know."

Chawar fished for something in his pocket, then withdrew his hand and stood there indecisively.

Tini leaned against the wall and stared at him. In the low light of the hall she couldn't see his face. Light from the room next door illuminated only half of his red head and his jaw with its thick, curly red hair that moved as if he were chewing.

Suddenly Chawar laughed out loud—then turned around, whistling to himself.

Tini stood there for a moment longer, then she went outside. She breathed in the night air in one draught so deep that she thought her chest was going to burst. Then she began moving forward again, more hastily now. Once in a while she stopped and listened...then onward through the fog-bound gray city, through the moist veil that covered everything and allowed objects to be seen only when they were directly in front of one, dark and wet. Now she had reached the river. She did not see it, but heard the alluring gurgling of the waves. There in the fog something was moving along the river

bank. Tini knew immediately what it was. She hastened further along. She had no clear thoughts and it wasn't even anxiety or fear that she felt, only tension. "Will I be able to get away from him? If I can get as far as the Weissgerber,⁸³ then it will be all right."

The unpaved path was slippery and she was not making much progress; then too, she had to keep looking around constantly. Then suddenly she ran into someone. She knew immediately who it was. "He took Erdbergerstrasse and Wassergasse to get ahead of me," she thought mechanically.

"Lois! Please don't hurt me," she blurted. She heard him breathing heavily. Then he seized her as if with iron tongs.

"I won't do it!" Tini groaned and tried to defend herself. She fought with rage and excitement. They struggled with one another then fell to the ground.

Tini heard the gurgling of the water, the gasping of the man who was forcing her down. Something heavy came down on her head and weakened her limbs; a long, shrill sound filled her ears; she saw flashes of light, then darkness and icy cold.

The struggle with Lois lasted for a while, but whenever she struck at him, he ducked and managed to pull her along with him: his cold fingers grabbed her and cut off her breath. His panting became a roar, then a bright, loud ringing. Around her everything began to sparkle, and she was aware of curved, yellow rays that fluttered around her—and seemed stark to her eyes. She shut her eyes. Quiet and exhaustion overcame her. The noise in her ears continued as loud as ever. It was as if she was hearing Lothar speak with his soft, comforting voice—until everything turned dark and still.

XXII./[Chapter 35]

Up until now Amalie Remder had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Social Democratic doctrines. Or at least so she thought. When she went from house to house giving piano lessons, or when she was taking care of her meager household finances, scraping together enough money to pay off her father's creditors, she frequently thought about the large role that she would be asked to play in the future socialist state. The doctrine of civic and political equality for women and men was what first brought her close to the Party. When she began to associate with members of *The Future* and even to write articles for it herself and to attend their meetings, then she felt better able to endure the hardships of her life. Then the serious and bitter girl could even feel joyful and happy. She often told herself that devotion to a great idea works all sorts of wonders.

Since that nocturnal conversation with Klumpf, however, that idea had lost a great deal of its power. No amount of hope in the future could get her through the many hours of the day that she had to sit beside grumpy and talentless pupils and beat out the tempo of a Mozart sonata with her hand on her knee, or make it more pleasant to ask the washing lady if she could wait a bit to be paid. She could have just cried out of disgust and repugnancy. What use was the Great Cause of the state of the future to her? She didn't think about it any more, she thought of only one thing, of Klumpf. Her hopes for the future, her convictions and her faith were all incorporated in him. Now that she had lost him, both hope and conviction were gone. Since that night the somewhat arrogant

and confident disciple of Lassalle had become nothing more than an oppressed and embittered piano teacher.

When the disaster crashed down upon her friends who put out *The Future*, and all of them fell away, and the Great Cause they had been working on seemed headed for a miserable end, then Amalie's first thought was that Klumpf—unhappy, disillusioned, and abandoned—might return to her. Should she go see him and comfort him? And yet.... like all poor, lonely girls who have had to stand on the side-lines all their lives, Amalie too had developed a kind of stubborn, high-strung pride. She could not go to Klumpf. But she had to do something for him, had to show him what a kind heart he had spurned. It would have been easier for her to offer her life for him than to go to Panigelgasse⁸⁴ to see him. This resolution at least added a bit of painful momentum to her otherwise dreary life.

Thus, with the elevated feeling that something uncommon was about to begin, she climbed the stairs to the mezzanine of house number 10 on Panigelgasse and rang the doorbell at the neatly polished door of Frau Rosenthal, the boxkeeper at the theater.

Frau Rosenthal opened the door. She was a small woman with a sickly, withered face and she wore a black bonnet with red ribbons.

“Is Fräulein Marie Hempel at home?” Amalie asked with a rough voice.

“Yes,” said the woman, inclining her head slightly to the side and looking at the visitor suspiciously. “She's at home all right, but—who may I say is calling?”

“That won't be necessary,” Amalie said, arrogantly brushing her way past the little woman. Then she knocked lightly on the first door she saw and stepped in without waiting to be asked.

Mietzi's blond form lay in a red wingback chair in front of the fireplace. She was dressed in her red petticoat with blue silk stockings on her feet. She was asleep.

When Amalie entered the room Mietzi woke up with a start and looked amazed like a child just waking from sleep. She did not understand how this tall, pale woman with the man's hat had gotten in. But then she recognized her as the piano teacher who lived on the fourth floor. What on earth could she want?

Amalie laid her music folder against a wall, pushed the netting on her hat aside and attempted a smile—her twisted, angry smile. “Good day, Fräulein,” she said with a voice made deeper by her excitement. “Please excuse me for barging in without an announcement. Perhaps you know me. We used to live in the same apartment building. Amalie Remder. I have something important to tell you—that's why I've come.”

“Well, it certainly must be,” Mietzi countered. She blushed and her face revealed unmistakable signs of fear.

“So, permit me to take a seat then,” Amalie continued. She sat down, took a deep breath, arched her eyebrows together til they formed one dark line above her eyes. Now that she was supposed to speak, it was more difficult that she had thought it would be.

