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THE DEFENDERS

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BY FRANZ HOELLERING

Translated from the German by **LUDWIG LEWISOHN**

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THE DEFENDERS

AT MIDDAY the lights were on. The patch of sky visible from the coffeehouse hung black and moist between the roofs. Snow began to blow and rain to fall at the same time. The people in the street lowered their heads, hunched their shoulders, and slipped by close to the plate-glass windows. The flag at the gate of the ministry snapped in the sharp air. For days now, a cold wind had been blowing down from the Wiener Forest into the Inner City. Policemen shivered at their corners. Taxi drivers played cards in empty cabs; no business, even with the vile weather. And Christmas only a few days off. No one would have known it. Christmas, 1933! There was not a trace of merriment or holiday excitement in the air. But then who could remember a merry Christmas except the older people? The last one lay twenty years in the past, in the year '13, before the war.

Herr Otto the headwaiter remembered standing in tails and black tie beside the buffet. Behind it brunette Fraulein Mitzi was preparing portions of sugar and passing the waiters their metal checks. Otto ran his right hand through the change in the shabby leather bag at his hip as he always did when he was not busy. His fingers could distinguish every coin. It was part of his business. Nor did any touch of carelessness or disorder escape him. The personnel were not what they used to be. They took **no**

pride in their jobs. Except Fraulein Mitzi. She was a real discovery.

Herr Otto turned his eyes from the street and looked appraisingly over the two rooms of the cafe: the small old-fashioned one in front, and the large one, beyond, that had been renovated and now seemed too modern to suit him. It was early yet for the afternoon guests; the morning crowd had already gone. Only a few poor devils whose morning coffee had to see them through until evening or who were waiting for an acquaintance to bail them out of the cafe still sat at the tables. The headwaiter sighed. There were also guests—what could one do?—to whom he gave credit. Mentally he counted up all the unpaid slips in his wallet. Almost five hundred schillings. In the last week the amount had risen again. High time he collected some of it. He ought really to make a beginning with Dr. Sonnenschein, who owed more than anyone. But it was a cross. Dr. Sonnenschein was one of the old guard.

Ah yes, the old guard. The *crtme de la crime* of Vienna. Writers and theatrical people, radical architects and painters, Bohemians and their patrons . . . From all over the Monarchy curiosity-mongers had come to eye the famous guests. Those were the days. Then they used to fight until six in the morning over a poem or a novel. Now they all had double chins or bald heads and talked nothing but politics, and even that without the old fire. In the chess room there were not two new players who could compare with the old ones.

"What are you thinking so hard about, Herr Otto?" asked Fraulein Mitzi.

The headwaiter, starting out of his reminiscences, replied: "About the times, Fraulein Mitzi. Believe me, a coffeehouse is a great school. By watching the guests I can see how life goes uphill and downhill. Mostly down"

"Yes, it's all right for you. You can talk with the guests and listen to them. Back here it isn't so interesting."

"It's not what it used to be, Fraulein Mitzi. Now take that

plump little gentleman there by the window eating boiled eggs. That's Dr. Sonnenschein, one of our most faithful customers. Whether you believe it or not he was our first war hero in August 1914. He came back to the coffeehouse from the front on crutches with one arm in a plaster cast but with the gold medal for bravery on his chest. That was a sensation! And who knows anything about it today? Not a soul. He knows the whole encyclopedia by heart, but he hasn't got enough to eat. Yes, I tell you the times are to blame, the times and not the people."

"A Jew and he has the gold medal for bravery?" Fraulein Mitzi asked thoughtfully. "My brother,—you know, Maxl,—he says the Jews are cowards and that it's high time to chase them out of Austria, to Asia or Africa, I believe, where they come from."

"Palestine," corrected Herr Otto, but only in his mind. One name was as good as another and he made it a rule never to talk politics.

"One tea with cream, one raspberry soda, two black coffees." It was the new waiter.

Automatically Fraulein Mitzi reached for the metal checks. Then she had to stop and think what it was he wanted. This new one had a tone in his voice that made the words she heard day and night sound different, even new. Ordinarily she threw the metal checks on the waiters' trays but this one stretched out his hand. Better not touch his fingers any more. It was like an electric shock. And the look in his eyes confused her.

"You must have a nice family life at home," Herr Otto continued when the waiter had disappeared into the kitchen. "Your father a Social Democrat, your brother a Nazi. I can imagine. Wouldn't you like to marry, Fraulein Mitzi?"

"Why not? If the right one comes," the cashier answered ambiguously and bent quickly down to the sugar box. Herr Otto, who had turned a heartfelt look on her, met only his own face in the big mirror of the buffet. Luckily at this moment

the nervous, impatient voice of Dr. Sonnenschein came across the tables. Dutifully Otto moved into his routine.

"Soft-boiled eggs, one coffee, three crescents."

"One schilling eighty."

Dr. Sonnenschein looked straight ahead, not moving. A painful pause began. Then, still not looking up, he said in low, embarrassed tones, "Give me the change from ten schillings."

Herr Otto hesitated only a second before he laid eight schillings twenty on the table.

Dr. Sonnenschein rose abruptly, pushed aside the twenty groschen for a tip, pocketed the schillings and limped quickly away. Every time he borrowed money to play cards he was ashamed and he would leave the coffeehouse hurriedly, as if he had an objective. God knows what! All he did was limp around the block a few times. Where could he go?

The headwaiter took the sheaf of slips from his wallet and added ten schillings to the largest total. Looking up, he saw that the Councillor of the Legation Baron Wiesner of the Foreign Ministry had just come in through the revolving door. There was a real gentleman. They were getting more and more rare. That had been different too before the war, before the breaking-down of standards, as the Herr Deputy Hippmann liked to say.

Dr. Heinrich Baron Wiesner von Langenbruck was of medium height, slender, delicate rather than robust. He had a fine-cut face, clean-shaven; the first gray showed at the temples, and blue eyes merry by nature seemed secretly to contradict a serious and thoughtful bearing. He always made Herr Otto think of the General Staff officer who in the winter of 1918 had sat every day at the third window, for hours on end—until suddenly he failed to appear and the papers said he was dead. In despair over the lost war he had shot himself. There was really no similarity between the two, only that air of the cavalier and something else, something you couldn't see. Herr Otto could look right through most people. Well, they were just ordinary people

like himself. But the Baron — he had guessed his age as well over forty, but when he looked him up in the Gotha he was only thirty-seven. Overworked, perhaps — no wonder in these times.

Baron Wiesner sat down at the empty table that was reserved for the literary set he frequented in the coffeehouse. He pushed aside the noon editions of the papers. Knowing more than they were allowed to print, he was not interested in the devices the editors used to cover their prescribed ignorance. He threw aside the French and English papers too. He was in no mood to share the world sorrows of the great powers, and their lofty conception of the Central European situation was a thing he had to grapple with from day to day.

Wiesner leaned back in the comfortable upholstered seat, slowly drinking his coffee and enjoying the silence of the empty cafe. The atmosphere soothed him. He had first come here as a student and later on he had returned whenever he passed through Vienna. During his service abroad the coffeehouse had been part of his memory of home. Since his transfer to the Ministry, last spring, he had dropped in here regularly once or twice a week. Here he met a few people outside the circle of his work. No intimacy, and therefore no claims. Everybody served as everybody else's background.

Most of the afternoon guests who were now appearing one after the other he knew by sight. They had been coming, like this, every day, for years, out of habit, or boredom, or because they could not stand being alone with themselves. For many of them this senseless sitting around in the coffeehouse was the most agreeable feature of existence. But actually there was consolation in that. Reality, the great superpolitical status quo, was always able to parody the great phrases that men invent.

Not an hour ago the German Legation had abruptly broken off the negotiations by which the Austrian Government had hoped to prevent what amounted to the closing of the frontier. The masters in Berlin were putting pressure on the Vienna

Government by undermining the economy of Austria. The breaking-off of the negotiations was their answer, probably only their first answer, to the growing friendship between Vienna and Rome. Wiesner had been a member of a delegation that had been trying for months to save the winter tourist trade in the Alps. This hope was now gone. His chief, a bureaucrat of the purest type, had shrugged his shoulders. "Higher policy interferes . . ." Naturally, that relieved him of all responsibility. Wiesner had a feeling of disgust, not because his home was in the Alps and he could better realize the need and despair in the villages,—he was not easily given to pity,—but because there was always a "higher policy" to interfere with whatever reason or decency required. How long did he mean to participate in this nonsense?

But even in his disgust Wiesner did not hide from himself the fact that the failure of the negotiations was only a minor irritant and that the acute inner discomfort he suffered had its main origin in himself. Ever since he had known this child Maria he had been trying to escape from himself through work, as he had formerly tried to escape through excitement. He had not succeeded. And now that the exhausting negotiations were behind him and the holidays, with their emotional demands, were drawing near, he could no longer put off the moment when he would have to face himself. He would have to make a decision. He would have to be clear in his own mind as to what he wanted. He would have to know for himself, one way or the other. Yet even in such a moment of painful earnestness there arose that haunting mistrust. The older he got the more difficult it was to regard himself as really important.

In 1918, after four years at the front, he had come back outwardly mature, inwardly still the inexperienced youth. His civilian clothes he found too short and civil life remarkably strange. But he had slipped back into the groove cut out for him by birth, education, fortune and the special circumstances of his life. His career and his personal development since then had

been no more than an automatic progress with which his innermost self was not involved. Others wanted to build a new world or rebuild the old. He remained a spectator with a strong dislike for all the shouting. Whenever a goal seemed to show itself, and his heart beat faster and his thoughts leapt ahead, doubts, bred and matured by four years of war, of the humanity of human nature had choked his enthusiasm. There was the cry "No more war!" and he had been ready to add his voice to it until he perceived that it had no practical meaning. The reality he kept seeing with open eyes too obviously contradicted it. His work at the legations in London and Berlin had brought him extraordinary advancement, transfer into the Ministry, and offers of political power. He had not even considered them. He did not believe in the promise of a great future that was held out to him. He did not believe in any great future. It was just another of those popular and comforting myths that he had no need of. Life was eternally great and eternally small. Sometimes he reproached himself for his passivity and fought against it, but in the end the same question always faced him: If I had fallen at the Dnieper or the Piave, what then? No, the world did not need him. But even if it did need him, in politics a man who was unwilling to recognize the ultimate decisiveness of force was a fool. . . . An honourable private life. That was all that was left for him. The question was, Would he be able to give it meaning? Assuming responsibility for another person was like assuming responsibility for the whole world. Or so it would often seem to him. Thus, by a detour, he would be back at the very point he wanted to avoid. He sensed the inflated nature of this sort of thinking, but still he could not get rid of the dilemma.

The coffeehouse was coming to life. The revolving door admitted Elli Falk, a young actress who had been living for years with the critic Arnold Kafka. She walked past Wiesner as if she had not seen him. He had spent an evening with her in

May, before he met Maria, an evening that had ended prematurely. Elli had been very frank. She wanted to leave Kafka. She was perpetually on the lookout for a rich friend whom she could at the same time like, but when it came to the point she could never go through with it and she remained faithful to Kafka, whose writing brought in no regular income. They must be on bad terms again; otherwise Elli would have come to the table. Elli and Kafka belonged to the group of which Wiesner was only a casual member.

The first to sit down was Dr. Sonnenschein. Wiping the rain and snow from his face he pretended to have come from some work in the State Library. At short intervals the others followed. Anna Taul, sharp-tongued, scrawny, incessantly smoking heavy cigarettes that she got from the American consul, gave Sonnenschein, with whom for years she had got nowhere, an unsuccessful smile, the most motherly she could muster but still sharp enough. After her came Dr. Moritz Koller and his wife. He was small, black, vivid, a busy lawyer and fanatical bridge player. She was a slender racy person with a noble profile that did not go with her housewife's voice. As the most successful woman writer of the coffeehouse she annoyed her male colleagues with a pretentious modesty. Her books were elaborate historical biographies into which Sophie, a former member of the Communist Party, had escaped when the times became too difficult. She greeted Wiesner with the look he knew so well — half-abashed, half-defiant, as if the sight of him recalled to her the fact that she was over forty. Now the Socialist Deputy Hippmann, a physician sidetracked in politics, shoved himself through the revolving door. Tall, swaying, with drooping shoulders, he bowed elegiac greetings to right and left as he went toward the cloakroom.

"The worse his Party behaves, the more spiritual he looks," Anna Taul snapped, and gave everyone a start because Hansi Hippmann, the Deputy's high-bosomed wife, sailing straight to the table like a three-master with a following wind, arrived

almost in time to overhear. There was no joking with Hansi. She sat down, and her greetings were short. As always, the poor woman appeared to be a kind of embodied reproach. Actually, this character she involuntarily assumed was, they all knew, displeasing to her. She fought against it and suffered, but it was no use.

Roller began to fume, as he did every day, because the two brothers Schwarz, who with Sonnenschein made up his bridge four, were late again. Sophie, always on the hunt for information, drew Hippmann into a medical-political discussion. The actor Zettel (stage name for Hrdlitschka) sat down, sleepy-eyed as usual, silently nodding and almost unnoticed.

Suddenly Anna Taul crushed out her cigarette and hissed: "The Herr Individualist! We oughtn't to let him come to the table any more." Her remark was directed not at Zettel but at Arnold Kafka, sloppily elegant, very male, with a sensual mouth, still the "friend" of Elli, whose absence from the table everyone had noticed. Kafka never got up before two o'clock and was always accompanied by his slender, intelligent fox-terrier bitch. His first act in the cafe was to deposit her in the cloakroom.

Nobody answered Taul. Kafka came to the table, sat down without greeting anyone, and buried himself in papers and magazines. It took the arrival of Mali Schmal to liven up the conversation. She was a fashion editor with a stormy past and a perfect figure, and had got back from Paris only this morning, brimming with news. Mali's husband, Adolf Schmal, an insurance actuary, smiling beside her, didn't count; he was only tolerated at the table because of Mali; it was tacitly understood that he had better not try to speak.

Mali described the spring fashions. Hansi Hippmann sat rigid and silent, enemy of the conversation. When it grew too loud Kafka, irritated, looked up from his reading. He was throwing covert glances at Elli, who was sitting with Mia Kertesz, the wife of a film director, an elegant woman with

a bad reputation. Suddenly Schlesinger, a young journalist of the reactionary press, came to the table—everyone but Adolf Schmal knew he was having an affair with Mali. He squeezed himself in between Mali and Zettel, who was fast asleep.

The last to appear, with his soft creeping tread, was the unofficial head of the group, Paul Kainz, tall, emaciated, pale, with small rat's eyes in a monkish face. The older generation still quoted a line now and then from a volume of poems he had published as a young man, before the war. He wrote nothing but trash now, newspaper serials full of suspense, and managed to live on them, sometimes in splendour, sometimes in want. His real work, fragments of a cruel analysis of human behavior that left the soul without its props, was buried in the briefs of the senseless lawsuits that for fifteen years he had been carrying on against his former wife. She had been unfaithful to him during the war. Wiesner had lived with him for a few weeks in the trenches on the Isonzo when their lives had been worth nothing. Those weeks were still an unspoken bond between them; they had nothing else in common.

For Kainz the coffeehouse was a jungle where he crept, in mind and body, among the tables. It was a lie that he was mainly interested in money! He gave advice to young girls and unhappy women. They seemed to need his words so badly. Like Dr. Sonnenschein he spent so much time in the coffeehouse that it was difficult to imagine him outside. When these two were not playing chess or cards, as semiprofessionals, with inferior players who had money, with snobbish bank directors or manufacturers, they kept wandering from table to table, sitting half an hour here or there, with the Socialist students, the Zionist bank clerks, the actors and film jobbers, the journalists, the literary physicians or political lawyers, and always and again with the women—secretaries, students, married and divorced, widows and sweethearts with or without an avocation, who were stuck like raisins in the dough of this loud-soft, vivid-sleepy tumult, thick with fumes of coffee and de-

bate,, the coming and going of waiters and guests, the rustling of newspapers, and the hisses for silence.

Wiesner sat leaning back with half-closed eyes, smiling sometimes when a telling stroke of malice fell in the duel that now developed between the Government-owned Schlesinger and the radical Sonnenschein. His aloofness and his slightly ironic silence had long been accepted. He observed the comedy around him, the sympathies and antagonisms that covered real relationships but also revealed them, and all the while he was still pursuing his own thoughts. He had the gift of being intensely alone among people. When he was really alone he felt cornered by his own demands upon himself. Among people, at least, the comparison with his fellow men—and this comparison was natural—did not depress him. He could think more objectively in their midst. How biting Anna Taul would be if he were to say that he was in love with a nineteen-year-old girl and wanted to marry her! Sophie and Mali would take a match-making interest, and Kainz too, Kainz, especially. But later in private he would ask, "Why marry her at once?" Only Hippmann and Sonnenschein would be honestly pleased. Socialists were the respectable citizens nowadays. "Why marry?" Had he not asked himself the same question? It would be so simple to seduce Maria, that wakening girl, and put her behind him. But this time that was not the point.

A loud dispute at the buffet drew everyone's attention. The owner of the cafe was having one of his attacks of self-importance. He was always scolding his employees. Now he was even beginning to pick on that nice Fraulein Mitzi. He accused her of mixing up his checking system, of being careless, of handing out the wrong checks.

Otto hastened to the cashier's aid. He was the only one who could talk back to the owner. As soon as he caught sight of Otto, he stopped in the midst of his tirade and rushed back into his office. Fraulein Mitzi left too. She put on her coat and went out of the cafe through the small door next to the coat

room that led into the vestibule of the building. Had the owner fired her, Sophie asked excitedly. But Otto reassured her. "It's nothing. She wasn't feeling well and she's gone outside to get a breath of air."

Wind and rain swept against Fraulein Mitzi. She gripped her handbag tighter and peered cautiously around toward the cafe window. No one was there. She stepped to the curb and looked up and down the street, searching each doorway with her eyes, but her brother Maxl was not there either. A car swerved round the corner, splattering water—such recklessness.

"Maybe it was only my imagination because I'm always afraid of it," she thought. Visits during working hours were strictly forbidden. She had lost her last job because of Maxl—he had come so often, the last time full of liquor and noisy. But when he had sobered up he had promised never to do it again. Yesterday he had asked her for two schillings. He was always broke. No fault of his. Three years unemployed, ever since he had finished his apprenticeship. Others got their pay on Friday and took their girls out. He didn't have the few groschen for cigarettes. But didn't she have to be careful with her money? She already gave them more at home than it would cost her to live alone.

Back in the cafe the window panes had been running with water but she had seen him very distinctly, his hungry fanatical eyes staring at her. They had frightened her through and through. No, she hadn't been mistaken. He must be somewhere around. If he came back now she'd give him three schillings,—five, all she had,—if only he wouldn't compromise her again. The boss was already angry enough with her, and what would the new waiter think,—that hard-working, honest fellow,—that she should have such a ragged down-at--heels relative. She wasn't ashamed of Maxl, not at all; she had brought him up, he was even her favorite brother; but to a stranger everything looked different at first and men scare easily.

Fraulein Mitzi crossed the roadway and looked into the side street too, just to be sure. Maxl was a good boy. Had he remembered his promise at the last minute? He had stood at the window and stared at his hard-hearted sister—he envied her her job; he, a man, had none. It must have almost pulled him inside, out of the cold into the warmth, out of the dirt into the fine cafe. But he had held himself back and turned away. Now he was going back to Ottakring, the whole long way, wet to the skin and without a groschen in his pocket. Thinking of Maxl Fraulein Mitzi herself became furious at the whole world. But chasing out the Jews—that wouldn't help either. There were many more Christians even in the coffeehouse.

It was after three when the cashier returned to her place. Herr Otto sighed with relief. Her color was back and he could let Herr Fritz return to his own work. This was the hour when the cafe filled up, especially in such weather.

The two brothers Schwarz arrived at last. Koller leaped up with relief but rushed at them full of reproaches.

"Why does he have to play bridge every free minute?" Wiesner reflected and listened with only half an ear to Hippmann, who sooner or later always explained to him in a sad voice that Austria was lost if the Government antagonized the workers. Schlesinger wanted to know why labor did not subordinate itself during the emergency. Hippmann gave him a contemptuous look but did not argue, merely stopped speaking altogether and buried himself in his thoughts.

"Don't ask such stupid questions," said Hansi. Nobody dared quarrel with her.

Wiesner was sorry for Hippmann. His last speech, just before the Government had forbidden any public political activity on the pretext of a "general Christmas peace," had sounded very threatening. The workers were ready to risk their lives for their freedom. Perhaps. But were the leaders ready to advise such a course? It didn't ring true when Hippmann appealed to

force. All his life he had fought it. Could he now use force himself? Were pacifists able to lead a war? Wiesner, from his own experience, could realize and understand the conflict.

Anna Taul was saying that Mia Kertesz was a pervert and took cocaine. She wasn't fit company for Elli. Kafka — he had found another seat, with his papers, when the conversation got too lively — was a scoundrel. All he could do was read and sleep around. He didn't work at all any more and let himself be kept by Gerda Hilz, the rich corsetiere. Elli had no pride, to take what she did from Kafka. She ought to break with him, but she was too weak to do it alone. She needed to be helped. When it seemed as if the whole table was about to concern itself once and for all with Elli's fate, a fight at the next table diverted everyone's attention. So it would always go when something had to be decided.

"Growing anti-Semitism, Nazi *Putsch*, socialism ... all nonsense! Austria remains Austria!"¹ a thick man shouted, banging the table with his fist.

"Parliament eliminated, the High Court abolished, the freedom of the press destroyed, terrorist gangs on every corner ... all nonsense? Mere trifles? Austria remains Austria?" answered an excited fellow with a North German accent, one of the refugees who had been sitting since spring in the coffeehouse.

"The children are still Marxists," jeered the thick Viennese.

"Am I to be against medicine because quacks exist?" answered the German. Nervously, he ran his hand through his hair and walked quickly away into the back room.

"Right," whispered Hippmann to himself, while "Austria remains Austria" sent a loud laugh after the fleeing refugee.

Kainz was an unprepossessing figure but he turned and brought the scoffer to silence with a look in which there was something beautiful. Then he rose, bowed slightly, and moved cat-like in the direction of Elli and Mia Kertesz. There, he felt, was a conversation to his taste.

Schlesinger also left. He had to report to the paper every

afternoon at four o'clock and he was usually late. Kafka returned with his magazines. There was no quiet anywhere. Why didn't Anna Taul ever laugh? Wiesner compared them all with Maria — Elli, Mia Kertesz, Hilda in Langenbruck, and many others he knew and had known. Had all of them once had that magic innocence? Could it be kept, intact? Could he protect Maria? Could he lead her and watch over her? Or would he only despoil her? Were these honest questions or was he merely contemplating a new flight from himself? Or did he perhaps really mean it seriously, that he wanted to stand up against life?

Fraulein Mitzi had been benefited by the fresh air, and, still more, by the conviction that Maxl had gone home. She threw the metal checks on the trays with her old assurance and the new waiter could catch, each time, a hidden smile. She looked less and less often at the window by the entrance. Anyway it was dark now; she couldn't have seen Maxl even if he had been there, but he had gone home. He had kept his word. He was a good boy.

Suddenly in the midst of these pleasant and comforting thoughts Maxl returned, but not to the window outside. . . . He came into the cafe like a guest! Fraulein Mitzi didn't believe her eyes. He was not ragged and he was not in his shabby sweater. He had on a brand new black overcoat and a black 'bowler hat. How he took it off! Twice she had to look at him before she could believe that this fellow was really her brother. He had had a haircut. He walked to the cloakroom as if he were used to it. He wore a new suit and his trousers were sharply creased. He must have won in the lottery. He looked like one of the young bank clerks.

Fraulein Mitzi did not know whether to be happy or frightened. Why didn't he look at her? Did he want to surprise her? It wasn't natural, the way he stood there. He put the cloakroom ticket into his waistcoat pocket as if he did it every day. And what was that now? Instead of coming into the room he walked down

the little passage beside the cloakroom and disappeared behind the curtain which hid the small door into the vestibule. The folds of the curtain bellied outward in the draught. Was he going out again? The coat and the hat, was he leaving them behind? How in the world did he know there was a door behind that curtain and where it led to?

With a shock the answer to her questions came to Fraulein Mitzi. He knew it from herself. Every few days he had asked her casually and craftily and always only a little at a time about the layout of the coffeehouse, about entrances and exits, where the cloakroom was, how far away from the buffet, at what time most of the guests were there and where the boss's office was. Now she understood why. What he really wanted to know was hidden in all the questions he had asked her and she in her stupidity had told him everything. Now she could see how he had swindled her. But why, for God's sake? What was he up to? Fraulein Mitzi looked in despair at the red curtain, its folds hanging straight again, and from there to the revolving door. Her ears caught the orders, her hands worked. She must pull herself together or they would notice the anxiety that went through her whole body; they might even think, if something happened, that she had had something to do with it. An accomplice. But what was she thinking? What could happen? Maxl wasn't bad. There could be a perfectly good reason why he went outside again. But the hat and coat . . . Where had he got those new things? It hadn't been like him, the way he moved. Like an actor. Jesus, what was going to happen?

Maxl was sitting at that moment in an elegant sports roadster that sped across the Ring and out of the Inner City. Everything had gone well. If the bomb in the coat exploded as it should he would be made a group commander and get his pay every week. There would be an end everlasting to this job hunt. His eyes never left the precision watch the Germans

had given him. The time fuse of the bomb was set for exactly 3:45. If it worked, he was out of the woods. He would be somebody too.

"How long now?" asked the man at the wheel.

"In two minutes."

Maxl glanced admiringly at the fur-trimmed leather coat beside him. Then again he followed the jerks of the second hand. It couldn't get there fast enough for him. Finally, just as they reached the intersection near the General Hospital, the moment came.

"It's crashing," said Maxl almost devoutly. "Professor Pichler and the lieutenant will have some fun now."

The noise that broke out at 3:45 in the cloakroom of the cafe did not correspond to the crash that Maxl imagined. There was no detonation, only a brief rumbling that did not even carry so far as the back room. But the consequences were serious enough. The woman in the checkroom rushed out screaming, wreathed in a puff of thick smoke like one black breath from a locomotive.

After a moment of terrified, listening silence that held them rigid, the guests in the front room sprang from their seats. Sounds of the scraping of chairs and the scuffling of feet filled the air. From the end of the room rose hysterical shouts, shrill and confused, from those who saw every escape cut off as people fell back from the tables near the cloakroom. The excitement swept into the back room. There too the customers jumped up, and the noise of it came like thunder through the air. Then again there was dead silence until the cry of "Fire!" rang in every ear.

At this critical moment a young lieutenant standing near the cloakroom leaped up on one of the deserted tables and shouted commands in a loud voice that cut sharply through the growing tumult: "Quiet! Remain seated! Don't push! It is nothing. No danger." His fearlessness ran through the cafe as fear had

done before. It grew quiet and all eyes clung to the speaker. "There is no fire. There is not the slightest danger," he shouted once more.

They began to believe him. The smoke under the ceiling was thinning out; no more came; and in the cloakroom nothing moved. The panic ended as quickly as it had begun. The mass of guests, pressed together by fear, broke up again.

"Please, dear ladies, take your seats. As a favour to me," the lieutenant shouted and folded his hands, entreating them.

"He's very handsome," said Mia Kertesz to Elli in a loud voice, and the people around them laughed.

Herr Otto and a courageous guest who turned out to be the high-school professor Pichler, a member of the Fatherland Front, were the first to enter the cloakroom. Two iron coatracks had been overturned, a few coats torn. That seemed to be the extent of the damage. Everywhere lay scraps of paper, torn or whole, bearing great red swastikas. These calling cards left by the bomb-throwers quickly found their way into the rooms outside. A Nazi bomb! The explanation was at once soothing and disquieting. Similar outrages had already been perpetrated in the provinces. Each time the explosions seemed to be arranged so that loss of life was avoided, and the ensuing panics were never allowed to get out of hand. Nevertheless they had had an immense terrorizing effect. They demonstrated that the Nazis could throw real bombs if they wanted to. Thus they made it clear that they were still carrying on in the teeth of the decrees and that they had no intention of giving up. How would it all end?

The fire brigade arrived to answer the alarm turned in by the owner and left after a short inspection. Then the police took charge. The ticket was still attached, whole, to the lapel of a coat which had been blown to bits. The detectives, of course, knew that the owner of the coat had left the cafe long before. When the high functionary sent by the political police heard of the young officer who had stopped the panic, and wanted to talk to him, he too had disappeared.

The search for clues and the grilling of the employees, who were called one by one into the owner's office, produced no results. The cloakroom woman could not remember who had given her the coat. There were many black coats like that. On her way back from being questioned Fraulein Mitzi leaned suddenly against the mirror of the buffet and began to cry. "If you don't feel well, go home," said Herr Otto solicitously. She raised her head and stared at him in terror. "Not home," she whispered, "not home." The headwaiter's eyes opened wide now in fright, but he pulled himself together at once. She shouldn't see how much he had understood. But Fraulein Mitzi already knew. "Don't be frightened, I don't know a thing," said Herr Otto quickly and pressed her hand.

Of those at the table Arnold Kafka was the first to sit down. He didn't actually go on reading as if nothing had happened but at least he made plain his resistance to taking part in a mass experience even though the mass was merely the highly individualistic clientele of his coffeehouse. Zettel, who had slept through the explosion, had no idea what was going on and no one explained it right to him. Dr. Koller came around, in a state of furtive anxiety, to see whether Sophie was all right. When he found her no more excited than usual he flew into a rage at his bridge partners. The brothers Schwarz had thrown down the cards—and merely on account of the stupid Nazi bomb!—and Dr. Sonnenschein had disappeared to telephone the news to an evening paper instead of going on with the game. "Schlesinger will burst, for once he went to his office on time," said Anna Taul maliciously and Mali Schmal suppressed a retort. Her husband was explaining to her the construction of a bomb and she had to pretend to listen. "The police can't hold me. I have to go to the theatre, I have a rehearsal," Zettel suddenly shouted and started away. A moment later he was back, white as chalk. "Kafka, your dog!" he cried. Kafka let his paper sink slowly as if he had heard only his name. Then he jumped up.

The waiters, picking up the overturned coat-racks, had found the fox terrier with its chest crushed in. Kafka bent down and pressed his ear vainly into the short white hair. When he straightened up again the cynical expression had left his face. It was merely sad. With his left hand he searched his pockets for his ticket. Herr Otto brought him his coat and helped him into it. The crowd in the room made a passage for him. Kafka carried his dead dog in his arms if it were a child. When he passed very close to Elli her hand made a quick involuntary movement but she did not touch his arm. She only looked after the leash which hung down from the collar. The loop trailed in the dust on the floor.

The two rooms quickly went back to normal. New guests arriving could have no idea of what had happened a few minutes before. The conversations at the tables still lingered on the bombing and the chances of the National Socialist agitation, but not for long. What was the sense of racking your brain? The Austrian cart was upset anyhow. Nobody had a good word to say for the Government. The Heimwehr was not much better than the Nazis. The Social Democrats would stand for anything. And anyway, what happened in Austria would be decided in the capitals of the great powers. Why get excited? There was a good detective play at the Volkstheatre, Bassermann was excellent, there was a Mozart concert at the Music Hall, in the Stefanskeller they were serving a very fine muscatel, and you could always go to the Opera.

Baron Wiesner left the cafe with the Hippmanns and they walked part of the way together. The wind and rain had stopped. Passing under the street lamps Wiesner could see the despair of the Deputy, who suddenly whispered: "I don't know any way out. Blood will run. All our good sense hasn't helped. How beautiful the world could be, but the people don't understand it. Poor Europe." At the next corner they separated. "Merry Christmas," said Hansi Hippmann bitterly.

The tower clock on the Minorite Church struck half-past five. The two strokes fell across the empty wet square, then it was silent again. Wiesner heard his own steps on the pavement. How beautiful the world was! If the others didn't understand it, he knew it; and he had only to make a decision. To live with Maria, quiet summers in Langenbruck; to travel; to be alone with her among strange people, to walk late at night on a boulevard in Paris, to go up the Acropolis beside her, to lie on a beach and watch the sea ... Why was he still hesitating? Was he afraid of happiness?

The sentries at the entrance of the Ministry stood at attention. The bayonets on their rifles glinted cold and sharp.

IF Baron Wiesner felt pressure on him to put into action his half-formulated plans, this was due in part to the manager of his estate, a very peculiar man, half-farmer, half-soldier, whom he had himself appointed to the position. It was only eight years since the death of the old Baron, who all his life had managed the rich estate in the Tyrol, with its forests and fields, its great manor-house and administrative buildings, and had done it quite alone but with such stubborn and antiquated methods that he had almost brought Langenbruck under the auctioneer's hammer. Baron Wiesner, at the time his father died, was an attache in the Austrian Legation in London. He had been suddenly faced with the choice of selling his inheritance at a price far below its value or of investing the necessary funds to convert it into a modern money-making estate. The second course involved the risk of losing his liquid capital, but he had decided to take it — out of sentiment for Langenbruck, where he had passed his childhood and his furloughs during the war; out of the desire to have an interest apart from what he called his paper-and-banquet existence; and out of the not quite conscious need to show his dead father how an estate should be run. He had entrusted the task, which he felt to be beyond him, to the agronomist Werner Lilge. Lilge had gone through the war from the first day to the last as a noncommissioned officer in the Baron's regiment, steady

in battle, always dependable in that great murderous monotony. The absent owner knew that he could rely on Lilge, on his competence and on his character.

Lilge had not once disappointed him in all these years. It was, therefore, at first all the more disturbing to the Baron to receive on the morning before Christmas a letter from him that declared without preamble that because of political developments he could no longer be responsible for Langenbruck. He made an urgent request that the Herr Lieutenant come at once "if everything is not to go to pieces." Wiesner immediately asked for a leave of absence. The trip would not interfere with his plans: he was spending Christmas Eve with Professor Steiger and his daughter, but they were going the next day for a vacation to their hut in the mountains. He had resigned himself to spending a lonely New Year's Eve when the alarming letter arrived, necessitating a journey that would help him pass the time until Maria's return.

He found Langenbruck in good order—the manor house, the woodlots, the sawmill, the preparations for the spring sowing—but not the manager, who was determined to leave his post. The huge heavy dark-bearded man whose competence was widely respected in the countryside but whose unfriendly bearing made people shun him, waited until after the inspection of the estate to come to the reasons that had impelled him to write. His initial reserve and the unbending attitude he maintained throughout the interview ruffled the nerves of the Baron, who could not help regarding this journey more and more as a vacation.

"Herr Lieutenant, I can't go on," Lilge said in slow, carefully spaced words. "The workers on the estate are more stirred up every day. The priest, the burgomaster, the district administrator, the commander of the Heimwehr—everybody mixes in my affairs. From every quarter a different wind whistles. The workers in the saw mill are Social Democrats. The woodcutters are with the Heimwehr. The ones that are not political follow

the priest, who plays his own politics with them. How many are with the National Socialists, you don't know, but there are enough of them. At night sand is poured into the machines of the sawmill. I put sentries there but it doesn't help. The tyres of the trucks in the garage are slashed. In the middle of December I get an anonymous letter. If I don't fire the machinist the works will be blown up. Then comes a second letter. They threaten to burn the house over my head if I go on selling the wood to the Jewish traders. I made a complaint at the gendarmerie but they shrugged their shoulders, and the district administrator advised me to make some contribution to the Heimwehr. Then the Heimwehr will give us protection. As if that wasn't their job."

The manager saw the expressionless face of his employer and stopped talking. Wiesner let the pause grow before he asked, "Is that all?"

"It's enough, Herr Lieutenant," replied Lilge heavily. "With things going the way they are the estate will only run down again. I have good people everywhere now. What they think, what they hope for in this world or the next, doesn't concern me. I can't fire the machinist. It would be a loss to the estate and it would be unjust. He does his work and he has a wife and children. Should I sell the wood to the new paper works because the owner is a Heimwehr leader? Even if the traders pay a better price? The threatening letters come from the paper works. They want to intimidate me. For Christmas the owner of the paper works gave the Langenbruck Heimwehr new uniforms as a present. Why? At the miserly price he offers me for our good wood he could get back what it cost him a hundred times over. Every day something new to spoil my work."

Wiesner turned a look of relief upon his manager. He had expected worse. "Lilge, you shouldn't take all this so hard," he said in a conciliating tone. "There's unrest everywhere today. We must try to overcome it. You don't really want to give up!

We have only to figure out what is most profitable for the estate: Go on selling the wood to the Jews or sell it to the paper works? Risk an act of sabotage and damage we couldn't make up in years; or yield to the Heimwehr with less profit, perhaps with none, but also with no danger? To this I think the answer will not be difficult. It's too bad to lose the machinist. But I doubt whether we can keep him against such overwhelming odds. We'll soften the injustice to him, but nothing remains for us but to give way. Remember, Lilge, a skirmish to win time!"

"But it's not right," the manager began again, but the Baron did not let him speak.

"Man, you are an idealist," he said. "But an estate has to function. I don't want Langenbruck burned to the ground."

Through the long windows of the manor house the setting sun glittered. The trees in the park threw long dark-blue shadows on the snow. ". . . Langenbruck burned to the ground . . ." The words hung for a moment in the room, then the thin tick of the clock on the mantel grew louder again.

"I am not a fool, Herr Lieutenant," said Lilge, quietly. Then he burst out: "Making deals from morning till night. That sticks in my gullet. Dodging into corners, making fists in my pockets, taking injustice and inflicting it. No, Herr Lieutenant, I won't take any more lessons. Langenbruck has to function. Yes, I see that, but I can't help it function any more. I've tried everything and I've thought things over, backwards and forwards, ever since summer. I've poured enough water in my wine. Enough. Herr Lieutenant, I ask respectfully for my discharge."

The two men were close now, facing each other. The slender delicate nobleman and this tree of a man, hard, hairy, brown and heavy.

"You can't expect me to say 'Yes, agreed,'" answered the Baron. "I just can't imagine Langenbruck without you. I see how serious it is with you, but you must let me see for myself. That's the reason I came in such a hurry. Let me form my judgment

from my own observations. I must be back in Vienna on Twelfth Night. You can surely stand it until then?"

"Very well, Herr Lieutenant."

This conversation was followed by others, beginning with a long evening with the priest that left contradictory feelings on both sides. The priest, white-haired, tall and broad as a door, stamped furiously up and down the living room of the rectory, his long pipe in his mouth, recklessly spitting on the floor. His long black soutane had a greasy shine at the chest and along the lower sleeves. Under it the iron heels of his high boots beat time to his words. Wiesner sat on the dark shabby leather sofa, drank the fresh Tyrolean country wine and looked at the old man with silent pleasure. He saw the work-hardened hands that were more at home in the fields than with the paraphernalia of the Mass, their fingers flung out and up, almost touching the low ceiling of the room. He remembered a scene from his youth: the priest, holding in one hand the holy chalice, with the other gathering up his skirts like a woman, rushing through rain and mud to perform the last rites, with Seppl, the illegitimate son of his housekeeper, always a few steps behind him, out of breath, swinging the little death-bells.

The priest let himself go in wild accusations against Right and Left, high and low. His recipe for salvation was fear of God, and work. To the objection that there was too little work in the world, he replied by cursing machines and the Socialists who had invented them. For Lilge he had not a good word to say. "Your manager, he's possessed, Baron Heinrich," he said. "The man sees only the estate. He has no wife and no friends. His God is the balance sheet. He comes every Sunday to church but he listens to my sermons like a critic. He doesn't move. He always stares straight ahead at the crucifix above the altar, but his whole presence is a protest against my words. The peasants look at him secretly. They think he's queer. I have the feeling that one day he will explode."

When the clock rang for vespers Wiesner wanted to go, but he had to stay for the evening meal. His host drank a great deal of the dark red wine, and talked and talked of the old times and the errors of modernism. Everything was going wrong, human beings couldn't throw off original sin; instead of thinking of the Last Judgment they clung to the world. When they said good-bye, he was subdued and asked the Baron not to take his talk seriously. He knew he spoke more foolishness than sense, and he had had enough of the vast, endless futility of it all.

"Langenbruck needs a young priest," thought Wiesner as he lay down in the great bedroom in which his father had slept for fifty years. And in the rectory, the peasant priest, with a new pitcher of red wine beside him, thought, "I knew better where I stood with the old Baron." When the pitcher was empty the old man rose unsteadily, crossed himself, and prayed, "God, take me home soon."

Next day Baron Wiesner called on the Federal Administrator who had only recently been transferred to the district, and whom he did not yet know. As the richest landowner in the district and a member of one of the higher Ministries, the Baron was received by the new man with all the private and official politeness he could muster. He was a blond, pale man in the early forties with the cautious air of a functionary whose whole purpose is to execute blindly the orders of the Government. After two minutes Wiesner knew that he had to deal with a careerist who wanted to sound him out. Here in this bare provincial office sprang up the same mistrust that all Government officials in Vienna felt for each other, each thinking the other secretly with the opposition, Left or Right, and none knowing, in the uncertainty of the situation, who would be on top and to be reckoned with tomorrow.

It took only a few friendly words from Wiesner to lead the man into conversation. But this official, with his average face, his fleshy nose squeezed by , cheap pince-nez, remained cau-

tious. He excused himself in advance for any errors he might make by referring to his recent arrival in the district and then, in wide-ranging noncommittal talk, he expatiated on the poverty of the inhabitants, small mountain peasants who wrung their daily bread from the stony soil but never had any cash. Many of them lacked salt for their potatoes. Since Germany had closed the frontier to tourist traffic the winter-sports hotels and the small mountain inns stood empty. In former years the express trains had brought hordes of skiers daily, now everything was dead. Not only the Germans from the Reich stayed away but also the English and the Americans. They were afraid of the *Putsch* of which they heard so much talk.

"What is the feeling in the district?" Wiesner interrupted this description of facts that nobody denied.

The District Administrator hesitated. If he only knew where the sympathies of his influential visitor lay! "The feeling?" he repeated indecisively, and sighed. "Many say better an end with terror than terror without end. The National Socialists exploit the despair. Some who are against them would today rather surrender to Germany than suffer hunger any longer. The slogan of national unity is more effective than a diplomatic formula like independence guaranteed by the powers. The people ask: 'What does this independence consist of?' The demoralized among them answer bitterly: 'In restrictions and the loans we have to beg for: too little to live, too much to die.' And our new Italian friend everybody mistrusts. The Tyrolese know what their brothers south of the Brenner suffer."

The District Administrator leaned back like a bad actor impersonating an important man. He was wondering whether he had made the right impression without giving away his own opinions.

"And the Social Democrats?" asked Wiesner, coming closer, in a single move, to the object of his visit.

"They don't play any part," answered the official quickly, happy that he could say something that could not, as he as-

sumed, displease the Baron. "They don't count in my country district. They are intimidated. The Heimwehr has it easy with them."

"Any complaint against my machinist?" Wiesner's voice suddenly sounded tight and sharp.

"No, no charge," answered the Administrator, and added confidentially: "But he can't keep his mouth shut."

"My manager brought those threatening letters to you?"

"Yes. He thinks they came from the Heimwehr, but the Nazis could have sent them just as well."

"Did you investigate?"

"Everything's been done," lied the District Administrator. "Sorry, without success. I haven't the apparatus for such inquiries."

Wiesner knew the instructions of the Ministry of the Interior which favoured the Heimwehr. "I didn't come to reproach you," he said seriously, "but they threaten to burn Langenbruck. That's going a little too far."

"My office is at your disposal, Herr Baron," the District Administrator replied formally. His words did not sound very promising, even to himself, but he wanted to prove himself useful to the influential Baron. He leaned forward and continued in muffled tones. "You will excuse me if I allow myself to make a suggestion, Herr Councillor. It would be that you get in touch with the new district leader of the Heimwehr, Major Schrack."

"With whom?" Wiesner restrained his astonishment only with an effort.

"With Major Schrack, the lawyer, since yesterday the most powerful man in the district," answered the District Administrator. What had startled the Baron? Or was it something different that had come over him?

He received no explanation. Wiesner thanked him politely for his advice and information and left. It was a hasty departure. For one moment the official stood stilly full of doubt.

Had he made a misstep or not? Then he went to the window and, hidden behind the heavy curtains, watched the Baron send away his sleigh and walk slowly down the street. He waited until he was out of sight. Then he turned away hurriedly and — it couldn't do any harm — called Major Schrack on the telephone.

Wiesner walked slowly the long way back to Langenbruck. He took a path little used in winter that ran over snow-covered meadows and along the edges of wooded mountain slopes. Many times he sank up to his knees in the snow, but the exertion did not distract his thoughts. Major Schrack had turned up again and with him the whole war.

Wiesner had served almost the whole four years with him. In a hundred battles they had stood side by side. Schrack, the elder by twelve years, had been like a brother to the youth who had first presented himself on a marshy meadow, before the fall of Lemberg. Wiesner had looked up to his brave superior who never wavered before danger and did not despair when it seemed as if time were standing still and the war had no end. All night long, again and again, they used* to discuss the meaning of the world, the value of courage, the benefits of self-conquest. It was a clear, unspoiled relationship of mutual esteem, often with a stress of affection on the side of the Major. Until suddenly, after the unhappy battle of the Piave, he had asked for the transfer of his adjutant. Lieutenant Wiesner had taken formal leave of the Major near the ruins of the Casa, which two days before had stood so bright and friendly among the vineyards. Not a personal word had been spoken. Since then he had never seen Schrack again. Now it was all as near as yesterday.

Major Schrack commanded a group of light and heavy batteries near San Donna di Piave. They had dug in behind the Casa. Logs and earth thrown up gave slight cover from the flying shell splinters. The Major directed the fire; it was the adjutant's duty to regulate the flow of ammunition to the guns and keep the telephone system functioning. On the first night, while the technical corps,

under cover of darkness and drumfire, was beginning to throw pontoon bridges across the river, the counterfire of the Italians and the French had already set in. By forenoon, when the great attack of the infantry was sweeping forward, the position of the artillery-corpmander Schrack was under heavy fire. The dugout was very damp and getting hotter all the time. From the canal on the right side of the Casa came a dull foul smell and swarms of malarial flies. The adjutant, who was driving one patrol after another out into the shell-ploughed land behind the lines to find and piece out the torn and scattered telephone wires, came back into the dugout around eleven and noticed at first glance that something was wrong. The men at the telephones made strange inquiring faces at him. The Major, usually so spirited, was giving his orders through the telephone automatically in a voice that became steadily slower and softer. He was pale and breathing heavily.

This was the moment when the fire of the batteries should be moved forward; it should precede the advancing infantry like a crashing roller. Fright paralyzed the adjutant for a second, then he snatched a telephone receiver to his ear. From all the infantry lines the shouts came in. "The cannon shooting too short!" "On our own troops!*" "In our backs!"¹ "Too short!"