“It is a disconcerting assignment,” she began with difficulty, “that I must acquit myself of here. But perhaps it will not seem quite so strange to you. No doubt you know, Fräulein, Dr. Klumpf who works in the editorial offices on the fourth floor of our building.” She paused and stared tensely and angrily at Mietzi.

A bemused twitching flashed through Mietzi's facial features. She nodded

vigorously. "Of course! The nice Herr Doktor with the black beard. He sometimes brought things for my father to copy."

"That's the one," Amalie interrupted her sternly. "In that case you may also know that he is interested in you."

"What? That Herr Doktor?"

"Yes, indeed. He is."

"But I don't know him at all. He has never spoken to me." Mietzi was no longer embarrassed. She giggled. "Did he tell you that?" She leaned over towards Amalie so as to speak in that secretive tone that girls use when they're talking about a "gentleman."

Amalie remained serious and stiff. "He knows you, as I have already said. Please listen to me quietly for a moment, Fräulein. I said before that my task might seem a bit strange. If you will allow me to say what I have to say clearly, we'll be able to clear up this business quickly."

Now Mietzi too became serious. Moreover, she was offended by the lady's haughty manner. Crossing her arms over her breast, she leaned back in her chair.

"He did expressly say that he loves you, mind you," Amalie continued. She attempted to say this as calmly and straightforwardly as possible.

When she heard this Mietzi raised her eyebrows a bit.

"The events of the past few days have caused him to worry about you. He would very much like to offer you protection. In short, he is offering you his hand."

"His hand? You mean he wants to marry me?" Mietzi could not restrain herself from giggling childishly once again.

"My dear child, I do not know," Amalie retorted, "whether you can fully appreciate what it means to be loved by a man like that."

"I don't even know him," Mietzi repeated.

"Even if you had only seen him occasionally, you would surely have been convinced that you could put your fate into no better hands."

"But I've never even said a word to him."

"And you will admit, dear child, that your fortunes right now are in a somewhat precarious condition, and that it is an in.... incomprehensible bit of good luck for a young woman in your situation for a well-respected, a great man to be ready to cover your, er... inadequacies with his splendid name."

Amalie's tone of voice was no longer quite so icy; she was spurred on by a degree of bitterness. Amalie stood up and began to pace the room in large steps.

Mietzi said nothing. She stuck tight to her chair and stared teary-eyed at the dark form with its pale, stern face. She was afraid. Should she call Frau Rosenthal?

"Well?" Amalie finally asked and stopped walking.

"Well what?" Mietzi asked and looked up shyly.

"What response are you going to give him?"

"But I don't even know him."

Amalie's lips distorted a bit. "I am simply amazed that you find it so hard to give an answer. I am assuming, of course, that a girl in your situation would seize on such an advantageous opportunity without hesitation to...er..." Amalie paused to think for a moment, "return to the ranks of normal society. That would of course be the determining

factor in your case.”

Mietzi didn't understand it all completely, but it sounded harsh and disrespectful, and her eyes filled with tears. “I don't know what you want from me, Fräulein. I can't just marry any man who happens to run into me in the hall. Perhaps he ought to come himself, but.... oh, I don't know. But not like this....”

Amalie laughed bitterly, her cheeks now colored by a red glow. “You probably do not have a good grasp of the situation, Fräulein.” These last words were so strangely forceful that Mietzi thought: “Maybe I should get out of here, she might do something to me.” “Not a good grasp,” Amalie repeated. “If a man has the misfortune to fall in love with a girl of your sort, then it is undeserved good fortune for her. But to go courting such a girl—that he could not bring himself to do. Girls like that have thrown away the right—our right—to be courted by a man. They are either taken by someone or not.” Now Amalie spoke faster and all her disdain and spleen came pouring out. “Or are you no longer even capable of understanding and feeling what it means for a man to protect you with his unblemished and honorable name?”

That was too much. These words felt like lashes of a whip to Mietzi. She trembled and cried out of anger and fear. “No—no!” she said. “I don't like him, this Doktor of yours. Please go now, otherwise I'll call Frau Rosenthal.”

But Amalie had not yet said all she wanted to say. “Of course. Shallow persons such as yourself cannot understand how low a man must fall who has the misfortune of loving you; you are no longer even aware of your own shame.”

Mietzi made a dash for the door, grabbed the handle, her face covered with tears. “Please go. Even if I am a shallow person and don't like your Doktor, who can make me? Marry him yourself! I don't want him.” And opening the door, she yelled: “Frau Rosenthal! Please come here. This lady....”

Amalie had suddenly gotten calm. She picked up her music folder and said arrogantly: “Oh, you have nothing to worry about, I'm going. We have nothing more to say to one another.” She walked past Mietzi without looking at her and went down the stairs.

Frau Rosenthal stood in the hallway with Toni, Mietzi's sister. They both rushed up to Mietzi full of curiosity. “Who **was** that?” Toni asked. “What did she want with you? But you look a sight! Get yourself together, quick. The Count will be here any minute. I saw him walking down the Hauptstrasse. And he can't see you like this.”

But Mietzi shut the door on her sister and said: “No, he can go right back. I don't want to see him today.” And she went and curled up in her chair, her face planted on her drawn-up knees and cried.

Amalie walked slowly back to her lodgings in an exalted mood. It had felt good to throw all her hate and scorn right into the girl's face. Now there could be nothing between Klumpf and the girl, and her thoughts turned again to her warm, pitying love for the poor, great man. Now that the world was crashing down around him, he needed her strong self-sacrificing love—that he would have to feel it.

Then there he was on the corner of the Wiedner-Hauptstrasse standing in front of her. He looked sick. With his hands behind his back, his head bowed down, he walked slowly lost in deep thought.

“Hello!” Amalie cried.

He looked up, smiled distractedly and stopped. “Hello, dear friend.” Then he tipped his hat and was about to continue on.

“Doktor, Amalie said, “I have something to tell you.”

“What is it, dear friend? I'll accompany you for a bit.”

“I was—there.”

“Oh!”

“Well, Doktor, here is something that will tear you away from your thoughts. Things that grow in the swamp prefer to stay there and they resist being transplanted onto a mountain.” No sooner had she said this than she regretted it. The analogy seemed tasteless and trite. She continued a bit more subdued: “She wants to stay where and what she is. Believe me, nothing more can be done.”

Nothing in Klumpf's troubled face gave the slightest hint that he was bothered by what he had just heard. Pensive and silent he walked along beside Amalie.

“Doktor,” she began again, “Have I caused you pain? Are you angry with me?”

“How could I be angry with you?” he said with a friendly look towards Amalie.

“You have always been very kind to me. And then, so much has been taken from me—everything, in fact. I no longer pay attention to painful things. I thank you.” He stopped and extended his hand to Amalie, held her hand in his for a moment and when Amalie looked into his eyes she blushed and her severe face suddenly looked happy and expectant.

“We probably won't see each other again,” Klumpf continued. “I'm going away. There's nothing left for me to do here. Farewell, dear friend.” He released her hand, waved goodbye and walked away.

Amalie lingered on the spot for a while, motionless and white as a sheet. Passers-by looked back at her. “Something is wrong with that lady,” one woman said. Then she came out of it. No! She wasn't going to let people see. No one, absolutely no one was going to know it. And she hurried home in big strides.

XXIII./[Chapter 36]

Fräulein Clementine had survived a serious illness. She sat in her living room, her face more sickly and pale than usual, awaiting Doktor Beckrath.

She was now well-to-do and independent; but ever since that night of terror she could never free herself from torturous feelings of fear, nor could she derive any pleasure from her improved circumstances. She believed that she was surrounded by dangers, she felt alone and unprotected. The doorbell rang. It was the broker—her only friend.

Freshly shaved, perfumed and smiling, Doktor Beckrath entered the room. “Good day, madam. Thank God we have made some progress. Thank God!”

Clementine wanly stretched both hands towards him. “Oh, Herr Doktor, how good of you to come. Please have a seat. I can only be calm when you are with me.”

“Well, well,” Beckrath said and tried to put a softer expression on his red businessman's face. “You're a tad nervous. Of course. But rest assured, madam, that our affairs are in good order.”

“Thank you, Doktor, thank you! You are my white knight. If it weren't for you....” And Clementine cried. “I'm a poor, rejected gentlewoman surrounded by bad people!”

Beckrath was not comfortable with this kind of emotional outburst. “You're just nervous, that's it,” he murmured and thought about something else.

“I asked you once already, Doktor,” Clementine continued to complain: “to give notice to all the renters here, **all** of them. My late stepmother, in her wisdom, used to say: “All we have in this building is rabble.” I got rid of the two maids. And the new girl, I don't know, somehow I don't trust her either. Thank God the caretaker and his family have left, they were such terrible people.”

“You can rely on me, madam. Everything will be done as you wish. The police have already shut down the Social Democrats' workshop. Funny how it turned out though: they too were acting a bit like the police. Ha-ha! The Zweigelds are leaving. Their daughter's engagement has been broken off. There are a lot of rumors that one can't make much sense of. No matter, we'll take care of the rest of them in short order. Take courage, madam. What's past is past. Why dwell on it? You've got to live your life, right? And I have to think, madam, that your own life has been made considerably easier than others.” He rubbed his hands together and giggled dryly.

Clementine was not in a mood to be comforted. “What good is that? I am without protection and support. What kind of a life is that? If we had had a man to protect us back then, who knows? But living alone like this, I tell you, Doktor, I'm dying of fright. I cannot live like this.”

Beckrath listened attentively. “I'm not quite sure what you mean, madam,” he added.

Clementine raised her eyebrows impatiently. “Surely you haven't forgotten, Doktor? Back a while...”

“What would that be, madam?”

“Jesus, Doktor! How can you not understand me!” Clementine returned to her sharp tone of earlier. “Back then you said.... Don't you know what I mean?”

“Oh, that! If that's what you mean.” Beckrath jumped up and made a bow. “My feelings towards you remain unchanged, they have not changed.”

“Well, then, Doktor, take me!” Her pale face transformed into a submissive smile. She stretched out her thin hands and repeated: “Take me!” Beckrath hesitated. He didn't know exactly how he was supposed to take her. Finally he clasped one of her outstretched hands and pressed it against his scruffy mustache. Then he sat down very contented.

“So, madam, that was stupid of me. You can be assured. You are now under a man's protection. We could have had it earlier, but it's still not too late.”

“Yes, Doktor,” Clementine said, still very melancholy. “I do feel more at ease. The terrible things I've been through have given me better insight into something that has slumbered in my heart the whole time.” The sound of her own voice and the words she spoke were themselves a relief to her. She wanted to add some charming words to an offer of engagement that was practically graceless.

“No doubt,” Beckrath confirmed.

“You know, Doktor, today is the first time since that terrible night that I have felt just a bit happy.”

“Oh! I as well. You know, of course, how long this idea has filled my thoughts.”

“Yes, Doktor, you are faithful!”

“Yes, indeed. I told you I would be.”

“That gives me my strength back. I almost feel like going out for a bit.”

“How about a little drive through the Prater?”

“Oh, no! I was just reading in a special edition of the newspaper that there's a trial going on the District Court. It's that young Gerstengresser boy from the third floor, you know.”

“No, madam, I cannot allow it. You are still too weak for that. It would be upsetting for you.”

“Come on now, Doktor!” Clementine was able to make her words sound a bit flirtatious. “At this point I'm still a free woman. You still have to do what I want you to, right? So take me there. It's only a matter of a petty theft. What should be so stimulating about that? It will probably be just the thing I need. Doktor Benze, the prosecutor, is speaking today. An attractive fellow. Let's go see how he looks now that his plans to marry have fallen apart.”

“You wish is my command, madam. I'll get the coach,” Beckrath said submissively.