The Major went on murmuring his false distance figures, always the same figures, and stared with insane eyes at his adjutant, who tore the telephone from his hand, advanced the fire five hundred metres, put on one ear the headphone for the forward lines, on the other the receiver for the back lines, put the mapboard on his knee, and took over the direction of the fire. He sat there for forty hours. His left ear caught the messages from the front, his right the orders from the rear. His lips, never stopping, gave commands to the batteries. "Grenades. Shrapnel. Gas grenades. Rapid fire. Precaution fire. Hundred metres forward, hundred metres forward, hundred metres forward. Drumfire, drumfire. Slower. Barrage fire! Hundred metres shorter! Hundred metres shorter! Hundred metres shorter! Barrage fire, bar-

rage fire." Shorter, always again shorter. . . . The enemy counter-attacked and the Austrian troops fell back. The Casa was shot into the air, the bricks of its walls thundered on the roof of the dugout, the wounded cried, the telephone connections functioned worse and worse, the patrols did not come back any more, the commander of telephone operations, Cornet Count Olzevski, Wiesner's friend, bled to death outside, slowly, and without help.

Major Schrack knew nothing of the fate of his command. He awoke from his exhaustion on the afternoon of the second day, in a world far removed from the war. He watched the slender figure of his adjutant uninterruptedly issuing commands, his slim hands moving over the map, leaning back occasionally, breathing deeply, wiping the sweat from his face or stretching his body, which kept asking for sleep.

At first it was only a slight temptation to which the Major succumbed. He stroked the adjutant's shoulder, his hair, scarcely touching him. Then suddenly the young officer felt the breath of his major hot on his neck. He went on giving his orders: "Grenades, shrapnel, hundred metres shorter. Riding Battery 4 action front right, deflections, deflection difference, range . . . level . . ." He felt the hand of the Major and pushed it away. He saw the indiscreet looks of the telephone operators and his head throbbed more with every hour.

The adjutant Wiesner had to fight not only the attacking enemy who pushed the oncoming Austrians back to the east bank of the river, but hunger, thirst and exhaustion, the pain of the death of his friend, and the insane love of the Major; and the battle went on until the morning of the third day. When finally he gave the command "Stop firing," the last offensive of the Austrians, which should have ended the war victoriously, was over and lost. He crawled on all fours, over a hundred cigarette butts, out of the dugout. A bleak dawn, stars paling out in the strange calm, received him.

Baron Wiesner, on his way home through the snow, skirted the last slope. Langenbruck lay below him, at the opening of a high

mountain valley. Out of each chimney light smoke rose straight as a candle to fade delicately into the clear winter blue of a sky so radiant, high and wide that Wiesner, stopping, involuntarily said to himself: "Firmament." It arched not merely over this piece of earth that lay before his eyes but over his whole life. He could see it, a second landscape within the landscape. His heart was beating from the exertion of his walk; it grew more and more quiet as this self-awareness came to him.

Wiesner found Lilge in the office of the estate and surprised "him with the announcement that he had decided to arrange a festive New Year's Eve in the manor house for the neighbors and the important people of the district. They made up the guest-list and dispatched short invitations by messenger. Major Schrack sent his regrets next morning; because of a previous engagement he could not come but hoped to see the Baron soon. The tone of his note was rather formal, it could mean what it said, it could also mean a reluctance to renew the association. Whatever it was, Wiesner was determined to clarify their relationship. He had never permitted himself to judge the Major's breakdown, coming as it did after four years at the front, and he had respected his wish not to be reminded of it. But Schrack's present position made it impossible to keep out of his way any longer. The estate was more important than private resentments.

For the guests, and, in a different sense, for the host, the New Year's party was a momentous evening. The Mayor of the village, who owned a winter-sports hotel that was now closed, had provided a trained personnel and a small band. There was a great deal of dancing and drinking and more talk of the good old times than seemed suitable on the eve of a new year. For everyone, what was beautiful was what was past. At twelve, amid the clinking of champagne glasses, Lilge appeared with one of the estate workmen, who set a rosy suckling pig on the polished floor. It grunted and snuffed its way among the shrieking ladies. Lilge, wishing luck to the owner of the estate and his guests, looked like a warning black conscience, and a cold draught blew through the room until he was gone. Then lead was melted and

poured into cold water and from the little grotesque shapes that gave free play to fantasy the future was prophesied. The District Administrator behaved like the lion of the salon and his wife, who was getting fat, was jealous. The priest got into a dispute with the district judge about the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, the new economic and states' rights programme of the Catholic Church. The Mayor, drinking more than he could carry, drew Wiesner into a corner and confessed that he belonged to the forbidden Party of the National Socialists. "In the coming year Austria will join with Germany and show the world they can't stamp on our necks any longer," he shouted. "The Austrian legions stand at the Bavarian border ready to march in. My son is with them too. They'll sweep like a storm over rotten Vienna!" The Baron had to use all his powers of persuasion to induce the high-traitor hotelkeeper to silence. He was relieved when "ladies' choice" was announced and Hilda came and bowed an invitation.

Hilda was the daughter of the country doctor, a mountain beauty in her final bloom. She was a famous skier. Malicious tongues said that running down the slaloms at the international ski races she had failed to land in the harbour of marriage. She was slender, and in these provincial surroundings her gestures had a touch of urban elegance. The District Administrator's wife, who had been making her way toward the Baron, stopped short and threw an enraged glance at Hilda. "You could see to it that your wife is treated with more respect," she said to her husband later.

The Baron had known Hilda since their childhood. She was seventeen when he came home from the war. They had had a few months of romantic love. But his father transferred him from the University of Innsbruck to that of Vienna, and so he was saved from one of those premature marriages in which so many returned soldiers sought refuge from the tumult and loneliness of the war. It took Hilda a long time to recognize that it was all suddenly, irrevocably over, but she was too healthy to let this first disillusionment break her. Many years later, after his father's

funeral, Wiesner had stayed for a time in Langenbruck, and once again they had come close to each other. At home they had had to be careful, but in London and later in Berlin, where Wiesner invited her for secret visits, there had been beautiful free weeks. "She is a sensible girl,"* Wiesner used to reflect, "she always knows when it is time to leave." And Hilda always wondered, "When will he finally understand that he cannot get away from me?"

Hilda, waltzing, was her most alluring self. Wiesner felt her hot breath again as he had felt it long ago on the mountain slope in the great summer loneliness when he had first kissed her and played shyly with her braids, until she had escaped him, running swiftly as a deer down the long hillside. The flushed faces of the ladies and the white shirt-fronts of the men swam together in broad indistinct circles which turned faster and faster. Hilda alone remained near and clear. A gleam of moisture lay on her half-open lips. For a few seconds Wiesner came close to losing himself to her again. She was a beautiful, tested reality. It would have been so simple. He was already thinking, "For months I have been courting Maria without knowing whether she will agree or not," when he felt himself harden in the familiar way, and without any transition he spoke, out of the merry heaven of the waltz. "I'm going to marry soon, Hilda." It was cruel. But now at last it was all behind him.

Hilda went on dancing as if nothing had happened, answering not a word. She only lay a little heavier in his arms and her lips were suddenly closed and dry. But no one in the room could notice that. They watched the pair and exchanged significant glances. It all embarrassed the old country doctor, who thought to himself, "Perhaps the girl will still have her luck." After the waltz Wiesner and Hilda did not speak again until good nights and Happy New Years rounded off the party. "They have made a rendezvous and are acting unconcerned to put us off," thought the District Administrator's wife, and started the new year with a new resentment.

The guests were gone. In the ballroom the servants kept moving about for a time, then they too left. Wiesner sat fully dressed on his bed. He had not turned on the light. The blue glow of the snow outside came through the window. Strange how this stupid evening, full of bad manners, without wit and noisy, filled him with satisfaction. "They are not responsible," he thought. At last, he had made a clean break with Hilda. Her behaviour had been, as always, faultless. Sad, to have to give her up. He went to the window, opened it, and breathed in the cold air. A feeling of great sureness came over him.

Suddenly he leaned out. Too late. He couldn't see anything now. Or had it been an illusion, that shadow gliding over the snow and along the wall down below? He peered and listened. Nothing, no sound, no shadow. Everywhere the unmoving silence of the clear winter night.

He stepped back into the room. At first nothing, then a creaking outside the door . . . again . . . then soft steps. He opened the door. The light from the fireplace flickered into the hall. Hilda stood before him. She was in evening dress without a cloak, only a shawl thrown round her shoulders. Snow sparkled on her red evening shoes.

"Hilda!" It was an exclamation of surprise and solicitude. She entered smiling. He quickly closed the window. When he turned she was stooping before the fire and rubbing her hands. He hesitated before he walked slowly across the room and sat down beside her on the floor. The smile had disappeared from her face but she looked at him quietly without question or reproach. He held her hands until they were warm. Her lips glistened again, and the white of her teeth. The braids were gone, but also the childish fear. It was beautiful to be grown up. . . .

The first dawn fell like a gray shadow into the darkness. They lay without moving side by side. He felt her warmth. "If the war had never been, yes indeed, if! I came back four years older, and war years count double, but they were not years of life—just the opposite. I miss them to this day. I was so stupid about

women. This last six months I have been doing everything wrong again, like a school boy."

Hilda controlled herself. Her voice did not tremble when she asked, "Is she very young?"

"Nineteen."

The word came to her from far away. Nineteen, no older than she had been.

His breathing became deep and regular. Gently she slipped away from him, rose softly and dressed quickly. She was shivering in the cold. The light was pale as she went out without a glance of good-bye.

During the first days of the new year Wiesner gave himself with growing interest to the administration of the estate. Lilge saw to it that no detail escaped him. Afternoons Wiesner continued his visits. Everywhere he noted the same dissatisfaction, confusion and insecurity. There was a general conviction that something must be done. The more intelligent understood that a small country like Austria could not pursue an independent policy. Fundamentally nothing would have made all of them happier than to live without any policy at all, but circumstances forced them to think politically. A distant country's decree against the importation of lumber had more to do with the weal or woe of their daily lives than all their own efforts. But how were they to influence this distant country?

Two days before his scheduled return to Vienna, Wiesner climbed up to the sawmill. The machinist was an older man, broad-shouldered, with the neck of a bull, close-cropped hair and two deep furrows between his brows. He looked, in his fresh-washed workmen's clothes, like a part of the machinery. He took off his cap and led the owner of the estate into the small house where he and his family lived. The little place shone with order and cleanliness. His wife was standing over the stove cooking. She gave the Baron a frightened look and called the children out of the front room where they had been playing. When she

had gathered them all in the kitchen she closed the door on her husband and his distinguished visitor.

The machinist went to the table at the window and with a quick movement of his hand, offered Wiesner the chair at the front. He himself sat down in his usual place and looked straight at the man to whom he owed his bread. The screeching of the sawmill came from outside, otherwise there was silence, even in the kitchen. "You know why I've come?" said the Baron. It was half-statement, half-question. "Yes," answered the machinist. "You have come to dismiss me, Herr Wiesner."

The Baron repressed a smile of sympathy. It was many years now since anyone had denied him his title. With the founding of the Republic the nobility had been abolished, but this democratic law had been applied only in official correspondence, and not always then. In common parlance and in private intercourse nothing had changed. The Vienna cabmen and taxi drivers, soon after the days of 1918, were once again elevating to the lower or higher ranks of the nobility any customer who looked as if he were good for a substantial tip. The academic title of Herr Doctor was reserved once more for less promising customers or those who looked Jewish.

Wiesner answered the machinist with, a "Yes" that sounded too sharp in his own ears, but any attempt at diplomacy would have had an even more wounding effect on this disillusioned worker. He continued in an impersonal tone. "I assume you know that Lilge refused to dismiss you in spite of the threatening letters. I too resent having to sacrifice you in the interests of the estate. As an avowed Socialist you will understand that better than anyone else." The Baron's glance ran over the titles of the fyooks and pamphlets that stood so bravely on their unpainted shelf.

The machinist nodded and an expectant look came into his eyes. Wiesner hurried to the end. "I will pay you your salary for the next three months, but I would like you to do me a favour. I want you to go voluntarily. Ask Lilge for your discharge. In

that way we can protect him from his conscience and the Heimwehr will lose its triumph."

There was a pause before the machinist answered, and then his voice sounded firm and calm. "I agree, and if I have to move, the quicker the better. I'll tell Herr Lilge that I have to start a new job on the fifteenth."

Wiesner took three bank notes from his wallet, put them on the table, and stood up. The worker remained seated. "I'd like some information," he said. "You're in the Government; I want to know whether the negotiations of our leaders for a compromise have any chance of success."

"I am merely an official in the Foreign Ministry," the Baron corrected him. "But so far as I know the Government is not considering a compromise."

"The Heimwehr wants to exterminate us, just as the Fascists did in Germany and Italy," said the machinist slowly and with conviction, and yet as if it were hard for him to grasp.

Wiesner wanted to leave, but the machinist seemed not to notice it. He sat with his head dropped forward, his face twitching darkly. Suddenly he blurted out in a hoarse voice: "But what do these former officers want from us? We Austrian workers are the best disciplined in the world, of our own free will. When we were in power we didn't ruffle a hair of anybody's head. We believe in democracy; is that a crime? We've always thought only of how we could make the world better without shedding blood. Now we're getting our thanks. Day by day we're robbed more and more of our rights and our work. Sometimes I feel like smashing everything and burning it down." He turned away, went to the window and looked out at the sawmill whose screeching had been drowned by the sound of his voice. Now it shrilled again into the room.

The Baron saw the gray hair of the worker shimmer like silver in the light from outside. He wanted to go to him and put his hand on his shoulder and say a few words. But since he could not help him it was better not to speak. He left without a word.

In the kitchen the woman was wiping her eyes on her apron; the children hid in the folds of her skirt. Only later, on the country road, did the Baron realize that he had left without saying good-bye, just as if he had been running away.

He put off his visit to Major Schrack until the last day of his stay. As his sleigh turned into the beautiful market place of the district capital, Hilda overtook him on swift skis. She pretended not to see him. The omnibus, which ran up to the high mountains, stood in front of the courthouse, its engine throbbing. Down from the Silvretta a cold wind blew.

Wiesner saw from Hilda's equipment — the ropes, the ice pick, and the heavy rucksack — that she was going for a high tour. Perhaps in her hurry she had really not seen him. He wanted to call after her but all he did was think to himself that she shouldn't go on such dangerous trips alone. As his sleigh stopped in front of the house in which Schrack had his office, the bus pulled out. Through the flowers of frost on its windows a pair of eyes stared out across the square. Wiesner did not see them.

Two Heimwehr sentries, young healthy peasant boys in gray uniforms with green lapels, white cocks' feathers in their military caps, and rifles across their shoulders, came to attention as the Baron mounted the broad staircase to the office. The air in the waiting-room seemed stale. The office girl went to announce him and Schrack followed her into the room. In his face the joy of seeing Wiesner again and a nervous restraint contradicted each other. Wiesner got a shock. Until this moment the Major had been fixed in his memory as the war officer of twenty years ago.

The lawyer Schrack was fifty, tall and slender, restrained in his movements, still a soldier, but the old elan was missing. He wore a black morning-coat and a high stiff collar. Wiesner was hard put to it not to show his disappointment. "Old and bourgeois!" he thought.

Schrack in his youth had been one of those Austro-Hungarian officers of the better sort, always slightly given to melancholy,

who in dismal Gahcian garrisons or in lonely Alpine fortresses had not turned to drink but read books, learned foreign languages, and strove for a higher life. They were dilettantes for the most part, but sometimes a genuine talent flared among them. There had been, for example, the cavalry officer who translated the poems of the bitter Frenchman Villon into masterly German. These officers of an army recruited from so many nationalities, inimical to politicians, all discussed politics and projected plans for the salvation of the Monarchy, the dissolution of which seemed more and more inevitable. Commanding the sons of all the nations of the Danube, they understood the faults and virtues of each and felt themselves above the nationalistic quarrels that paralyzed the parliaments in Vienna and Budapest. They were Austrians, first of all Austrians, and only afterwards Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Rumanians, Croats, Slovenes, Ruthenians, Poles or Bosnians. They clung to the Empire, which stretched from the Adriatic to the Russian swamps, from Turkey to the Bavarian frontier. In all its parts they were at home. They loved the ever-changing landscape, the Alps, the sea, the Hungarian plains, the Bohemian forests, the Danube, the Moldau, the Etsch and, with ever-hungry hearts, the high capital and residential city of Vienna, which had not its like on earth. At the outbreak of the war, it was not toward conquest that these officers had marched. For them the goal was greater—the preservation of their colourful homeland and, for the best of them, the preservation of a type of tolerant human being that, in this common household of many nationalities, flourished just as vigorously as the type of blindly stubborn nationalist whose shadow had fallen ever more darkly across Europe since the turn of the century.

Schrack had been at the front from the first day to the last. In 1918 he returned—not victorious at the head of his batteries to the town from which he had led them, for that garrison now lay far beyond the borders in one of the newly organized republics; he crept, a beaten, humiliated son, and yet a foreigner,

into the ancestral city. A great past lay shattered. Through sleepless nights he wandered lost among its ruins. The days were no better. The ex-officer was forced to recognize that everything he was, or knew, or had learned, meant less than nothing now. Every schoolboy was his superior. But since he was too young not to want to go on living, and too proud to live on his relatives, he went to work — as clerk, as riding master, as tutor to the impossible sons of the newly rich. He had faced his material need and its demands had saved him. He began to take an interest in the strange civilian life and studied at night to prepare himself for a real occupation. Five years after the end of the war, at forty, he took his degree in law at the University of Innsbruck. For three years now he had been a lawyer in his own right.

The conversation between the Major and his former adjutant — "He still has that air of superiority,"* thought Schrack — took a long detour through the confused postwar history of Europe, which they both judged as accidental survivors of the World War. Twenty million crippled, dead, for nothing. For them it was the futility of the war, not its horror, that was the crime. The lawyer described facts as he, a partisan of the prewar order, saw them. The Baron added sceptical generalizations and counter-opinions, often without quite finishing, because he was not sure himself of their validity or because he did not wish to hurt his companion.

Major Schrack suddenly heard himself talking. Usually in his case there was no split between the speech and the speaker. He was what he said and nothing more. Now only his mouth spoke, things he had already said very often. He himself seemed to be somebody else. This division troubled him. It made him feel insecure and self-critical. But he had not survived death to doubt his life. He was Major Schrack with rights and duties. Fifteen years ago he had not dared to appear on the street in the uniform he had worn honourably since boyhood. Now they saluted him again and stood at attention. He inspired respect once more. He had not let himself be beaten. Either by life or by the weakling

that inhabits every human being. „ . . . He had conquered and that was enough. Make no mistake, First Lieutenant Wiesner! You have no right to plague me. Beware of reproaching me with anything. The bombardment of our own troops near San Donna di Piave was an accident. A tragic accident. There was no human guilt, and if there was it has long been expiated. I am myself again. Don't remember too much, Herr First Lieutenant, or I shall have to settle with you too. Don't remember too much!

"You mustn't think, Wiesner, that I joined the Heimwehr in a spirit of revenge. I've shown these civilians that I can do all they can." He pointed contemptuously yet with a kind of pride to his legal files. "But these tailors and shoemakers wouldn't stop bungling the world until we stopped them. These politicians! Every one of them represents his own narrow interests; none of them thinks about the whole, however much they may talk of it. What have they made of the once flourishing countries of the old Monarchy? Each new republic cuts the throats of all the others. We must restore the old order, reunite the Danube countries under the banner of Christian culture! We will exterminate the Socialist insanity, with its stupid talk about human equality, and, even worse, these idiotic race theories. We are not reactionary; we know that time doesn't stand still and that technology is changing the world. But human beings are always the same, they never change. We shall re-erect the natural barriers between master and servant. Don't worry, a genius will always leap over them."

Schrack's laugh was too loud. Why, really? Wiesner's disappointment grew. Too many phrases, Philistine phrases. In this petty-bourgeois office, smoky, dull, full of tables with fringed covers, how far away seemed the war experience that lived in Wiesner's memory. And had the trenches turned into this! Wiesner doubted the reality of his memory. Minute by minute the unforgotten image of the soldier at the front was here falling to pieces. And this man asserted that human beings do not change! It was really laughable. But what did he expect anyway?

One word out of the bloody years to rebuild their comradeship? Or a pressure of the hand, a silent mutual confession of mutual shortcomings? They had once been so close to each other. Or had they? Had it ever been true? This man was so strange to him.

Schrack turned on the desk lamp.

Wiesner got up. "I have smaller troubles at the moment," he said. "My estate is caught between the renovators and the restorers. Langenbruck needs peace for work. I'm here to ask it from you, Herr Major. Your Heimwehr is mixing a little too much in my affairs."

Schrack had been prepared by the District Administrator. His reply had a pedagogic sound. "You must have some appreciation of the necessities of our struggle. We give you, as a diplomat, the right to stand aside. That in itself is a great deal. Naturally injustices and mistakes occur. That, unfortunately, cannot be helped."

The tone irritated Wiesner. He was still the master of Langenbruck. Quietly he said, "I will not sell my wood to the new paper works. No one can force a bad price on me by threats. Either the patriotic paper manufacturer pays as much as the Jewish traders or he will see where he gets off. He wants to make a profit out of his politics. He will not succeed with me. This must be absolutely clear between us."

Schrack missed none of the sharpness behind Wiesner's words. But he answered casually, "Til give him a talking to. Is that enough?"

"Yes, naturally," Wiesner replied, and after a short pause he added just as casually, "I'd like to ask you to find me a machinist among your people. Mine has found a better position and is leaving in a few days."

Schrack understood the concession implied in this request and promised to recommend a reliable man. Wiesner thanked him and said good-bye. Schrack accompanied him to the outer office. He had a final impulse to say something intimate but repressed

it at once. The guards were standing at attention again. Wiesner involuntarily raised his hand to his hat in the military salute. That was all that was left. As he wrapped himself shivering in the robes of his sleigh, he thought, "He talked too much," and with this he drew a thick line under an old account.

The drive home through the upward-climbing valley was beautiful. It began to snow. The *plop-plop* of the horses' hooves was muffled; the little bells on their hames tinkled merrily; every tree, every bend in the road, had its place in his memory. The lighted windows of the farmsteads cut tiny yellow squares in the blue landscape. Wiesner gave himself up to the friendly feeling of being home and to his growing longing for Maria.

In front of the manor house Lilge was walking implacably up and down. Wiesner saw him from a distance and could not repress a stirring of anger. He had an impulse to let the manager wait until morning, but he could not bring himself to treat so deserving a man that way.

Their interview was short. When Lilge went he went forever. The methods of the Herr Baron, he said, went against his grain; he was particularly set against the arrangement with the machinist. The man was not the sort to talk out of turn but Lilge could figure out for himself how he had got to the point of going voluntarily. But this was merely the last straw. He had had enough in any case and he had made preparations to leave the country, which no longer held anything worth while for him. He was going to South America to join his brother, who had emigrated a few years before with some other Tyroleans who had also had enough. No, with all due respect, he didn't want to be manager one hour longer.

Wiesner let him go without more ado. He was fed up with this nonsense. People permitted themselves to have convictions with which they were unable to cope. Lilge was efficient in war and peace; he was not equal to the difficult transition. Nor could any good come out of his bitterness.

On the last night before his departure from Langenbruck the Baron lay awake a long time. Until now his pleasure in his work had been drawn from the composition of exactly worded briefs, in a kind of abstract play of terms that satisfied his sense of form; now suddenly he felt a deep sympathy with the real world of human beings, the soil, animals, wood, machinery, with its pettiness and need, its meagre understanding and its ambitions, with the manifold life that he had been accustomed to accept under the name Langenbruck without its ever having occurred to him that he could be the master of this world if only he wanted to be. The difficulties and the resistance he had met on this visit aroused his whole nature, which was always stirred to activity by contradiction. He drew up the balance sheet and made his decision. He would live his own life, however the world around him behaved. He would say Yes if he had to, but he would find ways and means of making his silent No effective. His way of life would become an example that would be more influential than all these stupid theories. He no longer doubted what Maria's answer would be, and thinking about her he fell asleep.

Morning intensified his hopeful mood. He discussed the affairs of the estate with Lilge's astonished assistant. Lilge himself had taken his few belongings and left in the night without saying good-bye to anyone. In the afternoon the Baron made his farewell visit to the priest. The pipe fell out of his mouth when Wicsner told him that he had decided to quit the service of the State and take over the management of Langenbruck himself. It would be two or three months before everything was settled. In the meantime, he wanted His Reverence to keep an eye on the estate. The temporary manager — yes, Lilge was gone — had orders to consult him whenever anything required an immediate decision. He himself would come up every other week-end to look after things.

The priest gladly agreed and they sat with a jug of red wine, talking of this and that until it was time to drive to the station.

With the feeling that he had arranged everything as well as possible, Wiesner left Langenbruck towards evening.

At Innsbruck he had to wait an hour for the express. On his way to the dining room he saw Lilge at a ticket window. He went straight to him, "We'll not see each other again very soon, Lilge," he said, "and we parted yesterday a bit too abruptly. I want to thank you once more for all you've done. I beg you also not to forget that we were together many years, in war and in peace. If I can ever help you, please let me know."

"Thank you, Herr First Lieutenant."

It seemed to Wiesner that a gleam passed over the hard man's face as they shook hands.

As he was undressing in the sleeping car, Wiesner reflected that, with this meeting a part of the past, what he called his period of apprenticeship was behind him. He wanted to live, seriously. Lilge had deserted. Schrack was again playing the soldier. Where the machinist's way led no one could say.

D

R. FRANZ STEIGER, a widower, professor at the University and director of the Technological Institute, lived with his daughter Maria in an old patrician house on Freedom Square in the Inner City. Thanks to his scientific successes and to an increasing income derived from patents in high valuta countries, Professor Steiger was independent. The baroque facade of the house had been officially declared a public monument. To the friends who met there the house was a symbol. They never said, "We'll meet at Steiger's"; they said, "At the house on Freedom Square." What they found there was simplicity and an intellectual atmosphere in which cheerfulness weighed not less than seriousness. Young Joseph Birkmeier, the brother of Maria's friend Pepitta, privately called it "the island." This, in his mind, was a term of censure, for he was bent on rebuilding the world.

Louise, the new parlourmaid, trying to get used to the atmosphere of the house, called it "funny." She meant peculiar to itself. Although she had been here four weeks, since St. Nicolas, she still felt a little ill-at-ease. It was so silent in the house. Only very gradually did she gather courage to turn to herself as she was dusting. In her last job, in the house of a department-store owner whose children all worked in the shop, conversation broke loose at breakfast. Even though it did not interest her particularly, listening to it made her feel as if she had a part in it. In the

house on Freedom Square everything was different. The Professor was an early riser. At six o'clock, when it was still black-dark now in winter, the butler Johann served him his breakfast at one end of the great dining-table. The young lady, whom she waited on, did not drink her coffee until two hours later, and never saw her father before midday, often not until tea or supper. When she memorized her poems and theatrical parts or played the piano it couldn't be heard downstairs. The beautiful pieces of antique furniture were mirrored in the polished floors, silent and always the same. Thank God the holidays were over! It had been like living in a museum. Now, at least in the evening, there would be some life again. FloWers had just come—so early, probably from the Baron.

The clock of the Schotten Church struck eight. Punctually the parlourmaid set a breakfast tray on a table by the studio window. The studio was a huge room made by throwing two attic chambers into one. It had been done when the Professor rebuilt the inside of the old house. Johann had once explained it to her. "If one could only rebuild people that way!" he had said at the end, because he liked to draw a lesson from everything. "Studio!" She had never known that a room could be called that. Of course she didn't know what it meant. Johann instructed her in a tone that was like the Professor himself. As an assistant in the Professor's laboratory he had picked up crumbs of wisdom, even bits of ancient languages. "Studio," said he, "comes from the Latin *studere*, which means to take pains." A room, then, in which one took pains to accomplish something; that was a studio. It sounded quite sensible. She asked what the young lady took pains for? "Art," Johann had answered solemnly. Yes, that was it—the young lady and the Professor, art and science. At these words Louise felt again the devout schoolgirl emotion she had had when her teacher had talked about poets and heroes of the spirit. In her former position it had been trade and business. They were more talkative. Here it was the more beautiful life. She could feel it when she held her

breath and listened. It was in the very house, in the very silence. Sometimes she was so stupid, it made her afraid.

Maria found the flowers on the breakfast table in the florist's box. She did not need to open the little envelope to know who had sent them. She unwrapped them carefully. Red roses. Usually he sent white lilacs. She smiled to herself as she poured water into a vase. He hadn't had an easy time with her, and now he was growing impatient. Maybe she ought to be ashamed; but there was something delightful about disturbing him. Nothing gave her greater pleasure. But she had better be careful. There was a deep seriousness behind it all and that last afternoon before the holidays she had learned a lesson. It had been a very little thing, Pepitta would have laughed at her, but it was significant.

She had intentionally taken Heinrich upstairs without turning on the light. It was dusk and the tension between them had at once become unbearable. She left him and went to the window and gazed out over the roof-tops. She wanted him to follow her and suddenly he was really standing there, behind her, quite close. It was an exciting moment. She had a feeling of triumph and of fear all at once. He took her hand. She did not withdraw it, and felt in the fingers of them both an unknown tenderness. Then, in an impulse that she had at times regretted, and at times not, she turned and kissed him. But at the same moment she put her palms against him, and when he wanted to draw her close pushed him away. She remembered exactly how wide her eyes had grown at the moment, half in terror, half in surprise. He had let her go at once, turned away, and switched on the light. In his face she had observed the delicate irony which pleased her so much. His ways were so different from the crudeness of her fellow students at the academy, who knew only crass refusal or consent. In his superior way he acted as if nothing had happened. She too of course. But something *had* happened. To them both. Now he had sent these serious red roses. It was the first time.

As far back as Maria could remember, the two winter weeks she spent with her father at the mountain hut—snow, sky, all day on skis, early to bed—had been her most intense Christmas joy. This time she had secretly counted the days until their return. Her father had noticed it. Yesterday in the car, coming from the station, when she had turned to look up at the Karl's Church and the shimmering green patina of its cupola in the setting sun, he had said: "You're very glad to be back among people." And when she had not answered she had felt a look that went through her. "Perhaps the solitary days alone with me in the mountains don't suit you any longer?" he had asked, without really asking. She had meant to contradict him but she couldn't get the words out. He had been silent too. The car entered the Ring and passed the Opera and it had seemed like an eternity before they reached the house.

After supper and an excited telephone conversation with Uncle Schlager, while they were reading the papers that had accumulated in their absence, her father suddenly burst out: "I wish I had stayed in the mountains, not to see or hear anything of this universal idiocy!" Then right away he began to talk of Heinrich and his difficulties at Langcnbruck, but let the subject drop abruptly. "He has undoubtedly made some compromise," he said and his voice was contemptuous and hostile. It came to her at that moment with surprising clearness that he was against Heinrich. But why then had he let her go with him to plays and concerts and never asked a question? She had noticed it once before, but she had not given it any further thought. Now after these holidays, which seemed different from any that had gone before, everything else seemed different too. The whole of life wore a different face. She herself was no longer what she had been. Father was right; being alone with him was no longer everything to her. She had ceased to be a child.

When Maria started off to the hairdresser to have the damage of the vacation repaired, Agnes the cook came out of the kitchen to inspect the new mink jacket her father had given her for

Christmas. It was the first time Maria had worn this magnificently extravagant present. Louise's eyes glowed with admiration and even Johann stopped his vacuum cleaner. They were all very sweet to her. The coat created a sensation at the hairdresser's too. She had to let the cashier stroke the fur and Frau Hilz, one of the smartest women in Vienna, paid her a compliment. Only Herr Friedrich, one of the political philosophers among the hairdressers, was insensible to such things. "Your first haircut of the new year," he said. Then immediately he threw his bomb. "It smells of war, this new year. You think so too?"

"But the whole world is frightened at the very thought of war," Herr Friedrich.

"That's exactly where everyone is wrong. For many people war would be a welcome change. Take the married men for instance; I saw them in 1914. They sang and yelled with joy. And why? Because they get such rotten treatment from their wives that they're completely miserable. They will go to war with pleasure, if only somebody calls them. What amazes me is that no one has written anything about Woman as the Cause of War."

"Don't talk such rubbish." The owner of the shop interrupted him as he passed by and smiled apologetically at Maria's image in the mirror. Friedrich whispered. "He's one of the bored ones; this morning when he read in the paper that a hundred and forty bombings had been perpetrated since the first of the year he was all excited. But it wasn't rage; it was joy. We'd have no peace till war came again, he said. He's already anxious to read reports of battles."

Leaving the shop Maria stopped a moment in front of the windows and glanced at her reflection. The dark green tweed suit, the mink jacket, the tan handmade low-heeled shoes—she was satisfied with her appearance. Her preference for the English style was really right. The French style, which Pepitta affected, was too feminine for her. "Stupid hairdresser. I certainly shan't bore my husband," she thought, and with a little proud smile she turned into the Graben. The sun came out of the clouds and

one side of the street was lifted into clarity. The gold on the baroque monument in the centre of the Graben glittered so that she could not look at it.

People said that the Graben, or moat, was no longer what it had been before the war when Vienna was still Vienna and this broad thoroughfare in the heart of the city was the centre of a world of elegance which likewise no longer existed. A columnist had written about it only yesterday. Maria had a vague childhood memory — it must have been in the last year of the war — that often came to her when she walked down the Graben: of a gay uniform with big medals on many-coloured ribbons bending over her. Uncle Schlager still told enthusiastic stories of those leaves of absence after months at the front, when he and his comrades met, often for the last time, on the Graben. He was fond of saying that even the looks of the girls were not what they used to be. Hemrich never mentioned the war. It was strange to think that he had been a grown man when she was still being wheeled about in a perambulator. And now he was taking her seriously. She wondered why Joseph had got so excited over the re-introduction of the imperial uniforms. The gay-coloured breeches, the patent-leather boots, and the gold braid reminded her of a masquerade. Grown men suddenly appeared in bright daylight in costumes that would usually be worn only on the stage or the screen. It was rather funny. Maria ignored a cavalry officer who turned with a clink of spurs to look at her and wondered whether they really didn't put on those costumes out of sheer boredom. The chatter of the hairdresser was still in her head. "Will there be war?" She herself was surprised to see how little this fateful question meant to her.

She passed the "Iron Stick," the nail-studded tree, and took her favourite way. Through Kaertner Street with its many shop-windows to the Opera — where in her early girlhood she had waited at the stage-door to catch a glimpse of Lohengrin or Tannhauser — she had long since had a distaste for tenors — past the Albrecht's Ramp, across JosepJi's^Scjuare, which seemed a

great open hall into which the tall windows of the State library and the Museum of Engravings looked down, over to St. Michael's Square and the Kohlmarkt. She knew every house, every window and gateway, the waterspouts and ornamental figures, the Bohemian lions on the Lobkowitz Palace, the carved escutcheons, the policemen, the public porters, the cabbies, the salespeople in the shops, the posters, the signs, the shingles, the traffic signals—all the human and inanimate characteristics of her beloved Inner City. Whenever she had been away from Vienna, she came back to pay a call on these streets. Then there would be days when her only pleasure was in walking; when she saw nothing but the sky above; there were evenings when her eyes sought only the ground, as though she were looking for something she could not find. Yes, she was sometimes afraid, without knowing why. Yesterday on the trip home her delight had been external only; deep inside she was afraid. But she did not want to admit it to her father. It was her secret. Often, after weeks of a wonderful sense of balance, she would not know in from out. To be sure, she understood what was the matter, but with her head only. When she was skiing she thought about it a great deal, but not everything could be decided by thinking. She couldn't talk to anyone about it, not even Pepitta; she was ashamed before Pepitta, who was far cleverer than she. With Heinrich she grew calmer. She felt that she could fly to his arms if ever she wanted to. Then, at the last moment, it was never necessary. The knowledge that she had the choice gave her confidence, and there was no hurry.

Near St. Michael's Church she suddenly heard someone call her name. She turned and saw Uncle Schlager hurrying toward her. He was out of breath and red of face; his blond-dyed mustaches were standing straight up. His hands kept sawing the air, a stick in one, a handkerchief in the other. Lately he was always beside himself.

Professor Schlager was not her uncle at all; she had merely

called him that since childhood. He and her father had come from the same peasant village. They had grown up together. Steiger, the son of a poor cottager, had helped Schlager, the rich son of the manor, to get through his examinations. Later in life, too, their paths had run parallel, except that Schlager had been more and more outdistanced. He had a professorship too; he lectured on Forestry at the College of Agriculture. But the appreciation his sober specialized knowledge commanded in little, tight circles could not be compared to Steiger's international reputation. This inequality sometimes produced tension between them. But at the house on Freedom Square it was disregarded. Schlager and his jealousy were taken for granted. To Maria, who had grown up at his knee, he was an old, comfortable piece of furniture.

"Maria, my child, I've been running after you ever since you passed the Opera. What's your hurry? I almost lost you!" he gasped, wiping his face.

She laughed gaily. "Good morning, Uncle. I hope you didn't get overheated."

"It's all right now. I weigh too much—over two hundred pounds; I'll take the cure in Marienbad this summer." He took a deep breath, tucked Maria's arm under his own, and made an important face. "I've got to talk to you; come, I'll treat you to a glass of sherry; not that you need to stimulate your appetite; you look like life itself; but you'll like the sherry."

They entered a place on the Kohlmarkt, half inn, half shop. A large room at the back was famous as the breakfast rendezvous of a certain social set. After eleven o'clock the idle sons and daughters of the rich gathered here. There were tender meetings designed to look accidental. Here too came well-to-do visitors from all the Succession states, former Austrians with sentimental memories of Vienna. On their way in, Professor Schlager returned the bow of a lieutenant who stood at the bar with a group of Heimwehr officers.

Schlager gave his order and began at once. Maria was sur-

reptitiously studying the guests. Pepitta in her place would have been coquettish.

"You can spare me the preliminaries, Uncle," she interrupted. "I was there yesterday when Father spoke with you over the telephone. Tell me right away what's in your heart.*"

"So you know? All the better. He treated me like a dog, as he always does when I give him good advice. I'm not offended; but this time I refuse to give in. And you must stand by me, Maria. You're the only person who has any influence. You must get his signature to the Declaration for me."

"But Uncle, when he says No, he absolutely means it. You know him."

"He never refuses you."

"You're very much mistaken."

"Maria, if he refuses to assert his loyalty to the Government, it may be very unpleasant for him. We've got to save him from that. It's our duty, Maria."

"But Uncle, he knows how to take care of himself." With a smile she raised her glass and touched the wine with her lips. Her eyes ran over the room.

Schlager's face was scarlet. "This is no joke, my girl. I must ask you to pay attention."

Maria shook her head. "He won't sign. He won't have anything to do with politics, as you ought to know. It's his fixed principle."

"It's an impossible principle in this period." In his despair Schlager almost swept the glasses from the table. "We're not asking him to play Party politics. The Declaration merely expresses the general hope that the authoritarian regime will succeed in steering the Fatherland toward a better future. That's mild enough! He can have no objection to that."

"I'm not so sure! He was very angry yesterday. It's my impression, Uncle, that he doesn't like this authoritarian regime of yours." Maria spoke lightly; she was amused at Schlager's agitation.

"Don't say that above a whisper," he hissed, glancing fearfully at the Heimwehr officers. Maria followed his eyes. The lieutenant, an arrogant blond fellow, smiled at her as though he had been waiting for her to look his way. She thought him repulsive.

"I didn't run after you just for fun," Schlager began again. "Don't be so frivolous. Listen to me. Great events are in preparation. Ask your Baron."

Maria became impatient. "But Uncle, Father isn't obliged to sign any document you put on his desk. I think you're exaggerating again. Anyway, I can't tell him what to do, especially about things I don't understand myself."

"You don't understand them. Very well. But you've got to talk to him just the same. Tell him at least what I've told you. Tell him how worried I am on his account. If I tell him, he pays no attention. He doesn't take me seriously; he never has."

"Now Uncle . . ." With a gesture of her hand Maria tried to assuage an old hurt. Then she said decisively: "I'll talk to him."

"Good! Believe me, my girl, I know what I'm talking about. Political means—they're not always noble."

Maria was now all attention. "I don't understand you, Uncle."

"Never mind; he will understand, when you repeat it to him. Don't stare through me like that."

It was clear to Maria that he was keeping something from her. She didn't ask him what it was; her words were like a threat when she said, "I'll tell Father—every word." She rose though her glass was still half full.

With old-fashioned courtesy he handed her her little bag. "Talk to him this very day: I'll expect a call from him."

"Yes Uncle, and thank you for the sherry. Good-bye."

At the bar the lieutenant and his friends turned toward her. She passed them swiftly, her eyes straight ahead.

The moment she got home she called up the Institute. Fraulein

Berg answered. The Professor was at the Ministry of Education. Was there a message? No, thank you. Maria hung up the receiver. Suddenly she seemed to know precisely what Schlager meant.

Louise wondered what had happened to her young lady. She had come home quite changed; her good spirits of the morning were gone; she barely touched her food. Then, until she went out again, she kept practising scales on the piano, over and over again. Strange patience in one so young.

At ten minutes to six, Baron Wiesner was opposite the Art Academy waiting for Maria. In an effort to catch the very instant of her appearance, he peered through the half-open gate into the dusk of the passageway, where the janitor was walking up and down. People came and went. He saw them only vaguely and waited for Maria — first a faraway uncertain motion, then a strand of her hair, a shimmer of her face, her whole figure emerging from obscurity. He loved these minutes of suspense. They were almost a fulfilment yet a fulfilment that was still in the future. He tried to visualize the familiar face, to redraw it, trait for trait, in his thoughts. The high, almost masculine forehead, the great eyes of a child, the unawakened yet tender mouth; the chin defiant, the ears gay and delicate, the nose not too small but narrow, with a subtle, slightly sophisticated curve . . . His imagination was powerless to fit the parts into the whole. Perhaps they didn't quite fit. But an expression at once intelligent and shy, which he knew and yet could not quite reconstruct, blended them in a face of contradictory and touching youthfulness. It seemed to him beautiful and fairylike as a morning landscape when the sun has not yet topped the mountains but the dew is already glittering. Yes, there was a glitter on her which in his inmost thoughts he dared not touch, yet longed to set on fire.

Maria came so swiftly across the street that he hardly had time to take his hat off. All at once she was there beside him. Again.

as he nearly always did, he had missed the second of her appearance.

"Thank heaven you're here, Heinrich." She said it breathlessly and took his arm with a gesture of trust and of belonging to him. Wiesner felt that she was asking him for protection. It was a wonderful feeling. He delighted in it as they walked back to the Ring, and Maria, without asking about Langenbruck, began to tell him about Schlager, and the demands and insinuations he had been making. "Would Father really be threatened if he didn't sign the Declaration?"

Wiesner tried to calm her. "Schlager thinks he's terribly important. He's organizing a group of patriotic professors. No one is obliged to sign the Declaration. But anyone who refuses had better not say why."

"But what exactly do you think Schlager meant? He didn't act the way he usually does when he makes a fuss. Political means—they're not always noble," he said.

"I'll have to have a talk with him," Wiesner answered after a thoughtful pause.

Again Maria had the feeling that something was being kept from her. Did he know what Schlager had meant? Could it be what she suspected? Did he, too, feel that she must be treated as a child? She stood still and looked at him and said quietly, "I know, Heinrich, that Father and Fraulein Berg are very close friends. There's talk about it at the Institute."

Wiesner did not answer until they had left the crowded intersection at the Opera behind them. They went the same way Maria had gone that morning. The lights were on and it began to snow quietly. "It's possible that Schlager had that in mind," he said slowly.

"But that's Father's own private business," Maria said softly.

Wiesner reflected. There was no sense in deceiving Maria. It would be better for her to take Schlager's warning seriously and pass it on to her father. In that case the Professor would at least know from what direction his independence might be attacked.

Wiesner could hear them, the Jesuits in the Ministry of Education: "An educator of young men and women who sets his students such an example . . ." The whole foul hypocrisy . . .

"Why are you silent, Heinrich?"

"Private business — it's a very elastic phrase. Schlager perhaps means much better than you think. Don't forget that as a university professor your father is a civil servant. The authoritarian regime wants to make sure of him. He's a very great man and every means will be used to force him, at least outwardly, into the Government camp. That's the way things are. That's the situation. It is better for you to understand it. But you mustn't worry. Talk to your father; you and he are friends; -you will see that he will find a way out."

Maria had a sense of relief now that the thing had been spoken out. She had not wanted to believe her own thoughts. Of course, Father would manage to get the better of his enemies. He was worth all of them put together and they would find it out if they tried to force him to anything. She didn't need Heinrich to tell her that. It sounded as though her father were guilty of some impropriety and as though the Government had a right to interfere in his life. "Authoritarian regime" — again that expression. Just what did it mean?

She took her arm from his and said: "And that's the kind of Government you serve!" This wasn't quite original with Maria. Joseph talked that way when he criticized Wiesner.

"My resignation is being typed now. If all goes well I'll leave the service on the first of March."

Maria lifted her head. In the dim light of the street Wiesner could not see how startled she was. She made no resistance when he took her arm again, and he pressed it tenderly.

"I have a great deal to tell you. Langenbruck was a deep experience this time. There a whole world belongs to me, a world I have long underestimated. You will like it, Maria."

He told her about Lilge and Schrack and the priest and the New Year's Eve party, of the small worries and the grandeur of

nature, of the mountains, the forests, the sky. He omitted nothing except Hilda. As he described it Langenbruck became a great realm which it was his task to administer rightly.

Maria's heart began to beat hard. He had never spoken this way to her before. This was the seriousness, the red roses. She did not interrupt him. It was beautiful to listen. But she could not help thinking all the while of Fraulein Berg. What concerned her father concerned her too. When Heinrich finished she could not say a word. Happily they were at her door and Johann opened it instantly, as if he expected them.

In the hall stood two strangers. They had on their overcoats and held their hats in their hands. They couldn't have been there more than a minute. They looked like workmen in Sunday suits. Maria was startled until she recognized them. They looked so different in their city clothes.

The younger of the two said hesitantly: "We came to thank you and the Professor."

The older man, who had a humorous air, though it was not clear what gave the impression, added in a rough good-natured voice: "Yes, Fraulein, we read in the paper that three tourists were lost in that same storm. And you saved our lives." The younger man gave him a glance that asked him to be silent.

"You would have come through the storm well enough," answered Maria, and then addressed the younger man. "We saw your tracks next morning. It was very rash of you to make the descent over the fresh snowdrifts, and by night. But you managed it!" She voiced the admiration she genuinely felt for sporting achievements. Then she made the necessary introductions: "Baron Wiesner — Engineer Meik and Herr . . ."

"I am Kraus, foreman," the older man helped her out.

"Will you stay with these gentlemen, Heinrich? Father will be here any minute now. They'll tell you how we met," she said with a smile that was a little forced, and ran up the stairs. A

fresh annoyance, she thought, but she was not sorry that her conversation with Heinrich had been interrupted.