* * *

Pale afternoon light suffused the district courtroom as Beckrath and Clementine stepped inside. The witnesses had just been heard. There were almost no spectators there. Herr Gerstengresser sat on one of the benches in the back and seemed shocked and uncomprehending; next to him sat Elsa, pale as death, her eyelids reddened, her eyes focussed directly on the slender form sitting before the presiding judge, his back towards Elsa. She wished she could have seen Leopold's face because she would have tried to give him courage by looking into his eyes. He sat a bit folded up in himself, his head bent low. His shirt collar was gray and wrinkled, his new coat tattered; his beautiful brown hair that he and Elsa were so proud of was tangled and uncombed. Oh God! Poor Leopold, for whom things could never be too elegant!

The court reporter read the record of proceedings aloud quickly and monotonously. The presiding judge and the lay assessors⁸⁵ sat there sleepily playing with their pencils. The prosecutor at his table sat with his nose in a stack of documents and was paying no attention to what was going on. The lay assessors stared numbly at the court reporter and tried to pay attention, fighting against sleep, which hung over the assembly like a leaden veil.

Doktor Benze, at his table, also had papers spread out in front of him, and was reading with his head propped on his hand. In his thoughts he was miles away from this dismal courtroom. Before him lay an ivory-colored sheet of note paper covered with lines in a genteel hand, and he kept reading it over and over.

“Dear Franz! I am writing to make it clear to you that I did not act in haste or anger.

No indeed! I have thought about the whole thing very carefully and I believe that we

must go our separate ways. I belong to Papa and I will always cleave to him.

You will find another woman who will bring more honor to your name. It will be better that way. Don't you think so?

If it's all over between us, let us part from one another as two who once loved each other, but have parted precisely for the sake of that love. Because that is how it is. God knows it is so. Farewell, Franz.

—Gisela”

Just a short time ago he had the rare good fortune to find a love that was pure. And now? All was lost. Poor once more! “Parted precisely for the sake of that love” she had written. The love was still there. She belonged to him—and yet! Benze bowed his head, bowed it low enough that he could have touched the letter with his lips. Tears constricted his throat. Who was to blame for this? The frivolous city of Vienna in which he could never fully feel at home. And it dragged everything pure and holy into the dirt. It was Vienna itself that robbed him of his girl. Oh, this Vienna!

The court reporter fell silent. Now it was the prosecutor's turn to speak. He rose from his seat, arched his eyebrows revealing his boredom as if displeased that his work with his papers had been interrupted; then he began to speak, quickly and with a quiet voice, as if it were some trivial matter that he hoped to dispose of as fast as possible. He reminded those present that a young salesman, one Leopold Gerstengresser, age nineteen years, employed at the shop of a Herr Punzendorf, had purloined silk shawls valued at 300 florins and had sold them. My task, the prosecutor said, was a simple one since the accused had made a complete confession. He only wished to point out that recently such crimes—mostly perpetrated by young men, mostly from respectable families, who had been tempted by a need for entertainment and by frivolity—were on the increase; and for that reason the court must bring all of its severity to bear on such a case. An aggravating circumstance was the fact that the accused had been employed; as a mitigating circumstance he pointed out that the young man had no previous record. Happy to have completed his statement, he sat down and started flipping through his documents.

Now it was time for the defense to speak.

Doktor Benze stood up, very straight, his chest thrust forward, but despite this posture his face still bore an agitated, nervous look and his voice wavered as he began to speak.

He laid out the fact of the theft plain and simple. Since the defendant had already confessed, it seemed the only task remaining for the defense was to point out mitigating circumstances. But only such circumstances could be admitted which might show convincingly that the guilty person had not acted out of habit or from an innate drive towards criminality; and that society could reasonably hope that a lighter sentence might set this troubled soul back on the right path. The prosecutor himself had already

mentioned that mitigating circumstances were present. The witnesses, above all, Herr Punzendorf himself, Leopold Gerstengresser's boss, had testified that the accused had always been a quiet, orderly young man, a good son and brother, a dutiful employee—until he was seized by the feverish and fateful desire for pleasure. That indeed was the cause of his guilt and his misfortune.

Up until now Benze's voice had been toned down and hoarse, but now he paused, shook his hair away from his forehead and stood up even straighter. When he continued his statement, his voice now took on a sharp, metallic tone.

“And yet, on the other hand, there are mitigating circumstances under which the crime was committed that were not merely seductive, but actually compelled him to this crime. These are forces that exercise such a strong influence on people that a certain type of behavior, blameworthy as it may be, is indeed understandable, reasonable, and indeed, even necessary. I say 'necessary' because the chain of events, and even more the atmosphere in which a man lives—that is, everything that he sees and hears, the things he learns to respect and admire—must have a very strong influence on a young person's spirit, so that what he does seems to flow naturally from the pre-conditions. And so we hesitate to lay all the responsibility at the feet of the person who commits the crime. And so, members of the panel, what was a mitigating circumstance must be seen as an exonerating factor.”

/[Chapter 37]

At these words the prosecutor looked up and smiled as at a child's game. The presiding judge looked at one of the lay assessors and yawned. He had no use for these defense attorneys who always want to show what they can do and draw out the simplest things to great length.

“Let us, members of the panel,” Benze continued, “let us take a careful look at the developmental stages of this particular crime. Leopold Gerstengresser grew up just like most boys in lower middle-class Vienna. His parents provided a home, but there were no luxuries. There were enough funds to provide him with something of an education and to place him in the respectable position of salesman in Herr Punzendorf's business. We know that in conditions such as those a young man's life is serious and full of toil. It's a struggle to carve out a bit of happiness for oneself. But, members of the panel, picture a young man who has the aptitude, but who also shares a bit of the hot-temperedness and sanguine approach to life that he shares with his countrymen—picture him in the fetid atmosphere of a large city where everyone rushes about looking for pleasure. He sees his surroundings, his parents, his friends, his neighbors—all of them are simply out for pleasure. Never does he hear anyone offer praise or encouragement for simple devotion to duty. Work and a career are only paths to moments of pleasure, and the shorter the path, the better. And if he looks toward those classes above him—who are supposed to be models for him and who inspire him with respect and admiration—with them too pleasure is the most important thing in life. Gentlemen of the panel, do you believe that such a young man will be able to withstand the contagion? And why should he stand on the sidelines. Why should he even think about leading a life of seriousness and self-

denial when no one else does? The true calling of the Viennese is to make life pleasant and fun—at all costs. That is the message that he hears on every street corner, at home, in school, and that he hears from childhood on. Anyone who is poor, or sad, or serious is not respected, is, in fact, ridiculous.”