The engineer was silent. But Herr Kraus related vividly how the Professor had rescued them in the storm and taken them into his hut, but Karl, that was the engineer, had left during the night, because he was afraid he'd lose his job if he wasn't at the factory in Vienna in the morning. Wiesner scarcely listened. He was thinking about Schlager, with whom he would have to have a word.

While Maria was changing her dress and putting on powder and rouge—Heinrich liked it—the telephone rang. It was Pepitta. She was wildly excited; something was always happening to her. A lackey in livery—"Mother nearly fainted!"—had delivered a letter in an envelope with a seven-crested crown from the old Count Jasomirgott Uexcuell. It was an invitation to sing at the annual ball at the Count's palace in February! Such a distinction! She could hardly believe it. Maria breathed with relief when Pepitta finished her story and added, "I can't come today. Joseph is at one of his secret student meetings; he gets crazier all the time; Father has to go out too and I don't want to leave Mother alone."

When Maria came down Johann was laying two extra covers. "The visitors are staying for dinner," he said, turning to her. She stopped and listened. Did her father not want to be alone with her and Heinrich? She heard him now in the next room reproaching the engineer for his rashness. Then the foreman laughed.

Maria went down into the kitchen to soothe Agnes the cook, who didn't like unexpected guests. But she also wanted to gain time. When she returned, the door of her father's study was half-open. But she did not go in. She did not want to talk to him until they were alone. In the library Wiesner was chatting with Kraus. "In what factory are you employed?" she heard him ask as she came into the room.

"In the automobile works at Floridsdorf," Kraus said. The

engineer was gazing at the books along the walls. Maria wasn't sure he had seen her.

"Isn't there a Herr von Winterstein among your directors?" Wiesner asked, giving Maria a chair.

"Do you know him?" Kraus exclaimed, setting down the glass from which he was about to drink. "He's the personnel manager, best-hated man in the outfit —"

Again the engineer interrupted him with a warning glance. Kraus drained his glass and changed the subject. "You'd like to bury yourself in these books, wouldn't you, Karl?"

"Yes," the engineer answered. Nothing else.

They were similar physical types and their gestures followed the same pattern. Only gradually did one perceive that the engineer was not an ordinary worker. He was slenderer than the foreman, but taller and more muscular. Maria, from where she sat, saw only his profile. He might have been in his middle twenties; the foreman was surely over forty.

The Professor entered and kissed Maria's forehead. He looked tired. On the way to the dining room he asked Wiesner how he had found things in the Tyrol. Wiesner described how his manager was emigrating to South America. On account of the difficulties this made he would have to visit Langenbruck again within two weeks. But he betrayed nothing of what he had confided to Maria about his leaving the diplomatic service. When he finished Kraus said that he too had once thought of emigrating, to Russia, but had abandoned the idea. After all, his place was in his native city, in Vienna, and running away didn't solve any problem. Then he began to question the Baron about the plans of the Government, and the conversation took a political turn. It reminded Wiesner of the machinist in Langenbruck. It was, in fact, the identical conversation. The workers couldn't understand why the whole world was suddenly against them. "We don't demand anything wrong," said the foreman, and all his merriness was gone. "We only want to live quietly and decently." The engineer stared silently at his plate.

Maria heard a great many words that made no sense to her, however much she tried to figure them out: War on a double front, the Italian loan, the protocols of the League of Nations, the visit to Vienna of Suvich, the Italian Minister, martial law, breach of the Constitution . . . She gave it up. She thought of Fraulein Berg, whom she scarcely knew, and of Heinrich's decision. Was he going to move to the country for good? She was aroused from her thoughts when the conversation around her fell silent. She noticed her father's admonishing glance. He did not like to have her sit passively at the table and take no part in the talk.

"What did you do all day, Maria? I see you visited the hairdresser." He looked at her tenderly. They could all see how much he loved her. It always embarrassed Maria to have him show it, especially before strangers. Quite against her intention she said:

"I met Uncle Schlager. He was terribly wrought up because you won't sign the Declaration. You are to call him up without fail. This very day. He asks you most earnestly."

"Is that all he had to say?" The Professor's voice had changed. Under the table Wiesner pressed Maria's hand.

"He begged me to persuade you to sign the Declaration. He said it would be better for you if you did."

"That's like him, to hide behind you," the Professor answered, as if relieved.

"I told him at once that you would have nothing to do with politics."

"Right! And I'll stick to that!" cried the Professor. "Otherwise I might as well lock up my Institute and throw the key away. Each party wants to harness me. When I say I don't understand politics, they think it's a subterfuge. When I mince no words and tell them that my research is more important than all the noise they make and that I have no intention of adding to it—then I'm eccentric and queer. No one grasps the simple point that science is my politics."

The foreman was making a visible effort to understand what

the Professor meant. The engineer lifted his head critically. "Like Joseph," Maria thought.

"Don't hesitate to say what you think," said the Professor.

"The situation is critical — " the engineer answered and got no further. It didn't make much sense. Then he added quickly: "Men who stand above the party strife should tell the whole truth now and not take refuge in evasions."

"And who told you that I know the whole truth?"

The engineer waited before answering. Then he said: "That's right. I don't know." He went on eating. It was not clear how he meant it.

Everything about him annoyed Maria. "Which truth?" she asked lightly and added almost perty, "There are many truths, you know." She was quoting Heinrich, and she gave him a sidelong smile. He had once said that to Joseph, who also imagined that he knew better than everybody else.

"I'm no metaphysician," the engineer replied without looking up. His tone was contemptuous.

"Bravo!" the Professor exclaimed. "Nor am I. But how about the politicians? They're full of faith and empty assumptions and know nothing." His irritation seemed excessive. Again Wiesner pressed Maria's arm as if to guard her from some indiscretion. Something was wrong. Perhaps the whole affair was more serious than she imagined; perhaps her father was in danger.

There was a pause, which the Professor himself ended before it became embarrassing. He spoke calmly now, quite master of himself, in the objective tone of his lectures. He made excuses for the politicians whom he had just accused. They were not responsible for their shortcomings. Who did have any precise knowledge? The world was in its infancy; man was learning to think as a child learns to walk. His reactions were still as involuntary as those of the invertebrates, his ancestors. Outgrown instincts, experiences that no longer had any relevance, determined his decisions. There was, in fact, no *homo sapiens* as yet; ideas were still new and frightening to him. Therefore, man's dreams

of right, goodness, protection of the weak, on the one hand; and on the other, the slow-moving predatory existence of the jungle. No change could be expected until man had the courage to trust his reason, and apply it. "I am afraid it will be a long process. But it is the decisive one, and I am its servant. The structure of the atom is more important to me than the Constitution of the State. It *must* be more important to me, hard as that attitude sometimes becomes. The mere opportunists won't understand that."

There was a sense of torment behind the quiet sentences. The Professor suddenly looked weary. His vigorous peasant face was gray and riven as the bark of an old tree. They were all silent. Maria put her hand over her father's.

The foreman came to her aid with instinctive tact. "I'm happiest when I'm skiing," he said, with a touch of embarrassment. The Professor nodded his understanding and rose.

Over coffee in the library Maria told of the invitation Pepitta had received. But the Professor did not listen. He pushed his coffee away and leaned back in his armchair. Usually he was interested in everything that concerned Pepitta and loved to share her excitement over things. Maria observed how he closed his eyes in exhaustion. The two strangers exchanged glances. Wiesner tried to make the conversation flow again. He explained to them what an important social event the ball at Uexcuell's was.

"Do you mean the leader of the Heimwehr, Uexcuell?" the foreman asked, and Maria was sorry to have mentioned it. It seemed impossible today to avoid politics.

Wiesner explained that it was the young Count who was a leader in the Heimwehr; the old gentleman, of whom they were speaking, was its declared enemy. Before the war, as chief military commandant in Prague, he had refused aid to the North Bohemian coal mine owners in putting down a strike. He had been nicknamed "the Red general." Now he was over seventy.

Maria guided the conversation back to skiing. When the foreman said that he had belonged to the Socialist sports association, "The Friends of Nature," from the time of its foundation, the

Professor shook his head. "Socialist friends of nature — what a contradiction! Nature is our old, old enemy. It has neither understanding nor foresight. Its methods are confused and anarchic. It tries every experiment and sticks to every nonsensical thing that issues from its womb. Socialist friends of nature! Red general! Mad, quite mad!"

A little frightened, Maria looked to Wiesner for help. There was something wrong with her father. He showed an agitation that was not natural to him. Now she was really scared.

The engineer got up and said abruptly: "Well have to go now." The foreman got up too.

"Maria, play something on the piano. It would change our thoughts/" The Professor spoke as if he had not heard that the two guests were about to leave. But the engineer insisted, and that at least was very decent of him, Maria thought. A few minutes later they were gone and it was quite as if they had never been there.

Maria went to the piano. She could never refuse her father any wish. She was about to begin a Sonata of Beethoven, and perhaps that would set everything to rights again. But she had scarcely had the thought when the Professor rose, quite unexpectedly, and glanced from her to Wiesner and back again, as if his mind were not there. Then without a word he left the room.

"Perhaps he is ill; I never saw him this way,"* Maria whispered after he had gone.

Wiesner took her hand. Would he ask her to decide now? A beseeching expression came into her eyes. "No, Maria; don't be afraid. Well talk another time. Take care of your father. Ill leave you two alone. But call me up before you go to bed."

She went with him to the door downstairs and gratefully touched his cheek with her lips. Wiesner watched her as she tripped so girlishly back up the stairs. The touch of her lips remained with him. In his hands there was an impulse to seize her but in his heart a childlike deference. He must get rid of this contradiction within himself.

Maria found her father in his study bent over a volume of his favourite work, Mommsen's *Roman History*. He looked up. His face was tranquil again, the torment gone, as if extinguished. "Forgive me for having disturbed your evening," he said.

She went to him and kissed him. There was no one like him. Still holding her hand he went on: "It wasn't a beautiful day for me. The funds of the Institute are to be reduced; barracks and churches are more important. And my secretary is ill. She is leaving for Italy in the morning."

"Fraulein Berg? But she spoke to me around noon."

"Yes, she was quite well then," he said slowly, looking steadily into her eyes. "And one other thing," he continued, "that concerns you. Wiesner is nearly twenty years older than you. I should like you to have a man who would begin his life with you, not close it. Don't hold it against me, Maria; I speak from experience."

Maria could not help reflecting that Fraulein Berg was only twenty-five. She listened as he went on.

"It wasn't right of me to let you be alone with him so much. Now I can only ask that you test yourself thoroughly, whether you really love him."

She made no reply but said good night and ran upstairs to telephone Heinrich that all was well and her father cleverer than all of them. Then she sat for a long time beside the telephone without taking down the receiver. She was suddenly tired of words; and it was more beautiful, half-dreaming, half-thinking of a thousand things, to watch the hand of the clock and to feel that someone was longing for the sound of her voice.

At midnight a chorus of bells rose from all the churches round about. She opened the window. The snow lay inches deep on the roofs and was still falling. The silent flakes drifted through the air. It made her happy, and she did not think why. But tomorrow was a new day and there would be many other new days.

IV

P
PITTA BIRKMEIER, brunette, graceful and impudent, the authentic Viennese girl of the Viennese songs, was standing, on the stroke of twelve, the hour for which she had been summoned for an interview, in front of the Uexcuell palace on the Rennweg. All the blinds were drawn. The house seemed dead. She looked down at herself before she rang the bell. Maria was an angel. Without a moment's hesitation she had loaned her the new fur jacket. It was a wonderful feeling to have it on; but nevertheless she had a little stage fright.

A Heimwehr man opened the door. Inside, a lackey in a yellow uniform piped in blue and silver asked her to follow him. She pulled herself together and walked proudly between the Heimwehr guards who had come out of the porter's lodge. One of them gave a whistle of admiration. Oh yes, she had known for a long time how she affected men.

The lackey led her across a tiled court toward a long greenhouse and, before she knew what to think, bade her precede him as they entered. A dim light fell through the clouded walls of glass. At the extreme end stood a tall man in an army officer's long coat. All she could make out was that he was absorbed in watering flowers. While she waited at the door the lackey went and spoke to him and took the watering can from his hands. The officer, who had the red stripes of a general on his trousers

— it must be the Count — turned and came slowly toward her.

He seemed to grow taller with every step he took. He had a sharp birdlike face. On his otherwise bald head one tuft of whitish yellow hair fluttered like a bunch of feathers. His head waved atop a long thin neck with a yellow, frighteningly pointed Adam's apple in the middle. Pepitta felt a mixture of fear and curiosity. The man looked like the Grand Inquisitor in the Schiller play at the Burgtheatre. But when at last he stood before her, emaciated, withered and wrinkled, there was something endearing in his aged eyes that took her fear away. Involuntarily she made a curtsy like a little girl.

A smile passed over the Count's face. He bent down and kissed her hand. It wasn't unpleasant and it was very elegant. Then he said with a sort of high-bred humour in a trembling nasal voice: "I am old Uexcucll; behind my back they call me 'the Vulture,' but I'm no bird of prey; I'm a quite harmless old gentleman, Fraulein Pepitta. You must let me call you that; I happen not to like family names."

Pepitta laughed. He wasn't so wrong. Family names were usually stupid. The Count joined in her laughter with an aged chuckle. Then he thanked her for having come and asked her whether he might not first show her his flowers. "Please, Your Excellency," she answered. Thank heaven at the last minute it had occurred to her to call up Wiesner and find out the proper way of addressing the Count!

The Count led her to a great bed of marguerites; next came lilies of the valley, primroses, larkspur, forget-me-nots and even gentians — only the flowers of forest and field, no palms or strange carnivorous plants like those at Schonbrunn. It was fragrant, like a mountain slope in summer, and just as hot. The Count helped her off with her jacket. She couldn't stop him, though her little frock was much less impressive. In her embarrassment and because she had to say something, she said that she would like to help him water his flowers. Instantly she was sorry, it seemed too intimate a remark, but then it proved to be exactly right.

The lackey was on hand with a full watering can; it was small and not heavy and the water had been heated, lukewarm. The Count talked about his flowers, their charm and their habits. It was very instructive but slowly Pepitta became impatient. She gave no sign of it and went on watering the beds as slowly and carefully as the Count himself, until at last he stopped and led her to an old carved bench of stone. She was terribly excited.

He began by telling her that he had heard her last July when the Conservatory gave "*Die Fledermaus*." A cold chill ran down her back when he said very seriously that he was sure she had a great future as an artist if only she would not, like most of them, let herself be spoiled. Then he spoke of the ball, which was set for the seventh of February. It was to be a masquerade. After the unmasking he wanted to entertain his guests with an old Viennese cabaret. He wanted Pepitta to sing. Several stars from the Viennese Theatre and the State Opera had already been engaged. For his quite personal pleasure, he wanted her to sing the aria of Adele: "My Lord Marquis, A Man like You." He had no doubt she would outshine the so-called stars, who in his opinion had lost all genuine feeling. She would, of course, receive the same fee as the others; beyond that she was to consider herself his personal and most special guest. If she had friends whom she would like to have come, she was to give him their names and addresses at once so that invitations might be sent in time.

In spite of her excitement Pepitta gave the answer she had carefully thought out: His Excellency's offer was a great distinction and she would do her very best. She began to calculate how many dresses she would be able to buy with the fee. He had of course not mentioned any figure and naturally she could not ask.

Silently the lackey appeared again, as if from nowhere, with a notebook in his hand. She gave the names and addresses of her friends: Baron Wiesner von Langenbruck, Professor Steiger and his daughter Muria, her brother Joseph Birkmeier. There were all kinds of reasons why she couldn't add the names of her parents to the list.

The Count rose and helped her into her jacket. Then he cut a bunch of primroses for her; she had been particularly charmed by them. The lackey put the flowers into a little cardboard box and wrapped and tied it—they had everything, tissue and twine, just as in a florist's shop. At the door the Count handed her the little box with a gesture of exquisite old-fashioned gallantry and again kissed her hand. Before he let her go he held her back for a moment with a mischievous smile. All at once his face had something youthful about it and he was telling her that he had received her in the greenhouse to see how she would behave to his flowers. That was his way of testing people. She had stood the test so delightfully that he wanted her to permit him to incite her for tea some day. She could only say that she would be very happy, and a minute later she was outside on the icy street before the dead house. But now it was as if she had been in an enchanted castle.

Slowly she walked as far as Scfiwarzcenberg Square, deeply stirred by her interview with the Count and by the vistas that were opening up. By the clock on the Ring she saw that it was half-past one. Startled, she hailed a taxi, spending her last bit of money. At home the whole family was waiting for her. And Maria, too, whom she had asked to come to protect her from Joseph and from the objections her father would make. Now that would not be necessary. When she told them how it had been, and how she was to sing as an equal with the stars of the Opera and the Vienna Theatre, and what a strange but distinguished gentleman the old Count was—why, then, they would not be able to make difficulties about it.

Joseph Birkmeier, a small man of business and Socialist alderman, was descended from an old family of Viennese craftsmen who more than a century before had kept a cabinetmaker's shop in one of the narrow streets near the Hofburg. His own father had had a flourishing antiquary's shop, and he in turn had the

fixed idea of making a lawyer of his son. Unfortunately Joseph had shown no gift for advanced studies, especially in law. His own desire to be an architect had met with definite obstacles in the higher branches of mathematics. He happened to be more of a practical type. Finally he had entered his father's business and inherited it after his death. The shop was in good condition financially and he could allow himself to conduct it with dignity. Once he himself had made some profitable sales the word "profit" lost the degrading connotations the Socialists had given it. As an unsuccessful student he had been quite susceptible to the Socialist oratory, the more so because he was strictly forbidden to go to those meetings through which, in the early years of the century, the subjects of the House of Hapsburg attained universal suffrage and began to protest against the impending war. In those days, nearly thirty years ago, Father Birkmeier had even been a secret member of the rising Workers* Party.

In 1914 he had succumbed, like all the other opponents of war, to the well-staged storm of public opinion. On the walls of the cattle car in which his regiment, singing lustily, was transported to Galicia, he had written: "Against the bloody Czar!" It was the watchword with which the Socialists sought to quiet their consciences and to give the universal enthusiasm a revolutionary tinge. Scarcely had the infantryman Birkmeier had his first taste of war when a wound in his lower arm, painful but not at all dangerous, had brought him back to Vienna. In the hospital there duly flowered a romance between him and his nurse, a rather pale girl whose patient smile touched his heart. They were married at Christmas — on the first of those four Christmas Eves of the war, when the world sang "Peace on Earth" without listening to its own voice. The young husband soon realized that he had made a mistake. But two children were soon born. Birkmeier's sense of responsibility won a Pyrrhic victory over his deeper judgment and his longings, a victory that he later made up for in extramarital affairs. The children growing up heard

disputes in their parents' bedroom; doors were slammed in the middle of the night, and in the morning their mother had tear-stained eyes.

When the war ended Birkmeier was thirty-five. Because he had been on the spot he had forged ahead of competitors who were in the trenches. The radical leanings of his youth were revived by his contact with war profiteers, whom he provided with a cultural patina for their new wealth. Then overnight came the terrible collapse and the proclamation of the Republic. The Socialists entered the Government. It was the right moment to remember his old Party book. The Party itself, having lost most of its young recruits in the field, received every useful reliable citizen with open arms. Birkmeier became a member of the city administration and served on its building commission. His early desire to be an architect found, after a fashion, a late fulfilment. He had the sensation of being a master-builder after all, and devoted himself entirely to work for the community, neglecting his own business. The family had to do without many things which he might otherwise have given them. But that caused no difficulties. The public recognition accorded him from time to time consoled his wife. At least she could be proud of him now and in her yearning to be proud of him she exaggerated the importance of the part he played.

The children had looked up to their father and admired him ever since he had taken them to the opening of a new block of model communal dwellings for workers, an occasion on which he had been the third speaker. Proudly he had stepped on to the platform; his small round figure seemed to expand; his glance swept over the gleaming windows, the sunny balconies, the green lawns in airy courts, the playgrounds and fountains where two hundred workers' children were to be saved from the tubercular germs of the crowded slums. This was politics to his taste, practical and constructive! Let the rich complain about the taxes that paid for these houses; let the insatiable Communists jeer! These buildings impressed everyone. One day their greatness and

beauty would silence the grumblers — the greedy on the right and the greedy on the left as the speaker Birkmeier put it.

Reality did not prove him right. The bourgeoisie, which had again assumed exclusive power in the State Government, was criticizing more and more violently the Socialist administration in Vienna, which it regarded as extravagant and demagogic. Even in the ranks of Birkmeier's own party voices were raised in warning against putting too much faith in "reform," and the damning phrase about "lower middle-class illusions" was being directed at the Party functionaries. Yet the masses believed in the new model dwellings as a far-reaching symbol of their great and peaceful power. In the general elections of the spring of 1927, the Workers' Party, with the united bourgeois parties arrayed against it, obtained seventy-six per cent of the total vote in Vienna and forty-three per cent in the provinces. Whereupon the leadership announced that only two more general elections were necessary to conquer the State. Thus the policy of reform, of abstention from force, of tranquil reason, was having its triumph. Moral weapons were winning the battles, social democracy was marching irresistibly forward.

Joseph Birkmeier the younger, then a twelve-year-old schoolboy and head of his class, had distributed election leaflets for his father's Party. In the evening he stood wedged among the workers in front of Party headquarters. His sister was with him; they clung to each other's hands in the crowd. The rejoicing over the victory grew. An old couple standing near by embraced and kissed them. It was a solemn moment. Even little Pepitta, caught up in the general excitement, suddenly ceased to laugh and shout. Then from a thousand throats rose the old battle song of the Austrian workers, their proud "Song of Labour," and with throbbing hearts the two children joined softly in the mighty chorus.

The schoolboy Birkmeier did not suspect how far from realization was the paradise that glowed in his young imagination as he sang and that would, he was sure, become realer and realer every

day. He was overcome by the fear that he would be too late, that all the great things would have been accomplished before he was grown-up. He lay awake the night after the election, the first election he had been aware of, dreaming wide-eyed in the darkness and waiting for his father, who was attending a victory celebration. At last the key clicked in the lock.

When the Municipal Councillor Birkmeier switched on the light he was taken aback by the little while-clad figure in the hall. Slowly he pushed his hat back from his forehead, much too far back. The child had the impression that the gleaming baldness moved forward from under the black rim.

"Father, tell me, when I'm grown-up can I help too?"

Birkmeier was tired. And he had drunk more than he could handle. Not that it mattered; it was something that happened only on holidays. But fancy the boy asking such questions in the middle of the night!

"Yes? Help what?"

"To make everything new?"

How difficult it was to hang up his overcoat when the clothes-peg turned so—let the coat lie on the floor. To make everything new! What nonsense! There had been a young Party man who talked like that at the celebration, a fellow with an irreverent face, full of ironical asides, one of those radicals without the right feeling for responsibility.

"Go to bed, boy. You will still be in time."

Father was unsteady on his feet. His face came nearer and grew bigger and a heavy hand weighed on the child's narrow shoulder and almost pressed him to the floor. The paternal kiss was moist and tasted of beer, and the beard stubble was prickly.

Seven lean years had passed since that night when for the first time the son had felt hatred for his father, and not understood the feeling. The recovery, which had promised to revive a nation exhausted by war, quickly declined. Millions of unemployed wandered through a bewildering world. The paradise the schoolboy Joseph had dreamed about receded further and

further. He was now a slender, overserious student at the university, in the second year of his legal studies. The son was to be what the father had failed to become. The child, who had been afraid of coming along too late to help build a new world, had become a young man who suffered, often beyond his endurance, the contradictions of the times in which he lived.

"It gives me a heartache, Joseph, the way you hang your head. What's the matter with you?"¹¹ his mother would often ask. She had become a quiet woman, old before her time.

"What's the use of living?"

He always gave her the same answer, though the words might be different. Sometimes he saw the fear in her eyes. Then he would say quickly before bending over his books again: "But I'll find out one of these days. Mother." He was pale and had no taste for the pleasures of the boys of his own age.

"I must talk to you, the boy studies too hard," said the careworn woman, when she heard her husband come home. He had thought she was asleep and was about to undress in the dark.

"He pokes his nose into things that don't concern him," Birkmeier answered grudgingly. "When he passes his next examination I'll let him go to Paris for two weeks."

He threw himself on the bed, turned over once or twice and fell asleep, unaware that the woman beside him, gentle as she was, held her ears because she could no longer bear to hear that creaking of the bed. "Paris? what next?" She thought. He started to snore. "He has no real feeling for his children."

Councillor Birkmeier was far more reconciled than his son to the bad times, which he called, far too conventionally for Joseph, "the economic world crisis." He was not dissatisfied with the turn events had taken. The shop was still profitable enough to let the children pursue their studies and to give their mother a sealskin coat for Christmas. If occasionally, in the afternoon he lost a few shillings at cards, it didn't matter. He had to admit to Joseph that the world was beginning to have an ugly look, yet if one had a sense of humour and didn't expect too much life was

bearable enough. In spite of their faults, which their mother overlooked, he could take pride in his children too. The girl was pretty and gifted, the boy industrious and clever — if only he didn't have such exaggerated ideas. You could listen to his lectures for a week or two; after that your patience gave out.

The disputes between father and son usually had no genuine bitterness about them. They were really a kind of game from which the Councillor, without admitting it to himself, always carried away some point that he could use at his committee sessions. But they were conducted so heatedly that Pepitta and her mother were often frightened, though they knew how peacefully they always ended. Whenever the controversy was at its height the father would suddenly get up, look at his watch, and with an unanswerable "I must go to the coffeehouse," break the argument off. And then father and son would stroll out together, leaving behind them two women whose cheeks were red with excitement and whose eyes sometimes held tears.

The argument that arose at the dinner table over what Pepitta told them about the Uexcuell Palace and the old count with his flowers and his wonderful offer grew more serious than usual and lasted so long that the maid in the kitchen was able to read a whole chapter of her sex thriller. Suddenly the devil broke loose.

"Fresh primroses in the middle of winter?" the father asked, estimating the cost of the flowers Pepitta unwrapped. There was no extravagance these children were not capable of.

"I could have had gentians and hedge-roses and cornflowers, violets and even big real sunflowers," Pepitta announced.

"Did you get the flowers at the palace?" the mother asked.

Pepitta threw herself on the sofa to catch her breath, she had raced so up the stairs. "I'll tell you all about it in a minute; you'll be surprised."

"May we eat?" Joseph asked in a sarcastic voice and pulled out a chair for Maria.

Pepitta made a face at him. "You may!" she cried with fresh

energy and jumped up. "I must tell my story first, without interruptions please, Joseph! It will interest you particularly, and I can tell you at once that the old Count is no ogre."

She threw all her vivacity into the story, but she soon observed that the family did not share her enthusiasm. The mother compressed her lips as if expecting an impropriety. The father was furtively watching Joseph who did not move a muscle. Only Maria was on her side. Pepitta had rather intended to hold back the story of the invitation to tea. But she wouldn't, — just to spite them a little. When she was through there was silence in the room. She waited a moment, then she said ironically, "Ah, I see you're all speechless." After another pause she asked more seriously, "Is anything special the matter here?"

Her mother served her. "You'd better eat now or the food will get cold."

"You all sit as if you were deaf and dumb! What is it that you don't like, Mother?"

"I'm not sure Pepitta. Maybe . . ." Her eyes took on the expression of uncertainty that always hurt Pepitta. "I'm not sure it's proper."

"What?"

"The interest in you that the Count displays."

"But, Mother," Pepitta laughed, "you don't think . . . He's an old man! Didn't I tell you? Why, Mother, he's as old as the hills!"

"You must at least get out of the invitation to tea. That has nothing to do with your professional work. Don't you agree, Fraulein Maria?"

"If you knew the Count, Frau Birkmeier —"

Alderman Birkmeier looked up. "Do you know him?" He really asked only to silence his wife. He always felt uncomfortable when she showed this hostile distrust of men.

"No," Maria answered, "not personally. But I've heard a great deal about him. He's over seventy, and an extremely cultivated gentleman."

"You never can tell!" Pepitta's mother was stubborn. "My daughter does not take tea with unattached gentlemen."

"But I can take Maria along if you're so scared that — " Pepitta swallowed the rest of her speech. No use shocking her mother.

Suddenly Joseph's voice cut through the air like a knife. "That's not the problem at all," he said.

They all stared at him. He always had a different opinion, on principle. Pepitta was glad enough to have him shift the talk from her mother's phobia about men. But it was no use to argue with him either. Maybe he could be stopped.

"Joseph, for heaven's sake leave politics out of it this time. The whole thing is a harmless private social occasion — a party — a ball."

"In the first place, as I've told you before, in these times every private matter, willy-nilly, assumes a political character—"

"Joseph, please, be quiet! Maybe you're right, but it drives me crazy!" Pepitta put her fingers in her ears.

"— and in the second place, the Uexcuell Palace is not a private residence," Joseph continued, not to be put off, "but the headquarters of the Heimwehr commander, Uexcuell."

Maria saw her chance to intervene. "Joseph, you must not confuse the old general with his son," she said and repeated what she had heard from Wiesner about the "Red general." She was quite proud of the fact that she had remembered the details about the strike in northern Bohemia and the general's refusal to give military assistance.

"Yes, I recall that," Birkrneier exclaimed. "So that was this Uexcuell? It must have been around 1911; made a sensation. A great debate in parliament and in the House of Lords! Those were democratic days! And now he cultivates flowers!"

"And his son cultivates murder; excellent division of labour!" Joseph said savagely.

The maid brought in the apple strudel and coffee. Joseph's sarcasm annoyed his father. But the boy really didn't look well.

*The mother, fearing a quarrel, interposed a question. Would

Maria and the Professor go to the ball? To help Pepitta, Maria said of course they would.

"I know a little dressmaker in Favoriten," Pepitta cried, "a real artist, too, who will make us charming costumes for next to nothing. Oh that will be—" she broke off in the middle of her sentence, for Joseph had risen, white as a wall, and was looking at her in rage. Before anyone could remonstrate he had himself in hand again and his expression was almost one of entreaty.

"You really don't know what you're saying, Pepitta," he said. "You, the daughter of a Socialist, just can't go and sing and dance for those Fascists." It sounded, as he said it, as if Pepitta were planning a crime. But she was determined not to let him order her about this time.

"Didn't you hear that the Count is a perfectly decent man and even helped you people once, when he was younger?"

"But it's that whole crowd. We can't associate with people who are out to cut our throats. That kind of laxness has almost ruined us already."

Pepitta was impatient. "I don't understand all that, Joseph. Anyway it's my career, not yours! I'm going to the ball and that's my last word."

"You're not going! I forbid you to go!" Joseph was beside himself. It was a sudden outburst. Then it became deadly silent around the table. But Joseph said no more. The more positively he behaved the greater became his secret doubts. Often he did not believe his own thoughts. And Pepitta stirred up all his suffering with her simple assurance. Why did he always lose his temper? He was not yet a responsible person. To be alone, to be alone with one's self, and be silent, until one really understood, and then to act, not talk . . . Nervously he stroked his forehead, murmured an apology, and supported his head on his hands. At this moment he felt his father's glance.

During the dispute between his children Birkmeier had calmly eaten his favourite dessert, even though his son's uncompromising attitude irritated him. But when the boy assumed his own au-

thonty to forbid something and began to roar, it was too much! He laid down his fork and looked sharply straight at his son. This peculiar glance was famous in the family from of old, but it had long ceased to daunt anyone. It was now rather felt to be a challenge. Under the table Pepitta gave her brother a good-natured shove and at the same time a pleading glance—but it was too late. Joseph asked his father if he did not share his opinion and the two men measured each other with their eyes.

Birkmeier had to admit—he was that honest with himself—that he had no opinion at all. He didn't want to spoil the girl's fun. It was too absurd to think that there should be nothing but politics: moreover, in the last analysis singing was her profession. She had to begin somewhere and this ball seemed to offer an excellent opportunity for introducing her. On the other hand it didn't please him particularly that it was the Uexcuells who were giving the ball. It was a dilemma. But since nearly every human being is faced with some dilemma every day of his life he was rather disgusted by his son's fanaticism. And the way the boy dared to stare at his father . . . What would Pepitta's friend go home and tell her family? His hand itched, but it was one of the rules of his life that the clever man gives in; it is the ass that comes to grief. He inserted the conciliating tone he used as a member of the building commission, and his wife and Pepitta were relieved. "Joseph, I don't understand you," he said mildly. "You know with mathematical precision what is correct and what is incorrect, even what is good and what is evil, and you don't allow for anything between. Only vain and self-righteous people do that. A humane person is never extreme, he has an understanding of the difficulties of life. Not every shoe fits every foot. There are two sides to every question. You probably consider these banal observations. Well, they happen to be true. And one more thing: If anybody in this house is going to do any forbidding, it is I."

Joseph did not answer. His father picked up his fork again and went on eating. This time he had put Joseph in his place

properly. After all, experience was worth more than all the courses at the university. But why didn't anybody say anything? What was wrong? He looked up and saw the three women staring at Joseph. The boy trembled convulsively. The whole atmosphere was suddenly quite different from what it usually was on such occasions.

Slowly Joseph pushed back his chair, got up and walked toward the door.

"Is he sick?" thought the father. But at the same time he seemed to feel in the boy an attitude so hostile, so irritating, so contemptuous that he could not endure it. Nor was it decent simply to leave the table before the meal was over.

"Joseph, stay!" His voice was sharp.

Joseph turned around. The mother's yellowish hands trembled above the white tablecloth. Pepitta said angrily, "Oh, please, no more drama!"

"Don't be impudent," her father barked and turned to Joseph again. "Sit down. I have something to say to you." He was stern. Maria hardly knew where to look.

Joseph sat down on the green-striped Biedermeier sofa. Above it hung a large frame in which were grouped photographs in small gilt-edged ovals of the members of the building commission. His glance ran over them. "Petty bourgeois, with or without moustaches," he thought. It was merely a reminiscence that belonged to the period when he had started to hate that picture. As he looked at his father now he seemed to see that round rosy head in a gilt-edged frame. Everything was so senseless. Why fight with him?

Joseph's unexpectedly peaceful demeanour irritated his father. Within certain limits, and without committing himself, he liked to argue with his son; that was his notion of modern education. But passive resistance was more than he could bear.

"What is the matter with you, Joseph? You act like a mute at a funeral. Are you afraid of the examinations or are you unhappy in love?"

"Neither," Joseph answered.

"Did you get into some scrape? Are you sick?"

"No."

"Well, then, what is it?"

"I can't stand it any longer," Joseph said after a pause and in a weary tone, as if his words were the end of a long explanation.

"What is it you can't stand any more?"

"Everything. The life we lead is one long lie, yours, mine, everybody's." His voice was calm but a great cruelty lurked behind it.

"Joseph is just having his pessimistic day today. Let him fight it out with himself," Pepitta said quickly.

She went up to her brother. "Maria has a box at the Volkstheatre tonight. Come along! It's a mystery melodrama. Do!" Furtively she squeezed his arm. It was a signal between them. "Please," she repeated and Joseph was aware of her sympathy, but he was through with compromises.

"What do you mean by saying our life is a lie?" Herr Birkmeier was now acting the heavy part of master of the house and head of the family.

"You'd better not ask, Father," Joseph answered sharply. That false self-importance goaded him more than anything else. "I've got rid of the inhibition you implanted in us."

"What inhibition?"

"The unwarranted respect for your person."

"Joseph!" His mother's cry was a warning. In it the son heard the sound of unuttered knowledge. But he had gone too far to retract. Pepitta ran to her mother and put her arms around her. Softly Maria Steiger rose and went into her friend's small bedroom where her things were. No one seemed to notice.

Birkmeier crumpled his napkin and sat up very straight. The blood rose, past the roll of fat at the back of his neck, into his bald head. "Go on," he said, "go on, before I put you straight."

Joseph's voice trembled. He had to do violence to himself to

speaking now but he went on. "When I was a child I looked up to you. I thought you were a very great man. You talked us all into believing it. I sometimes wonder whether you believed it yourself. And what are you in reality? A card-player and a Socialist Philistine. And that's what you all are." With a vague gesture Joseph indicated the photographs above the sofa. "What have you accomplished? What kind of a world are you handing over to my generation? First you went blustering to war, after talking pacifism for years; then you suppressed the revolution out of sheer cowardice and love of your own comfort. Finally you built a few houses and acted as though it meant the building of a new world. This cursed present is the crime of all of you, of every one of you — your crime!"

Joseph fell silent. His voice had sounded strange even to himself. And in the end he hadn't said what he really wanted to say. A moment ago everything had been so clear to him; now his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth and, what was worse, he suddenly felt that he was in the wrong, though everything he had said was so true.

"So it's all my fault!" Birkmeier shouted, talking himself into a rage. He liked to make speeches. He began to gesticulate and to raise his voice as if he were facing an audience. "My arm that they shot is crippled; I lost twenty thousand gulden in war loans; business is bad; I work till I drop. But according to you it serves me right. I declared the war, I dictated the peace treaties and then for a change it was I who invented the hard times, the unemployment and everything bad. But it doesn't matter, seeing that I have a son who knows everything and can put everything to rights again. What a pity he wasn't born twenty years earlier. Already in 1914 he would have forbidden the assassination of the heir to the throne at Sarajevo."

While these sentences were slipping easily into his mouth he wondered what to do with Joseph. He felt his wife's beseeching glance; now and then she knew what she was talking about. Maybe the boy did study too hard. The main thing was for him to

pass the next examination. Then let him go to France and improve his French, in Paris he would get different ideas. Birkmeier had a swift memory of his own adventures on his first visit to Paris, and the accusation "Philistine and card-player" no longer troubled him. A conciliatory mood came over him.

"You know perfectly well that you've been talking at me and not meeting my arguments," Joseph replied. "I didn't say you declared the war; I said you hadn't made the slightest attempt to prevent it; I didn't say, either, that you caused the economic crisis. I said that in spite of the obligations of your Party programme you did nothing to change the system that produced the crisis. Therefore you're guilty of the whole cursed present and I have the right to call you to personal responsibility,"

"And it is my duty to tell you that you have no notion of reality and that the day will come when you pipe a very different tune. I won't live to see it but I wonder what you will have achieved when you're my age. And I hope with all my heart that your children will take a different tone to you and judge you more justly than you do me."

Birkmeier spoke the last sentence in a deliberately heartfelt tone. His wife looked up at him gratefully.

Joseph heard Pepitta asking again whether he'd go to the theatre or not. He couldn't answer; he closed his aching eyes and pressed his hand against his forehead. His head hurt and his nerves were quivering from wakeful nights and too much black coffee. He seemed to hear people crying and singing. . . . A beggar bared the stump of an arm and kept tittering in a bird-like voice: War, war. A girl fastened her stocking. The silk mesh was tight over the flesh and an inch of bare white flesh gleamed alluringly. His brain whirled with the maxims of the Roman law — *Justia Rcgnotum fundamentum est . . . nemo plus juris transferre potest* — and all the contradictions weighed upon him. . . . The salesgirl in the shop had a new hat; it was shaped like an Italian helmet. It was a present from his father. He wondered whether they had a room somewhere or met in a

house of assignation. . . . The Martial Court was hanging its first victim, an illiterate cretin. In Paris they were building a World's Fair. In Germany they were torturing people to death. Brown with sunburn, Professor Steiger and his daughter returned from their winter vacation. Count Uexcuell cultivated flowers and prepared to give a ball. The only sense in all this confusion was that it must come to an end some day. One must not allow oneself to enjoy relaxation; one must work this thing out to the last detail, work ceaselessly till this world machine" could function at last without friction or sound, till the time when this project called "life," "earth," "humanity," would at last be printed, corrected, read and forgotten and there would be quiet, absolute quiet, and no more motion at all.

The air in the room was dull and dim; it smelled of food and now suddenly of cigar smoke. Without looking at him Joseph knew that his father was now holding a cigar in the corner of his mouth. This cigar after each meal was his greatest pleasure. He was just another poor devil. If he didn't call his father to account as strictly as he called himself where was he to begin? Ugh, how he sucked in his coffee! How well-fed he was, the Herr Socialist, how well-fed and how modest! Joseph turned and looked at him in a way that made his mother reflect, "Why do they always fight? They are so much alike!" And there was a good deal of his father's intonation in Joseph's voice as he said: "Can't you drink your coffee properly? It's disgusting."

Birkmeier's clenched fist thundered on the table; the plates leaped. "That's enough " he roared. "Your impudence today is intolerable!" He sprang up and raised his arm. The mother put her hands over her eyes; Pepitta made as if to hold her father back but Joseph had already caught the descending hand. His fingers were firm about the wrist with its blond hairs, and slowly pressed the arm down.

"You forget that your philosophy forbids corporal punishment," he said softly. Then he released his father's hand and left the room.

Disconcerted, Birkmeier looked after him. Then he left too, slamming the door behind him. The crash made Anna in the kitchen drop her novel. Frightened, she ran into the vestibule and helped the master into his overcoat. He slammed the outer door with another crash.

The mother wept gently to herself.

"Don't take them seriously," Pepitta said. Then she joined Maria in the bedroom.

"Do forgive me, Maria. I won't invite you again. Let's go."

"It doesn't matter," Maria said.

"Do you understand now why I envy you?" whispered Pepitta. "I must get away from the family, I must, or I'll do something foolish." Tears started from her eyes.

V

IN Floridsdorf, District 21 of Vienna, a city in itself at the left bank of the Danube, they were working overtime at the Automobile Works. The date of delivery for the army transport cars had suddenly been moved up. Karl Merk was one of the two engineers on duty in the assembly plant. Foreman Kraus watched him helping the men take apart a motor that would not start. Schremmel, the other engineer, stood over him, giving unnecessary orders till Karl, to the delight of the workers, shot him a look that silenced him.

Three days had passed since their visit to the Professor's house and Kraus had not yet given his friend a piece of his mind. He had wanted to, right away, after they left the house on Freedom Square; but Karl had been saying "Good night" and walking away with his long steps almost as soon as they had set foot in the street. It was out of friendship that Kraus had gone there with him, though he had more important things to do and in spite of the fact that in his opinion it would have been much better to write a "letter of thanks for the help in the mountains. He had finally given in to Karl's insistence on a personal visit because the Professor could prove a good connection for Karl, who hated his slavery in the factory. And then — Karl had behaved clumsily and attacked the Professor. That was no way to

get help; and in case Karl had only wanted to see the girl again, it was still not very clever.

The more Kraus thought about it the plainer it became to him that the girl had been the real reason. Ever since the visit Karl had been avoiding him, and hadn't exchanged a personal word with him. And his rather crude behaviour to the girl was additional proof. Karl was not the sort for pretty speeches. And no wonder that the Baron had put him out of humour. For a blind man could see that there was something fairly definite between the girl and the Baron, who, by the way, wasn't a bit arrogant. And anyhow Karl didn't have the clothes to associate with such people. It was a different world. They had both been out of place. And there was no time for love stories either.

This brought Kraus back to the sudden appearance of the tramcar man Scheller, Defence Corps leader of the district Brigittenau, in the factory that morning. "I happened to be in the neighbourhood," he said casually. But then he wanted to know whether Karl and his mother were reliable. Of course he got a positive answer. Karl had resigned from the Party merely as a protest against its failure to fight the breach of the Constitution that had been made on the fifteenth of March, when the Government had suppressed Parliament. His heart was in the right place. They didn't come any better than Karl, not even in the illegal organization, and his mother was a working-woman of standard weight and alloy. Kraus could assert all this with a good conscience.

Scheller had listened carefully but he did not give a hint, by so much as a word, why he was asking. These "illegals" were always on the lookout for treachery; you couldn't blame them, either, for their mysterious behaviour; arrests were being made every hour. When Scheller left, Kraus had a disagreeable, insecure, unpleasant feeling. It plagued him all day long. Perhaps they wanted something of Karl; that was the most likely explanation; but perhaps he was under suspicion. It was against all the rules to talk to him about it, and yet it was the duty of a

friend to do just that. He ought to tell him that something was going on behind his back. He could do it without a qualm because he'd be ready to stake his right hand on his friend's decency.

The telephone was ringing behind Kraus' partition; he almost missed it in the noise. It was his wife. A comrade had just been arrested, a widower, and she had to take care of his children. She wanted to tell Kraus so he would know where she was.

Putting the receiver down Kraus smiled happily. A year ago Bertha would have had different reasons for not being at home when he got back. Yes, she certainly had been a bitch, and everybody had insisted on telling him about it, though he knew it better than they. Only Karl had not said a word, he had never sneered like the others—he had never made the slightest remark. In his presence Kraus had never had to be ashamed. And when the others had stung him to the point of getting a divorce and he had gone to Karl in his despair, he had helped him, as no one could have done. And so simply!

"Are you still fond of her?" he had asked.

"Yes."

"And she keeps your house neat and in good order?"

"Yes."

"And she treats you well in every other way?"

"Yes."

"And her only fault is that now and then she needs another man?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's nothing against you. She just can't help herself. She wants to know more about life, and she's afraid that suddenly she'll be old and everything will be over. Can't you understand that?"

"Yes, but . . ."

"And she'd be miserable if you put her out?"

"Yes."

"And you yourself? Tell the truth."

"Yes, I would too."

"Then -why don't you stay and not break up the children's home? I grew up without a father and I know what it means. Tell her that you understand her, that you're not a slaveholder, but that you have your own life too. So you'll stay with her as long as the children are kept out of it and she doesn't cause talk. You've got to take the position that she's only a friend with whom you share the same flat. It won't be easy at first. Bui that's my advice. And mark my words, after a while she'll come and try to win you back."

That was the way Karl had talked to him and his advice had turned out to be right. He had led his own life and after a while he even liked the feeling of being free himself. He could see how it upset Bertha when he came home late and didn't say where he had been. But she asked no questions and there were no quarrels. They respected one another. Then she began paying him all kinds of attention, and after six months she had come to him. Since then they had lived together as the happiest couple of their age in the district. It was as if she wanted to make up to him for all the times she'd hurt him. And he kept his freedom too. Every Saturday he could go with Karl to the mountains, and no matter how long he stayed at Party meetings or the shop council she never complained. Recently she had even begun to take an interest in his affairs. Yes, he owed all his happiness to Karl. If it hadn't been for him his wounded pride would have driven him into a stupid blunder. Life in reality wasn't a bit like the things they taught you at school. Less romantic, but much more romantic too. He didn't need to tell Karl that; Karl knew it better than he did. And if he was in a tight place now, there was nothing he wouldn't do in return to get him out of it.

After closing time Kraus and Karl went together to Karl's tram stop, as they did every day when they got through at the same hour. Kraus lived near the works. Their coat collars turned up, their hands in their pockets, they kept step, marching through the streets as if they were on a tour in the moun-

tains. The wind, whistling, blew against them, whirling the light snow at the corners, and the cold tightened again.

A passing police car reminded Kraus to tell Karl about Bertha's telephone call. "How many do you suppose they arrested today?" he asked. Karl shrugged his shoulders and did not answer.

Then of a sudden he said: "Forgive me for dragging you into the Inner City on Monday. It was an illusion, the girl and the whole thing."

To this Kraus made no reply. But at the tram stop when the car approached he said, "There is something else. The Defence Corps people were inquiring today whether you're reliable—you and your mother too. Of course I swore you were."

"Tell them they can depend on me when things get serious. But I want them to leave my mother alone. There's my tram. Good night."

Karl crossed the street and looked up at the house. The two windows of the flat on the fourth floor were lighted. His mother was still up. Thoroughly chilled he climbed up the dim stairway. The wind had gone right through him, his overcoat was nothing to brag about. When he opened the outer door of the flat he could smell stale cigar smoke, and light came from under the warped door of the living-room. He stood still and listened. Nothing stirred. He closed the door behind him and switched on the light. On the rack he saw an unfamiliar coat and a roundish bowler hat. In the umbrella-stand leaned an old-fashioned black stick with a polished, yellow ivory ball for handle. Did he know this stick or did it only remind him of an antiquary's shop-window that he often stopped to look into? Wondering, he hung up his own coat and walked to the door of the room.

Karl and his mother occupied a flat consisting of a larger room, a smaller room, a kitchen, and a little hall. His father had fallen in Eastern Galicia at the very beginning of the war.

On a sunny summer morning, in the list of killed and wounded, Frau Merk had seen a brief, black line that grew bigger, blacker until the whole world was black. It had taken the war widow a long time to understand that this morning would be followed by another morning and another — until twenty years had been filled with them. But she had lived on, because there was a six-year-old boy to take care of, and so everything had gone its long hard way. And hadn't others been stricken even worse? Mother Merk, as she was still called by her son's former school-mates, never complained, it was only that ever since his childhood Karl had felt in her something he couldn't get hold of, something he later recognized as a finality that one didn't speak of. And that had never changed, despite her naturalness, her practical good sense, the happy balance of elements in her character.

During the troubled years of his development it had often tortured and depressed him to think that she lived only for him. Once with all the crudeness of his inexperienced youth he had burst out and asked his mother, at whom men still turned their heads: "Why don't you marry again?" For a moment she had stared at him with narrowing eyes. Then for answer she had struck him, for the first and only time, again and again as if she were unconscious of what she was doing and where her hand fell.

Karl stopped in front of the living room door. He knew suddenly why all this was going through his head. On that terrible evening, after she had beaten him, he had seen this ivory ball for the last time. No longer hesitating, he turned the knob.

In the middle of the room, on a chair beside the table, facing the door, sat a man between forty and fifty, appallingly fat. He sat motionless even when Karl stood before him. Only his eyes blinked. Small, red-rimmed, and pale as water, in that huge fat face they did not look like human eyes. An unhealthy complexion, a small clipped blond moustache, thinning hair —

Karl stood as if rooted and registered impression after impression, change after change. The man's legs were so short that his toes barely touched the floor, his thighs so huge that they hung over the chair's edges. The huge belly rose and sank. The arms embraced it, but the hands did not meet, the unexpectedly small hands that did not fit the fellow at all. On the table stood two brandy bottles, one empty, one almost full, and some used glasses, Karl counted five. There were ashes in the tray and more were scattered over the white tablecloth. The air was thick with smoke.

"Good evening, Herr Franze," Karl said, feeling as if he were again the schoolboy greeting the neighbour who used to come to call and give his mother advice. Until one day he stopped coming, the day after that beating which Karl never forgot but which did not humiliate him because it had not been a punishment. Never again had his mother been so beautiful as during those minutes when she was defending her heart. Afterwards, for weeks, she had looked at him as if she wanted to tell him something, explain something to him, until it was no longer necessary, because Karl had understood too, without speaking. The scene became a secret between them which each of them now and then thought about but never touched with words.

"Good evening, Herr Franze," Karl repeated, since no answer came. And it was some time before Ferdinand Franze, once a half-starved musician playing in wine taverns, now first kettledrummer in the famous Symphony Orchestra, cleared his throat and in a low sad voice that rose to express joy at seeing him again, and then cracked, gave him the Party greeting:

"Friendship, Karl, friendship, if you don't mind my still calling you Karl, Herr Engineer, and don't you be embarrassed wondering how I got so damned fat." The greeting ended in a lament.

"Naturally you call me Karl, Herr Franze." He stretched out his hand. It was some time before the short little fingers of

the fat musician were placed in Karl's muscular hand, without pressure, cold, lifeless. It was a dismal feeling.

"Is anything wrong, Herr Franze?" Karl asked.

"Nothing, or everything, as you choose. But let's have a brandy, we must drink to our comradeship; if I call you Karl, you must call me Ferdinand."

Karl almost never drank, but after the cold he could stand a brandy. He filled two little glasses; they clinked and emptied them. Now by rights they should embrace. Karl didn't want to hurt Franze's feelings but he knew he could not kiss him. The musician solved it by kissing the air, in caricature, and they laughed. Then Karl said: "All right—Ferdinand. And now tell me where Mother is and why you suddenly come to see us after so many years, and then in the middle of the night."

Franze got up, or rather he leaped to his small feet, much more nimbly than Karl would have expected, trotted up and down and suddenly stood still before him.

"Aha, your mother," he cried. "There's a remarkable woman! I don't know whether you know that I wanted to marry her once upon a time. She sent me packing, and no mistake, otherwise I'd be your stepfather. She'll be home later. We had a conference, then they all went out half an hour ago. I stayed so you wouldn't be worried at her not being here. We could have left a note, but I wanted to see what you'd grown up like. And there was some brandy left too." Franze spoke quickly, stammered, with a hasty voice that fell over itself; then again, slowly, monotonously, his breath whistling in unnatural pauses. "He must be sick," Karl thought and asked, puzzled: "Who had a conference here? Where did Mother go so late at night? You must tell me that."

"I can't tell you anything," Franze snapped. "First because I'm not allowed to tell anything anyway; second because your mother expressly forbade it. You know her, don't you?"

"All right, then we'll wait till she comes back," Karl said

and sat down on the sofa. He thought to himself: "He greeted me with 'Friendship,' he's in the Party. They wanted something from Mother. That explains the question to Kraus. They work fast."

Franze was glad that Karl did not go on asking questions. He seemed to have his mother's discipline. The apple does not fall far from the tree. "Now well celebrate our reunion," he croaked and poured a second brandy. "You've grown to be a man since I last saw you. That must be twelve, no — " he counted on his fingers — "fourteen years ago. According to that you're twenty-six. Right?"

Karl nodded.

"Jst about the age I was in those days. Time passes, thank God! Your health!"

They clinked glasses again. Franze insisted. The second glass went straight to Karl's head. He felt a tightness in his gums. He almost asked: "Mother sent you packing because I was growing up and might get ideas about it, isn't that so?" But he remained silent and it was not until a ring on the musician's finger caught his eye that he said: "You're married?"

Franze's watery eyes blinked and his hand sawed the air. It was an inconclusive gesture that might have meant many things. Then he sat down and after a pause he answered: "I was married; she killed herself!"

This time his voice was calm and dry and struck Karl like a blow. He bent forward for the next sentence, but none came. They both heard, below them, a motor car that crossed the Belt, approached the house, rattled past and drove away. They were both silent. Suddenly Franze said, "Yes." Then he poured a third brandy.

This was really more than Karl could handle. But when Franze lifted the glass with his comical little fingers, Karl had to do him the favour and clink glasses with him. They drank again and to Karl, at least, the smoke-filled room and the whole world became a friendlier place. If he wanted to he could

challenge that Baron Wiesner. But he would have to think it over, whether he really wanted to or not.

Suddenly Franze clicked his tongue and began to tap the legs of his chair with the heels of his tan shoes. Karl lit a cigarette and let his eyes follow the blue smoke as it rose lightly and curled about the stale gray clouds that still hung in the air. He gave a start as Franze began abruptly to speak.

"Yes, that was also a kind of solution," he said. "She killed herself. Right after our boy was buried—yes, I lost him too—she disappeared. For days and days I looked for her in the city and sent one telegram after another to all her relations in the country. No use. After a week—I was half-crazy—the police called me up. They had found her, at St. Poelten, on the railway tracks. She'd gone the whole long way on foot. She probably wanted to get to Melk, where she had grown up, to see the old monk she spoke about so often. She was a devout believer but it didn't do her any good. In her hour of need she couldn't even reach the convent. She must have been hungry and very tired. She let the night express run over her. She wasn't the great love of my life; but in that hour I'd have liked to have been with her and helped her."

Franze fell silent but began tapping his heels again. It sounded now like a funeral tap. He filled the glasses for the fourth time, paying no attention to Karl's gesture of refusal. But this time he didn't offer to clink glasses and drank alone.

"It all started with the burning of the Palace of Justice," he went on. "No, not with the fire but with the verdict handed down the night before."

Karl had the feeling that Franze was not really talking to him any longer. The words burst hoarsely in the man's mouth, slid across his lips and fell at random. They were not meant for anyone. He continued to talk without emphasis, more and more rapidly.

"I read the verdict in the paper on my way to rehearsal in

the Concert House. All the people in the tram were angry at the acquittal of the Heimwehr men who had shot down three workers and a child for fun. But nobody thought beyond that and we were as innocent as the Party leadership itself. And imagine, while the workers of Vienna were going on a spontaneous strike of protest and were marching down the Ring, I was drumming the great Mourning, the Eroica. I always have to think that I drummed the Eroica that day. And I have to think of Jesus too. I cut out the photograph, and kept it, showing our good old mayor driving to the Supreme Court Palace that the workers had set on fire. They illuminated justice, all right. He went among his people whom he had led for forty years but who had suddenly outgrown him. How he implored them, how desperately he wanted to hold back their rage! Yes, he stretched out his hand, from his car, just as Jesus did from his boat in the storm on the lake of Tiberias. The only difference was that the mayor couldn't make the storm be still. The police did that. Their guns rattled the whole day and there was a hunt on in the streets of the great musical city of Vienna. In the afternoon, when all the demonstrators had disappeared from the streets and the fire department was putting out the fire undisturbed, a boy who wanted to see them better climbed up on the scaffolding of the Volkstheater, which was being renovated. The timber of the scaffolding was white and yellow and the boy had on a dark suit. He made a good target. A policeman raised a rifle to his shoulder and shot him. He tumbled down from plank to plank, to the pavement. During the night they telephoned: a bullet had gone astray! Oh yes, they can shoot and they can telephone—the best police force in the world."

The eyes of the fat drummer did not blink any more; the lids were closed and he spoke out of a passionless trance, monotonously, without a stop, as if he were relating the story of his misfortune for the thousandth time and as if it no longer touched him personally. Below them, again, a car passed. Karl

drank the brandy that stood before him. "Swinish," he said to himself, half-aloud.

"I had the boy and his mother buried in one grave, in the Central Cemetery, beside the hundred victims of that day. Since then I've been active in the Left Wing of the Party. Since that day. It taught me that one can't live outside one's time. You can do it for a few weeks or a few years; you can't keep on cheating forever. Once upon a time I thought I knew better. As a worker's child I belonged to the Party. But I merely paid my dues and beyond that I didn't care. My music was the most important thing to me. I made a career and was taken on in the Vienna Theatre and put on a tuxedo every night. Then I was engaged by the Symphony Orchestra and put on tails and both Toscanini and Bruno Walter said I was the best in the world on percussion instruments. So I got married and we had the boy and it was a regular idyll. I believed the world was complete and didn't turn out so badly if only you worked hard. I had a lovely apartment and out at Hiitteldorf we had a plot with vegetables and flowers and an airy little garden house. And I gained fifty pounds. And in one week everything was finished, just so I shouldn't go on imagining that I was alone on this earth. I can't drum the Eroica any more since then; I always have to have a substitute when it's played. Only my weight I haven't lost, but that's fine; fat people don't arouse suspicion. I also drink too much. Prosit, Karl!"

Karl was not easily moved; his life had been hard too; but a lump came into his throat. He poured out another drink and they clinked glasses again. Franze had spent his misery and his face wore an expression of content.

For a while it was so quiet in the room that one could have heard a pin drop. Then Franze asked in a tone quite free of the torment of a moment before: "How has life treated you, Karl? I can still see you running down the stairs to your place in the basement or playing marbles on the street."

Karl thought of the two dark holes in which he had grown

up. Just a hand's breadth below the upper rim of the window the pavement ran. He could guess from the heels who was passing by. Every night at one o'clock his mother got up. After closing hours the waiters in the whole neighbourhood brought her their quaint two-tailed coats to be cleaned. They had to be spotless by the following noon. How were you going to get them dry in such a short time? But his mother had always had them ready. All night long the water splashed and the brushes scrubbed. The deep sound of the washboard was the most exciting. Sometimes Karl woke up and listened without moving until he fell asleep again. Or he crawled out of his bed and wanted to help. Then his mother called him a night watchman and made him go back. Often he dreamed of the wet black ghostly tails; secretly he was afraid of them. Tails. The word still had overtones for him. Franze, with his girth, must look funny in them.

"Your mother was unapproachable," Franze continued. "She wouldn't take help from anyone. I can still hear the pride in her voice when she said: 'My Karl is beginning to earn money; we'll get along.'"

"What I could do wasn't worth talking about. I gave private lessons to elementary school pupils—just reading and writing and arithmetic at eight groschen a lesson," Karl said.

Franze swung round on his seat, as if it were a swivel chair. "Right," he cried. "I saw you once in the house of a tailor named Cuba, didn't I?"

"That's right. His boy was particularly slow." Karl was glad that they had found so harmless a subject. His mother would surely be home soon; it was almost one o'clock.

"That was before I moved away from your neighbourhood," Franze made a face as if he were still sorry about it. "Old Cuba sold me my first dinner coat, on the instalment plan. He had an eye on me for one of his many daughters, probably Eulalia. Horrible to think about. She's a common whore now. I ran into her not long ago. Brought it all back to me. It was always

dark in their place, and there was a smell of singed cloth and sour beer in the air and the doors opened and closed as quietly as if they were made of velvet, and on every wall hung a saint's picture."

Karl remembered. "Sometimes in the middle of the lesson one of the girls would come out of a corner all tousled and sleep-eyed and creep through the room slowly and lazily, like a huge cat. The oldest one waylaid me once in the anteroom and hugged me as if she were crazy. I ran for it and that was the end of the lessons at Cuba's."

"They were all tubercular," said Franze as if in apology. "Eulalia's just a skeleton now; it's getting her fast." Again he sawed the air, then came to an abrupt stop and laughed merrily as if something agreeable had occurred to him. When he recovered his breath he croaked: "Didn't you also give lessons to the son of the barber on Kopp Street?"

"Yes," Karl answered, surprised at Franze's gaiety. "He offered to have the apprentice cut my hair twice a month instead of paying me."

"That's the joke," Franze cried. "That fellow was the worst miser I ever met. He was stingy with the shaving soap. It didn't do him any good though. When he finally made up his mind to have a holiday for the first time in his life he had a stroke at the railway station out of pure excitement. And that's the way it goes. Prosit, Karl!"

Karl clinked glasses with him. It didn't matter now. Carefully Franze guided the conversation from past to present. Karl gave no sign of knowing that Franze was trying to sound him out and was furtively looking him over with those unnatural, watery eyes. Let him fancy himself to be ever so sly if it gave him pleasure. And besides there was nothing to conceal.

No, it hadn't been a day of joy, the day of Karl's graduation. The engineer's diploma of the year 1930, however solemnly presented, was no more than a ticket of unemployment. There were simply no jobs. He had studied for eleven years and his

mother had worked her hands to the bone for him and he was back exactly where he was in his schoolboy days, giving lessons. There was this difference, that the pupils were older and the pay higher, but not proportionately so, and certainly not high enough to save his mother from menial work. Yet the whole time that had been his one aim. And he had not even achieved that. Finally, eighteen months ago, he had found a job as draughtsman in the automobile works at Floridsdorf. He had got it through Kraus, a member of the shop council, whom he had got to know in the "Friends of Nature." But his prospects in the factory were poor. The work wasn't right and the chief engineer was secretly a Nazi.

Karl answered Franze's questions without reserve; only, on account of the brandy, he had to be careful not to get confused and give away the thing he had most at heart. It wasn't easy, everything led into it. He was fed up with this life and troubled about the future. He could see, looking at his colleagues, how things went. There was the engineer Schremm, whose main interest was what his wife had put up for him in his lunch; there was the engineer Mauserl who practically lived for a toy train he had at home; or the engineer Wunsch, champion of a suburban bowling club. He could even understand them. They hadn't kept their eyes open when they were young and then suddenly it was too late. He was now at the critical point himself. Wasn't it ironical? Franze couldn't get enough air to breathe but he had a purpose in life. He was fighting, in the Left Wing of the Party. Only, alas, because of his misfortune. But for the tragic loss of his wife and child, he might now be spending all his time worrying about what flowers and vegetables to plant this year in his garden at Hikteldorf. But the right thing would be to accept one's life, to be happy, to have something to lose and yet act according to conscience, however dangerous it might be, because one couldn't be content any other way. Only life didn't conform to the laws of ethics. It tossed you hither and thither and didn't ask about your ideals. You

had no choice. Perhaps Fraulein Steiger was better off. She had a variety of truths to choose from. Most people didn't have even one.

Karl pushed away the brandy Franze had poured out for him. He was determined to stay sober, agreeable as it would be to forget everything just for once. Even back in the Professor's house, when everything was going wrong, he would have liked to empty the wine bottle. But he didn't want Franze to be able to tell the Defence Corps people that he couldn't control himself. Not that it mattered so much what they thought of him. They talked big and kept their weapons hidden or buried. But they had enough irresponsible critics already; he wouldn't add his voice. He had resigned from the Party out of sheer disappointment and so that he needn't share its guilt.

The conversation died down. Franze decided that this was enough for the first time. In any event Karl had said nothing to arouse suspicion. It was two o'clock now; they must have made the rounds of all the houses and the last depository in the cemetery of Ottakring wasn't far off. Thank God he hadn't had to go along after the wild chase he had that day. Early in the morning he had got the uncomfortable feeling that he was being followed by a police spy. For two hours he had crossed back and forth across the city, until he felt reasonably safe again. After that there was the exhausting rehearsal of "The Song of Earth"—there was a nervousness in Gustav Mahler's music that was contagious. Then a committee meeting: Scheller had been convinced by Kraus that Mother Merk was the right person. Finally the subscription performance, nothing less than the Ninth Symphony: "Be embraced, ye million brothers; let this kiss be for the world . . ." Well, the world didn't exactly look like that springtide of the peoples of which the program note spoke. But such people as Comrade Josephine Merk did reconcile one to the world. Without a question, without the slightest doubt, she had been ready. It was an excellent choice. The Brigittenau group could congratulate itself and be grateful to him. If only he were not so tired. The doctor had told him to

go to bed early, risk no excitement and drink no liquor. It was very funny. To be forbidden to live in order to put off death — what nonsense! But it did feel good to close one's eyes ... to be quiet a little.

Karl thought that the musician must be asleep. Then he saw one of those small hands playing with the watch chain. Between index finger and thumb the chain was turned, back and forth, almost imperceptibly, without stopping. ... It made Karl nervous. He was almost ready to shout at that fat blind bag. But he controlled himself. He would rather talk it over quietly with his mother later on. Where was she staying so long? He stared at the tall clock and followed the second hand and did nothing but wait.

Suddenly they heard the outer door. Unsteadily Franze rose on his short legs and threw a guilty look at the brandy-bottles; even the second was now almost empty. Karl straightened the tablecloth before he stood up.

Mother Merk saw Karl's coat next to Franze's, the hats, and the stick with the ivory handle. "If only he didn't talk any nonsense," she thought. "But the boy is grown up now."

Karl opened the door. The room behind him lay in a fog of smoke.

"You're fine ones," cried Mother Merk. "Instead of putting things in order you smoke and drink the hours away!" Her glance passed from the table to Franze, who clung rather pitifully to his chair, his eyes, embarrassed, on the floor.

"It's time," she said to him kindly, "for you to go home. It's half-past two. You may still catch a tram on the railway line to Mariahilfer Street. You can walk from there. The cold will sober you up. You ought to be ashamed of drinking so much. Karl, you'd better take him to the tram."

"As you say, Frau Merk," Franze bowed clumsily. "Thank you for your hospitality and everything. Karl and I had a fine talk and drank to our renewed friendship." He tottered toward her and held out his hand. Their eyes met.

Karl pretended not to see the understanding between them.

He left the room and put on his overcoat. After a pause in which no sound came from inside, Franze followed him out.

"Hold on, Herr Franze," Mother Merk called after him, "take your bottles with you. I won't have alcohol in the house, and the next time don't bring it; drinking gets you nowhere."

Obediently the musician went back, took the bottles and stuck them into the pockets of his overcoat. Karl helped him on with his coat, gave him his stick, and went out with him. Mother Merk heard them groping their way downstairs. Those old tenements had no lights in the halls. Landlords were thrifty.

What a lot of smoke! Mother Merk opened the window, carried the sticky little glasses into the kitchen, washed them and put them back on the shelf where they belonged. She hadn't used them for years. Then she went back, and leaning over the window sill shook out the tablecloth. The wind was sharp; the brief exposure chilled her to the bone, but she could never stand an unaired flat. She made Karl's bed on the sofa. She had to get the oven ready for morning too. She took the ashes out and put in paper, kindling wood, and coal ready for firing. Then she closed the window. Now it was her own house again, poor but orderly.

She went into the small room which was her own, turned on the light and looked in the mirror over the washstand. It was a long time since she had really looked at herself. Her eyes had been all for the boy. Now she studied herself objectively, almost as if she were a stranger. Her features were hard and firm; she could read her whole life in them; but there was no trace of bitterness, thank God; they were neither haggard nor without hope. The eyes under the square forehead and the dark brows were as vivid as when she and Karl's father had met. Two bright flames, he used to call them.

She combed her short gray hair and smiled like a young girl. Today had been her day of triumph! It was to her, a nobody, a washerwoman, a servant, an uneducated person who

never opened her mouth and went to no meetings, it was to her they had come, because things were getting serious. The Party could depend on her; they had found that out in their day of need.

She took a little photograph from the bedside table, passed her hand over the glass and frame and looked into the face of a young workingman. "You dear fool," she thought, losing herself as she gazed, "I preached to you always: Make order in yourself and keep it, and the great things come of themselves. All the discussions, all that sitting up all night, had no real value. Now you are happy. Yes, your wife has become a member of the illegal organization—overnight and nobody must know it. But I can tell you. See, I don't let you down, even in your politics."

Karl came back. She put the little picture in its place. A feeling of uncertainty came over her. How would Karl take it? She had never had a secret from him before. But this secret was not her own, and he was a man. He must learn to understand that she was also, again, a human being in her own right and not only his mother.

Since no tram had come, Karl had put Franze into a taxi. He walked home slowly, carrying his hat. The cold wind had done him good; his head was clear again. He asked himself whether he had better talk to his mother or not. He didn't want her misused. Was she able to judge the chances she was taking? She was brave but she knew too little. She herself needed to be helped and she was no longer as strong as she thought. It was his responsibility.

But when he entered the room and saw how orderly it was again, how the fire had been laid and the bed made, he quieted down. "She knows what she's doing," he thought. "I mustn't spoil it, just keep an eye on her." He had observed how proud she was when she came home, how her eyes had sparkled.

Mother Merk looked at him as he took off his shoes. No, she

couldn't talk to him. Anyway he must know that she was pledged to silence.

"I would have cleaned up, Mother," he said. "It's late. You'd better sleep a little longer tomorrow. I'll wake myself up and make the coffee."

"That's what you think! I'll sleep a little faster. Good night, Karl."

"There's nothing you want to tell me, Mother?"

"No, Karl. I mustn't."

"Well, good night then."

She went back into her little room and closed the door. He put on the pyjamas she had made for him last Christmas and turned out the light. Ugh, the bed was cold!

He could not fall asleep. Franze, the liquor, all the secret goings-on. And Maria Stciger. A feeble reflection from the arc-light below on the Belt flickered across the ceiling.

"Are you asleep, Mother?" he called into the darkness, not loud enough to waken her.

"No, Karl." The answer came at once.

He got up, went into her room, and sat down on the edge of her bed.

"Don't be angry, Mother, but I'm worried about you."

"I understand, Karl."

"Can I help?"

"I don't believe so. First you must make up your mind. Until then nothing one does for others means anything."

"But if you needed me —"

"Yes, Karl."

He leaned over and kissed her.

"Good night."

"Good night."

They both lay awake for a long time. When the wind struck the windows the panes rattled.

In his heart Karl was fighting a battle. Life was not a matter of private pleasure. Private pleasures were brief. Love was

only part of life, and not the most important part. Any idiot could lose his heart. It was nature's trick. He was used to renunciation; afterwards you always saw that you hadn't missed anything. The thing was to make up your mind first! But hadn't he done that a long time ago? He knew what he wanted. Science, that was it. The Professor was right. But life didn't wait until problems were solved. And nobody was waiting for the engineer Merk to solve them. They confided in his mother, not in him. Kraus, Franze — how simple it was to be free of doubt.

He went on reasoning with himself. But as sleep gradually overcame him and he sank deeper and deeper, he had the happy feeling that all his resolutions to forget Maria would be vain.

Mother Merk, in her mind, went up dark stairs, through black cellars, past dank or dusty walls, stooped in low halls and under roof-trees. Her eyes sought a chalkmark, her knuckles tested walls. Not here. Farther to the right. Yes, now it sounded hollow. She was the last reserve. If all the others were arrested, the police would never hit upon her, an unimportant person who had never opened her mouth and never gone to a meeting. Franz had thought that out cleverly. Scheller was strict. Nothing in writing, he said, and there were so many addresses to remember.

Over and over in her mind Mother Merk went from one secret store of arms to another. Machine-gun depository Minna, machine-gun depository Paula, five hand grenades, three guns, one depository of high explosives. She would not forget any of them; she could find them all again when the command came. The password was "Anna 1927."

VI

THE STREETS of the suburb of Potzleinsdorf either climb the foothills of the Vienna Forest or else, like Berg Street where Baron Wiesner occupied the second floor of a small villa, run along the mountain's edge. There are avenues of white acacias whose springtime fragrance floats in through the windows; there are wooden fences or iron ones covered with ivy, well-kept flower beds in front of modest houses, soft ochre walls, green shutters, gardens that run down to the main street or climb to the crest of the hill; and a deep quiet hovers over the old village that has been incorporated in a great city. But where the street ends the city ends too and the forest begins.

From his windows Wiesner could look out over the wide sea of houses. On clear days it was easy, even with the naked eye, to find the spire of St. Stephen's Cathedral, in the exact centre of the city, from which the streets ran in starlike radiation. But the interconnecting streets turned the star into a huge net of trembling lines, brighter or darker, depending on whether the house roofs were in shadow or in sunlight. In clear outline two concentric semicircles could be seen, broad furrows in the multifaniclefted, multicoloured waves of roofs in the blue air: the Ring, which separates the inner city of banks, churches, and palaces from the districts of the lower middle classes; and the

Belt, which in turn separates these from the workers' districts and the factories. Thus the city had grown, ring upon ring, like a tree. In the east glittered the broad ribbon of the Danube delicately merging into the horizon; in the southwest gleamed the white peak of the Snow Mountain, a radiant greeting from the Alps far beyond the dark wooded hills. At night the wide panorama became a black sea in which the lights of the city sparkled—like a mirrored image of the starry sky. Or the moon shone and lent its magic to this fragment of familiar reality in which, hardly imaginable now under the gleaming veils of pale light, two million people slept. Neither fog nor rain could obliterate the view. The water might run down the windowpanes uninterruptedly for days but the people of Potzleinsdorf knew what the world really was like behind the great grey wetness and how it would be again tomorrow.

It wasn't more than half-past two. Wiesner heard the charwoman leave. She was an uncommunicative sensible person, the factotum of the owner of the apartment, who was a lady concert pianist on a world tour. She had made no difficulties when Wiesner, on moving in, had demanded that all the ribboned laurel wreaths, the horseshoes ornamented with gilt lyres, and the little plaster busts of composers be removed. Nor did she object to his library of fifteen hundred volumes which made necessary a complete rearrangement of the furnishings. So the apartment, once the smell of cheap pseudo-culture had been thoroughly dispelled, became charming and habitable and every Sunday Wiesner would tell himself that he ought to spend more time at home. If Maria would do as he hoped and not insist on staying at her father's house on their future visits to Vienna, they would have here for the duration of the lease—it still had more than a year to run—ideal city quarters.

Wiesner walked through the three rooms and looked into the kitchen. Now he was back again at the window, now he was standing in front of his books. Since Monday he had seen Maria for only a few hasty minutes—her father wasn't well.

Nothing serious, but she didn't want to leave him alone. Except for that once, they had only had telephone conversations. This morning suddenly she had wakened him' at eight. "I'm calling from the South Station; Father is leaving on the early train for Florence to recuperate. Come at six. We'll be alone and undisturbed." Did her voice sound troubled or was it only her usual abruptness over the telephone? She disliked telephoning.

It was impossible to avoid the suspicion that Professor Steiger was joining Fraulein Berg. Wiesner had talked to Schlager, who called the secretary a scheming woman; but Wiesner could see well enough that she must be a beautiful, intellectually mature person, perhaps a little difficult. According to Schlager she was only out to marry Steiger's money; in his opinion there could be no question of love between a woman of twenty-five and a man who would be sixty in two years. What he didn't understand was how Steiger had succeeded in persuading Fraulcin Berg to give up her position. Either it had cost him a small fortune or he had promised her God knows what. To be sure, he had stolen a march on his enemies in the Ministry of Education—but at what a price! What stubbornness! Steiger had never understood anything about women.

This observation interested Wiesner. He knew practically nothing about Steiger's private life. In the house on Freedom Square a personal word was seldom uttered and Maria had told him as little about her father as about herself. He tried to sound out Schlager. He learned that Steiger had not married until he was forty and then he had clung to his wife in the exaggerated way a man has when after many disillusionments he finds late in life the person who really seems right for him. It had shattered him when she died giving birth to Maria. He had taken refuge in his work, and his utter concentration upon it since his tragic misfortune accounted for his success. "His genius is that of diligence," Schlager said. "Fundamentally he's quite average. Now the strain is taking its revenge." Wiesner was not blind to Schlager's professional jealousy nor to the fact

that he now envied his friend's success with Fraulein Berg. At the suggestion that Steiger might be planning to marry his secretary, Wiesner felt an instinctive objection rising in himself too. He used the inner censor at once. He knew that the superficial observer, quite involuntarily measuring an unusual situation by the standard of ordinary Events, could easily mistake tragedy for comedy and see in an absurd light what was perhaps beautiful and worth striving for. He had no desire to be guilty of that kind of conventional misunderstanding. Nor, as a moment's reflection showed, had he anything to lose by his prospective father-in-law's remarriage. The bond between father and daughter, which was too intense in any case, might be more easily loosened, and Maria would be more his own if her father were not left solitary.

So the news of Professor Steiger's departure had at once eased Wiesner's mind. He decided to make good use of his absence. It was not unfair. Steiger could expect nothing else. Perhaps he even counted on it. Between subjecting Maria to the demands and uncertainties of a stage career for which she was rather too delicate, and knowing that she was sheltered in Langenbruck, there could hardly be a choice for a thoroughly responsible parent.

Wiesner took out of his desk a metal box which held the diary, yellow with age, that his mother had kept when she was a young girl, and a small blue velvet box, old and worn too. From this he took a simple gold ring set with a dark red Bohemian garnet. It was a poor little ring, made noble by its history and very precious to him. The obligation he had received with it from his mother had influenced his whole life. For good, he thought now, because of his feeling for Maria. There had been times when he had hated the compulsion in the ring.

The ring had come into his mother's possession when she was seventeen. Together with the blue velvet box there had arrived

a letter to her parents in which a certain Count Resignier, an ensign in the White Dragoons, begged for her hand in marriage. She loved the ensign and before the sudden departure of his regiment had given herself to him secretly. There had been no time for ceremonies. Her parents, members of the minor country nobility, had accepted the offer with delight and without suspicion. The heart of their daughter, which had been tortured since the hour of her sin by fear and by a remorse that she would repent of as quickly as she felt it, was jubilant beyond measure. Her happiness was brief. Toward evening of the same day there had come, with the news of the suppression of the disorders in Prague, the news of the ensign's death. At the entrance to the bridge of St. Nepomuk a heavy stone hurled by a rebel had killed him. This cruel and senseless accident had brought the girl to the edge of madness. Years passed before she recovered even an outer show of equanimity. Even then she would sit for hours in the little pavilion at the end of the park and stare into nothingness without moving. Only the fingers of her right hand touched the ring on her left with a gentle, almost imperceptible caress. Then one day, to the surprise of the family to whom the unhappy girl had long been a burden, the ring disappeared from her hand and she had accepted the suit of Wiesner's father. The marriage had taken place within a few weeks.

Wiesner had learned the story from the closely covered pages of the diary which he had found among his father's effects. It had been tied and sealed with his mother's personal seal, an apple tree delicately traced. The ring had been given to him many years before when he was still a boy. It was at the end of the day on which the Bishop of Innsbruck, who had come to the little village church of Langenbruck out of respect for the old Baron, had administered to him the holy sacrament of Confirmation.

He had come to bid his mother good night, after the exertions and excitement of the day. The little box had been in her

hands. Her whole attitude betrayed a shy hesitation and when she began to speak in her delicate voice there was a mist of tears in her eyes. Now that he would soon be grown up she wished to give him this ring, her most precious possession, for his future bride. But she exacted the promise that he was to give it only to a woman, with whom, after a mature testing of his deepest thoughts and emotions, he had truly determined to spend his entire life. And life, she added, was long. Her words were solemn; it sounded like a vow and involuntarily he repeated it after her. Then he had given her his hand in pledge and she had held it long and silently. His heart throbbed more violently than it had done that morning on the steps of the altar. From the corridor outside came the sound of his father's heavy tread. His mother gave a start; she begged him never to speak of the ring to anyone, not even his father. When the door was opened she kissed him good night in her usual restrained way. So that his father did not notice what had passed between them.

Next day, in a fever of romantic excitement over his promise, his imagination proudly painting pictures of the bride to whom alone he would some day give the ring, he took the well-wrapped case, packed it in his metal plant-box to protect it from dampness, and buried it in a secret corner of the garden. His mother never asked him where he kept the ring. Not until he returned from the war did he dig it up—intending it for Hilda. But at the last moment he hesitated. The promise he had once so freely given became suddenly an oppressive obligation. His very reflections, the testing of himself, robbed his first love of its glow. Later came other more serious occasions to give the ring. But he had rejected each one as he had the first, regretting his scepticism less from year to year. Now at last, with Maria, he was utterly sure of himself.

The sharp shrilling of the doorbell gave him a start. That was Robinson. He knew it from the very sound of the bell.

The former actor was the only one who ever called on him, and always on Sunday. This hermit's life would now come to an end too.

Robinson, tall and broad as a tower, stood at the head of the stairs, water dripping from his raincoat; his plentiful hair—he never wore a hat—stuck moistly to his forehead. "Salute," he said in greeting, and lifted one arm in a careless gesture. Under the other he carried a fat briefcase.

Wiesner knew Robinson no better than one knows a neighbour through casual encounters. Once when he was leaving early, Frau Schilker, the socially ambitious owner of the house who was chatting with Robinson at the garden gate, had introduced the two men. Then it happened that they occasionally strolled down to the main street together. It was only a five minutes' walk. Robinson never went to the city. He bought himself newspapers and cigarettes in the tobacco shop near the tram station and returned. The servantgirls on their shopping tours avoided him but looked back at him with admiration after he had passed. Jic was that kind of man. Wiesner felt as if the black beard behind which Robinson hid his actor's face were glued on.

Until six months ago Robinson had been a prominent member of the Burgtheatre. His Philip had been famous. One day he had failed to appear for the performance. He had sent no excuse. Over the telephone, apparently sober and well, he had asserted, unbelievable as it seemed, that he would never act again. He had hung up the receiver without further explanation. It was no nervous breakdown, as had at first been assumed. It became clear that he meant what he had said. No one could persuade him to return to the stage. He refused advantageous offers from film companies. He turned reporters from his door. If they accosted him on the street he threatened them with personal violence. For a while the incident was the sensation of the theatrical department in every paper. Now for the past three months he had been boycotted by the press, but he seemed well satisfied.

From his own rooms Wiesner could look straight into the actor's large studio. The hangings were seldom drawn. A gigantic table was littered with maps and all the walls were covered with them. Since his departure from the stage Robinson gave his days and nights to the study of military science. The two men rarely discussed this strange preoccupation. Occasionally Robinson proposed some new theory of the battle of Waterloo or of Koniggratz. But he always broke off of his own accord and their brief conversation stuck to the weather, the icy or muddy street, or the forest. Since Wiesner had mentioned his library Robinson had come to borrow books; they were always the biographies of statesmen. At times Wiesner thought the man not quite sane, at others he classified him as a man who had happily escaped from the world into himself. The actor could laugh so that it resounded through all the gardens.

"I'm bringing back your books," he said as he entered the foyer and took off his raincoat. He wore a red woollen sweater, no coat, and wide trousers. Everything about him was coarse and weather-worn and his gestures had something primitively natural about them. He looked like a seafaring Frenchman. Wiesner thought of his effect on the servantgirls. He was never quite at ease alone with Robinson.

They chatted about Clemenceau. Among other books Robinson was returning the volume of the Frenchman's conversations with his secretary. "The old man was the real thing," said he. "Maybe he's right in saying that the Germans think only of death and the French only of life. Think it over! We haven't a single genuine comedy, for Minna von Barnhelm is tragic at bottom. We haven't found out yet that drama means nothing but action, the demonstration of that succession of cause and effect which is so difficult to observe in real life. We still believe that the drama must be tragic. We Germans as a nation haven't yet discovered the seriousness of gaiety. But mustn't one first become master and have space to waste before one can affirm life? The slave must glorify death in order to live at all. The

difference between the French and the Germans is not psychological; it is a difference in age. Since the Great Revolution the French have been a nation; the Germans will become one at some time during this century. Then they will be able to shed their narrow seriousness; thank God they still have it."

"It isn't just nations that grow up; the whole world is growing more mature," Wiesner objected. "You can't go in for medieval behaviour nowadays; it will prove a boomerang."

Robinson shrugged his shoulders. "Force is still decisive," he answered, as if he wished to end the discussion. He got up and went to the bookshelves. After some indecision he chose the diaries of Bismarck. When he brought the volumes to the table his glance fell on the little box and the ring. It made Wiesner uncomfortable—as if he had been found out. Robinson lingered a moment but only remarked that it was raining bucketsful and packed up the books. Wiesner could see that the man was thinking something about him.

Robinson closed the briefcase and took his leave. Wiesner did not invite him to stay. At the door, wrapped once more in his coat, the actor asked unexpectedly, "Why did you send in your resignation? Aren't you satisfied with the Government?"

"How do you happen to know?" Wiesner was taken aback.

"Oh, friends . . ." On Robinson's face there was a superior, unsympathetic grin. Then letting the matter drop he raised his right arm—"Salute"—and went away.

Fifteen minutes later Wiesner left to visit the coffeehouse. He could not bear to be alone with his impatience any longer. From the tall window of his studio Robinson waved to him with a rather exaggerated gesture. At the same moment Frau Schilker came tripping out of the actor's house. She was startled, and her greeting had an excessive friendliness. It came home to Wiesner that there was a secret understanding between these two; he had long suspected them of being National Socialists. If they dreamed of making an ally of him they were badly mistaken.

At this hour his usual table at the cafe was occupied by strangers. Wiesner sat down at another one by the window and tried to read the papers, but his thoughts were at the house on Freedom Square. As the time of his meeting with Maria approached he grew increasingly nervous. The delight of anticipation, which he usually got out of waiting, would not come. Banal phrases flitted through his mind: "the decisive step," "taking life in both hands . . ." He tried to dismiss them. Yet they seemed to cover all his resolutions and plans, his experience and his future existence. The question, the secret question, was whether he would be equal to the life he had thought out for himself. Thoughts were friendly to the weak who thought them; they almost always yielded before they became dangerous. But reality was inconsiderate. Was he able to foresee what it would be?

Kainz came to the table and behind him limped Dr. Sonnenschein, carrying a document. It was a petition to the Department of Political Police already bore many signatures. Several days ago the cashier's brother had been arrested in connection with the bombing in the cloakroom of the coffeehouse; at noon the same day Fraulein Mitzi had been taken away by the police. In this petition the guests of the coffeehouse testified to the girl's excellent reputation and demanded her release. In the hysterical yet competent style of the document Wiesner recognized Sophie Roller's hand. Sonnenschein was demanding that Wiesner sign it too. Herr Otto made a sudden appearance at the table, asserting excitedly that the Baron's signature was especially important since he belonged to the Government. Wiesner wanted to warn them against false hopes. Instead he signed his name without saying anything, despite the fact that he had no opinion about Fraulein Mitzi. So far as he could recall she certainly didn't have the air of a fanatic. Nevertheless the cashier might have been in a conspiracy with her brother. But he was opposed in general to arresting people and he knew that the petition would

soon find its way into the wastepaper-basket anyway. Herr Otto's gratitude was boundless.

"He's madly in love with the cashier," said Kainz, looking after him.

"Why shouldn't he be?" Sonnenschein cried, and they returned to a dispute about Elli Falk that had evidently begun earlier. Sonnenschein was insisting that it was exclusively her own business whether she stuck to Kafka or not. People's friends ought to keep their hands off; this eternal meddling was disgusting.

Kainz had visited Elli that afternoon in Kafka's flat. Since Elli had found out that Kafka was playing her false with the corsetiere Hilz, she had taken to sleeping in a small otherwise unused room which was full of dusty boxes and trunks. There she lay weeping on a broken divan. Thus Kainz had found her.

"Kafka comes to her locked door every night," he said, "and promises her everything under the sun and begs and curses. But she won't open the door."

"That's what she tells you," replied Dr. Sonnenschein. "But she doesn't move out; something still keeps her there. So why interfere? Leave her alone!"

"Kafka is a scoundrel," said Kainz.

"We're all scoundrels," said Dr. Sonnenschein.

Kainz squinted with his ratlike eyes; for a moment it gave his pale bony face a cruel expression. Then he got up and smiled. That smile was a very arrogant dismissal of all that Dr. Sonnenschein had said. Head on one side, the tall figure slipped away without a sound.

"I wonder why I always contradict him?" Sonnenschein said after a while. "I'm sorry for him."

"Why are we all scoundrels?" Wiesner asked.

"Because we cheat. Who among us, for instance, has a wife and children? We get out of the ordinary obligations that every common man assumes. We just sip. Ah, when I think of all the

girls who have come to this place in the course of the years and what has become of them!"

It took a good deal of self-control on Wiesner's part not to reveal his own private plans. The ordinary obligations, that every common man assumes . . . Good words. He would have liked to press Sonnenschein's hand.

Sonnenschein felt the sudden impulse of sympathy in the Baron. Very softly he said, "I need ten schillings." Wiesner gave him the money and said good-bye. The clock in the Schotten Church pointed precisely to six when he reached the house on Freedom Square.

The evening began with a disappointment. Maria was not at home. But she had telephoned that she was delayed. She had left at noon for the Vienna Forest. In all this ram? But Louise, herself gleaming in a white apron, assured him that Maria had been equipped for the bad weather. In the dining room places were laid for two. Louise switched on the light in the library and brought in vermouth and soda. Wiesner sat down in the deep brown leather armchair and again began to wait. The fingers of his right hand clasped the ring box in his pocket as if to draw strength from it. Nothing moved: there was only the rain that kept beating against the windows.

It was nearly seven when Maria arrived. She smelled of wind and forest and her overshoes were muddy above the ankles. From the Kahlenberg across the Hermanskogel she had reached Kobenzl. There she had had to wait, the only guest, in the restaurant in the old castle, because it was pouring too hard. But she felt, so to speak, thoroughly aired after a whole week in the house. Did he mind eating right away? She was very hungry. It would take her only two minutes to change.

It was, as a matter of fact, fifteen minutes before she came down the stairs. But then she wore the little black evening dress and the delicate chain of pearls in which he had first seen her. She seemed to him still lovelier now, though less childlike, more

grown-up. She had an expression that was new to him. A self-conscious smile, indefinably touched with irony, wavered lightly about her mouth, which was slightly painted. Her eyes seemed larger and her glance harder. He went to her and took her hands. They seemed feverish. For a moment they were so close that he felt her breath. Then she turned aside in a matter-of-fact way. There was something forced in her manner.

During dinner Maria talked more than usual, passing abruptly from one subject to another. Her father wanted to be remembered to Wiesner and asked him to keep an eye on her. Had he received his invitation to the ball at Uexcuell's? On Thursday she was going to the dressmaker with Pepitta, but the costume was a secret. She wanted him to have a talk with Joseph Birkmeier; there had been a frightful scene at Pepitta's house. She was really afraid for Joseph; he took everything with such deadly seriousness. Uncle Schlager had made his peace with her father, as usual. Two students at the Art Academy had been taken into custody, one because he was a National Socialist, the other because he was a Communist. She was to have played opposite the Communist student in the death scene of Schiller's "Cabal and Love." Was everything all right at Langenbruck? How had he spent his evenings this week?

She scarcely listened when Wiesner answered, but began to talk about something else. When he asked her why she was so restless she merely looked at him for a moment, half-surprised and half-questioning. Then she chattered on. Her cheeks still glowed. Whether from the sharp air or from excitement, he could not tell. "We'll take coffee upstairs in my studio, Louise; then we won't need you any more." It sounded more as if she were giving an order to herself. Upstairs, Wiesner had hardly closed the door of the studio behind them when she broke down. She leaned against his shoulder and began to sob.

He stroked her hair tenderly. It was the first time she had wept in his presence. Her tears excited him in a strange pleasant way. It was more than delight in the fact that she turned to him in

her trouble. It was almost a feeling of possession. He felt it with a half self-critical, half-happy surprise. "I'm so ashamed," Maria whispered, and slipped away from him and out of the room. His eyes followed her. The invisible wall between them had vanished.

Louise came in and set the coffee service down, and after lingering a moment went out. Wiesner fixed his eyes on the door through which Maria must come back. When she did there was a shimmer of fresh makeup on her face. She smiled, a little embarrassed. "Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, but now come here and tell me all about everything."

"But that is impossible." She came nearer and filled the cups. Her hand trembled.

He waited until she sat down beside him. Then he drew her toward him and kissed her. She let him and did not push him away as she had done at Christmas. Slowly she closed her eyes. She did not resist, but neither did she yield; there was a withdrawal which at once excited and embarrassed him.

Swiftly she drew herself up and said, "Father thinks you're too old for me."

"And you, do you think so, too?"

"No, I don't." The words came like a breath from her lips.

They were so silent that the soft patter of the rain outside seemed to increase in volume. So silent, as if there were no need for further words; but it was only because so much that was unspoken hovered between them.