“The prosecution has told us how the accused and the witness Marie Hempel were united in a quest for life's pleasures. Oh, but they did nothing out of the ordinary! Go ask anyone in the tenements of this imperial city; in every apartment building you will find several of these relationships based on fun-loving. Young realists such as these boldly and naively seize upon anything that is merry, that promises pleasure as if it were their right, as if that was how it was supposed to be. Marie Hempel was very demanding. The accused was afraid he would lose his girlfriend if someone could offer her more. These young realists understand each other very well. A lover who does not fulfill every expectation will be abandoned. But Marie Hempel seemed like something that Gerstengresser expected of life. He often heard about men who did the most daring things just to take part in the festival atmosphere of Vienna. If they were successful, then they were praised and admired. If they were not successful, then they ended up in a courtroom like this and their colleagues shrugged their shoulders sympathetically, they pitied him. The poor boy—he didn't know how to stay on his feet on life's dance floor. That's all there was to it. Now, Gerstengresser himself resorted to such means. Believe me, gentlemen, did he have any idea of the consequences his actions? Man is the product of his environment.”

“Have a look for yourselves, members of the panel, at this apartment building where Gerstengresser lived. Is it not just a perfect slice of the larger world we live in? On the first floor lived a caretaker whose daughter had formed an alliance with a felon and under his influence became an accomplice to theft and even murder—this case is later to be heard in his courtroom. Up on the fourth floor you'll find Marie Hempel, who, after she had brought misfortune upon Gerstengresser, calmly turned her attentions to a richer and more fortunate lover. Then above them, Gerstengresser. Throughout these small, squalid apartments you will find a heated and boundless appetite for intoxicating pleasures. Finally, on the fifth floor are the offices of a Social Democratic newspaper, which attempts to organize this impetuous cry for good living. Is it not also infected with the same disease that penetrates all social levels of society and threatens to exterminate that which is the most beautiful and pure? And I ask you, gentlemen, can you hold the accused completely responsible for what he did? Can you hold him solely responsible for it? Or isn't there an accomplice who cannot be brought before the court, who bears perhaps the greatest responsibility here?”

He had finished and he now sat down. He hardly knew himself exactly what he had said. It probably was a bit confused and hardly convincing. And yet he felt that he had spoken from the heart and given voice to some portion of the bitterness that burdened him. And this brought a sigh of relief.

Now the prosecutor rose to respond to the defense. He smiled ironically and good-naturedly, and lovingly stroked his gray mutton-chops with his hand.

“I would not have believed,” he began, “that I would find it necessary to speak on

this topic again. The issue, honestly, is nothing that requires any further explanations from me. The fact that the temptations of a big city can be dangerous for a young man may be of interest when it comes to sentencing, but it can hardly affect the way the panel will vote. No! Because as the defense was speaking, it dawned on me that we're not dealing with acquittal for the accused, Leopold Gerstengresser, but rather for a different person who is to be tried in his stead. It was not Gerstengresser sitting in the dock, but rather Vienna, the city itself! My close relationship to the latter will justify my adding a few words in her defense!"

"Unfortunately, we have to agree with the defense that there is a lot of frivolity in our fair city. Indeed, there is far too much! I'm afraid the defense could find many such buildings in our city. From my long years of practice I could point to the existence of apartment buildings that are far worse than this one. But against its being the perfect example I will have to offer a caveat. Every large city has apartment buildings just like this one. They are not a Viennese specialty!"

Up to now his tone had been cheerful, even humorous, but now he became serious and paternal.

"At the same time, I don't want to misinterpret the words used by the defense. I understand quite well what he said about a 'bad' apartment building and about a climate of pleasure-seeking. Yes, gentlemen, Vienna **is** a happy city. But the wind that blows here is not disease-bearing. We Viennese work just as hard as anyone else. And our work is no less successful because we do it in good spirits. A determined and bold grasp of the lighter sides of life is what makes Vienna strong. We are proud that we are always ready to laugh and laugh loudly; we are proud that our sensibilities are flexible and can put aside disturbing things—if they cannot be avoided—by consoling ourselves with things brighter and more beautiful. None of that poisons a young man's mind. Rather, it refreshes the spirit. We are proud of our work, even if we do put on our party clothes more readily than other people do. And when we see something not right, are we more permissive because we not only condemn it, but also have some sympathy? No, no, we are not! The merry city of Vienna has a large heart and a pure one, for otherwise, cheerfulness could not thrive here. And if the air in Vienna is detrimental to anyone, then it's not the air that is at fault, because strong and healthy lungs thrive on it. The defense, I suggest to you, does not really understand Vienna. But you, gentlemen of the panel, by rendering a verdict of guilty for the defendant, you will thereby acquit our beloved Vienna."

The old gentleman had gotten hot from speaking. The audience applauded despite warnings from the presiding judge.

Benze hadn't listened. What did it matter to him? It was just words! Whether they were said by the prosecution or by himself—he disliked all of it. And it's all in vain! People are simply not capable of putting the turmoil inside themselves into words. Understanding is impossible! And Gisela thought him cruel, narrow, harsh and egotistical—incapable of meriting her love. And just a few words were responsible for it all; and they now stood between her and him. Benze picked up a sheet of paper and began to write.