He took her hand. "You don't know how I have looked forward to this moment."

"Yes," said Maria.

He kissed her again. Her lips did not come alive. He was tempted to try to rouse her and yet he did not desire it. How simple, had there been nothing but this moment!

She rose and walked slowly to the window and stayed there for a little while. When she turned to him again her face was thoughtful and eager, as if she wanted to tell him everything at

once. Then, without transition this expression changed and a childlike smile passed over her mouth. Again a little ironic she said, "You tell me what is to be."

He said that they should get married. She answered neither yes nor no, but asked whether they were to live at Langenbruck. He explained that this was his wish, that he thought it would be best for them both, and in a moment, finally able to speak, he heard himself, a little against his will, explaining to her his inmost thoughts. He searched, for instance, for a meaning in life that would transcend the moment and yet not be an escape; his deep sense of the importance of one's daily existence and of not trying to be more than one actually was; of one's duty to counteract bad examples by consciously embodying a better one. He spoke bitterly of this political period in which the struggle for the means of life was destroying life itself. His hatred for this time burst from him, and his determination to escape from it. Getting excited, he defended the right of the individual, despite the social problems of the day and even of the century, not to forget the eternal world. How he looked forward to showing Maria this world! No, she needn't be afraid that they would become provincial; Langenbruck was to be merely the fragment of earth of their common responsibility.

As he went on talking he grew more sure of himself and his words became more vivid. Maria sat on the couch, her legs drawn up, her chin on her knee, and listened attentively with a little frown on her girlish forehead. Her eyes followed him as he walked up and down or stood still and, at times, talked as if he were by himself. But in truth he was uttering it all for the first time, and for her alone. She neither spoke nor moved, not even when he suddenly interrupted himself and, standing in the middle of the room, said apologetically, "This doesn't sound like a declaration of love."

At last she raised her head a little. "I've thought about it all through the holidays and all last week and all today. I'm willing to marry you. Father doesn't need me any longer." She said it

very quietly, only a little slowly. Wicsner stared at her, incredulous. He had been so sure of her, and yet now when she agreed so matter-of-factly, he couldn't grasp it.

"Are you shocked that I should agree?"

"No, Maria."

"But what a face you're making!"

He said no more. He saw her get up and stretch a little and raise her right hand in a tentative shy gesture toward him.

The bells struck ten o'clock, and eleven and twelve. They had brought wine from downstairs and touched glasses and drunk to their future when the delicate vibrations of the glasses ceased. The ring with the red garnet was on Maria's hand. He told her of the vow he had made when he had received the ring; but he did not tell her the story of the ensign and his mother. He talked about his childhood and about the beauty of Langenbruck and for the first time about the war. Together they pictured their future. He drew for her a diagram of the manor house, and in planning its renovation it occurred to him that he would have a wing of the top story rebuilt for Maria into a replica of the studio in which they were sitting, so that she would feel at home at once.

"You needn't be afraid," Maria said. "I'll be glad enough to get away from all this."

He did not understand at once what she meant by this surprising remark. She had always seemed so happy in the house on Freedom Square.

"I'm really nothing at all," she continued without a trace of coquetry. "I don't know what you see in me. I make an impression by saying very little. But it is because I have nothing to say. Father's atmosphere, the whole establishment ..." she made a hostile little gesture, "make me seem important. But all I ever know is what I don't want. I have no positive aim. Often it seems to me that I'm a useless creature, but it doesn't make me sad. Is that bad?"

"No. You're merely unspoiled."

"I don't know. Pepitta's whole passion is for the stage. She can't wait to get on. I haven't her ambition. I've gone to the Academy because I didn't want to go to the University. Joseph wants to interest me in his political views. I don't understand a word. I do think, though, that everything is different from what people say. And deep inside me I am not where they are, only I don't know where I am."

"But you did understand me?"

"Perhaps. It sounded nice. To live without alien demands on one from all sides. Didn't you mean that?"

"That too, Maria."

"You see, it's not at all simple. But I do look forward to Langenbruck. In nature everything is calmer and less complicated. At least for me. To be sure, Father says that nature is our enemy; but he means something quite different. Walking in the rain this afternoon I suddenly felt a great longing for you."

"I love you, Maria."

She looked at him with a touch of embarrassment, almost of humiliation. She seemed to want to speak. Then a remote smile hovered in her face, but behind it, yet nearer, fear dawned as on that other occasion, and her eyes grew bigger and the blood tinged first her cheeks and then her forehead to the very edge of her hair. She bent over with a quick movement and hid her face in his hands.

Not at once did his fingers dare to feel. She pressed her cheeks against them; it was at first merely a hard pressure. Then he distinguished form and plane, the mysterious lines of the ear, the eyebrows, the lips. He took pleasure in the tenderness of his perceptions. He looked at the bent back, the slender neck, the locks that fell forward. First a little feverish tremor went through her; then he felt the pressure on his hand grow lighter. Her cheeks lay now softly in his hands; then suddenly her head turned upward, in the eyes laughter and a shy invitation. He could see the tension of the lips relax and in the next moment

he could feel them, feel the warm open mouth glide over his fingers and kiss his hand. This was the victory toward which he had been living since he had seen this girl for the first time, these the moments that were never to die, that he could cherish during all the years to come. This was the total sense, all that was, concentrated in one sign, one breath.

While he was still leaning over her, to lift her up and draw her to him, a shadow fell across his feelings, a foreboding, a thin fear. His mind was full of the words he had spoken. Why did he suddenly distrust them? They were too self-important. How honest, in comparison, her simple sentences! If she meant them differently she did not know it yet. But he was aware of the crazy intricacy of the world and yet pretended to be sure of us meanings and of himself. Would she save him or would he destroy her? Why this question? It was not his fault that there was only one answer—to gather all her youth in his arms, to play upon her ignorance, to watch for her awakening, to be the stronger and not to think further. Force was still decisive.

It did not escape him that she pressed herself into his arms with a determined readiness, as if she were carrying out a fixed decision. For a second, he didn't mind that; he only wanted to take her. . . . He controlled the tenderness of his hands. He kissed her and felt her whole body tremble and yield, and yet he desisted. . . . He saw her veiled in white kneeling beside him on the altar steps of the village church in Langenbruck.

"Everything must be right with us, Maria," he said tenderly. Her head rested once more on his shoulder and he caressed her cheeks. Suddenly he felt a hot drop on his hands.

"Maria!"

She smiled through tears. "Go now!"

At the corner of Herren Street as he was looking for a taxi he met Kainz and Elli, who were on their way to a bar. What devil possessed him to go along?

French chansons, couples dancing, Elli in high gear heading straight for a seduction; Kainz with a blank face, quite silent but as if he were her impresario. Elli liked champagne; Wiesner recalled that from their unfortunate evening last May.

After the first glass Kainz disappeared; his action was clearly deliberate. Wiesner hadn't wanted that to happen. Elli was popular in the place; she laughed across at other tables and drank too much. For gossip to couple her with him now would be a nuisance. Someone asked her to dance, but she refused. With an abrupt defiant movement she raised her head and looked Wiesner full in the face. She had great radiant eyes, her look was belligerent and intelligent. But she whispered: "What I said in May doesn't count any more. *Ym* through with Kafka."

"But you still share his apartment."

Her answer was a contemptuous gesture.

It was all so senseless. It was scarcely half an hour since he had left Maria and she had consented to marry him. In his thoughts he was already saying, "My wife." He was happy. Yet here he sat with this little half-disreputable actress in a stupid night club and did not tell her not to waste her charms on him.

Elli laughed, but not bitterly. "You see, to have a writer was my schoolgirl dream. History of literature, and so forth; and it's over."

Her first unhappy love had not affected her at all. Or was she only pretending? She knew all sorts of things that Maria did not even suspect.

"Love for its own sake, that's easy; that's mere diletantism. But love as a form of achievement . . ." She smiled alluringly at Wiesner. He heard Kainz in her speeches, but she spoke them with an excitingly informed innocence, as though they were her own. She was really charming in her cynicism.

Mia Kertesz, whom Wiesner knew only by reputation, came to the table. She smelled of a bitter-sweet perfume and her every gesture was lascivious. She let her deep black eyes sink boldly into

Wiesner's. "Elli, you can spend the night with me; my husband is out of town," she said smiling.

Very much against his will Wiesner escorted the two women home. In the car Mia Kertesz proposed that he come upstairs with them. He declined; Mia Kertesz rubbed her leg against his and tried to persuade him. When the car stopped it was Elli who whispered, "Do come along!" But he remained firm.

The long drive home was a kind of farewell. Mia's perfume still hung in the car. All that was over now. Even yesterday he would have gone along. . . . Many other things were over too. With what dignity Hilda had borne herself in Langenbruck! Some day, a good while later, so as not to wound her, he would have to make her a handsome present.

In Robinson's studio the light still shone. The man was bent over his maps, sticking little flags into them — Mars with an unkempt beard. "Fool," thought Wiesner, "I love life now; I need no nation to make me love it."

VII

T

HE Government had announced the creation of a Martial Court to deal with the internal enemy. All legal guarantees had been suspended. Facts were established in a shortened procedure; neither motive nor circumstance was considered. The proof that an act of violence had been committed was enough to ensure the sentence: death by hanging. Three hours after sentence was pronounced execution of judgment was to take place. During this brief period the Cabinet could petition the President of the Republic to commute the death sentence to imprisonment for life.

This happened in the very first case that came before the Martial Court. The son of a wealthy peasant had murdered his pregnant sweetheart. The second case had nothing to do with politics either. A tramp, the homeless illegitimate son of a maid-servant, set fire to the hayrick of an estate because he had been driven away without alms. He did not know, of course, that, a few hours before, execution had been fixed as the penalty for arson; and even if in his wanderings he had seen the announcement of the new regulation he could not have read it—he was illiterate and not quite right in his head. The judges felt uncomfortable when they condemned him according to the letter of the law, and added their request to that of the attorney for

the defence when he wired to Vienna a petition for commutation of sentence.

The first hour passed, and the second. In the small yard of the provincial courthouse carpenters were setting up a gallows. The sound of their saws and hammers and the screams of the condemned man in his cell got on everybody's nerves. The attorney for the defence telephoned to Vienna. Now every minute seemed an eternity, yet raced toward the hour of execution.

The life of the unknown tramp was lost in the interplay of higher political considerations. The petition for commutation of sentence never reached the President of the Republic. The failure to carry out the first death sentence had cast a doubt upon the energy of the authoritarian regime, which was now eager to show its steel determination. All the better if as a warning to its enemies it could make a drastic example of a nonpolitical defendant. In this way it could accomplish its purpose of intimidation without creating a martyr. On the exact instant, three hours after the rendering of the verdict, the petty incendiary was hanged. "He serves Austria with his death," So the judges consoled themselves. The Ministers in Vienna thought so too.

Ott, a shop Council man and friend of both Kraus and Karl, the quietest and most sensitive person in the factory but perhaps for that very reason the most impatient, could not get over the execution. "It's a shame, the things we let them do," he said as they were having their midday meal in the canteen. "Hanging a poor devil like that as a matter of politics, as if a human being had no rights! I questioned a lot of the comrades. Most of them have already forgotten about it. Or they merely shrug their shoulders. No one realizes that this execution is a symbol of the ruthlessness under which we are all suffering. Such callousness! The greatest injustice can be perpetrated and no one stirs. It was different in '27. The Palace of Justice went up in flames instantly. If we let everything go, we'll be all alone in the end. **Our** solidarity will be broken, the only thing we have. I'm going to make a motion today to strike at the next act of provocation by

the Government; and against any more Heirnwehr men being employed here. We don't need Herr Wmtersteiti's spies, Will you vote for the motion, Kraus?"

"No, No individual action, not now. We are lost without discipline. The governing Councils of the Party know everything you know, Ott."

"It's not true. If the rank and file is silent, the people in the Councils think we agree to everything."

"Only a general strike can do us any good. And the provocation for that must be important enough for every man to understand it,"

"And when is a provocation important enough? We're always waiting for a bigger one. There's no difference between a great and a small injustice . . ." He fell silent. The thought ran deeper than he could express.

"The comrades have wives and children who want to eat," Kraus said.

Ott passed his hand nervously over the soft, blond hair of his old child's head. "Hunger hurts. But we've got to resist injustice. Otherwise we won't get anything to eat either. Please vote for my motion. It's a matter of tactics; it will give the shop and Party chiefs a jolt."

"Sorry," Kraus answered. "Not yet; we're not at that point yet. Keep your head and don't get hysterical."

Ott gave Kraus an angry glance. Then he stared down at the oilcloth on the table and took a match and broke it into little pieces.

Karl had not taken part in the conversation, but now, in the silence, as if he were talking to himself, he said, "It depends on what one wants, to live in hunger and ignorance rather than not at all, or . . ." He did not finish, but Ott went on with the sentence quickly. "Or not live at all, rather than in hunger and ignorance."

"People don't have even that choice," said Kraus after a pause. "That's our misfortune."

"No." Ott broke in. "That's our mismanagement. Instead of inspiring them with our ideals, we've built them pretty apartments, and made them petty-bourgeois. And now that mistake is getting its revenge on us."

A waitress came, a pretty young girl, and Karl paid her. She sighed unhappily. "It's coining down in buckets outside," she said. She was one of the youngest members of the Friends of Nature, and was in the skiing course for beginners that Karl held on the Rax.

"Look out, Karl, she's got her eye on you," said Kraus when she had gone.

"I can think of worse things," Karl answered, standing up. "See you Monday."

Kraus and Ott looked after him as he walked towards the door, a head taller than most people. Not only the waitresses stared after him. At many a table a girl's head turned, looking at him.

"They all run after him," said Ott. "He's a good man, and he looks it, but he keeps his light under a bushel. I never know what he really wants. Skiing is hardly a life's work. He could have had a career in the Party."

"Give him time," Kraus answered. "He belongs to the new generation that has to start everything at the beginning. Actually I'm rather glad he's out of the Party."

"What?" Ott opened his water-clear eyes in disbelief.

"There is something wrong somewhere which those who come after us will have to make right before they can go any further."

"One mistake after another!" Ott got excited.

His exaggerations were beginning to get on Kraus' nerves, and besides, he hadn't been talking of everyday mistakes at all, but rather of strategy, of the whole idea. No use to explain it to Ott.

"We made a mess of things in March when they suppressed the Parliament," Ott whispered. "That was our worst mistake."

If we had fought then, we wouldn't have lost Merk — not him, nor thousands of others."

"We haven't lost him," answered Kraus.

When he got home Karl found a note from the grocer down at the corner who had been taking his telephone messages for years. *"Be sure to come to your class reunion tonight,"* the slip read. Nothing more. The man always forgot to ask who had sent a message.

On the third Saturday of every month, the graduates in Karl's class met in the back room of a small restaurant. With the years, fewer and fewer came, and Karl himself had not been there since the spring before. He had never felt really close to his school friends. He had always been an outsider, the son of a washer-woman among the sons of officials and manufacturers. Which of them could be wanting something from him now? Probably Jennerwein. Every month or so he had a wonderful new idea which he did not dare to carry out. The last time he wanted to emigrate to South America.

After supper Mother Merk said, "Who knows? It may be something important."

"Haven't I invited you to the movies?"

"To tell the truth, I'm a little tired. We could go tomorrow afternoon. That is, if it's all the same to you."

"To tell the truth," Karl repeated laughing, "you're not at all tired. You only want to get me out of the house."

She laughed with him, but then she said with some seriousness, "You must get out among people. When you're too much by yourself it's easy to lose sight of how things really are."

Karl understood what she wanted to say. Of course she had noticed the unrest that had plagued him the whole week. And probably she had known what was wrong with him before he quite knew it himself.

"Don't worry," he told her, and went out.

He arrived in the middle of a political debate, Hofer, junior

partner in his father's leather goods factory, pink-cheeked, blond, and getting a bit plump, was holding the floor as usual. He was a hundred per cent for the Martial Court and the authoritarian regime. Arrogance of the unions, instigation of the workers by uprooted intellectuals, Christian civilization, all the familiar slogans fairly hurtled from his lips.

Karl sat down next to Jennerwein — next to whom he had also sat on the school bench — and remembered the napkins, blue- or red-patterned, out of which, every recess for seven years, Hofer had unpacked two ham sandwiches. Jennerwein, Doctor of Laws, assessor in a district court, shook hands cordially. "I'm glad you could come," he said. The others — Karl could see it in their faces — were surprised to see him there. Moriz Mautner, whom he had once saved from a Jew-baiting brawl, nodded to him without interrupting his argument in support of Hofer. He was one of those Catholic Jews who never missed High Mass in St. Stephen's. Engel, the only other Jew of the class, listened, and threw in occasional caustic remarks. He worked in a bank and tried to keep himself going in spite of successive cuts in salary. He had no feeling for high-sounding phrases. To work, to look after one's own interests, and to lie in wait for opportunity, that was his philosophy. His favourite expression, that served as excuse for any sort of trickery, was: "You can't sling mud without getting your hands dirty."

Engel was for the Government too, in his own fashion. "Liberty is nothing but a fiction," he said, and with a side glance at Karl. "These 'scientific' Socialists always drag along behind reality instead of catching hold of it. The Nazis would like to murder me; the third evil at least lets me live."

"Fine patriots," whispered Jennerwein scornfully. His tone was full of malice.

"What side are you on now?"

Jennerwein did not answer. After a while, during which his attention seemed focused on the argument, he said, "Let's go." As they were saying good night, Hofer tried to stop them.

"Merk, doesn't the proletariat have anything to say?" he cried in a challenging voice. "Generally you spend your time complaining about the suppression of free speech," Karl gave him no answer. Turning away, he saw Mautner join hurriedly in the laughter that followed Motet's words. He didn't even hold it against the man.

It was still raining. They went into a cafe a few doors down the street. Jennerwein chose a table over to one side near the windows and ordered two cognacs. Karl waited till the waltz that the musicians were playing was over. Then he said, "Well, what's up, a new emigration project?"

"Yes," answered Jennerwein; "in a way, yes. I called you up in order to take leave of you. I wanted to take leave of the whole class, but they wouldn't have understood me, the Philistines. And you have to be told how you stand with me from now on."

Karl began to get impatient, while Jennerwein, instead of speaking, stared at him with cold, fevered eyes. This time he seemed really serious; something burned inside him.

Jennerwein looked around cautiously, then whispered, "I'm changing my spiritual climate. I've finished with the Christian philosophy of pity. It only hinders one in getting ahead. I have become a Nazi. I didn't want to, but I have become a Nazi."

The musicians were playing the Radetzky March. "Since I have made up my mind I am able to sleep," Jennerwein went on more loudly. "Terrible times are coming, but I'm not afraid any more. I am on the side of the strong and ruthless. This business of sacrifice is over. I shall make use of whatever comes. Only idiots will be humanists. And I tell you now, I am not the old weakling any longer, the one you all laughed at in the gymnasium. I shall be inexorable when the time comes, and even when you stand before me. This is what I wanted to tell you. That's all."

"Thank you for the warning," answered Karl quietly. So many words — morning till night. Ott, Hofer, Engel, Jennerwein, and even he, himself. It depends on what one wants, to live in

hunger and ignorance rather than not at all, or ... And Maria Steiger had said there were many truths.

"No," he thought, "she didn't really mean that. That was the Baron talking." In the mountains at the cabin she was quite different. There she had had large clear eyes, gentian blue in the snow-covered face. They looked at him secretly searching and did not turn away when he caught them at it. For a moment their glances had met, then quickly she had turned away, pulled her snowhood over her head, and angrily smoothed her hair as if she had heard him laughing inside himself. At first her face was only an outdoor face, healthy and pink from the cold. But then he had to look at her all evening, and found he could not catch the expression that grew ever more delicate and tender, unearthly almost in that gloriously earthly lace. She stood on the hearth. She put plates on the table. She put bread in the basket. So simple and natural in every movement.

"I'm going now," said Jennerwein, but he did not move.

"What do you want me to say?" asked Karl, "I can only tell you it's a pity."

"It's easy for you," answered Jennerwein in his old uncertain voice. Then he stood up. His tone grew threatening. "You are not afraid, not yet."

"No, I am not afraid."

Jennerwein walked stiffly away. The old gymnastics teacher would have liked to see his carriage now. He had taken so much trouble in the old days.

Karl listened to the music, and went back to the thoughts that had plagued him for a week. "It was an illusion,"¹ he had said to Kraus; but he, himself, had not believed it. At the cabin when Kraus and the Professor had talked about mountains and snow, she had said no word, and he no word. And that silence had united them just as the conversation had done for the other two. They had gone to bed at nine. When the storm was over he heard her washing in the next room. He pulled the covers over his ears, but under them he held his breath and listened to his

heart pounding. Yes, it had already happened then. In the house in town it had all been different. A manservant and a maidservant, a lift for the food, and a Baron . . . Politeness and senseless attempts at conversation . . . Nothing had been right. He had felt like an intruder.

One of the girls who sat indoors in the cafe because of the rain came to his table. He shook his head, but she said, "At least let me drink the cognac your friend left." When she had drunk she smiled. "That's all I actually wanted. It's easy to see there's nothing to be done with you."

"Why?" he asked.

"Give me a schilling if I guess? I haven't earned a groschen all day."

He nodded.

"Because you're terribly in love, but not with me."

"Here's your schilling," he said, and called for his check.

Instead of going home, he walked slowly over toward the Inner City. The streets were empty. On the Ring the arc lights were reflected in the wet pavement, and their mirrored images grew smaller and smaller with the distance. The black sky hung so low that the Parliament and the City Hall, the Burgtheatre and the University, seemed to merge into it. There was still a light in the attic windows of the house on Freedom Square. He stood in the portal of the Schotteri Church until the light went out. Not once did a shadow glide past it. Not once. First light, and then darkness.

Sunday morning he was back at the portal again. People came out from Mass and opened their umbrellas. He heard the uninterrupted clicking. His eyes were on the house across the street. All the curtains were drawn and the door was closed.

He had the impulse to go away, but could not. Suddenly the door opened. The Professor's daughter came out in an English raincoat. For a moment she was undecided, then she summoned a taxi and drove off. It all happened in a minute. Before he

could take a step forward she was gone. He went on staring at the door, closed once more. It was as if he only imagined what he had seen. But what good would it have done him if he had been more alert? He couldn't follow her. He had only four schillings in the world, and he had promised to take his mother to a moving picture in the afternoon.

Monday, the beginning of another week of life wasted in the factory, was always the hardest day. He had been so glad when he got the job. It had been a pleasure to get up early and go to work. The feeling of being shut out had left him. Now at last he had a place in the world and a schedule. Nothing was left but the schedule.

Karl sat at his drawing board and elaborated the sketches which the chief engineer had thrown on the table. He pulled himself together and tried to find some of his old joy in his work. He did the hatching with special precision; he drew the letters with exquisite neatness. In vain. The supposed reward of work well done was missing. In the drawer was his plan for improving the automatic starter. It had been rejected. Another illusion gone. They wanted to do business, even if the car was not so good! That was what they were after. Fashionable colours for the bodies and unnecessary gadgets were more important than genuine values. Wasn't it so everywhere?

One thought gave rise to another and Karl counted the minutes till closing time with growing impatience. It was last Monday that they had been in the house on Freedom Square. Now it was Monday again. It was about half-past six when they arrived and the manservant had said that Fraulein Steiger was expected back from the Academy at any moment. She had come in almost at once. The Baron had called for her, at six, obviously. He could do the same thing. He needn't stand there as if he were waiting for her. He could follow her without being seen and then meet her as if by chance. It was all planned. He would have to leave exactly at closing time and run

immediately to the tram. Otherwise he would miss her. Good that it had stopped raining.

He was there in time, in front of the Concert House across from the entrance of the Academy. It was ten minutes before the students began to come out. But then the Professor's daughter was not among them. At first he refused to believe it. The street lights were dim and for a moment a motor car had shut off his vision. Perhaps he had merely missed her. It was an unbearable thought. He must know for sure. The information the janitor gave him was desperately simple, almost funny. The third-year students had been dismissed an hour earlier today because their professor, one of the directors of the Burgtheatre, was having a first night. Day after tomorrow the regular schedule would be resumed.

Forty-eight hours. He felt contradictory emotions, shame, delight, and the humiliation of having to pursue her. But in the very compulsion there was liberation for him. The voice of good sense, which reduced life to its daily dull necessities, had fallen silent.

As he prepared to go, confused, disappointed, yet deeply absorbed in the experience, he collided with a man who filled the whole breadth of the doorway. The face was indistinguishable in the semidarkness, but he recognized him instantly. It was Ferdinand Franze. Escape was impossible. Before Karl, in his surprise and embarrassment, could speak, the musician grasped his arm hastily and convulsively, as if he too were shocked, and stared at him with wide-open eyes that were sick with terror.

"What's the matter? Has anything happened to her? Tell me. No, not here," Franze whispered and drew him out into the street and around the next corner, all the while peering from side to side. A few steps away from the light of the street lamp he stopped, out of breath. "Now speak," he gasped.

"I don't know what you mean, Franze."

"Then why are you looking for me?"

Karl grasped the misunderstanding and welcomed it. Franze's

orchestra had its offices in the Concert House. Karl had once even thought of the possibility of running into him. But now he was not sorry it had happened.

"Nothing has happened, I only want to talk to you, Franze," he answered calmly and as if this were really the reason for his being in the city. And he did want to talk to him now.

Franze's relief was infinite. "You scared me to death. Come and have supper with me."

He started off slowly, like a huge sphere beginning to revolve. At the next corner he hailed a taxi. "To the Raimund Cafe?" the driver asked. Franze answered by brandishing his stick with the ivory handle. During the ride he spoke only once, as they were driving down Lasten Street past the museums. The gigantic monument of the Empress Maria Theresia was outlined against a brightening sky. "In 1911, at the great demonstration against the high cost of living—I joined just out of curiosity—the Hussars were stationed on both sides of the monument with sabres drawn, but they didn't move on their horses. The big gates of the entrance to the Hofburg were closed. At the time I thought the Emperor was frightened; now I know he simply wanted not to be disturbed. Those were the times! No one would have dreamed then that some day there would be an Austrian Republic in which no man would dare open his mouth, let alone demonstrate. Nice progress! The old Emperor got along very well without a Martial Court!"

The Raimund Cafe opposite the Volkstheatre was frequented by actors and therefore almost empty at this hour. Nevertheless Franze made his way to a table by the window marked "Reserved." The headwaiter, with a friendly welcome, took the card away. "Here is where you can find me, Karl, when there isn't a rehearsal or a performance," Franze said. Squeezing himself with difficulty into the space between the table and the plush divan, he added with a sigh, ". . . If I'm not in the Turkish bath."

Karl sat down opposite him and observed the musician pull-

ing aside the curtains and staring into the street. His eyes were again like two little protruding buttons, pale and watery, in the huge, fat face. An uncertain, hazy expression came into his glance. Then, as if it cost him an effort to stop looking at whatever he could see through the clouded panes, he turned. The waiter was standing beside the table.

"I know what you're thinking about, Karl," Franze began when the waiter was gone with the order. "But first let's eat in peace before we get excited." Again he drew the curtains aside. "From up there — I can see the very spot from here — they shot down my boy. That's why I always sit here." He whispered, more to himself than to Karl: "It's sad, but I like to sit here. I have always before my eyes what the world is like and what it shouldn't be. It's so easy to forget the general unhappiness as long as one's own life is bearable."

Franze had ordered double-portion brandies. Karl drank his down, but did not speak. He felt aversion rather than sympathy. He had the feeling of entering a blind alley and not being able to turn back. The assurance he had had, of being on the right road in spite of its apparent hopelessness, was gone. A few steps more and he would be facing a wall. And what then? His whole life, which for a moment he had felt himself grasping firmly in his hands, now melted between his fingers. Franze's hatred, Kraus's thoughtful honesty of purpose, Jennerwein's despair, Ott's yearning after justice, the primitive faith of his mother — these were all walls. They encircled him; they moved nearer and threatened to crush him. "It's so easy to forget the general unhappiness as long as one's own life is bearable." Why did that sentence annoy him? Franze had not meant to criticize, he hadn't said it that way. Yet it still sounded like a reproach.

"I don't know whether I should tell you," Franze said suddenly. He was talking with his mouth full. "I still own that bit of land out at Hutteldorf that I told you about. Of course the vegetable garden is neglected and overgrown with weeds. I was out there yesterday. But since it's unlikely that I shall bless the

world with my presence much longer, I've made a will and made your mother and you my heirs. When you get married some day you'll enjoy the little place over week ends with your wife and children."

This disclosure embarrassed Karl. "You'll live a Jong time yet; don't talk about dying," he said, just to say something. He would have preferred to drop the subject, but it went on working on him. He had never really known anyone who had inherited more than broken bits of furniture or perhaps a watch or a few clothes. A piece of land! Mother would enjoy it.

"Don't for God's sake get an exaggerated idea about it," Franze went on. "It isn't worth much. Still, it's worth a few thousand schillings and there's no mortgage."

"It's nice of you to think of us," Karl answered. What else could he say? Whenever he had to thank anyone he had the same feeling of embarrassment that came over him when he had to receive thanks himself.

On Franze's face a dreamy expression rose; it came up like the moon. "If your mother hadn't refused to marry me, I'd be your stepfather now and we'd be much better acquainted. It's quite natural that I should think of you."

Karl had no answer for this. With your wife and children, Franze had said. And all at once these words sounded clearly in his ears, as if there had been no words since. Wife and children . . . He had never let his thoughts go that far. How impossible, looked at that way, everything became.

Coffee was served. Franze had rum with his. He lifted the little glass with his delicate fingers, held it against the light, inhaled its fragrance, and emptied it to the last drop in his coffee. "It's good for my heart." He sighed and took a swallow and looked around to make sure no one was listening. "And now, Karl, tell me what's troubling you, but not too loud."

"It's about Mother," Karl began. "I don't want her in danger. That wouldn't be right of you."

"Don't you think I've considered it very carefully too?"

"Yes, but I'd like to be sure. She's very trusting and will do anything that's asked of her. I like her to have the feeling that she is finally allowed to do something real in life, and something that my father would have done. You know better than anyone else that she's never forgotten him. But she can't quite judge what she has let herself in for."

Franze had closed his eyes as if he were sleeping. He opened them a little. There was something lurking in them. "It has become clearer to you that the situation is getting more critical—the persecutions, the arrests, the Martial Court. You feel it's serious now and you're afraid,"

Karl shook his head, "I only want to know what you're doing with her." He turned a little toward the entrance. It seemed to him that Franze's attention—he did not close his eyes again—was more there than here. But he could see nothing. A customer taking off his coat; a few people reading their papers; two girls exchanging whispered confidences.

Franze sipped his coffee. It was some time before he asked, "She didn't tell you anything?"

"Not a word."

After an interval Franze leaned forward and whispered, "Your mother has been assigned to our reserve group." Again he looked toward the entrance. What did he see there?

"I'll begin at the beginning," he continued. "Our stores of arms must be kept absolutely secret. Only three people in our district know their location. There were four, but one was arrested two weeks ago. Suppose the others were arrested too! Then no one would know where the arms are. If we needed them they couldn't be found. They're well hidden. For this reason we looked around for a person who had nothing to do with the Party and yet was heart and soul on our side. Your mother was the best person we could think of for this purpose. We thought of you first. But apart from the fact that a woman is less likely to arouse suspicion, as well as everything else, there is the further fact that you're employed outside our district. You might not be

available in a crisis. We have confided to your mother the addresses of the depositories, by word of mouth. Nothing in writing — that's one of our mam rules. She has learned the list by heart. In order to cut down the chance of error we showed her the hiding places that night — that is, the houses where they are located. If at any time the other three are arrested, then, — and then only, — someone would come to her with a password and she would give him the addresses. That is her function. It's nothing but a precaution. I hope we'll never need her."

The only thing that Franze omitted was that Mother Merk had also promised to accompany the comrade with the password from one depository to another. The addresses alone would not be enough. It was necessary to know in each case the precise spot where the weapons were hidden. Also there were things to look out for so as not to attract attention.

"Why, then, were you so startled when you saw me?" Karl asked'

"Because I was afraid that something had gone wrong." Again Franze peered toward the entrance and lowered his voice still more. "It's myself I'm thinking of. I fancy, the last day or two, that I'm being followed. I see faces I don't like. When I ran into you I was frightened through and through at the thought that they had been shadowing me even longer, that they had seen me when I went to talk to your mother a week ago. This constant being on your guard in illegal work makes you nervous." He wiped his forehead and leaned back, breathing heavily.

Karl believed Franze, and, for the first time during the evening, felt a sort of pity for him. Of course, the "illegals" saw spies everywhere, pprrtly because of their experience, partly out of caution, but also because they liked to flatter themselves that they were in danger. It was quite human. But the role assigned to his mother didn't seem to him as harmless as Franze said it was.

"We intended to take you into our confidence. But she wanted

to talk to you herself. I 'hope she won't be angry because I told you first."

Karl wanted to go, but Franze held him back. If they were being watched, there was a chance that the spy might follow Karl to find out who he was. Karl did not take this seriously. He thought he could get rid of a pursuer. But Franze wanted to make quite sure. He drew the curtain aside again and stared out toward the theatre. Only a second. Then he asked for an evening paper to find out when the play would be over. "When the lights at the exits are turned on," said he, "we'll go across as if we were going to meet someone. When the audience begins to come out, you go into the foyer and mingle with the crowd and slip out by an exit on the other side. If you do that quickly enough nobody can follow you."

Once more Karl looked at the customers in the cafe. They seemed perfectly innocent to him. Franze paid the bill and they both waited to see whether anyone else would make a move to go. But no one stirred.

At last they left. As they were crossing the street Franze looked behind him. He did it very cleverly, pretending that the wind was tugging at his hat. In front of the main entrance of the theatre they mingled with others who were waiting.

"Did anyone follow us?" Karl asked.

"Yes, that short fellow who was reading his paper near the door. Now he's over there, waiting at the tram stop. See him? I thought at once that he looked familiar. Can't remember where . . . And look, he's letting the tram pass; he didn't get on."

The final burst of applause resounded from inside. They heard the simultaneous opening of many doors and the sound of many feet going toward the cloakrooms. Franze stared at the pavement, as if absent-mindedly. "Here, on this very spot, my boy fell. Now they walk here in their evening shoes. They do it every day,"

The audience began to come out. The short man was still standing at the tram stop. "I'd better go in now," said Karl.

"Yes. Do it quickly and be careful. Sometimes there are two

of them. The other may be right beside us," whispered Franze. "And remember me to your mother."

Karl went into the foyer and passed through the crowd and left the theatre on the other side amid the chatter of many people. He was sure that he had not been followed. Nevertheless he almost ran, up Burg Street, over to Neustift Street and past the Augustin monument. It didn't seem a very clever thing to do, but Franze's mysteriousness had infected him. It was like children playing cops and robbers.

The air was clear and frosty. In the black-blue paths of the sky between the rooftops the stars were sparkling. Mounted police came down the street. The hooves of their horses clattered like machinery. In the shadow of a house door a pair of lovers were saying good night.

VIII

AT THE first opportunity Baron Wiesner left the tea at the French Embassy. He was not neglecting his duty. His colleague would be able to soothe the French diplomats, who were disquieted by the dictatorial course of the present Austrian regime, with more conviction than he could muster. Another five weeks and all diplomatic teas would be behind him. His resignation had been accepted. He drew a sigh of relief at his escape from the chatter of the drawing room and went out into the silence of the snow-covered city.

The walk to the Concert House was short. A light flurry of snow was whirling about the lanterns and the arc lights. Traffic glided by without a sound. From the Ring and the Rennweg horns sounded clear and sharp like the evening barking of the village dogs in Langenbruck. From the bright window of a porter's lodge two children were watching the snow shovellers. Before the palace of the Union of Industrialists stood a long row of automobiles, big black private cars and two field-gray Mercedes with Heimwehr pennants.

It was only half-past five. From the rink of the Skating Association he heard the sound of a waltz. He turned the corner and joined other spectators at the fence. In the middle of the brightly lit sheet of ice, dancing couples flew in circles, slender swinging figures, visibly given over to sheer bliss of move-

ment. Swift little clouds of breath slipped from their heated faces. How simple and natural happiness was!

Only to *be*. Never to argue about happiness. Why did he want to take it apart as a child takes apart a toy? Maria was wearing his ring, the wedding was to take place at Easter. Wasn't that enough? Their life lay before them, their common path, uphill, downhill, but never straying—if only he were the proper guide. The secret was to let secrets be, until they disclosed themselves. To listen, inside one's self, to Maria's heartbeats and to let time go by.

"I don't know whether you're making a mistake or not. I won't pass judgment. Science without a sense of its own limitations is no science." Was the Professor who had spoken these words a great man or did he overestimate him? Did the calm superiority with which he had taken their decision—he had neither hidden his doubts nor stressed them—indicate a secret disinterestedness? At the same time it seemed that he was not merely yielding to his faith but to Fate. Everything that concerned him became universal. "I wish you happiness. Get to know each other. Don't lie to each other. That's the best you can do." It sounded as if there were an immediate experience behind this insight. But he did not touch upon his personal affairs by so much as a word. He had come back from Italy less than a week ago, refreshed, less nervous, but more silent and self-contained. He had his own life and let Maria have hers' Or did he simply accept with apparent impassivity what he could not alter in any case?

Maria and Pepitta were already looking for him at the corner, when Wiesner tore himself away from his thoughts and from the spectacle of the skaters. Pepitta ran up to him.

"Well, where were you hiding, Herr Baron? Just for that you can't go with us today. All you are allowed to do is carry the books and music home."

"We have an errand," Maria said timidly. Since her engagement, she seemed changed in a quiet way, more womanly.

"Oh, it's not an ordinary errand. Something you're not to know," Pepitta said emphatically, and merrily gave him her heavy scores.

"I hope she won't lead you astray, Maria," Wiesner imitated Pepitta's tone while his glance rested tenderly on Maria.

"What impertinence! I, leading astray!" Pepitta pretended she did not see what was passing between them. "Look, he's jealous already. I'd better tell him, so he'll have peace. We're on our way to the dressmaker's to be measured for costumes for the ball. But don't ask what they're like, because then I'd have to lie." She went on chattering as they walked on. Wiesner took the girls to the tramway, comparing the two. How like her father Maria was!

The little dressmaker, Pepitta's "artist," lived in the Fifth District. The tram-car went through the magnificent Fourth District up Wiedener Main Street. The farther it got the more often the passengers changed. At each stop well-dressed people got off—a white-haired lady with elegant little packages that looked merry and enticing—and were replaced by working men and women carrying tool bags and bundles. By the time they reached the Wiedener Belt the passengers in the first car looked exactly like those in the trailer. Maria's fur jacket and even Pepitta's simple coat were unpleasantly conspicuous. "We'll be there in a minute; three more stops," Pepitta whispered, and thought of her brother and what he would have said about her and her friend—she felt so out of place among his beloved proletarians.

On the front platform of the trailer car, wedged in with a group of bricklayers, stood Karl Merk, oppressed involuntarily by the same contrast. He compared his shabby overcoat with Maria's fur jacket, feeling both encouraged and depressed by the thought that this outer difference was the only thing that separated them. As on the occasion of his first attempt he had been at the Academy door punctually at ten minutes to six.

After days of self-control and a lonely week end in the mountains, he found himself once more in the Inner City. He stood motionless in the shadow of an arch across the street. His heart was beating but he was not so excited as the first time. He wanted merely to convince himself of the futility of the hope he had not been able to suppress.

He saw the girls come out of the building and knew from their gestures that they were waiting for someone. The Baron, of course . . . The desire to give up once and for all was stronger in him than ever before. He could just stand there till they were gone, till they were out of sight, and there was no chance of catching up with them at all. They were nearing the tramway and the car was coming before he began to move. At least to see her close up once more . . . He reached the trailer, saw the Baron standing in the snow, and walked through the crowd to the front 'of the car. Now and then he could catch a glimpse of Maria's face. Where was she going? Now it would be simple to meet her as if by chance. But what sense would it make? A few meaningless words and then it would be as if it had never been. How still she sat among the working people. She had such a proud face. Back in the hut it had provoked him before he had given in to it. There are so many truths! Just to give her for once a piece of his mind . . . What would she answer then?

"It's the third side street to the right; we're almost there," Pepitta said with a little feeling of guilt as they left the car. She had borrowed twenty schillings from Maria to pay back a loan to that stingy Kaiser girl who imagined herself to be Duse, and so neither of them had taxi fare. The Baron would have given it to them but Maria was so oversensitive.

They were now on Favoriten Street, which led to the southern exit from the city, a rather broad business and residential street of houses four or five stories high. The long rows of street lights ran into the distance toward each other. The illuminated signs of a near-by picture palace were blinding. After

a few steps forward Maria and Pepitta noticed that something was the matter. The tram-cars were not moving on, but were drawing up one behind the other. Many more people than usual thronged the sidewalks. Excited voices, cries of surprise, vain stretching of necks. The police and Heimwehr auxiliaries could not clear the tracks. Beyond, where the girls had to go, the street was black with people.

Pepitta drew Maria on. "Something must have happened!" she cried with curiosity. An unfamiliar excitement was in the air, a restlessness different from what you felt in an ordinary crowd. Maria wanted to stop but Pepitta would not be held back. To their astonishment they observed that more and more of the people were dressed in black. They spoke not a word, all these silent people, and every face was drawn in a serious, solemn look. "It's like a funeral procession," Pepitta whispered.

More and more people gathered; the crowd, converging from all directions, grew denser and denser. Retreat was unthinkable now. The effect of the silence was ghastly, terrifying. Slowly the compact mass moved forward, their footsteps muffled by the snow. Suddenly there was a crash of shutters rolling down a shop-front, a second, a third. Then again that awful silence. Out of the windows of the motionless tram-cars gazed astonished, frightened eyes.

Karl's surprise had lasted only a moment. As soon as he saw the first workman in black he knew what was going on. The right of free assembly had been abrogated; the so-called "Christmas Peace" had been indefinitely prolonged. The workers' districts had been covered by a net of spies, policemen, and Heimwehr men. But the Government could not prevent the workers from agreeing by word of mouth in their shops and factories to meet at a specific hour and on a certain street. No flags, no songs, no speeches. Silence, and black Sunday clothes. "We're taking a walk on the grave of our illusions," Ott had said at noon. He grew more bitter all the time. "Still, it gives us the feeling of not being dead yet and a chance to estimate

our strength," Kraus had answered. He was in favour of these "walks" as preparation for the decisive battle.

Karl tried to make his way to the two gulfs. A sense of approaching danger urged him on. After a few steps he was hopelessly wedged in. Fear gripped him now. Everything that had gone before, the notion of meeting Maria by chance, of seeing her one last time, all the hesitations counted no longer. To be beside her now, whatever happened later. Assuming the tone of a functionary he cried: "If you please, comrades, let me pass." They made a lane, as best they could, and helped him forward. But after a few yards the crowd stood thick and solid as a wall. All movement ceased, for a counterpressure from the front was now perceptible. Begging did no good, nobody could move. He raised his hands on the shoulders of his neighbours to peer in vain over thousands of heads. He had to come down again. The counterpressure grew.

Farther on, where Maria and Pepitta were standing, the crowd had begun to surge back. Pepitta released Maria's arm and with both hands steadied herself against the man in front. A growing nervousness ran through the continued silence. Suddenly there were cries: "Don't push! Stand still!" A woman's scream quickly died to a soft whimper. A voice of command resounded: "Hook arms! Don't retreat!" Maria felt a man's arm taking hers and put her right arm through Pepitta's. For a few seconds firmness, then the human chain began to waver under an increasing pressure. Suddenly shrill whistles vibrated over the hundreds of heads. All the individual cries were instantly silenced as if cut off. The pressure ceased. Then again silence, but this time it was tense with listening. From far in the rear came the bell of a tram — the motorman did not know that the way was barred. Again came the shrill whistles, — and the whole street sent up a roar that did not seem human, — and the pressure was renewed, only a hundred times stronger. The human chains resisted in vain, were torn like ropes of paper. Cries of horror and of pain, and then a mighty upsurge that

lifted Maria and turned her about and beat in upon her back and thrust her forward . . . Pepitta was no longer at her side.

Swifter and swifter grew the tempo of the panic. Gasps, cries, curses, moans of rage coming from hoarse throats, and over and again those shrill whistles that chilled the marrow . . . Everyone ran for his life. Maria ran too, gritting her teeth, one thought clear: I must get out! At last the mass became less solid. An opening in the housefronts appeared. Yonder there must be more room, more air. Gasping she plunged on.

It was madness, but suddenly she stood still. In front of her a woman had fallen down, a second tumbled on top of her, then a man, and another and another, till a screaming, struggling heap of human beings barred her way. Maria recoiled, felt a blow, staggered. Then her knees struck the pavement and she tried to support herself with her hands. Someone tugged at her jacket and almost choked her. A heel flew past her eyes; she was forced to her elbows; a second blow thrust her against a wall and she tried to pull herself up by a moulding. But it crumbled in her hand and her strength left her. Tons of weight were pressing her down. She no longer had any breath, she could not cry and only now became aware that she had been howling like the rest ... so strange . . . Someone climbed over her and stepped on her hand and the pain was not violent, but muted like the roaring high above her. The chill of the snow in which her face lay revived her a little. Once more she tried to rise, with a strength she had not known in herself, but it was not enough. She felt tears running down her cheeks; everything swam before her eyes and the dirty trodden snow went black. An infinite beneficent weariness came over her . . . like going to sleep. All was well . . . only a rest . . .

In the house on Freedom Square Professor Schlager was giving Baron Wiesner a lecture. He greeted with enthusiasm Wiesner's determination to live with Maria in Langenbruck. It **was** not only right; it was the only possible thing to do: to

go back to nature,—usually he detested Rousseau,—to till one's fields, to beget children. The peasants and the family were the very pillars of the State. Wiesner guided the eloquence of the old bachelor, who spent many of his evenings in houses of ill repute, away from high ideals to the price of wood—the new paper works had made him a better but still inadequate offer. And Schlager in a self-satisfied way began to quote from his own lectures.

On the other side of the room Joseph Birkmeier was sitting bent over a chessboard and apparently engrossed in a problem. In reality he was listening to them both, to the vain asthmatic Government henchman whose horizon was bounded by the three-fallow system, and to the courteous Baron who acted as if he took the chatter seriously. Joseph found it hard to choose between the two, the Philistine and the well-bred objective individualist-egotist, as he privately called Wiesner. It was a shame that Maria had let herself get engaged to Wiesner; it was cowardly. Pepitta might be an ignoramus, but she was not like that. She had an aim in life and you wouldn't find her letting the first man that came along rob *her* of *her* existence.

Johann passed silently through the library. How careful he was to make sure everything was in order! In the dining room Louise was putting flowers on the table. Everything gleamed in hushed unobtrusive perfection. How delicately the clock ticked; it was almost seven. The light of the chandeliers was softly mirrored in the marble bust of Goethe and in the glass of the picture. Why did he accept this stolen tranquillity? It suited Wiesner, the perfect son-in-law. Why hadn't he long ago repudiated this house and all it stood for? Why didn't he get up and say what he thought and leave it forever?

It was easy enough to let anger whip up these projects; but in his heart Joseph was helpless. Words like "enemy," bitter terms of censure, could rise to his lips—but deep down he did not feel them. At dawn, after a night passed in hard study, everything seemed clear and logical. The great injustice, the

root of all evil, consisted in the exploitation of man by man. To destroy that would mean the beginning of a moral world. This was the only task, this was the next act of creation. To subordinate oneself to that act, that meant to live in harmony with the very spirit of things. ... It was different in the daytime. The great injustice flourished and in the act of self-subordination freedom died. There was less risk about the rights we are born with. Even their great champion, Goethe, as Minister of State had ignored them. In the reality one had to deal with, the contradictions were endless. Were the eyes wiser than the mind? Joseph had only to look at a workingman or at one of those Heimwehr fellows of whom Schlagcr, even now contradicted by the Baron, was saying nothing but good, to know beyond all doubt where the right was and, whatever the obstacles, the future also. That was all right to start with. But as each thought drew nearer and nearer to action the original meaning got more and more lost. Refuge in books gave only a false happiness. There was no question as to the goal. But the ways, the many ways toward it—these were the stuff of daily life. A matter of laughter and tears. He knew a little whore who took him home with her even when he hadn't enough money. Maria was going to marry the Baron, he had seen it coming; and Schlagcr talked like an agricultural journal. What was the meaning of it all?

The uninterrupted ringing of the doorbell could be heard even in the library. Schlagcr stopped talking and listened in irritation. Wiesner got up with a smile; that must be the girls. Then the bell was silent and they heard Pepitta's excited voice. Joseph knew that tone. With a leap he was at the head of the stairs. Wiesner followed him. Johann assured Pepitta that Fraulein Maria had not come home. With a horrified expression Pepitta stared at him. She looked bedraggled. Joseph and Wiesner ran down the stairs. Schlagcr followed slowly, his glass of vermouth in his hand.

Swiftly, in broken sentences, Pepitta related how she and

Maria had been caught in the demonstration and separated. She had been nearer the houses and had found refuge in a doorway. Outside streamed the flood of the masses, driven by mounted police. Then at last there was the empty street, sown with hats, handbags, canes, moaning men and women. Maria had not been among them. She must have run with the others. Pepitta had looked for her and had cried herself hoarse calling to her. Then policemen had come and pushed her down a side street, farther and farther away. She had thought perhaps Maria was safe. But she couldn't be at the dressmaker's because she didn't even know the woman's address. Pepitta had tried to call up the house on Freedom Square from a public telephone station. But the telephone did not function. Someone said it had been closed to private communications. "I ran the whole way to the South Station, like a weasel, oh, as fast as ever I could," sobbed Pepitta. "Only there did I get a taxi; it's outside now. Please, Joseph, go and pay the man. I have no money with me."

Wiesner went for his overcoat. For a moment he stood undecided. Then he took down the telephone receiver and called up police headquarters. The information they gave him was not too disturbing. The governing committees of several factories had tried to circumvent the prohibition of public assemblies. Thanks to advance information in the possession of the police, however, the crowd had been quickly dispersed. Order had been restored in the district and the whole matter was hardly worth discussing. But when Wiesner gave the official to understand that his concern was personal the story changed at once. Yes, there were many wounded and many had been trampled upon and many ambulances were in use.

"Was there any shooting?" Joseph asked when he returned from the street.

"I don't know," Pepitta sobbed in misery and anger. "If only Maria were here!"

Wiesner went to the door and looked up and down the street but came back again.

"What are you waiting for? Why don't you go and look for her?" Joseph's voice was excited.

"Because it's more sensible to wait, young man," Schlager answered for Wiesner. "If she's safe she'll be here any minute now. If anything has happened to her, it would be better to telephone all the hospitals. If I know the girl she'll be here in a minute!"

"When did you get separated from her?" Wiesner asked Pepitta.

"It couldn't have been much later than half-past six."

"It's now seven-fifteen," Wiesner said and went out into the street.

For a moment no one spoke. Then Pepitta appealed to Joseph. "Please sit down. You drive me crazy running around like that."

"Yes, sit down and control yourself, young man," said Schlager.

Joseph stared at him, pushed his hand through his hair, and roared, "Stop calling me young man!" Fie ran to the cloak-room, tore his hat and coat from the hook and rushed out, colliding in the doorway with Professor Steiger, who was just coming home from the Institute.

"Well, Joseph!" Professor Steiger looked after him with a shake of the head. Wiesner returned from the street and told the Professor as rapidly as possible what had happened.

Steiger would not let Johann help him off with his coat. He neither spoke nor moved; he kept his eyes half closed as though expecting a sound from the distance. Then he turned and went slowly to the still open door. His tall, broad figure filled it.

The horns of passing cars tore at Pepitta's nerves. She cried to herself. She whispered, "It's all my fault." Wiesner turned the pages of the telephone book.

After a while Steiger closed the door and sat down in the nearest chair, "If she isn't here in ten minutes," he said slowly,

"we'll go and look for her." His face was as rigid as a mask. Schlager opened his mouth and closed it again without saying a word.

Karl knew what to expect when that counterpressure of the crowd set in. When he had raised himself up to look for Maria he had seen from afar the mounted police moving against the crowd. He looked around and counted six houses to the next side street. There would be a slackening of pressure, and with a little luck he could catch the girls at that point; they would have to go in that direction. But he would have to stay near the houses. Farther out you were simply swept along.

But the panic rose and hurled him onward and left him no choice. He was pressed more and more out toward the tram-cars. Suddenly, when everything stopped and the pressure from behind him threatened to break his back, rescuing arms pulled him up into the platform of the nearest car,—where he landed out of breath, without his hat, his coat torn. The crowd raced by, hunted creatures with eyes distended by terror, crying, falling, struggling up again. At the opposite corner they tumbled into heaps. Then came the police, three rows of mounted men, and suddenly the street was empty. The impression of emptiness lasted only a moment. Then the eye caught the fallen and the trampled, little creeping mounds, whimpering and dark, trying to rise. People were streaming out of the houses and jumping down from the tram-cars to help. Karl ran over to a moaning heap.

Men and women lay wedged together as though a whirlwind had lifted them high and hurled them to the earth. Feet trod on faces; hands clawed through shreds of clothing into living flesh. The person smothering underneath tried to raise himself by clutching his living burden and so increased the pressure upon him. A woman's leg, just one, stuck lifelessly out from

among the screaming, quivering bodies. Blood seeped into the snow, a dark lake, dividing into little streams. It shimmered in the light of the street lamps.

Those who came to help tore body from body; they lifted the wildly struggling victims and tried to help them to stand. Many were on the point of fainting; others fled, as though lashed from behind. A young girl, uttering piercing screams, wanted to return to the crowd. An old man with bloodstained white beard stood dazed, wiping his spectacles. The hill of bodies grew lower and more lifeless. An ambulance bell clanged; more police came running up; the white coats of physicians dotted the street. Karl sprang aside and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

A few steps away Maria was leaning against a wall. She did not know how she had got to her feet again. Horses trotted past her; there was a smell of summer and country in the air; next the street expanded into a wintry square with a great many gleaming windows—a lovely, dim, dreamlike picture. Then consciousness returned. She recognized the tram-cars and grasped the horror that she had escaped. Her knees began to tremble and weakness fixed her to the spot. Mechanically her eyes followed the movements of those who had come to help. She thought of Pepitta. But she was sure nothing had happened to her. Nothing ever did. Then she saw Merk. He was the only person who was not strange to her. Now she did not feel so dreadfully alone. All at once it seemed as if she were only waiting for him.

The searchlight of a hospital car passed over Maria, and Karl at last discovered her. It was only a gleam at first. Instantly he had the feeling that all this had happened to him before: the girl leaning against the wall, half in the light, exactly like that. It was a confusing, irrational feeling. Then he realized that she was looking at him without a sign but as if she were calling him. He went up to her almost hesitantly and stood there quite still. She did not move either. "Thank God,"

he said, staring at her, hardly believing even now that he had found her. She answered his glance quite calmly and as if she were glad. Then she took his arm and leaned on it.

Slowly they walked down the street. All the demonstrators had vanished. The tram-cars were running again. A thick snow began to fall. The moans and whimpers still trembled in their ears, but all was silent now.

They too were silent. He felt her arm in his and that was enough. By the light of a cafe window he saw how pale she was. Without asking he led her in. It all seemed incredibly natural now. He ordered two brandies and that made him think of Franze.

"I must telephone," said Maria. They were her first words.

The waiter heard her and turned round. "The telephone has been officially disconnected, you know. We are the internal enemy." . . . He would have gone on speaking but three policemen came in. They glanced into the dark and empty inner room and went out again.

The brandy brought Maria's color back. Now Karl drank too. How beautiful she was. He looked and looked. He had so much to say and said nothing. Fie could see from her skirt and jacket that she had fallen. But he did not even ask whether she was hurt. Nor did she speak. For a while it was just as it had been on that first evening in the mountains, but the arrogance was gone from her face. It was merely proud in a way he liked. Her eyes did not avoid his; it was always his glance that wavered. He did not want this to be so, but he couldn't help it.

The waiter came to brush Maria's clothes. "Everybody's afraid to go out; they've killed our business for this evening,"¹ he scolded. "Damned brutes, to ride with their horses' hooves over peaceful people. It's a hell of a Christian Government, this!" The only other customer, an old man drinking a glass of spirits, joined in. He crowed like a rooster. "Serves them right, jolly well right! In troubled times like this every citizen should stick to

the Government that happens to be in power. What could the police do then? Nothing!"

"Hold your tongue, Professor," the waiter exclaimed, adding apologetically to Karl: "He means it humorously."

Maria did not sit down again. "I've got to go home," she said and picked up her handbag.

In the street, empty except for police sentries, Karl wanted to take Maria's arm again. He did not dare. Suddenly there was a disparity between them again, a disparity which for a time had no longer existed. Near the Margareten Belt they found a taxi. It was a tiny car and their knees touched as they sat down.

Street lights rushed by and then lighted shop windows as they drew nearer to the Inner City. At least the driver could not go fast in the fresh snow. Karl's heart beat as if it would burst. If he only knew what was going on inside her! The little bulb on the metre threw a feeble light on her face. She sat straight and still and looked ahead, neither to right nor left.

"We didn't meet by accident," Karl said as calmly as he could.

She turned her head and looked at him. It was too dark in the car for him to see what was in her eyes. After an interval she answered softly, "I know."

It sounded strange and sober and sad. He didn't know what to think. A suspicion grew in him that at once frightened and delighted him.

"I saw you last Sunday in front of our house in the rain," she continued. "And tonight in front of the Academy."

The windows of the car were covered with snow; every light they passed made them glitter. Words would be out of place now. For a while they sat without moving. Then he laid his hand upon hers, which trembled but was not withdrawn.

This was happiness. He was full of a boundless gratitude that Maria was alive. . . . He bent down and covered her hand

with kisses. He felt her other hand moving over his hair and the intolerable tension relaxed.

He was about to draw her to him; already his arm was around her shoulders when he hesitated, restrained by something unspoken in her which he could only sense. It was no overt resistance or gesture. But the tenderness, the drawing near that he expected—these did not come. The car must already be on the Ring, so constantly did the windows glitter. Her eyes were full of tears.

"Don't cry," he whispered and pressed her to him.

A smile hovered over her face. Then it was dark in the car again. His cheek was against hers.

"We must never see each other again," she said softly and without emphasis. But there was something in her voice that made him helpless—no hardness, no sadness, only a certain intonation that discouraged him. It sounded so unalterable. *She* was simply speaking the truth.

"Why, Maria?"

He asked but it was not really a question, so deep was his perception of the worlds that separated them. He had said the same thing to himself a hundred times. He had no right to thrust himself into her life. Now she had said it too. That was what she meant.

The car stopped. "You must promise me—" But she broke off and left the car and went swiftly and without a backward glance into the house. The clock in the near-by church struck eight. He counted the strokes.

The cabby was asking where he was to go now. The question startled Karl. He threw a glance at the metre and scratched up the change from his coat pocket.

For a while he stood in front of the door hearing the jubilant sound of a girl's voice. Her friend's, of course. Nothing had happened to her, and nothing had happened to Maria.

Slowly he turned to go. A passer-by looked at him as if in fear. He looked down at himself, at the torn overcoat. No won-

der. He felt the snow falling on his hair. Now to be in the mountains, on skis, and to go, go ...

When Maria entered the house it closed in upon her like a fog. What went on about her seemed to rise out of a shadowy realm. Words and faces would be suddenly near and sharply defined, and then they would sink back again. Between these glimpses there were only gray reaches of time and space, in which there was nothing but the trembling of her own heart and the trembling of many little stars glittering before her eyes. Pepitta's joyful hugs and kisses, the heavy hand of Uncle Schlager who kept patting her shoulder and growling like a bear, the shrilling of the telephone,—Father and Heinnch were calling up; of course they were looking for her, she hadn't thought of that,—Johann's voice replying that the Fraulein was back . . . Why did it all seem so alien and so unrelated to her?

Twice she had to tell her story, once to Schlager and Pepitta, again to Father and Heinnch—how quickly they had returned—of how she had run with the crowd and had fallen and did not know how she regained her foothold; how a long time had passed before she could get through the cordon of police and find a taxi. It seemed incomprehensible that it was only eight o'clock; already everything lay so far behind her. No, she felt quite well, she would be downstairs shortly, she must wash and change. She did not mention Merk.

She forced herself to eat so that the conversation would not come back to her. She saw that her father suffered under Uncle Schlager's talk, but he did not interrupt him. Perhaps it was true, what he said. The common people must not concern themselves with matters beyond their grasp. . . . Democracy unsuitable for the complicated life of a modern State . . . The word "liberty" being used for all kinds of hypocritical pretensions . . . The masses only happy when a strong hand held the reins . . . Why didn't Heinrich contradict either? Suddenly she

heard herself talking in a strange voice and using words she had never uttered before — "capitalism," "the police-state . . ." She didn't think what she said very stupid. But Uncle Schlager laughed and Pepitta looked at her dumbfounded.

Then Joseph came back. How happy he was to see she was safe; he looked completely worn out; he was a dear boy. Had he suffered more on her account than Heinrich? He told them that the streets in the Favoriten were normal again and that there were no longer any police to be seen. He said it as if he were not pleased about it, and then talked a good deal about a poster of the Socialist Educational Centre that was hanging in shreds from the billboard of the Workers' Home — and called it a symbol. "To celebrate the jubilee of a typographical union they were playing 'The Merry Widow,'" he said bitterly. Pepitta trilled one of the frivolous airs of Lehar and as usual a dispute sprang up between them. He was indignant over the cultural policy of his father's Party — they gave operettas instead of telling the workers the truth; she defended the human right to laughter and pleasure. It was a senseless dispute; both were right. Then friction developed between Joseph and Schlager, who really shouldn't have gone on calling him "young man." Maria wondered whether she was right in thinking that her father had not spoken the whole evening. Heinrich joined in the conversation only now and then, usually as a peacemaker, but it seemed to her that he was always whispering, "How do you feel, Maria?" though he had done it only once.

Maria lay awake for hours that night. Heinrich had kissed her on the cheek as he was leaving; they had been surrounded by the others. He treated her very tenderly; he was always sensitive to her moods, more so even than her father, who had been treating her for years as if she were a son. He had wanted her to be strong and defiant. And for years she had been like a boy. Perhaps he now felt that all that was over and could not adjust himself to the change. They were on good terms; yet they were becoming stranger and stranger to each other. He

had told her nothing of his Italian visit, he had not even mentioned it. Perhaps he really meant to marry Fraulein Berg and did not dare to as long as his daughter was in the house. He had made no objections to Heinrich's plan of living at Langenbruck; not a word of regret had come from him. He agreed to everything. A mother would have wept.

It was late, about two o'clock, when she telephoned Wiesner and told him she was thinking of him. She laughed at his sleepy voice and also because she was glad to have him answer. Sunday, a week ago, after they had spent the evening together, she had called him up but he had been out. Why had she never told him that? She had been afraid that this time too she would hear the phone in his house ring again and again, and get no answer. How good it was to say good night to each other, just to him, with no one else there. "You go to sleep now," he said and it was good to obey him.

She hung up the receiver and switched off the night lamp. The room was not quite dark. A light from the street fell on the frosted panes; perhaps it was the moon. They glittered like the windows of the taxi. But they did not alternate dark and bright. They stared at her through the night. She could not hide from them as she had hidden from something all evening. That engineer Merk, how he had searched for her among the injured; how he had looked at her when at last he saw her leaning against the wall. That was genuine. It would have been a kind of treachery to tell others anything at all. It concerned only herself and him—but how strange that no one noticed what had happened to her.

Was a cloud covering the moon or had they shut off the arc light on the square? For suddenly the windows were as black as the room. He was thinking of her too at this moment; she was sure of that. How funny the old man in the cafe had been, and what a tiny taxi! At first the whole thing had been like a terrible dream. But then like a fairy tale, and all just as improbable, until fear gripped her, a much sharper fear than she had felt

during the demonstration. When he had put his arm around her it had gone through and through her. Another moment and she would have been lost; he could have done anything with her. How weak that must mean she was — just because he came and wanted her, without asking. . . .

The fluttering of her heart gradually ceased. As she fell asleep she looked for a last time at the windows. But they were black and glittered no longer.

IX

T HE chief parts in the next premiere at the State Opera will be created by a Czech soprano and a Jewish tenor — that's the best indication of the kind of Government we have," declared Schlesinger of the patriotic press. He exchanged a swift glance with his friend Mali Schmal and left the coffeehouse table.

"But how long will that last?" asked Dr. Emil Baer hoarsely. He had just arrived from Berlin. He was one of those Austrians who had emigrated to Germany after the war and put the misery of Vienna behind them. Giving up his ambitions as a poet he had risen to be a director of a great Berlin publishing house. This had meant a villa in Dahlem, which the Left litterateurs frequented, and a blond wife named Adelheid, who was the only daughter among many sons of an impoverished family of the Prussian nobility. Twelve weeks of the Third Reich found all this glory ended.

Kainz, who was sitting a little aside with Mia Kertesz, greeted the return of the friend of his youth with relish. He could have told him so. The betrayal of ideals — this was how he described Baer's success — had not paid.

"How long will it last?" Baer whispered. "How long?" There was something idiotic in his habit of repeating a phrase and in his veiled, wandering glance. The cigarette kept trembling between his long fingers. He was emaciated and shabby; his clothes

hung loosely on his bones. The assimilated Prussian was gone; Sophie Kolier thought he looked much more Jewish than he ever had. He had nursed her venal talent along, and now she was dissolved in tears over his fate.

Sonnenschein and Kolier were playing bridge with the brothers Schwarz; Mali made a pretense of hurrying off to her office — attua'ly she was going to meet Schlesingcr; Fraulein Taul was at home with laryngitis; Zettel was asleep. Kafka as always was reading his papers. Everybody knew now, in spite of his efforts to conceal it, that he was Gerda Hilz's lover. Gerda was taking her second dose of pyramidon for her migraine. The black bangs on Gerda's forehead and the short neck that let the head sit low on her squarish body made Fraulein Mitzi think of a circus pony. For Fraulein Mitzi was back. She had been discharged by the police after twenty-four hours; so had her brother, for lack of evidence. Only yesterday, at their second meeting, the new waiter had said that the Hilz woman was the stingiest of all the customers. Two times out of thice she would stealthily pocket the tip she had already placed on the table,

"She's green with bile," said Mia Kertesz delightedly. She did not take her eyes from Gerda Hilz. That morning she had accompanied Elli, who had gone to her rival to be measured for a corset simply to annoy her with the sight of her youthful slender body. Gerda Hilz ignored the malice. But when Elli picked out a half-dozen of the most expensive Parisian lace brassieres — and Kafka still swore by her faithfulness — Gerda added fifty per cent to the bill. Elli would at least have to pay for her fun. But that was underestimating Elli. Instead of paying she said with her sweetest smile, "Do send the bill to Herr Arnold Kafka, or better still give it to him personally." She went off with her booty, leaving Madame Hilz livid with rage. Mia Kertesz delighted in recalling this moment and Kainz called the story a miniature masterpiece. Elli gave the brassieres to her hairdresser.

When Hippmann arrived he was disappointed to find only Sophie, Herz, and Kafka at the table, not counting the sleepy

Zettel. The Deputy had hoped to meet Baron Wiesner and have a talk with him. It was probably absurd to pin any hopes on such a conversation in view of the social and economic forces at work. Yet it might be possible to persuade a few sensible highly placed bureaucrats to exert a moderating influence on their superiors. For if they continued on their present course a catastrophe was inevitable. Therefore no opportunity must be neglected, no method left unused, to head it off.

Ironically Kafka read aloud a few lines from Kainz's article about the next premiere at the Burgtheatrc. Kainz described the "Tragedy of Man," which had been selected for performance, as a Hungarian "Faust," and saw a profound significance in the fact that the very expensive production had been undertaken at the behest of the Government — "as a cultural introduction to the imminent Austro-Hungarian economic negotiations." Success was already certain. It was a long time since one had heard so much Hungarian spoken at the fashionable hotels on the Ring. The Burgtheatrc could count on a patriotic demonstration of the first order. "Schlesinger himself might have scribbled that," Kafka said.

"He's making fun of it all," Sophie said, defending Kainz.

"What are you working on now?" Baer turned to Kafka, as he had done in former times, and thought of his lost villa in Dahlem.

Kafka raised his head as if he had been attacked. "I don't write any more; it makes no sense in these times," he answered sharply.

"The individual is being crushed by the collective mass," Sophie quoted sarcastically from Kafka's last article, which had appeared the previous spring, and repressed a contemptuous smile. She had known Kafka for twenty years. For that very reason he made no attempt to annihilate her, but hid behind his papers.

Hippmann, rousing himself from his thoughts, asked: "How could you stand it in the Third Reich as long as you did, Doctor Baer?" The expression that came into Baer's eyes made Hippmann add quickly, "I intended no reproach." He didn't want any debates with these literary bourgeois. When they were

needed they stood aside; now they were acting the part of sensitive plants.

"No reproach," Baer whispered, "no reproach." Then he leaned forward. "And tomorrow I go back!" He was trembling with excitement. Sophie laid a calming hand on his arm. It did no good.

"Adelheid asked me the same question, the very same question," he whispered. He pulled nervously at his cigarette, looked from Kafka to Sophie and then to Hippmann, and talked on like a hunted man.

He spoke of the boycott and of the persecution, of the friends who had deserted him, of the placard fastened to the fence of his garden, — "HERE LIVES A JEW'S SWEETHEART," — which he dared not remove; of insults over the radio and in the papers, of the jeering children in the streets; of how his Gentile brothers-in-law intrigued against him and his wife's parents forbade their daughter to visit them. But it had only brought Adelheid closer. In common terror they started from their sleep and held hands and breathed with relief when they no longer heard the tramping of the Storm Troopers' boots. Then he had thought of flight. But in the morning he would be wandering again from room to room, upstairs and down, through the house, abandoned now by both servants and guests, and somehow he could not tear himself away. Or he would sit in his library and read and read and find no consolation. Oh, what did Odysseus know who saw so many peoples, cities, customs . . . ?

"One night I heard Adelheid in her bedroom next to mine switch on the night lamp. I went in. On her coverlet lay a pamphlet about race defilement which her brothers had sent her. Was she about to read it? She acted as if I had caught her in the wrong. She sat up straight and asked, 'Why don't you leave? How long are we to endure this?' There was hatred in her eyes, but from her tone I couldn't tell whether it was for me or for this land that had maltreated us. I sat down on the bed beside her. It was the same question, the same question, and I answered

it. I told her and I repeat it now, Deputy Hippmann: Running away is no solution; we cannot run away from everywhere. And where to? We Jews have a surer method of getting even with our enemies; we simply survive them. Otherwise we would have been exterminated long ago — a thousand times in fact in our millennial history. Yes, that is my answer: I will stay and survive my murderers and though I am spat upon every day, humiliated and insulted, remain a witness, a witness."

"And how about Adelheid?" asked Kainz, suddenly appearing in front of the table.

Baer looked up and the eyes of these two met, the Jew and the Christian, who had once been friends and were now enemies. Sophie made a gesture as if to protect Baer.

"I mean, does she agree?" Kainz insisted in a cruel voice.

"Her eyes were still blue," Baer whispered almost inaudibly.

"Yes, and so?" Kainz asked pitilessly, observing Baer as he compressed his lips in pain.

"She was mine; they couldn't take her away from me." A memory stood in Baer's wide-open, burning eyes. Then he seemed to come close to collapse, and lit a new cigarette on his old one before he went on. "But she felt that my desire was only revenge, and she tried to resist. The satisfaction was all the greater. Next morning she was gone." With an embarrassed gesture he put out the cigarette, pressed his hand to his forehead and whispered: "I'm mad to tell you people that, quite mad."

In the sudden silence Zettel woke up and looked about, uncomprehending and frightened, with his comedian's eyes. Not a muscle moved in Kainz's ratlike face; softly he slipped away.

Through the revolving door Elli came straight to the table, and laid two bills on the paper which Kafka was reading. "Both the telephone service and the gas have been turned off. I won't pay any more," she said. She turned around and joined Mia Kertesz. Kafka followed her with a murderous glance,

"She too is blond!" Baer whispered.

Hippmann left the place as quickly as he could. What additional problems! Thank God, at least he was not a Jew! His wife Hansi, although only half-Jewish, had these moods of exaltation too. More than ever now that she was approaching her menopause. Simply dreadful! The Jews always wanted to be more than they actually were. This complex of being a chosen people — well, the Germans were taking it up now! That would be the final irony of history; proudly to exterminate the Jews and then be nothing but their substitute.

With a bad enough conscience the Socialist Hippmann fled quickly from these anti-Marxist speculations, which put psychology before economics, back into the reality of his busy day. He took a taxi to the Favoriten district, where he was to represent the governing Council of the Party in a conference with the opposition that had organized the senseless silent demonstration against explicit Party orders. Whenever things got complicated he was the one they sent. It was always his job to try to remove the oil that others had poured on the fire. It was very different from the dreams of his radical student days before the war.

This observation brought Hippmann face to face with his own misery. The weather was to blame too. It was one of those Viennese winter days when the south wind blew an unnatural warmth up from the Mediterranean and gave one a headache. The wind tugged at Hippmann's nerves as it tugged at all the flags the Government had caused to be displayed — the same wind that had blown on that unforgettable fifteenth of March, ten months before, which in his fondness for historical parallels he called "our Ides of March." He was willing to wager that Scheller, that dangerous tramway union man, would reproach him with the attitude of the Party on that occasion. How was he to answer him and still remain honest?

For on that fifteenth of March that would inevitably come up in the debate for which Hippmann was preparing had taken place the crucial test of power between the minority Govern-

ment and the Parliament. "AH power emanates from the people." It was written in the Constitution. But the Cabinet, which was assuming more and more authoritarian power, had forbidden, under various pretexts and actual threat of force, the session of Parliament fixed for that day. Many people had assembled on the Ring, enthusiastically saluting the national flags that were flying in front of the Parliament Building in token of the approaching meeting. Again and again rose the cry, "Long live liberty!" even though it seemed slightly rhetorical to the sceptical ears of Vienna. From mouth to mouth passed the watchword "General Strike!" The workers were not willing to stand for a violation of the rights of their representatives. The Defence Corp was ready. Its commanders were waiting at the telephone. Throughout the whole country eyes were fixed on clocks. When the hands approached three, the hour of the session, many factory-wheels stood still. The south wind bore the breath of an historic hour.

And then at three o'clock the gaily fluttering flags were lowered from the Parliament's masts. The masses looked on with dismay. What had happened? What was going on inside the great building? The policemen at the doors simply shrugged their shoulders. Had the Government really dared to arrest the representatives of the people? Immense excitement ran through the crowd, but changed to terrible disappointment as the truth finally reached the streets. The representatives had avoided a conflict. They had assembled earlier than the appointed hour and had voluntarily adjourned before the Government could proceed against them. Formally they had exercised their rights; in reality they had renounced them. So people said, "The Parliament has committed suicide," or "They surrendered with a bad joke, the babblers, the cowards!" Rage and disappointment were deepest among the Defence Corps people. Ready for battle and sacrifice they waited until midnight in their meeting places before they would believe the reports. Their suspicion that this Parliament, in which their proud Party was the strongest, had

met for the last time on that day had since been confirmed. This Hippmann could not deny.

The Council meeting was being held in the Workers' Home. The committeemen had proposed using one of the secret meeting places where the workers were accustomed to take refuge from the hostile State. But Hippmann had opposed this move. His argument had been that they were safer from spies in the Workers' Home; behind it was hidden the unexpressed desire to deprive the mounting tendency toward conspiracy of a background that inspired it. When he entered the crowded committee room, a little late as usual, he was convinced that all such considerations no longer had any weight. He determined at once to omit from the introduction of his speech the observation that undue pessimism was out of place, in view of the fact that the meeting was being held here, as usual.

At the long green council table and along the walls sat fifty men and several women. Most of them were in their working clothes; they had come directly from the factories. When Hippmann entered the tired backs straightened in unison. The union representative Miiller and the district secretary interrupted their whispered conversation.

Long experience had taught Hippmann how to estimate the distribution of as yet unexpressed opinions by the physical grouping of the delegates. At the table sat the older committeemen. They were all known to him; they were his friends, whom he had been able to depend on at elections. The Party, acting through these calm and steady men, had resisted all revolutionary temptations when at the collapse of the Empire its power was absolute, and had determined upon the slow and difficult path of evolutionary democracy. "As they did not become presumptuous in those days, so they will not despair now," thought Hippmann as his greeting, "Friendship," was answered by a heavy chorus of "Friendship!" and by deferential nods and cordial handclaps. The greeting sounded less spontaneous from the corners opposite the head of the table, where a seat had been

reserved for him next to the chairman. Up there were grouped men of a different type, younger ones with determined faces. Against his will Hippmann's heart was drawn toward them. In their midst he saw Scheller, tall, thin, a soldier rather than a Party functionary. Next to him stood Kraus of Floridsdorf. Did he already belong to the opposition too?

The chairman put out his hand toward the little bell in front of him; the silence was complete before the gesture ended. The bright little trill leaped over that long green table between all those serious faces as over a meadow. The formalities of opening the session — Order of the Day: *The intrigues of irresponsible comrades who endangered the unity of the Party at critical moments* — were quickly disposed of. The representative of the governing Council of the Party was given the floor.

Hippmann put together, neither too slowly nor too quickly, the papers which he had been turning over during the brief address of the chairman. It gave him time to overcome a whole series of thoughts and impulses, of hesitations, of contradictions, even of fear. He waited another moment, already on his feet, a moment of concentrated perception comparable to the tension of the actor emerging upon the scene. This tension, as he well knew, was communicated to his audience and he must feel it vibrating back before he could begin to speak.

It was an artistic delight to the speaker Hippmann to conceal his technique. In contrast to many of his comrades he knew that politics was not everything; he had learned that his hearers were most grateful for good handy sentences which they could take home into their private lives. He avoided all the superiority of the expert; he remained an imperfect human being, preserving the connection between ideals and daily life. He gave his audience the feeling that he knew far more than he said, and that he could have been, even outside the political field, a leader and a counsellor of men. Now and then he inserted into his arguments a statement no one could contradict, and allowed it to give colour to more doubtful ones. He was capable of interrupting a compli-

cated analysis of the political situation with the affirmation of the fact that two times two is four, as if he had been saying nothing else in his more difficult passages. Precisely calculated gestures, which habit had made second nature, bridged the chasm between what was said and what was left unsaid and perhaps better not said. This made it easier for his hearers to identify themselves with him. Bad speakers called him an actor. Let them be jealous! It was not true that he misused his talent; he was no demagogue. He said what he thought. Or thought what he said. Which came first, the speaking or the thinking — this question sometimes caused him moments of slight discomfort, especially when he was tired. Then that happy constitution of mind that never lured him down any path of thought that did not lead to the desired goal might appear to him suspicious. But he assured himself that these moments were merely phenomena of exhaustion. Something else protected him against himself. The constant necessity of having to simplify extremely complicated facts and situations had made him more aware of his knowledge than of his ignorance, so that he tended to forget all those basic intellectual problems, still unsolved, which as a man of action he had had to steer clear of. Sometimes he yearned to begin all over again. But he was over fifty and he had become a public institution. This institution had to go on functioning. Hippmann the person did not matter. As a speaker, once he had passed that final moment before he would start talking, he lost his doubts. With the first word he ceased to exist as a private person. Overworked as he was, he would have forgotten his existence as an individual more oft'n if at home Hansi had not kept reminding him of how he had changed.

Hippmann felt that he was going to be good today. This wretched Doctor Baer with his crazy eyes, these literary people, perverse or lazy, Sophie with her barren sympathy — how sapless they all were; that whole cafe was a madhouse, the old society in decay! Every hour spent with them was wasted. What happiness, after looking at those self-centred faces, to stand opposite

a man like Scheller and have the privilege of winning him over.

This spokesman of the Party's governing Council, which preached the principle of peaceful struggle with spiritual weapons, began with the unexpected observation that readiness to stake one's life on one's convictions was the first mark of an ethical personality. He pronounced this sentence slowly and in his most earnest manner. A tone of finality vibrated in his voice and evoked in the hearts of his hearers memories of the truly elevated moments of their lives. Weary eyes shone. The atmosphere of depression changed into one of solemnity. It was the old and ever-effective magic of Hippmann; when he spoke, the most exhausted pieceworker felt once more like a human being. "I am happy on this day to be able to come to an understanding with these ethical personalities among whom I hope and desire to be numbered."

This modest turn of speech was of course a bid for favour. But not even Scheller felt it to be so. Hippmann's reputation as a fighter was firmly founded. He had become known to the broad Party masses in 1917 when he organized the famous January strike against the continuation of the war and ever since then, in every crisis, he had voted for the more radical solution. In 1919 he had been in favour of a thorough house cleaning; in 1927, in the crisis that followed the burning of the Palace of Justice, and even more vigorously during the past month of March, he had demanded the general strike and the arming of the Defence Corps in support of the democratic Constitution. He had earned the right to criticize the radical opposition. The Party Council knew what they were doing when they sent him, thought the union representative Muller, who began to write figures on the pad before him, —1919, 1927, 1934, — again and again, large and round.

Passing on to the order of the day, Hippmann began by offering excuses for the organizers of the silent demonstration instead of accusing them. How well he could understand them, their impatience and their elan! That thousands of workers had

responded to their call was reason enough to take them seriously. It would be a grave error to dismiss them as irresponsible fanatics. They were the advance guard of the workers of Vienna. If nevertheless he was obliged to condemn the demonstration unreservedly, it was in the first place not for the merely formal reason that it had been a breach of Party discipline but for the much more decisive one that during a crisis in which the Party's very existence was at stake it was inexcusable to play with fire. To stage a demonstration and then permit it to be dispersed without effective resistance—that was always a grave mistake. If you say war, then mean war! Half-measures were bad measures. They disappointed friends and encouraged enemies. They were simply bad politics. It was such measures that he had come to condemn. And he had come for a higher purpose, to help clarify every mind before it was too late. For he could give even the most impatient his assurance that a decision was imminent.

Thus it was well always to begin with fundamentals. Who was the enemy? Whom must they fight? Was it the Government? Or the Heimwehr allied with the Government and bent on taking it over? Was it the National Socialists, who opposed both? Behind the Government stood the League of Nations, public opinion in England and France, and the Catholic Church; behind the Heimwehr stood Italy; and behind the National Socialists the Third Reich. The Government itself was not united. Its democratic wing was eager to make peace with the workers in order to protect the country against a German *Putsch*, or against plans for annexation; its Heimwehr wing was pro-Fascist, and relied on Italian help against Germany; the dominant centre, though inclined to mnke common cause with the Heimwehr, was unable to come to a decision. These facts raised many questions. Were the workers of Austria strong enough to fight three opponents at once? Could they make use of the conflict among these opponents? Was it still possible to manoeuvre? Were all these opponents equally dangerous, or was there a chief

enemy? "Such is our situation, such are our problems," said Hippmann, and took a sip of water to give his hearers time to grasp all the implications.

Continuing, he answered his own questions one after the other. It was as simple as A B C, or at least his manner made it seem so. Chief enemy: the National Socialists; compared to them the Heimwehr was almost a cultural movement. Enemy number two: the Heimwehr, as foes of democracy. Enemy number three: the Government itself, as long as it did not, at least in principle, restore the Parliament and the freedom of press and assembly. The Party could agree to a necessary limitation of formal democracy during the period of its probable abuse. In this case the common fight would be waged against the common enemy, the National Socialists, and for the very independence of Austria. Was that not clear?

"Clear!" The firm voice of Schelier resounded through the room. "But enemy number three confronts us daily with Heimwehr, police, and soldiers. We see no desire to come to an understanding with us."

"I can assure you, from personal knowledge, that forces in the Government are working toward an understanding with us . . ."

"We have no faith in those forces," Schelier interrupted. "The Government undermines our position by every means in its power. Its ally, the Heimwehr, demands our destruction. The great industrialists and landowners are eager to kill two birds with one stone. That's their idea. It's also the idea of the Italian politicians . . ."

The chairman rang his bell but at a gesture from Hippmann permitted Schelier to continue.

". . . and the question is, whose support will the Government rely on in its struggle with National Socialism — on ours, that is on the people of Austria; or on Italy? I am convinced that the Government has determined to pay Italy its price — our annihilation. The enemy we must fight, whether we want to or

not, is this Government. There is a last chance that the Government will free itself from the Heimwehr's clutches, if we are strong and determined, if we force them to it."

There was a murmur of applause from the group surrounding Scheller. The older men at the table looked expectantly at Hippmann, who went on in his friendliest tone.

"Comrade Scheller takes a black view. That is ms right. But there are many comrades, with perhaps even greater experience and insight than he, who are convinced that we can strengthen the Government's democratic wing by passive tolerance. Their aim is the same as Scheller's, only they want to reach it by a bloodless way, without the risk of civil war with consequences no one can foresee. They say that the Government will recover its reason. Scheller asserts that it has none left. This difference of opinion constitutes our crucial problem. And since no man can be sure which is right and which is wrong, I am persuaded that we must be ready for either eventuality. Such is my solution of our differences."

Now the men at the table applauded. The eyes of the union leader spoke a "Very good" as Hippmann reached for the water once more, not for oratorical reasons this time but because his tongue really cleaved to his palate. An unhappy feeling came over him. He was arguing well; he was contending with more cleverness than he himself approved against a simple worker. But what did words mean to this man Scheller? He was not yielding an inch; that he could see.

He went on rapidly: They must prepare for peace, for a Viennese peace against the barbarism of Berlin; they must demonstrate their strength by calmness and unity and neither provoke nor allow themselves to be provoked into action; they must enlighten public opinion in the great democracies, appeal to the League of Nations, rally the comrades in England and France, and not forget that a Socialist was the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. And at the same time rely upon themselves, expect the worst, prepare the general strike as answer to any

decisive attack on the Republic and keep the Defence Corps intact in spite of all regulations and arrests. Every confiscated store of arms must be replaced by two new ones. Nerves must be kept steady. Let the enemy come out of his trenches and advance — when you say war, then make war! "That is my opinion and, let no one confuse you, that is also the tactic determined upon by the supreme Council of the Party. Whoever breaks our front, however excellent his motive, no longer has a place in the Party. Our solidarity is our strength. But those of another opinion should openly profess it."

The speaker sat down amidst the applause of the old guard. Among the opposition no hand stirred. The chairman proposed a resolution exacting the strictest discipline and warning against a repetition of any public action not sanctioned by the governing Council. Debate on the question followed at once. It was almost eight o'clock.

Hippmann took another sip of water but the flat taste of his words remained in his mouth. It had been only another of those speeches of appeasement that he had been delivering month in and month out. In half an hour the resolution would be passed and everybody would go home. How many hundreds of resolutions had he caused to be passed in his life? And to what end? What a Sisyphean task! Scheller was much better off than he; he had no doubts. If he could only get out of this stuffy room, into the street, out of the district, and go to strange places, be alone and unknown. To take a trip to the Lake of Millstadt with Hansi and pay attention only to her . . . Not to have to act ... To be permitted to think again, to start from the very beginning . . . How tired he was!

One committee man after another spoke for the resolution. Then suddenly a railroad worker asked sceptically how the Party proposed to educate the members to be ready to fight if it never permitted even a partial engagement. There was applause from the opposition. Another speaker, a white-collar worker with spectacles, declared, obviously against his will, in a tone of

apology, that he had been delegated by his group to demand that the Party leadership should "not imitate the shameful example of the German comrades but lead the Austrian proletariat, with arms in their hands, against the enemies of democracy." The opposition applauded more violently and then the union leader Miiller asked for the floor.

Muller was an honest man who sent his four children to the very best schools despite his small salary. Both bosses and employees equally valued him and feared him. There was no getting away from his facts and figures and his tough leathery way of insisting on them again and again. Easy victories in wage disputes gave him no pleasure; he was proud of compromises arrived at with difficulty. He knew only facts and the logic of facts. He detested the formulations, half-emotional, half-intellectual, that the politicians used. Such phrases as "with arms in their hands" he could not bear. Only his old Viennese coachman's moustache betrayed his warm nature. His voice clicked like an adding machine.

"I am, thank God, no militarist. But this much I do know, that we have not enough hands and not enough weapons to offer effective resistance to the military power of the Government, which, including the army, the police, the gendarmes, and the Heimwehr, amounts to at least 100,000 men. I am also told that bombing-planes, tanks,, artillery, and poison gas are more effective than rusty rifles. No, in a purely military conflict with the Government we are lost, even if every Defence Corps man is a hero. We have just one effective weapon and that is the general strike, if it succeeds. It must be thoroughly prepared and the provocation for it, whether it develops naturally or not, must be powerful enough to command the adherence of every shop. We union people know how hard it is these days to carry through even a small strike. The fear of unemployment is stronger than the desire for better working conditions. There are more and more strikebreakers. These are facts which even Comrade Scheller cannot deny. There are periods of advance and periods

of retreat, even of retreat with losses. We must gain time. Every day of peace is a day won . . ."

The opposition burst out noisily. A young excited fellow, no longer holding himself back, plunged forward to the Council table. "And when is an occasion grave enough for a general strike?" he cried. "The suppression of Parliament wasn't enough for you. And of course you can't start a civil war over such trifling issues as the freedom of the press or the Supreme Court! Don't you realize that we're being slowly choked to death? Soon we'll have nothing left to fight for! We must get out of this blind alley into which you have led us. Every day of peace drives us deeper into it."

A second young worker, obviously a Defence Corps man, came forward. "And if we wait until you think that a general strike might succeed, we won't have a gun left. They're confiscating arms every day. They know why. They're afraid of us, not of you. That's their tactic: first to disarm us and then to attack us. And you are defending them."

"They don't want to fight at all, these capitulators," cried the first of the two young men, shaking his fist at Miiller.

Violent protests rose along the table. The chairman rang his bell but the voices drowned it out. Hippmann sat without stirring, the leader listening to the voices of the people. Miiller restored order by leaving his place and going slowly up to the two young men. He stopped just in front of them. Complete silence fell.

"You're too young, both of you, to be able to insult me," he said in a trembling voice, his face pale with rage. "But because you are so young, and have as yet no insight of your own, and since some day the responsibility you want to assume so frivolously will be on your shoulders, I'll tell you what would happen if we made mistakes today. It would simply be the end of us—the end of a cultural work of decades and the end of the finest workers' movement in the world. And the end of all those who have built it up through sacrifice upon sacrifice. The

personal end of all of us. Our attempt to put the world in more rational order will be smashed. Perhaps your generation will be luckier than mine. Perhaps — if you begin to think in time. That is my wish for you, and that is my answer."

Hippmann heard Muller returning to his place; every step, it was so still. He felt a movement through the stillness, the turning of many heads; and Hippmann knew without looking up that Scheller was about to speak.

Scheller had risen. "Comrades," he said as the silence deepened still more, "I do not speak now in the name of the traffic union of my district. Its attitude on the whole is not very different from that of other shops. They say that they will join in a general strike if the word is given; I don't know how it will be when we get that far. No one can foretell that today; too many sins have already been committed. Comrade Miiller has gone over all the reasons for prudence which he thinks we ought to keep in mind, and I'm quite sure that each of them is sound enough. But in my opinion the battle can no longer be avoided for the simple reason that the enemy is forcing it upon us. It is too late for speechmaking. Since we will have to fight it is better to fight at once, today and not tomorrow, before the Defence Corps is disarmed and all its leaders arrested. Every day of peace is a day lost. I speak in the name of a great group of workers who look upon it as their duty, without further question, to defend the Republic. For no one denies any longer that this Republic is being betrayed every day by its Government. We simply want to carry out the provisions of the Party programme. Our former confidence in the Party leadership is dead. We are afraid it might deliver us up to our enemies without striking a blow, just as the leadership of the German Party did with the workers of Germany. This possibility we shall and will prevent. I beg Comrade Hippmann to tell the Council that our patience is at an end. After the fifteenth of February, — that is, two weeks from today, — we shall no longer consider ourselves subject to its direction unless in the meantime it gives up its tactics

of retreat. Yes, the demonstration we organized was a test of strength. It had nothing to do, however, with the Government or the police. It was a demonstration against the Party leadership. Comrade Hippmann has called us the advance guard of the workers of Vienna. I promise you we shall seek to deserve this honourable name. No talk about discipline will change our decision. We will fight, and, if necessary, to the last man."

Every word struck home: hard, unemotional, devoid of cheap excitement. Something unalterable sounded in every sentence. Fear, incomprehension, confusion, resignation to a long expected fate, were visible on the faces of the old guard. No one stirred. There was no applause, no sign of agreement or indignation. It was as if war had been declared, as if death stood in the room.

Hippmann rose, the fatigue plainer in his face. Again he waited for a moment. When he spoke he was calmness itself.

"We have listened to a declaration which means nothing less than overt rebellion against the entire workers' movement of Austria. Irresponsible comrades whose numbers I do not know wish to impose their will upon the Party, to rule by threat its elected officers, and in this hour of greatest danger to desert to measures of despair. With the declaration we have heard, doubtless one well considered and prepared, Comrade Scheller and his friends have put themselves outside of the Party. I shall move for their exclusion and for that of every comrade who cannot keep Party discipline. The whole world is caught up in processes of such colossal change that they will determine the history of man for many generations. It is not for a handful of rash men to imagine that they are wiser than the whole class to which they belong. We shall repulse this new attack against our calm, objective and realistic policy. Traitors will be treated as traitors."

The last sentence cracked like a whip. A cringing movement went through the meeting and cries of protest died on lips prepared to utter them.