The judicial panel withdrew. He paid no attention—he was writing—then he tore

up the letter. No, it was simply not possible for him to say it. Oh, God, oh, God! This world is so wretched. He leaned back in his chair dispiritedly.

Outside it was snowing. People sitting on benches laughed and talked with each other. Leopold sat there motionless, sunk into himself.

“What an incomprehensible sadness fills this courtroom. Oh, if only I were already out of here!” Benze said to himself and rocked his head as if he were in pain.

The panel of judges appeared and pronounced judgment: “Guilty.”

Benze then spoke mechanically, saying those things that were in the best interest of his client. Then the panel withdrew again. Benze was so impatient that he could hardly stand it. He drummed on the table loudly with his fingers. Finally the thing was about to end! The panel sentenced Leopold Gerstengresser to one year jail time with harsher treatment.⁸⁶ Benze hurriedly packed up his documents and rushed outdoors.

* * *

The snow fell in large, soundless flakes. Everywhere—on awnings, on fences, on stairways—white puffs of snow built up, giving the street a clean and festive look. And people went about without umbrellas, raised their faces to the snow flakes, and smiled. The snow intoxicated the children, who dug into the white stuff with their hands and filled the streets with their laughter.

Benze too enjoyed the wet coolness of the snow that fell softly on him. Internally he was now calmer and more lucid. It seemed that everything, even the most unpleasant, could be overcome. It was his pain itself that made him begin to feel strong again; he was proud of this pain. The prosecutor had been right: he did not understand this Vienna with its disorderly softness and he never would understand it! He stood up straight. The love he felt, his happiness was being torn apart by the diamond-like hardness of his legal principles. He took comfort from the fact that his lot was such a tragic one.

When he turned onto the Wiedner-Hauptstrasse he suddenly ran into Gisela; she was covered with snowflakes, her cheeks rosy, her forehead covered with wet curls. In her hand she held a book of devotions. She had just come from evening prayer at the Paulaner Church. Benze wanted to step to the side shyly to avoid her, but she had already seen him and greeted him with the energetic nod of Viennese women and smiled softly and sadly. Benze tipped his hat and hurried by—as if ashamed....

It was getting dark and lamps were being lit. It had stopped snowing. The city, clad in a white veil, looked wonderfully changed. On street corners, at the entrances to houses, and in front of taverns people gathered, chatted and laughed, their cheeks reddened, snowflakes in their hair—all of them charmed and cheered by the new dress that old Vienna had put on.

XXIV./[Chapter 38]

It was four o'clock in the afternoon. Lippsen paid a visit to Lothar von Brückmann. He did not take off his overly large felt hat and thrust his hands deep in the

pockets of his overcoat.

“Hello. Ah—you're packing up then?”

“That's about all that's left to do,” Lothar replied, bent over his suitcase into which had had carefully laid his books.

Lippsen walked back and forth in the room, whistling to himself. Suddenly he stopped, rolled his eyes and wiggled his beard and mustache. “No—listen! They did a good job of it, quickly and cleverly. I respect them for it!”

“Quickly?” Lothar looked up. He was pale. His red mustache, which he normally loved to comb smooth and straight, hung down sadly at the corners, his eyes looked tense. “I don't know about 'quickly'.”

Lippsen laughed. “Yes, a good job and quickly done. Good because Klumpf, Branisch, Rotter, you and I got off scot-free. And you see, that's what bothers me. It was the right thing, but still it bothers me.”

“Speed plays no part in it, however. It is in slowness, deliberateness that we see the actual humanity of the police. The victim is tormented with little unpleasantnesses until it's over, whatever the case may be—it could even be the death penalty—and the victim perceives it as relief.” Lothar said all of this with a big stack of books under his arm. He then angrily threw the books into the suitcase with a thud and lay down in an armchair.

“Yes,” Lippsen said and sat down next to Lothar, “in times like these you have the opportunity to make all sort of observations. For example, did you notice how completely we have given up the cause—immediately—after the first conflict?”

“What were we supposed to do?”

“Hmm. Have you noticed how the others—Satzinger, Tost, and the comrades—are strutting around? For them the procedures were a triumph. They don't look like they have given up anything. No, for them this seems like just the beginning.”

“Well, my God! That's not so difficult!”

“I just mean that it's different with us. Their martyrdom and ours...”

“I know. Where are you going with this?”

“I'm just confirming it, that's all.”

“Fine! We all know that, we're the fools. The police were in on it in the person of Frau Fliege, who gave us a place to work. Then there was Herr Oberwimmer, who wrote the articles and we thought that was our cause, the cause that would save all of mankind. Oh yes, I do understand the tremendous humor of the thing! Tost and Satzinger are serious men. But that we—certainly not the worst of humanity—threw everything we had into it, and we weren't even serious; it was an easy game for the police; and we're not even guilty, just—dumb! My God! If 'confirming' something would help, then let it happen. Or can you think of something that would make it look better for us?”

“Me? No. Do you think I feel any better about the thing? I was just saying that, if we look at the naked reality of it, perhaps we could laugh about it too.”

“No thanks. I'm not interested in that.”

“I came to that realization too. It just won't work.”

They both said nothing more for a while and stared at the floor.

“Klumpf isn't as far along we are,” Lippsen began again finally. “He managed to

hold on to a sense of martyrdom. You know he's speaking today at the Drei Engel.”⁸⁷

Lothar shrugged his shoulders. “It makes no difference now. All that's left for us is to look for some sort of position to take. It's a pretty wretched business—but those are the consequences.”

“Oho! You seem to have come through it pretty well!” Lippsen looked at Lothar from the side and his gnome-like face twitched. “To change the subject.... They found the daughter of the caretaker where you live, in the river, murdered.”

“Yes, I heard that.”

“Pangs of conscience and murder? Do the newspapers really print such colorful stuff?”

Lothar laughed and in his laughter one could hear the painful emotional state that he was in. “To be sure, it is my lot to serve the state security police. I gave the necessary tips to the investigating judge and handed over one of our charity cases. It was Chawar. Did you know? He murdered the old woman. The girl was his lover. And you know she was an accomplice, don't you? Oh, but no, you don't understand that, do you? I don't either. We have lost any sense that two people could be so closely united. Well, the girl showed me how things were; then she went to warn her lover that she was going to betray him, and to allowed herself to be killed by him. Can you make any sense of it? Man, can you see how how that kind of violence is really divine? That is will—fate, the force of nature. These are things as strange and weird as ghosts to us who lack it. She **had** to do it because he was her lover. Can you comprehend the logic of it? Well, she came to me in desperation. And me, my God, all I had to offer her was words and thoughts about society's guilt, and bad luck—that's all. In the face of this most human of realities I was completely helpless. At that moment I did love the girl. Yes, old man, I loved her as we weaklings, who are cast off by Nature, love strength and the incomprehensible. She attached herself to me; she wanted to love me so that she could free herself from the other man; but she couldn't—the poor thing. How she despised me on that last day when she left to go have herself killed by Lois.” He began to speak more softly, as if telling a secret: “I saw her there at the emergency station by the river. They punished her poor, beautiful body to try to revive her. She lay on the bench as if she were tired, half covered by her wet hair, her face calm and sleepy—as it occasionally looked in life. Look, Lippsen, I couldn't even understand this prostitute, the little thief. She sought protection from me and I loved her, but it was a love based on our senseless, sickly carnality. And I—such a fool—wanted to save people with a bit of rhetoric! They too would have walked away with a disdainful smile, preferring to be killed!”

“You're all worked up,” Lippsen said. “Let me feel your hand. Yes, you've got a fever. But your condition is completely normal, by the way. I'm having more problems with Klumpf. Branisch will choke on his suppressed drive to take action. He's already talking about Australia. But you, old man, spit it all out, let me hear all of this complicated poison.”

“Nonsense, what good does talking do! We've done enough talking. That was our vice. Now just look at Oberwimmer—he's a mystery too. You shake hands with him in the morning and in the evening, you feel that you're hand in glove with him and then....”

“He's a mystery of human baseness that's not so hard to figure out—not now, not

in hindsight. I went to school with him. He was always a handsome, attractive and shallow boy; very democratic and enthusiastic about social reform, even when he was reading Cornelius Nepos.⁸⁸ But likewise he had too strong a predilection for expensive and beautiful things—pretty women, good clothes, a clean and comfortable place to live, ivy-covered houses, a family life! And at the same time he was hopelessly naïve in money matters and that brings you into contact with the people in authority. The police can use a handsome revolutionary who comes and goes in Social Democratic circles. You can see how it fits together. Did you ever see inside his house? That would explain a lot. You can wade through a lot of filth to get a pretty, clean home like that. You see, it all happened very naturally.”

“Naturally? Do you think it's natural that we had to sacrifice our existence, our very souls so that fellow could live in comfortable domesticity?”

“And his whole plan,” Lothar continued, “getting permission to publish the newspaper, his articles, his enthusiasm, his friendship with Tost, it's all so demonic that it hardly fits with his pretty-boy face.”

“Yes, but the plan wasn't his idea either,” Lippsen said. “Anyway, when he wrote those articles and when he talked to us, he was genuinely enthusiastic. He was really into it all. But afterwards he sent his notes to the proper authorities.”

“What a rascal! He didn't even believe in the authorities he was working for. Everything by half measures—a dilettante.”

“Exactly. Here's a newspaper from Geneva called *Der arme Conrad*.⁸⁹ It has an article on the matter. They claim we were all informers, of course. It will be hard to convince people otherwise.”

“I wish we had been informers: at least we would have known what we were doing—not the way it is now! Klumpf has to make a statement, that much is certain. This is his evening to lecture, he can't miss it—and we can't leave him in the lurch....”

Lippsen had stood up and laid a heavy hand on Lothar's shoulder, and his strange face became very serious. “Listen, friend, all of this has had a powerful effect on you. It will keep on working within you and will erase everything that was there before. I'm curious to see what will replace it. But all that fermentation will produce something solid.”

Lothar shook his head. “Nonsense. The principles that we filled ourselves with in order to puff up our deflated egos will all disappear at the first pin-prick. How about you?”

“Me? I'm going to toughen up.”

/[Chapter 39]

The auditorium of the Drei Engel on Burggasse was filled to overflowing. Many of those present chose to wait outside until the thing got started. And so they stood on the street in thick fog, they smoked and chatted—workers, craftsmen, students, journalists. Occasionally one of the groups would get too loud and there was laughter and hooting, which ensured the slow-paced and bored intervention of the police: “Please do not

obstruct traffic. Please do not loiter on the street.” Now and again there was a bit of excitement. People rushed to the door and formed a row to allow men to get into the hall. “Who was that?” someone whispered. “That was Brückmann, the other was Lippsen.” Then a coach stopped in front of Drei Engel. A man in a broad felt hat jumped out and hurried into the building. “That’s Klumpf!” it was said, and people pushed to get in.

Every month there was an evening lecture in the Drei Engel for the edification of working people. Klumpf’s presentations had always enjoyed good attendance. The people themselves did not know exactly what it was that attracted them. His language was too academic and elevated for his audience. Most of them could not follow him, yet they liked to listen to him. The things he said sounded beautiful and solemn; it went to their heads—you felt that even if you couldn’t quite understand it, the man was speaking of important things. The workers rather liked being addressed in such beautiful and elegant terms.

Tonight Klumpf was supposed to give a talk on “friendship in history.” He picked his way through the crowded tables; he looked around for some of his friends. There they sat, not far from the speaker’s podium—Rotter, Lothar, Lippsen and Branisch—sitting silently and observing the audience. They wanted to move back when Klumpf arrived, but he said: “It’s probably high time we got started,” and stepped on the speaker’s platform.

Earlier there had been a lot of noise in the hall, now it became quiet. Only back at the exits was there a bit of disturbance. Someone yelled something; other people tried to calm him down and show him out.