Scheller had not resumed his seat. He was standing with

lowered head, eyes fixed on space. Slowly he raised his head and advanced one step. The silence and the tension were now unbearable.

"Comrade Hippmann, who by the way has shown his true face at last, is quite right," he said, emphasizing every word. "We are violating the Party laws. We must be excluded. I was ready for that. But I must confess that it hits me harder than I thought. I have lived my whole life, ever since I was able to think, within the Party. Just before the war, when I was an apprentice, I entered the youth organization. My whole existence, everything beautiful that raises us above eating and drinking, all that is good, all has come to me through the Party. Only through its teachings I became a human being; I am at home in the Party as nowhere else. It hurts and I can't imagine being outside it . . ."

He interrupted himself. There was still a great deal that he wanted to say, but it was all private. The sad feeling that mounted in him was not good either. More rapidly he continued:

". . . But don't you see that it's no longer important whether we can win or not? The important thing for us is to prove that our ideals are worth our very lives. Otherwise the others would be right. If we die fighting, our ideals will live."

Scheller sat down abruptly, although he did not seem to be through. The men of the old guard were silent as if they were listening to what he had left unsaid. There was a pause in which the chairman, holding the little bell firmly in his hand, looked uncertainly from Hippmann to Muller and back again. Finally he asked, "Does anyone else wish to speak?" Evidently, no one. He turned to the principal speaker, to allow him to make his final remarks. But Hippmann waved his hand. No final remarks. The resolution condemning the demonstration and breach of discipline was adopted by a large majority.

Hippmann heard the formalities of closing proceed around him while the final remarks he had refused to make kept working within him. Why had he not made them? He could have been

conciliatory. He could have begun with Scheller's love and reverence and gratitude toward the party; he might have expressed a deep sympathy for this feeling which was so much more than loyalty to an organization, which was in fact a symbol of the profound cultural aspirations of the poor, toiling human being. Starting with that he could have let the order of the day expand into the infinite. Leaving petty politics behind him, he could have talked about culture, the future, humanity, good and evil, the imperfection of the created being and its innate yearning for perfection—a fountain of beautiful and stimulating mysterious words to refresh these weary men who had come from the machines to consider how best to defend their little freedom. Freedom—he could have pronounced the word in such a fashion that it would have had a single unequivocal meaning, would have meant the whole of life, the very right to breathe and the right to think. He could have got hold of this Scheller with words and shaken his very heart. "Confidence in our sacred cause and courage, but not the courage of desperation. Then we will be victorious, whatever happens," He heard himself saying it, but he was not saying it. A bad day . . . Why had he let things come to this? Did he want everything, finally, to come to an end?

Then he heard the moving of chairs and the scraping of feet and said, "Good night, children," and whispered to the chairman that Scheller was to wait for him. "No, no," he heard a voice say, "I've got a whole room full of comrades waiting for me at the bricklayers' hall." That was Miiller, a sober man who never entered a saloon. Hippmann wished that they were all gone so that he might privately bring this Scheller to reason. Quite aside from Party discipline, premature action was madness. . . .

Hippmann's mind was working as he pressed one calloused hand after another. They liked him, these men. These hand-clasps were really the single thing that remained of his whole

life. And weren't they worth more than everything else? If only the air had not been so stuffy; they ought to open the windows. A man couldn't just simply close his ears and refuse to listen. But when Hippmann looked for him, Scheller was gone. It cut him to the very heart. "He wouldn't wait," someone said.

The chairman, who always thought it an honor to accompany the speaker of a meeting to the tramway or to an automobile, was the first to notice how Hippmann, when he tried to rise, sank slowly forward and swept the bell from the table with his arm. He rushed to his side, supported the fainting man, made him lean back and opened his tie, collar, and waistcoat. Someone ran into the hall calling for members of the Worker Samaritans, quite forgetting in his excitement that the Socialist Red Cross had long been outlawed.

Hippmann recovered quickly. It was only a passing attack of weakness. He had them often now. Not enough sleep, no vacation for two years, no relaxation, and always these exciting arguments and explanations in halls filled with foul air. The chairman wanted to get a taxi, but Hippmann declined. He preferred to walk and would scarcely let them help him on with his coat. He left the hall without saying a word, waving farewell and thanks with a gesture that was still uncertain. The chairman and the secretary followed him softly, at a distance, down the stairs. Then, near the tattered "Merry Widow" poster, they stopped and looked silently after the tall man with the left shoulder pulled down from years of carrying a heavy briefcase — until he disappeared into the mist of the late winter night.

When Hippmann got home Hansi was not there. The servant told him that Frau Koller — the authoress, Sophie Koller, she elaborated respectfully — had telephoned frantically — something frightful had happened. A doctor from Berlin — yes, a Doctor Baer — had shot himself. "There's always that solution," thought Hippmann and went supperless to bed. If only he were not so tired. Perhaps it was merely the south wind.

Scheller and Kraus had left the Workers' Home not by the main entrance but by a devious way known only to a few which led across a damp court into a side street free of detectives. Half an hour later they were in a smoky little room, somewhere in the city's sea of houses under, over and among the thousands of similar small square rooms where the modern cave-man rends his prey and spreads his bed. Franze was waiting there. Without a word, Scheller sat down at the table and hid his head in his hands.

After a while Kraus said: "They'd all rather live."

X

P

POLICE headquarters of the Third Vienna District had been ordered, on Thursday, February 8, to station traffic policemen at the crossings of all the streets leading to the Uexcuell Palace so that guests driving to the ball should not be delayed or annoyed. The officer in charge, a protege of the young Count, sent a dozen additional plainclothesmen on his own initiative. It was no pleasure on an icy winter night to hover idly about a long row of cars. But still it was better than sitting around barracks and district stations. For some days now all police units had been mobilized. Nobody knew why. They couldn't march in mass formation against the National Socialist bomb-throwers whose insolence was increasing in spite of Martial Courts and ministerial speeches. There were rumours, to be sure, that they were planning a *Putsch*. But the men assigned to watch them had not been able to gather a scrap of evidence to show that their plans had gone that far. There was even less to be feared from the Socialists. The workers muttered but their leaders kept them well in hand. Perhaps the Heimwehr people, who were acting more cocky every day, were getting ready to snatch away their very citadel, the City Hall of Vienna. That was the explanation most policemen were figuring out for themselves. There wasn't a word about anything in the papers, of course.

The conversations at crossings and in hallways fell silent when

on the stroke of half-past nine the doors of the palace opened and a flood of light, brilliant and yellow as a trumpet tone, poured out on the dark Rennweg. Lackeys in livery unrolled a carpet, reaching from door to curb, in the colours of the house of Uexcuell, blue and ochre. The mock-seriousness of their long, shaven upper lips, contrasting with the tails of their coats, which flew out on both sides as they bowed low, amused the passers-by. Many of them stopped and stood about curiously but were soon forced back from the entrance by Heimwehr men in brand new uniforms.

The long facade of the palace remained black and mysterious. Observers in the houses opposite could not detect a single gleam of light from the tall, heavily curtained windows. Their glances were diverted to a solitary attic window that suddenly shone bright in the darkness. Within it appeared a woman combing her long hair, high above all that was going on below in the street and in the palace, a silhouette of bust and arms monotonously moving, senselessly unconcerned.

The first guests began to arrive and after that the glittering chain of cars was hardly ever broken. Curious watchers, who already filled the entire length of the pavement before the palace, kept craning their necks. In the cars gliding by they caught glimpses of ladies adjusting their masks for the last time. Their costumes, hidden by furs, could be guessed at from their coiffures and headdresses—delicate turbans, bright-coloured, wide brimmed summer hats, bold sporting caps. The gentlemen, most of whom were not in costume, seemed a little embarrassed under their silk hats or military caps. Even those who were lucky enough to have got a place near the entrance did not see much more. The broad backs of the Heimwehr cut off their view and the cold wind drove the arriving guests quickly into the palace. From within came the sound of music, merry tunes, delicate and far away. "The old upper crust," said a contemptuous voice. One of the Heimwehr men turned around with a threatening gesture.

It was after eleven when Wiesner finally arrived. Maria must have wondered what had kept him. But he mounted the stairs to the ballroom slowly, and inwardly he felt no haste. Once twenty years ago he had been in the palace on the occasion of a benefit for the war blind, Looking into radiant eyes which now gleamed at him from behind gay masks, he remembered empty hollows in pale unshaven faces. He was in no carnival mood—particularly since Bodo von Kleist, two hours before, just as he was dressing, had burst in upon him unexpectedly.

Over the telephone Wiesner had at once recognized the voice of his old comrade-in-arms. In his mind's eyes he saw three cannons take position on the ridge of a long Volhynian hill and, from a distance of two hundred metres, drive the Russians back. Lieutenant Kleist gave the orders sitting upright on his roan horse as though careless of the enemy's fire. That night, after the skirmish, Wiesner had been impelled to express his admiration to the unknown German officer. Afterwards it happened that their batteries stood side by side in a dreary swamp. Gray days and black nights followed during which they talked about the future of the world, so unimaginably remote in this drenched desert. Ten years later, in the diplomatic service of their respective countries, they had met again in London and resumed their war friendship. One day Kleist had simply disappeared. Later it was said that he had taken a job as military instructor in some South American republic. In 1933 he suddenly reappeared as a high-ranking leader of the Nazi Storm Troops in Berlin. For a long time Wiesner had refused to believe that this fine fellow, who had never hesitated between right and wrong and whom he flattered himself he knew intimately, had become a National Socialist.

Kleist was on his way to Belgrade and had only two hours in Vienna. Wiesner offered to hurry and meet him in the city; Kleist preferred to come to him and half an hour later he arrived in Potzleinsdorf. Tall and blond, he seemed not a day older; yet his whole expression was more determined. He anticipated

at once the question Wiesner had so often put to himself, "We must win the next war. Whoever helps to do that I welcome," he said without any apology in his voice.

The next war: The words set off a whole train of conflicting feelings in Wiesner. At the same time he knew that Kleist was right in his categorical assumption. You had only to try to imagine perpetual peace; you couldn't do it. Wasn't Kleist simply being logical? The National Socialists were organizing the German people for one aim, one only: victory in the next war. Any job could be well done if you could do it twice. But was the historical process as simple as that?

Wiesner suddenly had the feeling that he was being visited not by an old friend but by an emissary. Kleist barely answered questions about his personal life. He spoke as if according to programme, not a word too much or too little. He knew that Wiesner had sent in his resignation; he did not, however, bluntly ask the reasons for it as the political dilettante Robinson had done, but wanted to know precisely how he intended to use his freedom. Germany was going to conquer and unite the continent. What did shortcomings or ugly episodes matter in the face of this mighty task? To stand out against the course of history, against its destiny perhaps, because of *methods*? Rather unsoldierly! He still thought sometimes of the Devil's Forest?

Wiesner tied his white tie perfectly. Oh, he remembered the shattered trench that they had held with a single machine gun; but neither had he forgotten Kleist's face on the evening they got the news that Rumania had declared war. How hard it had become, and yet it could not conceal the beginning of an immense fear that the whole world would unite against Germany. Poor exhausted soldiers, they had lifted high their brandy glasses. Many enemies, much honour! Well, even this illusion had crashed.

"I am withdrawing into private life," Wiesner answered almost by the way. "If you're a true prophet it won't be easy either. I shall stand alone, one against the world."

It was several minutes before Kleist, who was standing by

the window, turned round and asked: "Is that your last word?"

"Yes, Bodo, by all the dead in the Devil's Forest. No more war! I swore it then. And I hate what you call 'the course of history.'"

They were silent during the drive to the station. Kleist's face had closed up like a vizor. On the platform he said in the voice of a stranger: "Who is not with us is against us." He did not shake hands. Involuntarily Wiesner thought, "Alone!"

This feeling of isolation did not leave him as he stood on the edge of the ballroom floor and looked for Maria. The gaiety pressing in upon him from all sides, reviving memories, long forgotten episodes of a carnival leave of absence in 1917, did not help. Yes, that went on, too, in the very midst of war. He thought of the whole heat of his youth as childishness. Did Maria feel now as he had then? A subtle fear began to creep into this question. But seeing himself in one of the tall mirrors, Wiesner shook it off. He was better-looking than many of the younger men.

The dancers whirled past him under the glitter of the great Venetian chandeliers. In the gallery sat the old ladies and gentlemen, their heads gently swaying to the rhythm of the music. The master of the house, the Vulture Count Uexcuell, sat upright behind the balustrade of the central loge, gleaming white in his general's uniform, and on his yellow forehead there was still a glint of the imperial cadet he had once been, a half-century ago. His son, in evening dress — not in a Heimwehr uniform — at least he had that much decency — played host to the diplomats who were present. How elegant and agreeable he and his friends could be when they were not making public speeches. Now they were playing, and successfully too, the part of romantic old Austrian waltz cavaliers for the benefit of the foreign ladies. At every measure of the Blue Danube Waltz, and at every woman's luring smile, Wiesner too was increasingly sensible of the charm of the past. At the same time his political eyes registered the

propaganda for which young Uexcuell was using the ball. The new old Austria was being shown off to the diplomatic corps and to the Italian financiers who were carrying on negotiations in the city. The entire nobility was on display. At the right of the old Count sat the Archduke who had returned some months before to the Fatherland as the representative of the young emperor still in exile; next to him, plump and good-natured, the Abbot of the Klosterneuburg Cloister, a picture of tolerance. His peasant eyes followed the handsome girls and women who had come from the great patrician houses, and even more eagerly the stage and film stars whose fantastic but decent costumes added to this aristocratic milieu that dash of the demi-monde that had always distinguished Viennese society. Among the dancers glowed many enthusiastic faces from the provinces, healthy and ruddy, army officers, Heimwehr leaders, Christian politicians. They contrasted with the pale tense faces of the ministerial bureaucracy, many of whom had exchanged their usual scepticism and mere official courtesy for an honest delight, yielding themselves, as someone behind Wiesner inevitably remarked, to the spirit of Phaeacia. It had always been a doubtful world, but tonight that vanished happier Vienna of long ago, which lived only in the memory of the prewar generation, but which the younger people and the foreigners had heard and read so much about, seemed to have come to life again. A breath, at least, of that "rebirth" which the Government speakers were continuously preaching hovered in the palace. Perhaps that old Austria did still live, if only one believed firmly enough in its deep and permanent value.

With pleasure Wiesner observed two shapely legs visible far above the knee, a delicate flexible waist, glowing cheeks. A lieutenant in the gay imperial uniform took the girl in his arms. They danced past him, a happy, self-contained harmony of life and love. Wiesner had a sense of unreality. All Kleist wanted was the future. Pitilessly now he was thinking of the conquest of Europe, while the train went roaring through the winter night.

Was his vision more important than this anachronism, this carnival magic? Why did nobody live in the present?

Looking up, Wiesner saw the professors, Steiger and Schlager, in a box. Half hidden behind them, with a tortured, critical face, was Joseph Birkmeier. So he had come to get a view of the ruling classes close up, as his lighter-minded sister had advised. No trace of the two girls, who had kept their costumes a secret. Perhaps the Professor or Joseph could tell him where to find them.

On the stairs a Pierrot stopped him. A woman's arm lay warm for a moment round his neck and two eyes he knew sparkled from a black lace mask. An excited but merry voice whispered in his ear: "Don't be afraid. I'm behaving myself here but after the ball I'm coming to you." Before he could reply the Pierrot had disappeared in the throng. The wintry sadness of a small town's market place, the throbbing of the engine of a bus, slipped into his memory. It was Hilda! That eternally surprising girl! How had she got here?

Entering the little anteroom of the box Wiesner heard Professor Steiger's voice. "What you always overlook, Joseph, is that human beings want above all to have a good time. You've got to resign yourself to that. You will think effectively only when you give this light-mindedness, which is probably the right attitude to life, its proper place in your calculations." Wiesner was about to turn away — no problems, not now — when Schlager said, "The girls have disappeared with their conquests." At that he drew the curtain aside.

Maria and Pepitta were enjoying their first much-needed rest. They sat, with their dancing partners and a strange couple who had joined them in the informality of the carnival, in the winter garden of the palace. This extremely long room, a glass-covered veranda, had been transformed into a wine tavern full of alcoves. Up green trellises twined the old Count's loveliest hedge roses. Violets in little earthenware jugs stood on the tables. Old-fashioned candlesticks with real candles diffused a mild and homely

light. Costumes and masks gleamed like great flowers in the dimness. A Schrammel quartet played hearty folksongs, somewhat too discreetly for a tavern. What was being served was not country wine but French champagne. From the ballroom came the sound of waltzes and polkas, melodies that rose and fell and floated through all the rooms and, so it seemed at least in the mounting carnival spirit, into every heart.

Maria's partner, a lieutenant of the Tyrolese Sharpshooters, whose regiment had been transferred to Vienna only a few days ago, radiated joy from his healthy, harmless face. A week ago in the snows of the Brenner he would never have imagined that he would so soon attend such a magnificent ball. In his enthusiasm he kept saying, "Magnificent, magnificent," and Pepitta was beginning to laugh at him. But, unknown to himself, he was fulfilling his function of helping Maria pass the time until Wiesner should appear.

Pepitta's partner, slender, dark, very elegant and appealing, his seriousness touched with gaiety, a Doctor Wagner if Maria had caught the name correctly — why this formal introduction? — would not let Pepitta drink a second glass of champagne. He knew that the Viennese laundress with the polka-dot blouse and hair ribbon, whom he was pretending to have just met, would have to sing after the unmasking. Under the table Pepitta squeezed his hand and in her behavior toward him there was a blissful obedience that was not all in keeping with her naturally independent and even impudent way with men. Was he a gynaecologist? The champagne was going a little to her head and Maria began to wonder why she had asked herself that question. All at once she had a sharp feeling of the profound difference between herself and her friend. Doubtless that was the reason why Pepitta had stopped telling her weeks ago about her little romantic encounters. She was to remain ignorant of this one, officially in any case. Why? Observing the two of them there arose in Maria a rather humiliating feeling of not being quite grown-up. How stupid! She was older than Pepitta, even if it

was only by a few months, but everybody tried to spare her. Nobody told her the truth. Father didn't speak to her about the troubles he was having over Fraulein Berg, as if such things didn't yet concern her. And Heinrich, when she threw herself into his arms, would say, "Everything about us is to be right," repulsing her gently.

Maria drank down a second glass of champagne in one draught and the lieutenant said, "Magnificent!" All her feelings and thoughts were whirling confusedly within her. But she perceived many things more clearly and sharply and thought herself very courageous until her heart began to beat at her own courage. For she had her secret too. She did not even share it with the person it concerned. She kept it for herself alone. Let them exclude her! No one would have believed what she was capable of thinking and imagining in the solitude of her most private self.

The lieutenant grew bolder. He put his hand on hers — shyly enough, but he did it. She let him. Pepitta and the doctor — they had known each other for a long time and were trying to hide it — it was quite clear how far they had already gone with each other. And wherever Maria turned it was the same thing. That other couple at the table for instance — what was he whispering in her ear that made her eyes so moist? And that fragile page yonder with the *apache*, and that ballerina with her two uniforms — everyone except her. It was ridiculous.

The lieutenant withdrew his hand. No one dared really take hold of her. When it came to Pepitta they had no hesitation: everyone at least tried. Not even the engineer had had the courage. He had put his arms about her but had been frightened by the least resistance. If he had only known how weak she had been for a few minutes! She would have driven on with him in that little taxi with the glittering windows. It could have stopped before some strange house and she would have stepped out and gone in with him. Why didn't he feel that? At first he knew exactly what he wanted; for weeks he had pursued her; and then

he ran away. How he had looked for her in that human heap after the demonstration! Watching him had been like standing at your own grave and seeing who wept the most.

No, she didn't want to dance again. She must drink another glass. Too little champagne made her merely sad. The *apache* was pressing his page into the darkest corner. What the girl — she was seventeen at the most and so fragile — must have experienced already! Best that Pepitta shouldn't dance too much; or later she wouldn't have breath enough for her singing. She seemed to have no stage fright at all. Still two hours to wait, and Maria really had come only to be present at her debut. . . . After the demonstration she had lost interest in the ball. But when the costume arrived and she stood before the mirror in her first full *dccolletage* — it was so beautiful to be beautiful! A kind of excitement took hold of her. She could hardly wait to show herself. As if beauty were something in itself, a merit or a distinction. Her father had been surprised when he had seen her. "A great lady," he had said. Perhaps he would finally understand that she was no longer a child. Would Heinrich notice that her dress was a copy of one worn by the Empress Elizabeth, when she was still a princess, at her first court ball? And her coiffure. The evening they met he had said she resembled the Empress. Should she go and look for him? Surely he must have come by now.

Why did Pepitta raise a warning finger? Was she the only one who must not flirt? Not even with a harmless lieutenant? It was no more than a game. At last the champagne was having its effect. She felt a division taking place. Within she remained herself; outwardly she could be like all the others. The world had no unity either, she had grasped that even before Joseph's explanation. Only she meant it a little differently. How delighted he had been that she had defended the demonstrators against Uncle Schlager. For two hours he had worked with her in the hope of making her a useful member of human society. To understand reality, he said, that which is. He was quoting Lassalle — as he explained to her — who had fallen in a duel over a woman he

loved. That was all she knew about him. . . . To know what is. Life wasn't at all as she had understood it to be from books and art. Novels and poems and plays and the whole of music had been to her only a fantastic vision in which to lose herself, in the gay and the sad but always in the beautiful. Now, ever since the holidays, a world had come into being which was much greater than its image in art, the genuine reality. During the night after the demonstration it came over her for the first time, like a glorious discovery, that this world was within herself, not elsewhere. She had not lived as the human being she really was. She had lived as an artificial person cut off from reality. So much she knew now. But she did not yet know *who* she was. She must first find herself. Sometimes the sensible shy girl who had got engaged to the distinguished Baron Wiesner seemed a stranger to her. And then again she was once more that girl. Where was the boundary between imagination and reality? Father was right—thinking was still painful. . . . Why were they all laughing and giggling? They were all having such a good time, and she did not know which way to turn.

The lieutenant took her hand again. The gentle pressure of his fingers increased and then relaxed again and she was full of tension of which she was suddenly ashamed. But she smiled at him and lifted her glass with a frivolous gesture. Oh, she could play when she wanted to. He looked at her in surprise, but when she returned his glance and took nothing back he was delighted and laughed, self-satisfied. It was a wonder he didn't say "Magnificent!"

Suddenly Wiesner was standing at the door, looking searchingly through the winter garden. Instead of putting her glass to her lips Maria set it on the table. For a moment she was tempted to let him see her with the lieutenant. But in the same instant she rose and left the table. "Don't give my costume away!" she heard Pepitta call after her.

Swiftly approaching Wiesner she looked at him through the

eye-slits of her mask as if from a hiding place. She felt herself blushing and dismayed when his searching glance seemed to pass beyond her. She breathed with relief when at last he recognized her. She stood still. The primitive music of the quartet, the melodies from the ballroom, the laughing, the whispering, the clink of glasses, the gleam of the costumes, the flicker of the candles, the movements of the masks, all so obscene — yes, that was the right word — the whole tavern blurred before her eyes. Out of this hot and multicolored mist stepped Wiesner and came slowly and admiringly toward her. There was nothing new or strange about him. But how he stood out against that vague background. It gave her a pleasant sensation in her naked shoulders the way he looked at her with pride. She straightened herself still more, up out of her secret girlhood. "A great lady," her father had said. But Heinrich . . . the appraisal in his eyes was a thousand times more eloquent. Yet in it was a cruel superiority which at once challenged and excited her. What she was longing for was, in him, circumspect and thoughtful. That stupid lieutenant. And in comparison the engineer too, who was just a person like herself ... A cold shiver ran down her back as Wiesner bent to kiss her hand. She was looking down at him, literally down. She wanted that. "I'm nasty, just nasty." It throbbed in her head. It was the champagne. But she was happy. They went down to the ballroom. What they said did not count. What was important was the feeling of security that grew in her at every step. No flirtations, no immature romances, no affair like Pepitta's with the doctor! Yes, everything was to be right; and as she wanted it. Not to yield merely because she could not help herself. To choose and to remain one's self. Then the reward, and the unknown, would be great and beautiful. Poor engineer, if he had dared!

They danced. The impression of unreality which had tormented Wiesner ever since he had entered the palace was still with him. He felt Maria's impulse toward him and his imagination leaped forward to future evenings. A feeling of possession urged itself

upon him. She was his own, he thought, half-triumphantly, half-restrained by the disappointment of earlier illusions of conquest. How happy he could have been but for these memories. To hold Maria in his arms before so many people was rather painful. Glances which approved his choice disturbed him as intrusive. The sense of her yielding almost embarrassed him. She was so young. How hot her hand was. It had been a mistake to give her the old ring. He should have made a fresh start and bought a new one. It had been the old compulsion of his boyhood sympathy with his unhappy mother. He must not try to put Maria in her place.

"Do you like my costume?"

"Like the Empress's and far more beautiful."

"What else are you thinking of?"

"Of how much I love you."

She laid her head against his shoulder and closed her eyes. She smiled as though in a delightful dream. No one, he determined, should disturb that dream. To shield her—that was life. Everything else was lies and empty arrogance. It all ended in the Devil's Forest, always and forever in the Devil's Forest, with the torn bodies of men in the wire entanglements.

Pierrot Hilda danced by. There was a sceptical expression about her too conscious mouth. A turn of the dance, and Wiesner recognized her partner. It was, of all people, Major Schrack.

Did Hilda know anything about the tension between Schrack and himself? Did she want to make him jealous? Imagine Schrack dancing? Had he got over his contempt for women? He wore his superior subaltern face; his "*Scrvtis*" sounded condescending and embarrassed at the same time. Obviously Hilda had been invited to the ball through him. She always found a way.

Maria gave herself to the rhythm of the dance. She did not suspect what ghosts of the past were playing about her. "To make a fresh start," Wiesner thought again and in the knowledge of her ignorance drew her protectively to him. At last he felt an upsurge of happiness in his heart. With her he would be

able to establish a true harmony, which, in spite of all the contradicting, would have, for him at least, a final meaning.

"Pardon . . ."

Maria glided away from him into the arms of a Tyrolese Sharpshooter who had bowed perfunctorily, and danced on with him. Wiesner felt his own astonishment. In his mind he had been so far away from the ball that he had not reckoned on this possibility. He heard laughter about him, good-natured but touched with malice. Before he was quite aware of it he was whirling about with a little Viennese laundress who, oddly enough, spoke a broken German.

"Pourquoi so sad, Monsieur le Baron?"

Wiesner knew instantly that this was Pepitta's little joke. He pretended to be deceived and spoke French to her. She rescued herself twice with "Out" and "S,'7 vous *plait*." Then in order to avoid further embarrassment, she interrupted him with, "For goodness' sake will you stop *parlez-voing*? The joke's on me, but it's not very gallant. Joseph says that I can't even talk German properly." She chattered on in her light-hearted way about the wonderful ball, the conductor, the grand people who were so human and so natural, until someone else cut in and danced away with her too. He was glad enough not to have to dance any more. Before the war he had been too young, and afterwards the time for dancing was past. The same was true of many things. He must be sure to prevent Hilda from paying him that visit after the ball.

The young Count Uexcuell walked up and down in the foyer with the Italian Ambassador. Their mutual understanding and familiarity were being conspicuously displayed. Reflecting on the behaviour of these two, Wiesner entered one of the side rooms into which, while he had been dancing, he had seen Hilda and Schrack disappear. They were sitting on tall stools before an improvised bar. Hilda was the first to notice Wiesner. The laughter died on Schrack's lips. Hilda took off her mask; she didn't seem to be having a good time.

"What a surprise! Hello, Hilda; good evening, Major."

With a gesture of invitation Hilda took her silver mesh bag off the stool beside her. It was the same one she had carried on New Year's Eve.

"I want to thank you for your report on the lumber contract," Wiesner continued but without sitting down. "I'm coming to Langenbruck over the week end. I'm glad to know that everything is in order."

"We'll soon have order everywhere," answered Schrack in an unnecessarily loud voice. "We consecrate the flags on Sunday." The connection between the two statements was obscure. He looked at his wrist watch; it was the same one he had worn during the war.

"The Major has kindly offered to take me home on the Government plane to Innsbruck," Hilda said. "But I believe I'd rather sleep." She looked at Wiesner, very much awake.

For a moment he thought of asking her to dance in order to tell her to be sensible. Perhaps he could make her return the key to his house. But he didn't wish to be seen with her in front of Maria. So he advised her to fly with the Major. He could see that she understood him, but she did not let him know whether she would heed his wish. It annoyed him, but he felt sorry for her too.

On the way back to the ballroom he ran into Schlager. Gasping and scarlet-faced as usual, he was coming down the stairs hand in hand with a frolicsome Venus out of Tannhauser. In his evening clothes he looked like the excited mayor of a provincial city. "The eternal womanly draws us down," he was exclaiming. It was disgusting. The distaste that Wiesner felt for the man had an element of self-accusation.

Maria danced with the lieutenant, then with a good figure in tails, then with a bad one, and then again with the lieutenant. Finally she caught sight of Wiesner and smiled at him but made no sign that she would like to dance with him. Again he stood at the edge of the dance floor, recognizing acquaintances, answer-

ing a jest now and then, refusing a voluptuous Spanish lady and a witty, bare-legged jockey. He couldn't deny that all this colourful gaiety had form and elegance, and indeed he had no wish to deny it. But Kleist came into his mind again, or had not yet left it. If he was right all this was senseless.

The orchestra stopped playing and three blasts gave the signal that the moment for unmasking had come. The couples stood still on the floor and the ladies unhooked their masks while their partners looked on in pretended expectancy. Wiesner observed the change which came over the scene with the baring of so many faces of women and girls. Involuntarily he watched a woman in a crinoline who had been surrounded by many men and who now, without taking off her mask, escaped from her cavaliers. Then suddenly Maria stood before him, breathless, her fairy-tale face radiant.

"I could dance till morning, just dance. Afterwards it's your turn whether you like it or not." She took his arm and nestled against him. At some distance stood the Tyrolese lieutenant, deserted and a little stupefied. How inconsiderate Maria could be. Pepitta rushed past. "Cross your fingers for me," she whispered.

A lackey followed Maria and Wiesner into the box and served them champagne. "It's really almost as it used to be in the old days," said Professor Steiger. Joseph refused to drink. There had long been a tacit agreement among them to ignore his endless opposition to everything; yet now a vibration of hostility ran through the box. He observed it, and said quickly, looking from one to the other, half-swallowing his words, "I'm only waiting until Pepitta has sung; it can't be long now."

Maria felt sorry for him. He could never get free from himself. She had got past that point. She had even promised to meet the lieutenant in the winter garden. He had been delighted. Heinrich would only have smiled if she had told him. He didn't even notice how men craned their necks to look at her. She wondered

why he was talking so long with the old lady in the next box.

He turned to her. "I want to introduce you to an old, old friend of my family. This is my fiancée, Countess."

Maria lowered her head and smiled into the lorgnette which seemed to approach her. She blushed to her hair. My fiancée. What a word. Mine — that was called a possessive pronoun. But at the same time she felt very proud.

General applause burst out. The entertainment was about to begin. People settled down, as they did at the theatre. In the rear of the box Joseph was walking up and down, gnawing his lips. Maria compared him with Heinrich: no one could ever see what he felt. Soon she would be calling him "My husband." How queer! Would she understand him better then and be closer to him? Perhaps it *would* hurt him to know that she had promised to meet the lieutenant.

She couldn't force herself to pay attention. She, too, was — only waiting until it was Pepitta's turn. Her gaze wandered over the boxes and all the faces in them. It was different in the theatre. There the darkening of the house made the public anonymous. But to play the clown for these bosoms and monocles — she couldn't have done it. There was old Uexcuell in the center box, birdlike head and stone-old, exactly as Pepitta had described him. She wondered if he were really so friendly and so harmless. Have tea with him alone? Heinrich didn't care for the ball. He disliked all public functions. They were quite in agreement on that point; and they even looked as though they belonged together. He wore his evening clothes so naturally, not as others did, like a costume. Joseph would have despised her for such thoughts. Perhaps the engineer too. She could still see his shabby overcoat, torn because of her, hanging down from a chair to the dusty floor of the café. He must be very poor. God knew where he was now.

At last, preceded by an opera star and a potpourri of old operettas, sung by the members of the Vienna Theatre, Pepitta stood on the platform. Her youth and shyness evoked a cordial round

of applause. Then she sang the aria "My Lord Marquis, A Man Like You . . ." with so much charm and wit that she had to repeat it immediately. A lackey gave her a bouquet of fresh primroses; with a deep curtsy in the direction of the centre box she left the stage. The next act was on, the chief comedian of the Burgtheatre was reviving a traditionally famous song and recitation, when she came breathlessly into the box. "Was I really good or were the people just friendly?" she whispered excitedly, addressing the question to all of them but looking toward Joseph for an answer. His face was pleased for the first time that evening and he kissed his sister's hand. It embarrassed her. They all congratulated her. Full of enthusiasm, Schlager came into the box; he acted as if he had discovered Pepitta. "They haven't given me my fee yet," she said with a questioning glance at Wiesner, who reassured her. Then she gave the primroses to Maria. "The old Count will believe to the end of his life that primroses are my favourite flowers," she laughed, and pressed her friend to her.

Maria found herself shrinking from this contact. She had observed Pepitta; she was just the same as ever, not changed at all. The profound difference between them which had impressed her at the beginning of the ball seemed to have vanished. Perhaps it made no difference whether one was still alone or not. But when Schlager had come bursting into the loge just now, she had seen Doctor Wagner at the open door. Why did that annoy her? Surely she was not jealous of Pepitta's conquests.

Maria overcame the inhibition that held her back. She slipped out of the box, hurried past Doctor Wagner and down the passage to the winter garden. She had a bad conscience, but her heart beat excitedly. It was to be a quick test. Hidden by couples who streamed toward the tavern, she remained standing. She saw the lieutenant trying hard to keep one of the little alcoves, the same one in which the *apache* had made love to his page. How far would the lieutenant dare go? She had thought it all out. "We have just five minutes," she would say and then wait to see what he would do. And yet she knew that it would not make the

slightest difference to her whether he was shy or bold. What was it she wanted then? To talk to somebody who knew nothing about her and took her to be a grown woman? How stupid! She was behaving like an adolescent.

In the ballroom they began to play a waltz and the foyer quickly emptied. All at once she was alone and stepped back from the entrance to the winter garden. At the end of the passage she saw Pepitta and Doctor Wagner kissing each other. It shocked her. She fled to the cloakroom. Tears were in her eyes. Everything was painful and meaningless. . . . My fiancée. She was still frightened of that possessive pronoun. ... If you lied everything was easier. A dab of powder and no one would be able to see.

Suddenly in the mirror appeared the face of the old Countess from the next box. "When will the wedding take place, dear child?" asked her elegiac voice.

Automatically Maria answered, "In the spring."

"In the spring" came the echo and a gleam passed over the wrinkled face like evening sunshine over ruins.

They left together. The old lady was full of advice. "Men are like beasts of prey. They must have their freedom. Or at least the illusion of freedom. It is a clever woman who knows that. For in captivity men are worthless."

When Maria reentered the box the men were looking down into the ballroom. They did not even notice her return. One could hear the sound of many feet on the parquet floor below. It was a strange, disturbing sound. The orchestra broke off in the middle of a waltz. Softly Maria took her stand beside Joseph.

In the ballroom the guests were crowding about a young Heimwehr officer who was gesticulating violently. His voice did not reach the boxes. The dancing partners separated. The mood of the ball was gone.

"What can be the matter?" Steiger asked.

Joseph rushed from the box. Schlager followed him.

Wiesner moved close to Maria and put his hand on hers, smiling and well-meaning. She felt ashamed.

No one remained seated in the boxes. Doors banged. An unpleasant agitation filled the air. Old Uexcuell spoke angrily to a lackey, who dashed away. More and more guests gathered in the ballroom. A piece of news passed from mouth to mouth; the tumult of many voices arose, but above it floated an uncanny silence and the memory of the music abruptly ending. Suddenly there were cries of approval and applause and the blast of a trumpet. On the stage stood the young Count Uexcuell. The throng surged toward him and then the silence became complete.

Count Uexcuell spoke in a terse, military manner and the usual burr of the Viennese aristocracy was gone from his voice. "Rumors are afloat in the city and in this house that bloody conflicts have taken place in Graz and that the Heimwehr is on the march in all parts of the country. I have been in communication with the leadership of the Heimwehr and with the Government, they being happily to a certain extent identical, and can now tell you the rumours are exaggerated. On the whole the country is calm; but," he paused for effect, "I may add on my own authority that the rumours are merely anticipating the course which the Heimwehr will soon, and inexorably, take in the process of the renewal of Austria."

Vigorous applause. With a smile Uexcuell was about to leave the stage. He reconsidered and raised his hand. It took a little time for the enthusiasm to subside. Then he said in his most charming personal tone: "It is one of the best traditions of the Austrian temperament never to exaggerate—I mean never to forget the serious in the midst of the gay, nor the gay in the midst of the serious. And so I am asking the orchestra for the next waltz."

Faces everywhere were radiant. A waltz, "Voices of Spring," began; the slight weariness that had crept into the atmosphere was gone. The ball began anew.

Professor Steiger turned to Maria and Wiesner. "Don't mind me. I'm going home."

"Well go with you," Maria said quickly.

Passing through the foyer Wiesner saw Heimwehr officers enthusiastically pledging each other at the bar. Schrack was among them. Hilda sat deserted and weary at a little table, like someone waiting in a station restaurant for a train.

Pepitta came from the ballroom. "Joseph rushed away like a madman and now you're leaving me alone too," she cried, full of regret, but Maria saw that it was not genuine. Dr. Wagner was waiting in the background.

Maria disappeared with Pepitta, and Professor Steiger was saying good-bye to his acquaintances. Wiesner took advantage of the moment to slip into the bar.

Hilda looked toward him as if she had expected him. Words were unnecessary. She opened her mesh bag and furtively slipped the key into his hand.

"I'm flying home in the morning."

"Thanks. Good night, Hilda."

It was not a happy feeling to say farewell this way after so many years. But it was better than a scene.

Professor Steiger leaned back in his corner of the car and Wiesner spread the laprug carefully over Maria's knees. She smiled her thanks. A few more strains of melody from the palace, and the car drove on. Her first ball was over.

"Pepitta will make her way as a comic opera star," Wiesner said suddenly. Tfyen he took Maria's hand and pressed it, as though confirming a promise.

"Fm troubled about Joseph," said Steiger, speaking across Maria to Wiesner. "And what precisely do you suppose young Uexcuell meant to imply?"

"That the Heimwehr is pretty sure it can control the Government."

Maria heard these remarks and felt Wiesner's hand upon her own. She was tempted to ask what difference the increased in-

fluence of the Heimwehr would make. But she wasn't sufficiently interested. Then the car drove past the Opera, and the lights of the great arc lamps shone through the icy windows. They glittered.

It was too late to stop at Steiger's and Wiesner drove straight home. Suddenly Kleist's silence during the drive into the city was with him in the car.

A troop of men were tramping down his usually tranquil street. The windows at Frau Schilker's were all alight and in the little garden Robinson tottered up and down. "Salute!" he shouted, and -bowed. He smelt of alcohol as he whispered : "'There will be no time for balls or weddings! Poets and soldiers—everything in between is rabble!" He laughed and staggered off.

Wiesner sat for a long time at his desk and stared at the little box of German cigarettes which Kleist had left behind. Beside it he laid Hilda's key. Poets and soldiers? No. The simple, decent average man—a quiet steady day, with morning, noon and evening at the right time. . . . But would he have the strength to live this way, and would Maria want to?

He waited but she did not call him.

XI

N

EXT morning a cold dry east wind swept through the city. Dust was flying about at the corners. The people on the streets kept close to the houses or crowded into the buses and trams, which barked, angrily, their signals. The news vendors, who even in good weather found it hard to get rid of wares sucked dry of all interest by the censorship, were beating their arms about their bodies to keep warm. The noises of the street were unnaturally hard and shrill; the human note was lacking. Nobody had any desire to shout greetings, to laugh or even to scold. People were glad if they could stay at home or were already safe in their places of work.

Such was the atmosphere of the city at seven forty-five in the morning when Professor Steiger set out for the Institute on foot, as he always did whatever the weather. It had not changed at ten o'clock when he drove to the Ministry of Education. He begged the cabby not to keep blowing his horn. His mind was on the interview with the Minister that lay ahead of him. Now he regretted having demanded that interview a month ago in his first anger over the reduction of the Institute's budget. Every day that had passed in the meantime had served to convince him of the futility of the protest he was planning. If the Minister of Finance had to divide the State's meagre income between the army, the police, and the Hcimwehr, there wasn't much left for

science. And so His Excellency had put off the painful interview again and again. That it was going to take place at all was merely a matter of courtesy. It was a waste of time.

If the Minister had been a common politician, Steiger could have had the pleasure of showing his contempt in a subtle way. He did that well and with economy of means. A quiet sentence. An intentional failure to understand. Then the gentlemen began to squirm in their web of evasions. But what was he to do with someone who was supposed to be a high-minded, genuine human being? Discuss fundamental errors? Psychology? He spread out his fingers, partly because they were icy cold but partly also to get rid of the impulse to beat the table with his fist which came into his hands every time he went to the Ministry.

The taxi passed the iron railing that enclosed a garden. Through the bare boughs the rose-colored walls of a little rococo castle were visible. It was the residence of the writer R. Here, after you had been treated to a cuisine of wonderfully complicated simplicity, you were served a bit of Thomas Aquinas or Saint Francis as an entree to the main course, the works of the host. R. had been a Red Guard in 1918, but since then he had risen to higher and more successful spheres—he was a friend of the Minister. The intimacy of these two was a matter of general interest because R. was a Jew. Stories of the friendship were passed from mouth to mouth among Jewish merchants, physicians, and lawyers, and had the same comforting effect as the more piquant fact that the mistress of the highest leader of the Heimwehr stemmed from the Ghetto. It was at one of R.'s evenings that Maria had met Wiesner. It had been a mistake not to keep her away from the literary set. She should have studied medicine and done serious work.

When the car stopped in front of the Ministry, Steiger had determined to ignore the hushed atmosphere that he would find here, to come straight out with his opinion and threaten to accept a call to a research post abroad. His first feeling of discomfort, partly the result of too little sleep, was gone now.

The secretary of the Minister received Professor Steiger with the information, which was conveyed with the most earnest apologies, that His Excellency had suddenly been called into an urgent Cabinet meeting that had been arranged by telephone. He had tried to let Herr Professor know of the regrettable interference but the Herr Professor was already on his way. However, the representative of His Excellency was looking forward impatiently to the opportunity of expediting the adjustment of all pending matters to meet the wishes of Herr Professor as fully as possible and without delay.

"I would rather not trouble the department chief," answered Steiger and turned to go. A voice rose behind him.

"Unfortunately I must insist, Herr Professor."

The department chief had entered soundlessly, and bowed. "Good morning, my respects. You must forgive me; alas, what a time we're living in!" With a gesture of invitation he stretched out his arm toward the small door through which he had slipped in. It looked as if the little man with his quick almost convulsive movements had suddenly been petrified, for he did not drop his arm until Steiger, after some hesitation, preceded him into the room.

Department Chief Katschnigg, by dint of assiduity, servility, and industry, had raised himself from the post of a simple teacher to that of a high official in the ministry. It was a great pleasure for him now to follow the Professor quickly into his office, and then very slowly to sink almost out of sight into his deep arm-chair. In this way he thought he could lull into security the enemy he saw in every university professor. Ha, these gentlemen still hid behind the formal guarantees of academic freedom—illusions of enlightenment and modernism—and went on corrupting the young with their private opinions. It was a wonderful thing to be able to look across the broad, dustless surface of his desk, to put the paper knife in line with the writing pad, to fold his hands slowly, to close his eyes and then to open them again in an expression of benevolence. Fully thirty years ago the

junior teacher that Katschnigg had been used to receive with the same equivocal behavior some misguided pupil whom he intended to dismiss from his presence thoroughly crushed.

"The budget of your Institute was reduced, Herr Professor." He bowed his head and his voice seemed to leap in spite of its monotony. "Regrettable, irremediable, but where there is nothing not even an emperor can be generous. Some types of research will have to be discontinued."

"I know that better than the Ministry," Steiger interrupted.

About the mouth of the chief hovered a shabby smile. "I'm coming to the point. But allow me first to convey to you the regret of His Excellency over a measure which he was powerless to prevent. He asked me furthermore to assure you that your Institute heads the list of those departments which will receive increased appropriations as soon as the means of the State make it possible. It is with personal sympathy that I fulfil my duty of giving you this formal assurance."

"Acknowledged with thanks," Steiger answered drily. He wondered what this Jesuit wanted. Well, the introductory palaver was over.

The chief cleared his throat and then began in an even softer voice. "It was, of course, the duty of the Ministry to consider how the time that is now left free by the partial curtailment of normal scientific activity in the Institute is to be utilized. It proposes, in harmony with the general Government programme, to apply it to a more intensive patriotic training of the students."

"There is no such thing as patriotic mathematics or patriotic physics."

The chief smiled again. "One could discuss that; it would lead us too far. There is certainly such a thing as patriotic instruction regardless of the subject matter. We pedagogues know how much the personality of the teacher counts."

Steiger did not answer. A clock struck three times. A quarter to twelve. His class met at twelve.

"It is not easy for me to convey to you . . . His Excellency

does not wish to be misunderstood . . ." the chief straightened the paper knife still more exactly. "But neither does he want certain happenings in the Technological Institute to be left undiscussed with its administrative head. Complaints have been registered. It has been said that the Institute is ruled by a spirit, if I may use that much misused word, which is in sharp contradiction to the efforts of the Government. It has been asserted that the administration of the Institute has done nothing to counteract what are surely indefensible tendencies—if the information is correct. Student meetings are tolerated in which the watchword is opposition to the Government. Illegal leaflets are openly sold in the lecture halls and corridors. In brief, as someone has said, it looks as if the orders of the Government had no validity in the Institute."

"Illegal leaflets are distributed in the whole city and the police cannot prevent it."

"But one of our informants asserts, Herr Professor, that by your express order the servants, janitors, and laboratory assistants undertook to protect a Socialist meeting which was held in opposition to the will of the majority of the students and should not have taken place at all. Is that correct?" Rapidly and angrily the question leaped across the table.

"I permit all legally constituted student organizations to meet in the halls of the Institute. I permit no meeting of that kind to be disturbed even by adherents of the Government. So long as I administer the Institute, law will take precedence over force."

The chief folded his hands. In this gesture there was an arrogant patience that was more unbearable than all his babble. But Steiger was determined not to lose his temper.

"Worldly law is unhappily subject to change," the chief answered regretfully, "and a law may already exist in the consciousness of the citizens which has not yet assumed the form of a recorded statute. That is usually a retroactive confirmation."