Klumpf organized his notes without looking up. Then he raised his head, looked out over the audience as if astonished, as if he were expecting something, as if he were giving those present time to greet him with applause as usual. But when there was only silence, he raised his eyes a bit and twisted his lips into the gentle, pitying smile that was peculiarly his.

He began to speak, at first softly and apprehensively: “Ladies and gentlemen—my friends! We have been getting together every month to edify ourselves mutually on significant and consolatory events which the history of the human spirit and customs affords us....”

Someone laughed. It was a loud, insulting Ha-ha.

Klumpf continued on a bit louder and more deliberately. “Enjoying things together unites us as much as does our common suffering and the work we do together. It creates mutual understanding. What is friendship if not profound, reliable, and affectionate understanding?”

These last words were greeted by increased mumbling and a bit of giggling. Right in front of Klumpf sat a short portly man with a merry face. Leaning back casually in his chair, a cigar stuck in a corner of his mouth, with the center tube⁹⁰ of his Virginia cigar behind his ear, he looked at Klumpf mischievously and smiling and said: “Thanks a lot! That’s a wonderful kind of friendship.”

The troublemaker who had created the disturbance at the door now had come back to the door and shouted. People laughed. “Let him speak!” someone shouted. It was Racher, from the furthest corner of the hall. Klumpf continued on calmly as if he didn’t

hear the noise.

“A profound and sympathetic understanding of man by man creates friendship. But before I begin to show you the quiet but powerful effects that such a sacred collegium of understanding has had in mankind's history, I first wanted to speak openly and frankly a bit about us, in hopes that just such a bond has begun to be knit between us—as one speaks among friends.”

“We know all about that. It's friendship with the police,” one workman said perkily.

“Why continue to put on an act?” said a rough and angry voice. Racher stood at the other end of the hall, red in the face. He kept talking, but in his excitement he couldn't make his clumsy tongue obey.

“Yes, down with him. There's nothing more he can say,” cried others. The grumbling and giggling soon turned into loud hooting, laughter and yelling.

Klumpf stared out absent-mindedly over the crowd that was yelling at him in an uproar. The chief of police stepped up to him and said something. Klumpf just nodded.

“He's consulting with the police,” said the short worker and laughed heartily. “Just look—Commissioner Branisch has already gotten up.”

Branisch had indeed gotten up. Taller by a head than everyone else, he stood there with so much restrained rage in his dark, resolute face that he seemed ready to go for someone's jugular.

Then the chief of police announced that he was canceling the event, and that if order was not maintained, he would have the hall cleared.

But the noise only increased, that incomprehensible sound of large masses of humanity, which become intoxicated by their own noise. People banged on the table with beer glasses and stamped the floor with their heels, but most of them just gleefully submitted to the noise without resentment and with laughing faces. Only a handful of workers who had gathered around Racher screamed with rage and raised clenched fists towards Klumpf. Klumpf's friends, pale and tense, surrounded the speakers platform.

The police chief stepped up to them: “You must leave, gentlemen; Herr Doktor Klumpf, please come down. You understand.”

Klumpf winced, turned red, and spreading out his arms, he cried out to the crowd: “You don't want to listen to me, comrades, but just think what you're doing to yourselves.”

“Not another word from that snitch,” Racher replied.

“No, no!” people said. “Send them all away.” “We have had enough,” and the pounding, yelling and hissing began anew. Suddenly the stub of a cigar went flying by Klumpf's head. The short worker had thrown it. There was a shout of jubilation. There it was—just what all of them had been hoping for.

“The dogs!” Rotter muttered under his teeth and held tighter to his gnarled walking stick. Klumpf dropped his arms and his face took on an expression of deep revulsion. He got off the platform.

Throwing cigar stubs proved to be popular; they now fell like black hail on the little group on the dais.

Someone suddenly yelled: “The police!” “The present-day police and coming to

the rescue of the police of the future,” added the little man from before.

“Let's go,” Klumpf said. Followed by his friends, he strode through the crowd. People laughed as they went by, or they called them names, but they did step aside to let them pass. They were already quite near the door—the *via dolorosa* was almost at an end—when Racher stepped up to Klumpf. Klumpf stopped and looked at him expectantly.

It became quiet all around. Racher wanted to say something, he stuttered, and then finally managed to say in a quavering voice: “Where is Kehlmann?”

“He is some place where he can be more effective for his cause than we can be for ours,” Klumpf answered and for the first time his voice trembled with bit of anger. Then he shrugged his shoulders slightly and smiled.

“Spy!” Racher growled, bent forward and spit in Klumpf's face.

A security policeman was about to go after Racher, but Branisch had already grabbed him. He lifted him up and threw him over the heads of those closest about. In the hubbub that now ensued Klumpf remained standing at the same spot, white as a sheet, with his arms hanging down. The stern, indignant expression on his face had vanished. He looked like someone only attuned to a throbbing physical pain in his body.

Lothar gave him a push. “Let's go. There's no reason to stay here.”

“Yes, let's go,” Klumpf said.

Next to the exit stood a tall, unkempt workman. As Klumpf passed by him, he smiled awkwardly and asked in a bass voice: “So you're Klumpf, right?”

Lothar was about to push the man aside, but the man took hold of Klumpf's hand and kissed it.

“What **are** you doing!” Klumpf muttered and withdrew his hand as if he were disgusted.

Now they were outside and they walked along together silently through the fog that covered everything and made the whole world appear like an empty gray void. At the corner of Neubaugasse they shook hands and separated.

Lothar accompanied Klumpf a bit farther.

“Now what?” Klumpf said and stopped.

“Time to get out of here,” Lothar said.

“Yes, time to leave, of course. They have no use for us here; nor we for them—we the knowledgeable.”

“We 'knowledgeable!'” A sense of bitterness arose in Lothar. “I fear that we knowledgeable have not understood, and they have a lot to relearn. Life is a bit different than we thought. Perhaps there's some other corner of the world where one could learn it.”

Klumpf shrugged his shoulders: “You can try!”