Steiger watched a flock of sparrows pecking at crumbs outside the frosted window. The tapping of their little beaks could be

heard. A paper bag of crumbs beside the telephone showed that the chief himself was their benefactor. Steiger got up and looked down at the man almost with pity.

"I take it you wish to talk to me about politics. It would be futile. I formally deny all the charges. All I can do is observe the existing laws of the land. I can have nothing to do with a presumptive and unformulated state of the public consciousness. In my Institute there is order; there is, whether the Government values it or not, freedom of opinion. The Minister is always in a position to demand my resignation."

The department chief rose quickly. "I will convey your views to His Excellency." He tried to muster an overtone of irony and succeeded in being merely bitter. He accompanied Steiger courteously to the door, where he suddenly clasped his head as if he had forgotten something: "Fraulein Berg, who is on leave of absence, has sent in her resignation— from Florence, if I am not mistaken. Is there any reason why her pension should not be granted in due course?"

Steiger stood still. "No," he said and looked sharply into the man's eyes.

"I don't understand," the department chief, lowering his eyes, continued in a tone now innocently familiar, "why a young and promising woman like that should give up her career. Do you know the reasons?"

"Yes," answered Steiger. "They are of a private nature. Good day."

The secretary in the anteroom jumped up and bowed respectfully. Steiger's long calm strides, and the closing of the door, were followed by the tripping steps of the departmental chief. "If you please, Doctor, prepare a memorandum for His Excellency. In today's conference Professor Steiger proposed his resignation from the Institute. He showed no inclination to adapt himself to the wishes of the Government."

When Steiger reached the street he stopped and took a deep breath. The wind no longer blew and only a few snow crystals

sifted down from a distant sky. What a gang! Now to go to Florence and forget all the malice and vulgarity . . . To live for himself the few years that might still be allotted him . . . Maria was taken care of and needed him no longer.

He heard the clash and tramp of a platoon of infantry approaching. What was wrong now? Guarding the buildings of the Government? These everlasting exaggerations and false alarms! Disgusted, Steiger went on. The drivers at the taxi stand stopped their talk when he approached. But he caught a few words: "General strike . . . damned foolishness . . . better hold your tongue!"

At the Schotten Gate, traffic was halted by a long column of soldiers. The chauffeur half-turned and looked at his fare critically. Then, pointing to the soldiers, "That won't help those swelled heads, either," he said.

Three policemen stood at the door of the Institute. The chapel was filled with students. Loud grumbling and the sound, of splintering wood and glass came from the direction of the bulletin boards of the student organizations. Young men in Heimwehr uniforms were tearing up the placards of the Socialists.

It was some time before Steiger could make himself heard.

"I am told by the police sentries," he called out over the many heads, "that a search for weapons has been ordered. I shall get in touch with the proper authorities at once. Please go into the big lecture hall; there is no use standing around here." He turned to the Heimwehr students: "You are mistaken if you think such rowdiness will go unpunished."

There was some applause. But it was almost drowned out by the whistling and grumbling as Steiger crossed the chapel, through a path that was opened for him and closed again behind him, and then mounted the stairs. Only a small number of students obeyed his order. The crashing of wood and glass began again.

In his office he was told that an instructor named Mauk had lectured in a Heimwehr uniform. He had aroused the Nationalist students against the Socialists and had then summoned the

police in the name of the administration. It was all a pre-arranged trick.

"Connect me with the Minister."

His Excellency had not yet returned from the meeting of the Cabinet. No, by God, Steiger would not talk to the department chief.

For a moment he considered sending in a written protest. He dismissed the thought at once. If only the police found no weapons!

"Call up my daughter and tell her to ask her friend's brother Joseph Birkmeier to come to see me at my house at seven o'clock this evening."

In front of his office a tumult arose, the crying of many voices. When Steiger appeared, a student streaming with blood fled toward him and the pursuing Heimwehr student recoiled. In the empty space between them and himself appeared the old janitor of the Institute, his face as white as his hair: he gazed in desperation at his chief, his eyes filling with tears. "Go into the chapel and announce once more that I am going to speak in the big lecture hall. And don't despair. Thought can no longer be beaten down on this earth."

After the wounded student had been put on the sofa in his study Steiger walked down the long empty corridor to the big lecture hall; he heard loud singing from the chapel. The hall was filled only sparsely, but his ablest students were there. His voice trembled, but grew firmer as he spoke in the solemn stillness.

"It is three hundred years since Galileo took his stand on the truth, with his last breath: 'And for all that, it moves!'"

A storm of applause interrupted the Professor.

The telephone call from her father's office aroused Maria from a sleep that Louise had protected from interruptions the whole forenoon. But a message from the Professor was something else and anyway it was late enough, nearly twelve o'clock. Maria opened her eyes. Through the half-open door of the dressing room

she could see her ball dress lying across a chair and one silk shoe lost on the threshold. Her vague glance wandered, still uncomprehending, to the telephone, rested on the clock, and involuntarily followed the jerking second hand. Then the telephone rang again. Without raising her head she took the receiver and answered automatically. Yes, of course, she would give the message to Herr Birkmeier. Hanging up, she nestled her head in the pillows again. Father's assistants always tried to make everything seem so important.

Suddenly she was wide awake. She neither stirred nor looked about but the fog of half-asleep was gone. The ball stood in her memory clearly, all its details at once. Only the music was gone. She saw herself among all the people. Men were turning to look at her. The lieutenant was falling in love with her. She had not kept her promise to him. She was shy but her behaviour was quite right, though it was only an imitation of that of others. Heinrich came late and then he was bored. He did not feel comfortable at public entertainments, and it would not have been suitable for him to do so, it would have been impossible if he had played along. He was always so self-contained. Did he know what went on inside of her? When she danced with him she belonged entirely to him. But it saddened her. To pass from one arm to another, to whirl about, on and on, that helped. Meanwhile the way Heinrich waited for her was wonderful. Without any effort, just because she was herself, she penetrated every corner of his life. Sometimes, when she loved him most, she understood him too; then she knew absolutely everything. But the awareness slipped away from her again and then she was all the more helpless. He could not live without her any more. It was just the opposite of the engineer, who was able to forget her. Heinrich would be forced to remember, again and again, to the point of despair. Her father could not really get to know him. On the way home they were still talking to each other merely as the Herr Professor and the Herr Councillor of the Legation.

Louise reported that Fraulein Birkmeier had invited herself for lunch and then, among other trivialities, that Herr Merk had called up at nine in the morning! Within Maria a feeling rose and fluttered, scarcely awake. She had waited the whole week. Now it was too late. She herself didn't know why. "If he calls up again, I'm out." It hurt Maria to give this order. But later, in the cold light of the winter day, the last gleam of memory was extinguished.

Red-cheeked from her walk along the Graben, but radiant too, Pepitta came in with a bundle of newspapers under her arm. In every account of the ball she was ranked among the prominent artists who had been present. One paper even called her "a rising Star." The Socialist press, of course, did not have any notice of the event. The reason was political. Now she could buy herself a few dresses, for the fee of three hundred schillings had come in a letter of thanks from the Count. Joseph's eyes had glared as if the money were the wages of sin. She worried more and more about him. Last night, or this morning, really, when she got home from the ball—it had got gayer and gayer, admirers had flocked about her like flies around sugar—it was dawn but Joseph was not back yet. Yet she had been wakened early in the morning by a loud dispute between him and her father. It was getting to be absolutely impossible at home.

Maria noticed that Pepitta did not mention Dr. Wagner. She acted as if no such person existed. She could hardly wait to show the newspaper notices to that vain Kaiser creature; she talked about a thousand things, as usual. She was the same in every respect. Maria could not understand it. She hoped that everything would be changed when she no longer lived alone, yes, that nothing of herself would remain. She was convinced that it would be that way with her and she wanted it to happen now. It was for this reason that her longing was shot through with fear. The lieutenant's hand, kind and stupid as a dog's paw; Heinrich's fingers, more and more exciting in their restraint; Merk's embrace, which had taken her breath away—nothing should become as commonplace as it was to Pepitta.

She called up Joseph, who promised to come punctually though he couldn't imagine what the Professor wanted. It was Pepitta who asked him whether he knew. She was always afraid that her crazy brother might make trouble in the house on Freedom Square. It annoyed Maria, who in her own confusion took Joseph's part. She was glad when Pepitta proposed that they go and look at dresses, not to buy them yet, because Pepitta was practical and wanted to make a thorough investigation before she parted with her beautiful three hundred schillings.

Before they left the house Maria called up Wiesner and asked him because of the cold weather not to wait for her in the street but in the Cafe Imperial. And that roused a memory. For their first rendezvous had taken place there. She had been so proud of being courted by the Herr Councillor of the Legation. Wiesner took her request as a mark of solicitude for him. This made her blush. What was really behind it was the fear that Merk might be waiting for her at the door of the Academy, as he had two weeks ago. She did not want the two to meet.

Wiesner entered the Imperial a little late. But Maria had not yet arrived. His train went at seven. At the last moment the trip to Langenbruck had become a problem because his chief had suddenly proposed to send him to the negotiations in Budapest. It took all his eloquence and the ambitious eagerness of half a dozen colleagues to win the day with his argument that an important mission ought not to be undertaken by one who was leaving the service at the end of three weeks. Now he could have his luggage sent to the West instead of to the East Station, but he had an unpleasant feeling as he gave the order. A year ago he too would have gone eagerly to Budapest.

It was almost quarter-past six. Impatiently Wiesner looked through the panes for Maria. A mounted policeman trotted through the falling snow across the Ring toward the Schwarzenberg Square. The horse pranced on the bridle path. The Ring, the Champs Elysees, Oxford Street, Unter den Linden. . . . No illusions now! He was saying farewell to those great thorough-

fares of Europe on which he had sought, how often and how vainly, to understand the contradictory tempers of its nations. Now he was interested in the village square of Langenbruck.

He went through the evening papers. Mutual understanding among the Danube states. A little life in Central Europe. The conversations between Austria and Hungary were artfully exaggerated; the Italian game they were playing was represented as their own policy. As if a solution were possible so long as the great Western powers were not clear as to their own intentions; he was through with all this humbug. In Belgrade Kleist was intriguing against both Hungary and Italy. Let him! Whoever won, it would be more decent to be among the vanquished than among the victors. He finished this sentence in his mind but not without criticism of the hyperbole he had fallen into. What could be keeping Maria? In ten minutes at the latest he would have to go.

Maria had been the first student to leave. Promptly at six, she slipped out by a side exit almost running. She fled from her companions and wanted at any price to avoid meeting Merk if he was waiting. She hurried around the skating rink where the brass band blared its waltzes into the near-by city park. She had to be alone. She could not endure anyone now.

Only when she got to the empty avenues of trees did she notice that it was snowing. Suddenly enveloped by the silence of the falling flakes, listening, she became calm. Gretchen's monologue at the spinning wheel, which she had had to recite at the end of the lesson, now sounded more and more remote, nothing but a poem again.

"My peace is gone,
My heart is sore;
I never shall find it,
Ah, nevermore!

Save I have him near
The grave is here.
The world is gall
And bitterness all."

When her turn had come she had stepped forward unsuspectingly. The teacher looked impatiently at the clock, it was approaching six; Fraulein Kaiser, bored, uttered a sigh; Fraulein Schneider, *the* Grctchen of the class, sat up critically. Maria perceived all this while she summoned the text to her mind, but with the very first line the feeling which she was to simulate overwhelmed her. The whole room disappeared. She was alone with herself as never before. She was not ashamed and all her fears and doubts were silenced. She was not playing a part; she was only expressing what was in her heart. It was a confession.

"My poor weak head
Is racked and crazed;
My thought is lost
My senses mazed. . . .

My bosom yearns
For him alone;
Ah, could I clasp him,
And hold, and own!

And kiss his mouth
To heart's desire,
And on his kisses
At last expire!"

In her eyes were both tears and laughter when she fell silent. Sorrow and joy surged in her breast. It was only the praise of the teacher and the admiring or envious glances of her classmates that brought her back from her secret reality. Pepitta's arm embraced her as if to cover her nakedness. Then she fled.

Wiesner was standing on pins and needles in front of the cafe when Maria arrived in a taxi. He jumped in and cried: "West Station." It pierced her like a knife. She had quite forgotten that he was leaving for Langenbruck.

"I was so anxious," he said, and pressed her hand. He never asked banal questions, such as why she was late. It gave her a feeling of freedom. In a few minutes he would be gone and she would be alone again with her imaginings which now, at his side, seemed hysterical to her. But the feeling of misery remained. Why was he not aware of it? Why did he not really help her? Would he have postponed his journey if she had come even later or not at all?

"I have something to propose, Heinrich, to beg of you."

"If only K . . ."

"Don't say if. I wish you would take me with you."

He did not answer at once. His hand moved tenderly; then seemed to grasp hers. Or did she only imagine that?

"It is impossible, Maria."

"Why?"

"For our own sakes."

"Let's for once do the uncommon thing."

"It would be — the common thing."

They drove on in silence. He held her hand, and, staring ahead, she noted the clicking of the figures on the metre. Then they hurried through the waiting room and along the length of the train. Why did she run beside him? It was so senseless. He reached his sleeping car at the last minute, this Herr Baron Wiesner, who knew exactly what he wanted and never lost his head as she did.

She waited motionless until the red light at the end of the train had disappeared, and still an extra moment as if to be quite sure that it would not reappear. When she turned she felt empty. She stopped at the telephone booths but hardly knew what she wanted. It was difficult to concentrate after such a blow. Then she did telephone home and asked that supper should not be

delayed on her account. "The Herr Professor is not home yet," Johann informed her, "but Herr Birkmeier is waiting in the library." The Herr Professor. The Herr Birkmeier. The Herr Baron. The Herr Engineer. Every human being was imprisoned in his separate category. So was the Fraulein. The young lady. She was walking through the parkways of the Belt. A cold wind was driving the snow. Naturally she must see. He was right. The way he took it and felt it, it would, of course, have been merely the common thing. . . .

Joseph had been waiting for fifteen minutes before the Professor arrived. He knew from his student club what had happened in the Technological Institute. The evening papers were silent of course. He suspected that the Professor wanted to see him in connection with the events of the forenoon. Perhaps the old fox wanted him to persuade his group not to make use of its legal right of assembly in the Institute. Then he would avoid the necessity of abrogating it and the Government would have its will without damaging the halo of an upright libertarian. That was the technique by which the so-called liberals bowed down to force, when they were ashamed to submit to it publicly. But Steiger would find out his mistake. The Socialist students had determined to demand the use of the big lecture hall for a meeting of protest against the outrage that had been perpetrated.

Joseph heard the Professor enter the house and was again annoyed at his own feeling of embarrassment. So often the Professor made him feel in the wrong. To take into account the fact that what people want, above all, is to have a good time. . . . It had sounded so unassailable. At the time no answer had occurred to him. Since then, however, later that same night in his wanderings through lonely streets, he had come upon a reply to this opportunistic notion of live and let live. Karl Freund, the president of the Socialist students' organization, to whom he had run after young Uexcuell's speech at the ball, had helped him find the answer. "Don't get excited. Tomorrow is another day."

He had yawned. He was already a politician, essentially reconciled to everything. What they all did was to construct for themselves an elaborate system of excuses. They were satisfied with thin soups of words. And tomorrow was another day.

"Just a moment, Joseph."

Professor Steiger passed him. His face was serious and pale. Then he begged Joseph to enter the study, closed the door, which was usually kept open, and left Joseph alone. He remained where he stood and, stupid as it was, felt himself imprisoned. That eternal, baseless feeling of guilt oppressed him again.

Only one lamp burned, on the desk. Through the curtained windows came the soft sighing of the wind. A tap was turned on and a door opened; then the Professor came in and sat down at his desk. Slowly he glanced through his mail, turning envelopes, reading the senders' names, but not opening any of the letters. Joseph started when he spoke.

"Tell me the truth, Joseph, have you people hidden arms in the Institute?"

"But — no, Herr Professor."

"For if you have I would advise you to get rid of them at once. The police will be back. The janitor and his wife will help you. I've known them for twenty years."

"I assure you we have no arms in the Institute. We simply don't own any arms, and we don't even count, we students . . ."

Steiger studied Joseph out of the corner of his eye. He liked him and understood what went on in him. Then he went up to him and put an arm around his shoulders. It did Joseph good.

"Be calm, Joseph. The translation of thought into experience is a difficult and endless task. The satisfaction it gives is rare and doubtful. It is pleasant to nourish great and just emotions; it is harder and more necessary to know what is to be done. The poor man has no choice. He lives as best he can; he fights or does not fight, as it may be given to him. Your obligation is heavier, Joseph. I understand your impatience. Old as I am, I often find it difficult to control myself. Yet control, self-control, is the be-

ginning. The day will come when Europe will have had its fill of political swindlers and will need honest men, who know. So study and prepare and do not let yourself be pushed into action. Leave the present to those who have ruined it."

Joseph raised his head. His eyes were full of uncertainty and his voice shy and fearful. "You also think, Herr Professor, that all is really lost?"

"Always these big and final words!" The Professor walked up and down a few times and then stopped in front of Joseph.

"There is never a time when all is lost. For life itself always goes on. You've missed nothing. Your hour will strike; but if you wear yourself out now in the stupid politics of the day instead of working, you will be tired and disappointed and good for nothing when your turn comes."

The Professor suddenly fell silent. There was a flat taste in his mouth. Remembering his own teachers he loathed preaching abstinence to the young. But the times of his youth had been different times, intellectually and morally stimulating and not as primitively dangerous to life itself as this glorious twentieth century. How gladly would he have given this young man his insight, a whole lifetime of observation and reflection. But how can experience be communicated to inexperience?

Steiger crossed the room and stood by the window. He pulled the curtain aside and looked through the panes. The light of the street lamps and of passing cars shone on the falling flakes. A man on the square was wildly chasing his hat.

"Mustn't we fight, each in his own place?" Joseph asked hesitantly. But his voice became more assured as after an interval he added: "We learn by daily living. The men of the future will be the survivors of the struggles of today. For everyone permitted to live many must fall. But none will live who is not prepared to fall."

"Very nice but false!"

Steiger had turned around. His words were harsh and terse. Thus he spoke in his lectures when he condemned any blending

of exact scientific research with metaphysical speculation. "The causal nexus, which you have just now so generously constructed, is an idealistic fiction. Machine guns have no moral discernment. Experience teaches us that the scoundrels survive the men of honor."

"Whoever can be an indifferent spectator—" Joseph stopped and then went on stubbornly: "Whoever, himself untouched, pockets his profit, be that profit ever so intellectual, is not a man of honor."

"Bravo, Joseph! Those are neither whole feelings nor whole thoughts. You are a decent young man, but that is not enough. I have seen many like you come and go. And most of them gave in. Not because they were corrupted, but because such inexact and therefore fragile convictions do not withstand the pressure of life."

Steiger felt how every word increased the moral distance between Joseph and himself. It was the same with Maria lately. She too did not want him to be right.

With a gesture of desperation Joseph thrust his hands through his hair. Then he burst out: "I simply can't go on sitting between four walls studying laws that are broken every day by their supposed guardians, and theories no one is guided by. I can't stand this whole lying science while outside they are putting up gallows and stationing the machine guns which, as you say, have no moral discernment. I simply can't, can't stand it any longer." He pressed his hands to his face.

Terrible to be young in this period. Thank God he had a daughter and not a son, thought Steiger. He went back to the window to give Joseph time to recover himself. It was so still in the room that the ringing of the telephone downstairs, and Maria's return, could be clearly heard.

"I do understand you, Professor," said Joseph, preparing to go. "Only I find it hard to keep calm and wait. Probably I'll get myself in hand."

"Right, Joseph. What is demanded of you is extremely dif-

ficult. But never forget that there is a surplus of blind passion in the world, and a great lack of knowledge. It is for us to establish a balance."

Together they went out into the hall.

Johann had opened the door for Maria while Louise answered the telephone. "Fraulein Stciger is not at home," she said. "No, positively not." She hesitated. "She's out of town, in the mountains." With a triumphant look at Maria she hung up the receiver. "God forgive me the sin of lying," she added. "But I'm sorry for that Herr Merk. Three times he's called in the last half-hour."

Maria kept Joseph for supper. The conversation at table touched on the ball, on Pepitta's success, on Wiesner's trip to Langenbruck, on the symphony program that was to come over the radio at nine o'clock, and on the weather. Steiger observed what pains his daughter took to conceal an inner disquiet. Joseph played the conversational game as well as he could and suffered under the contradiction between his uncompromising demands and his actions. Here he sat again where the porcelain gleamed and the wine was the right temperature, instead of running from factory to factory and from house to house in the workers' districts calling, "Defend yourselves or you are lost!" After coffee in the library he took the first occasion to say good night. He did not want to hear the concert, and suddenly the air seemed to him as thick and sultry as in a hothouse. Downstairs he was sorry again to have left so soon. He had no friends any more with whom he could spend the evening. The hopeless political situation created depressing differences of opinion and fruitless discussions. At home with his father, whom he did not wish to hurt, it was the same thing. Yet it was even harder to be alone. The Professor was right. He was losing himself in impossible demands.

He walked past the houses, driven by a senseless quest, until he ran into Carla, a slight girl with deerlike eyes and hair. She had once invited him to be her special friend. He admitted to

himself and to her that he had hoped to meet her. She looked up and down the empty snowy streets. Then she clasped his arm and took him along to her room.

Before he got ready to go home, Joseph lay for a long time gazing with open eyes into the scmidarkness of the miserable furnished room. Next door another girl brought in a customer. Carla was sleeping with her head on his breast. He felt her breath. Her hand held his arm, as if seeking protection. He felt his own heart beating more calmly.

At the moment Maria was sitting on the couch in her studio.

She had expressed a desire to spend the week end in the mountains and her father had at once agreed. She understood now what stirred her so. It continued to fill her with fear, but the fear arose from a feeling that was closer to happiness than to sorrow. She no longer resisted.

XII

IT was just getting dark when the bell rang. It was too early for Karl. Mother Merk dried her hands on her apron and opened the door.

There stood Ferdinand Franze. His face was blue from more than the cold. A blind man could see that. She helped him off with his coat, took him into the room and shoved him toward a chair beside the stove. It was a good thing she had the room already warm. "Pull yourself together, Herr Franze! I'll make some Russian tea right away."

"Pianissimo . . . Pianissimo . . ." whispered Franze as he sat down. But his nerves fluttered. It was no help that they were wrapped around with so many layers of fat. As soon as he was alone he got up again. Silly superstition that fat people were phlegmatic.

Even in the kitchen Mother Merk heard him drumming with his heels, up and down. In general he was a gentle soul, despite his weight. When she came back with the tea she had scarcely set the tray on the table when he came up to her, quite close, and asked his questions.

"Hand-grenade depository number one?"

"Neustift Street, printing-shop Siegel, under coal in cellar."

"Right! Number two?"

"Kalvarienberg seventeen, cellar, third bin."

"Right! Guns number one?"

"Ottakringer 104, garret, walled in, red cross."

"Right! Machine-gun depository Anna?"

"Old cemetery, main entrance right, row three family plot Prenzel."

"Right!"

Every time he said "Right!" Franze hit the table. But it made no noise, his fist was as soft as a rubber ball, it looked like one and sprang lightly up again.

"I learned my lesson," said Mother Merk and poured the tea.

Franze stared at her as if there were something he did not understand or as if his mind were wandering. Then he closed his eyes. His face for a moment was nothing but a pale sick moon, until he opened his eyes again. Then he sat down quickly and began to sip the hot tea. Suddenly he said:

"If only you had accepted my proposal that time —"

She interrupted him. "Don't start that. It's agreed."

He sighed. "Of course. I'm a nobody."

"Nobody is anybody, neither you nor I. No one."

"I wish I had come as far as you. But you were always so. Perhaps one is born that way." He groaned and finished his tea. He refused a second cup. "Thank you. Don't dare. Angina pectoris. I had a little attack around noon,— " he paused and looked at her questioningly, " — and then I had to hurry because of a spy the police honoured me with. But I got rid of him."

Mother Merk's attention sharpened. That was the reason for his unexpected visit. She had long planned how she would pretend to be stupid if ever the police suddenly turned up. Now, however, the word frightened her.

"Yes, that's the reason I came," Franze continued more quickly. "To tell you that I'm under observation. They can't pin anything on me. But at all events, I'll have to initiate you as a member of the organization. Under no circumstances must you write me or come to my house or to the orchestra office. The necessity shouldn't arise, but it's better to be on the safe side.

But if you must communicate with me, call me from a public pay station at the Cafe Raimund near the Volkstheatre. Unless there's a rehearsal or a performance I'll be there. But don't ever come there yourself; that spy sticks to my coat-tails."

"Arc you sure you're being followed, Herr Franze?" Mother Merk asked. She was quite calm again.

"Quite sure. We have investigated thoroughly. His name is Zmslerl, Emil Zinslerl, a detective of the political police. Formerly he was even a member of our policemen's union. Shouldn't be surprised if in his heart he's with us still. But what can he do? Being a detective is his profession. I'm not angry at him, even though he clings to me like my own shadow. But it's gradually getting on my nerves. When you think it over, a printer who works on an anti-labour paper isn't any better, or I myself, playing for the gang that sprawls in the boxes."

"Don't excite yourself, Herr Franze."

"But I do excite myself. I excite myself about the silent pressure — how everybody takes it for granted — that makes most people do what they don't want to do. This Zinslerl has two children and a young ambitious wife. At Christmas she wanted a fur scarf and he wasn't able to give it to her. Now she turns the house into a hell. We know it from a comrade in the next flat."

Mother Merk got up. "If you want to talk with me, you'll have to come into the kitchen."

He followed her and went on. "People must live — or at least they think so." He sat down on the coal bin and watched Mother Merk moving a pot, the red glow of the fire suffusing her face. She was still handsome. How swiftly the time had passed, the many years!

Mother Merk did not let him see how his news had disquieted her. Not that she was afraid for herself. That didn't occur to her. She was afraid for Karl, she'd been worried enough about him the last two Weeks without this. He came home very late night after night and didn't tell her where he had been, or else

he was sparing her the truth. And she couldn't help thinking of Herr Bunzl, the salesman at their Co-operative. Yesterday the laundress from Thalia Street had said to him that her husband was in favour of overthrowing the Government, force against force. That afternoon the man had been arrested. Quite likely Bunzl was the informer. He was always drawing out the customers with radical remarks that didn't go with his spick-and-span appearance.

"I have just one thing to beg of you, Franze," said Mother Merk out of her own thoughts. "Leave my Karl in peace. Don't get him mixed up in our affairs."

Franze's face looked surprised. But before he could say anything Mother Merk continued:

"Maybe you don't know about it, but I believe he's working for the Defence Corps. Probably Kraus is behind it, he used to go skiing with him."

"I swear to you that I don't know anything," answered Franze. "But if you're right, it would only be to the good. We need everybody and especially young men like Karl."

"Don't make speeches to me, Franze," she interrupted him. "Maybe it's very bad what I think, but sometimes I say one prayer after another that nothing will happen to him. Surely you must understand, Herr Franze, that I am terribly afraid for him."

"I do understand," said Franze after a time in which only the gas jet sang. He got up, as if he wanted to say more, but then sat down again and was silent. He sat there on that coal box like a swollen sack. But if you looked closer, his sick, exaggerated body faded and you could see his tragic soul beating its wings against the sharp edges of the world. Mother Merk felt that she had reminded him of his wound, and she was sorry for him.

"I saw a brandy bottle in your overcoat," she said. "Don't you want a little drink?"

"With your permission." He tripped out and was back at once.

Mother Merk produced a little silver cup from the cupboard. "It was a wedding present," she said to comfort Franze. Her life too had taken a different course from her dreams.

Franze poured out the liquor. He felt his heart like a heavy, quivering stone, a hard, independent object within the mass of flesh. A small cold draught from the window irritated him. It crept along his arms and down his back and spread over the whole surface of his body. His skin quivered and under it there was a wide dead space, without any feeling. But when the brandy went down, his heart grew warm and soft and was no longer a dead foreign object.

"It's a blessing," he said as he refilled the cup.

"Sometimes I think that being stupid and happy are one and the same thing," Mother Merk said.

Franze shook his head. That was not his opinion and he wanted to talk about it. But the bell rang and Mother Merk went out to open the door. It was Karl.

"Friendship," cried Franze.

"Friendship," Karl answered. He was glad to see the musician in the entrance to the kitchen. Ever since that evening in the Cafe Raimund he had liked him.

"Go into the living room. Two men in the kitchen are too many." Mother Merk gave Franze his bottle.

While Karl was washing and shaving Franze explained the situation to him as he had just done to his mother. Yes, that little man who had watched them in the cafe that evening, and afterwards at the tram stop, was a spy. Yes, his precaution had been justified.

Karl watched Franze in the mirror. He was pouring himself one brandy after another and talking all the while. His appearance bore no relation to his words. And perhaps none of it was true. Underground work had a way of stimulating the imagination. The Defence Corps people at Floridsdorf, for whom he had set up the short-wave radio, and even Kraus himself, used to hear the police twice an evening. And then it was nothing

but a mouse scurrying from its hole. These imaginary fears were catching.

"You shouldn't have come on a Friday night," said Mother Merk, bringing in the supper. "I serve no meat."

"Neither did my late wife," Franzc answered and quickly poured another brandy before she took the bottle away. As he put the cup down he asked Karl: "What do you think? Will the order for a general strike be obeyed in your factory?"

"The workers will obey; the white-collar people won't." Karl answered in an objective tone—as if it didn't concern him at all.

Mother Merk filled the soup plates. She hesitated whether to come out with what was going through her head. Still, it could do no harm. "Don't count on a general strike," she said. "The unemployed want work at any price; those who have jobs are afraid to take the risk. You should see the envy at our Co-operative if one of us can spend an extra groschen. It's almost hatred. And so those who are a little better off think they're worth more and begin to put on side. There's very little solidarity."

"Without a general strike . . ." Franze put down his spoon but did not finish his sentence. There was no need. In his sick, tired face his thoughts were plain.

"It will all depend on the reason for the strike," Karl said in an encouraging tone and glanced at his mother.

"On the reason," Franzc repeated. "But an adequate reason is never given us. Every day they rob us of a bit of freedom, never enough to bring on a general revolt. Soon there will be nothing left worth fighting for. We need the right reason. But they are not so stupid. They gradually suck the marrow from our bones."

Franze and Karl slipped into discussion of the mistakes that had been made. Mother Merk listened attentively, but it always took her a day to know what men's talk really meant, with all its foreign expressions and long names for things. All the while she was having her own thoughts. That winning was not really the point but just having the courage to resist.

Karl suddenly interrupted the conversation. It was the same one that he had had to listen to day in and day out for a whole year. He could not stand it any more. They were talking themselves into their grave. In the Defence Corps, to be sure, he had found something different — people who held their tongues and acted. But how many of them were there?

Karl got up after his last mouthful. Mother Merk, trying to conceal her anxiety, asked if he was going out again. A stone fell from her heart when he said, "No, only downstairs to telephone." He did not even put on his overcoat.

"I don't know what I would do if I were he," said Franze when Karl was gone. "It's true we are risking very little. Our lives are already behind us."

"That's what I meant before," said Mother Merk.

Karl came back in a few minutes in a changed mood. "Would you get out my ski things for tomorrow?" he asked, almost merrily. "I'm going to the mountains at noon."

"Skiing is something I missed in my life," Franze said, shaking his head and looking wryly down at himself. All three of them laughed, but suddenly it was not funny at all.

It was an evening such as they had not had in a long time. Karl joined them in a game of dominoes, and the world and the city and their troubles were forgotten for once, for a little while. The pretty white stones with the sparkling black dots clicked softly, forming stairways and labyrinths and patterns like those in Mother Merk's crochet book. And she won; it gave her a childish pleasure, playing against two such clever men. When Franze said good night at eleven o'clock he was quite himself. He breathed quietly and his face was peaceful. He thanked them heartily and invited himself again "when the troubles are over."

"He enjoyed being here," Mother Merk said with gentle pride after he was gone, and opened the windows. A vice, so much smoking.

Karl helped her make his bed- He was dead tired. He hadn't

slept more than four hours a night during the past week. If he was to be on the Rax tomorrow night, he had a hard day ahead of him.

"You're sure I don't need to worry on your account any more?" his mother asked as they were saying good night.

"No. It was nothing anyhow. I helped the Defence Corps people a little; you do the same thing."

She wanted to answer that that was a different matter but she didn't. Maybe he was right that it was the same thing, if you didn't look at it from a mother's point of view.

Before falling asleep Karl thought of Maria, as he did every night. He saw himself standing on Freedom Square in his torn coat, staring after her as she disappeared into the house without once turning. He had been as desperate as an unhappy lover in a novel. Now he couldn't even quite remember that emotion any more. Life had so many angles. Kraus had come with his request at the right moment. It had been a joy and a help to work with those fellows every night. They were as happy as children when the transmitter functioned. In reality he owed them thanks and not they him. And at times he was ashamed in the face of their enthusiasm. While he was yearning after a girl, to them personal happiness and the general happiness were one and the same. He wasn't like that. But he had at least done the decent thing by them. Now he was sure that all would be well. He felt it. If his premonition did not deceive him, if he should find Maria in the mountains alone, and if she were really the person he felt her to be, the person who had given herself away in the taxi when her hand had gone through his hair. . . .

Graz. Laibach. Triest. These words were painted on the carriages of the train that Karl boarded the next day at noon. The compartment was crowded and overheated. The skis, which he had put under the roof of the compartment, fixing them in the luggage racks on either side, were in the way of the black, military trunk of a Heimwehr man who scolded and smelt of wine.

Karl took the skis down without a word and put them into a corner. The conductor did not want them there. "Why don't you take the winter sport special?" Karl sat down without answering. No arguments, not now. He peered through a clear spot in the frozen window at a bit of sky that was gray and heavy with snow. If only the weather held out for five or six hours . . . Perhaps everything depended on the weather.

The snow-covered vineyards and mountain forests beside the moving train melted into one another. A few peaks were dimly visible. The ruined castles of the robber barons in the Valley of Helen remained hidden in the wintry mist. The train had stopped in Baden; the summer resort Voslau went past. The town was dead, smoke was rising from only a few of the chimneys. In the compartment there was the sourish smell of the tipsy Heimwehr man; a commercial traveller was raving about Greta Garbo in "Grand Hotel"; there was the wrinkled silent face of an old peasant and the hysterical protest against opening a window made by a gentleman with exquisitely pressed trousers but a shabby summer overcoat. Every few minutes Karl looked at his wrist watch and his brain began to throb — Graz, Laibach, Triest — in the rhythm of the pounding of the wheels, quicker and quicker with the increasing speed of the train.

After the overheated compartment the station bus, which took the valley road up to the hotel at the foot of the mountain range, was terribly cold and uncomfortable. The other passengers were an affectionate young couple with brand-new skis and gay sweaters, much too colourful. They giggled in the last row of seats. It quickly became pitch-dark. At every bend in the road, the lights of the car picked out spruces heavy with snow; on straight stretches they ran over the oily tracks ahead. At last this drive too came to an end. The lighted hotel rose like a piece of theatrical scenery out of the night.

A sharp wind whipped down from the invisible mountains. Karl took his skis and walked quickly out of the lighted circle of the hotel into the face of the wind before the freezing waiter

in tails with his collar turned up could approach to warn him against making the ascent. He walked a couple of hundred metres before he fastened on his skis. Voices from the hotel and the barking of a dog rang out after him but soon they gave up. Now there was only the soft whistling of the wind and the crunching of the snow in the thickening frost. His eyes became accustomed to the blackness.

He kept the right tempo. Only once did he relapse into the impatience of the day and hurry forward till the sweat broke out on his forehead. But as he got higher and higher he came closer to the elements; the great immovable solitude of the mountains filled him. Being on the way became a fulfilment in itself. The longing he felt was no longer torture.

Halfway up it began to snow. He felt the snow settle on his face, soft flakes in the hard air. The wind grew sharper and cut his breath. The terror that he would have to turn back gripped him. But he did not give in. Mustering all his strength he fought his way upward. He had weathered worse storms. Only he must not lose his way.

Two hours later the snow clouds lay behind him. The wind was still blowing, pressing them down into the valley. He stood at rest at the foot of the high rock wall that rose to the plateau. A half-moon climbed up a clear starry sky. Karl was now tempted to go up the steep ribbon by which he had descended, against all reason, on that night. He could have done it, in stair steps, with his back against the rock, his eyes on the sea of clouds below. It would have saved time. But he resisted the temptation. He took the safe detour, around the wall, leading up to the Bismarck House; from there a safe path went over the plateau, following the telephone poles, past the Professor's hut to the Socialist mountaineers' club, where there was always room for him.

There was gaiety in the Bismarck House. He could already hear it from far away, music and singing. People with burning pitch torches were running back and forth in the square in front

of the inn. As he approached he saw that they were trying to run up the mast a great flag bearing a swastika. "Up here they're brave," he reflected as he avoided a drunken Valkyrie with heated cheeks and a glass in her hand who approached him with cries of "Heil!" He was soon on the last stretch of the ascent behind the hotel. It was not much later than eight o'clock when he came out on the plateau and took the sealskins from his skis.

Before him stretched the wide plateau, gently sloping to the east in the cold light of the stars. On the range of hills at the north edge gleamed a reflection of the moon, pale yellow in the faded blue of the landscape, over which the wind was whirling the new snow in shimmering little clouds. Karl rolled the sealskins slowly and carefully together while he mastered the excitement that was taking hold of him. He could make out the shadows of the telegraph poles almost as far as the slope behind which stood the Professor's hut. Now he could shoot forward and in a few minutes he would know whether he was a fool or not. He thought the words, but his heart held no doubts. Suddenly he was filled with the great and happy hope that to each human life there was given a moment in which everything was just the way it ought to be, and even better. He straightened up and started, with the wind at his back now.

As he came around the slope he stopped short. There was light in the hut—a faint glow from a single window, but light. In the shed stood skis, one pair. For minutes he did not stir. He had tried for two weeks to give up this love and had not succeeded. Finally at the goal he had dreamed of day and night, a feeling of shame came over him. He might just go on by without her knowing he was so near. And then they would not meet till tomorrow in daylight, in sobriety. Why was he tempted not to use the very opportunity he had sought? What was he afraid of?

As he came a little nearer a dog in the hut began to bark, the sharp signal of a watchdog. The door was opened and a big wolfhound leaped out toward him and stood still, his eyes

gleaming, showing his teeth, as he stopped. Then Maria stepped into the shed.

It could not have been more than a moment, but it seemed an eternity before she called the dog back. Slowly he glided toward her past the frozen well.

She looked straight at him, she did not stir; she was neither astonished nor afraid. But she had to support herself on the doorframe, so unreal was the world in the pale light.

"Good evening," he said, suddenly so near.

"Good evening," she answered. To herself it sounded like an echo and an invitation. Karl bent down and unbuckled his skis.

Maria had left Vienna by the morning train and arrived at the Bismarck House as dusk was falling. Alois had gone with her, and lighted the fire, and left the dog for her protection. He was a native, the man-of-all-work at the mountain hotel, who also took care of the Steiger hut. He had not been down in the valley for ten years and you would have had to use force to get him to look at a newspaper. Maria had known Alois since her childhood and had learned skiing from him. He was the great mountain friend of her youth. Now sometimes he said "Fraulein Professor," but only in fun. When he had gone back to the hotel for his evening's work Maria had stretched out on the big rustic sofa, and the tenseness of the city had gradually left her. The wind outside, the vast prospect, and the silence of the room, in which she felt more at home than in any other, all served to quiet her. She wanted to reach an equilibrium and consider her life, in which everything was wrong—she did not want to come to a decision until she had done so.

Nero lay at her feet with his head on his paws. She watched his eyes slowly closing and fell asleep herself. She had not wakened until a half-hour ago when Alois had returned. He was now making supper in the kitchen.

Karl stood his skis under the shed and they went in together. He closed the door. Maria walked slowly over the thick matting. She stopped at the fireplace and listened. When at last she turned

her gesture was quick and defiant. Again they stood facing each other. But now her glance was strange, not as it had been before, when everything seemed as simple as their greeting.

"We have left Nero outside," she said.

He let the dog in, wondering who else was in the house. On the oven bench he noticed a man's hat and jacket and he heard footsteps in the next room. Turning, he saw Maria standing in the middle of the room and it was as if she wanted to come toward him. But at that moment a man, an older man, came out of the kitchen. Karl knew him by sight. "Griiss Gott," the man said and blinked his farsighted birdlike eyes. Then, as if reassured, he added: "We have a guest. There's enough for everybody."

"That is our Alois," said Maria'.

Karl noticed that she was blushing. She looked like a boy in her skiing trousers.

"Tm Alois of the Rax Mountain," the old man said with pride. "And you are one of the Friends of Nature, if I'm not mistaken. Friendship!" He knew every skier and every stone for miles around.

"Friendship!" said Karl.

Maria helped set the table. Karl took off his jacket and made friends with the dog.

"It snowed all the time I was making the climb," Maria said. "I was almost forced back halfway up," Karl answered. Then they fell silent again.

Alois, who had had his supper at the hotel, sat down on the bench with a glass of wine and lit his pipe, making conversation after his queer fashion, while Karl and Maria ate in silence.

"I always say it's much nicer here than over at the hotel," he said, "and so much more homelike. I can't bear the Sunday visitors. They make a lot of noise and forget to tip. Especially the ones we have this time, nothing but Nazis. Why, they're having a regular meeting right in the dining room; they think

they're safe from the gendarmes up here. Between ourselves the boss knew in advance, he belongs to them, in secret. That's the reason he saddled me with the responsibility and left with his wife for the valley at noon. He said he had to attend a wedding. But I know better. He just disappeared so he can say that he wasn't even here if it comes to an investigation. It's a scandal, but then the times, much too much excited, the times."

Karl tried to catch a glance from Maria. But she kept her eyes on the table and he could not tell what was going on in her. It was like that first evening when Kraus and the Professor talked and he and Maria were silent.

"A wedding," Alois sighed. He had finished his glass and wiped his gray, bushy moustache. It made Karl think of Franze, though this man was so different, hard, thin, with a skin like leather.

"That's the way it is." Alois started off on a new monologue. "I'm over fifty and it's too late for me. What woman would have me now? But I often think I should have got married. It's a more natural life. In the year '16 when I came home from the war—I know since that shot in the head I'm not quite right, but only now and then—I found out that my sweetheart who had promised to be true to me had taken up with another man. She was in her fourth month, saving your presence; then the fine lover didn't marry her and naturally I didn't either. But why naturally? Today I think I did wrong. For I was fond of her and she of me too. It was a misfortune that happened to her, because I was gone for two years and that's too long if one is young. The war was to blame, not her. But I raised the very devil at the time. It wasn't really myself though. It was something in me that I couldn't control. It's hell that a man learns nothing till it's too late to do him any good. If we could only stay young twice as long as we do, everything would be different. The woman is faded and withered now too. She keeps house for her brother, who's a widower. He owns the 'Seewiesner Alp.' I haven't heard from her in three years. But I can imagine'

how it is, being dependent on relatives. I wouldn't like it. Her child didn't do very well either, although she had him christened Alois after me. No wonder! Without a father and no money for an education. A name alone doesn't help much. I should have taken care of the boy, but I just didn't think about it at the time. It might have given a purpose to my life. Or maybe not, because I wouldn't have known it."

He had hardly finished when the telephone rang.

"That's Father," said Maria. It turned out to be the head-waiter at the Bismarck House. The guests were lighting a huge fire in the yard and he was afraid the hotel might go up in flames. He wanted Alois to come back.

From the window they could see the reflection of the fire in the sky. Alois set out, cursing. "I wish to God it was Monday morning; a devil of a night this will be." Karl and Maria looked after him until he disappeared behind the slope.

Maria took the things from the table and would not let him help her. A wall seemed to have risen between them.

Maria stood in the cold kitchen thinking. It was certainly high time to come to a decision. He had come as she had wanted him to. Yet now everything was different and much more serious than she had imagined. Did he have to come by night and not in the morning? Up to now the presence of Alois had given her some security, a margin to play with. That was gone now too.

When she came back she found Karl looking at an old photograph on the desk. "That's my mother; I never knew her," Maria said somewhat against her will.

After a while he answered. "I can't remember my father either. He was killed in the war."

They remained silent, both with the same feeling. Then it was as if each were waiting for the other to speak. But they only looked at each other until she lowered her eyes.

He began to irritate her again as he had on that evening in Vienna when he had tried to dictate to her father. To tell the truth. Why did he not speak it now? He behaved awkwardly;

no, not quite that. But he didn't make it any easier for her. He didn't even give her the chance to rebuff him.

Again the telephone rang and this time it was the Professor. While Maria was talking Karl went out and she could see him through the window, breaking icicles off the frozen well. That renewed her feeling of security, but when she hung up the receiver a fright came over her. It was much worse now than before Alois had left. Now they were really alone. She had expected the call; it had been her last protection. But she hadn't told her father that Merk was with her; she was already doing his unspoken bidding. That made her feel hostile. He wasn't embarrassed; he acted as if everything were decided and it were needless to ask her consent. She determined to send him away.

She did not call him but waited until he came in of his own accord. He crossed the room and warmed his hands at the fire and turned and looked at her with an expression that grew happier every moment. Suddenly he said, "And I tried to forget you, Maria." He called her Maria; it just proved that he had made up his mind.

"I thought it over and over, why we should never see each other again. . . ."

Maria leaned against the wall. She had the same feeling as on the day of the demonstration when she had also leaned this way and watched him. The same determination was in him, against which she was powerless.

"I am engaged," Maria said after a pause. She wanted to oppose something to his assurance, but it sounded hollow and false even to herself. Involuntarily her fingers felt for her engagement ring, and yet she knew that she had forgotten it, in the bathroom at home. She saw quite clearly the red garnet on the white enamel. Was this really the end between her and Heinrich? Because he had so much time and wanted everything to be so right? No, that was not the reason.

"Do you love him?"

"We're going to be married in the spring."

"You know that isn't true."

Maria turned to the window and stared out over the distant plain of snow to the sky. Behind her in the room hung the words that had just been spoken. Why was she resisting? She had come here only to see whether he would come, to be with him, to surrender. It had all been utterly clear yesterday when Heinrich would not take her with him—clear in her heart and in her head. She was not as lost in her girlish inexperience as all of them, including Pepitta, thought. Nor was she afraid. Why should there be a scene? With this question she reproached herself. But at the same time an inner voice—it was the voice of Heinrich, always so dependable—kept warning her. "Don't give yourself; he is ruthless."

"The stars are out and the wind has died down," Maria said without turning.

He did not answer. Then behind her she heard him coming across the straw mat and she felt a trembling in her knees and an inexpressible fear in her heart. Now he must understand her and not simply take her because it would be easy. She was coming to him of her own accord. She had already done so.

He stood behind her, quite close. She felt his breath, felt him about to move, but he did not touch her. He controlled himself. He was not ruthless, only different, as he should be.

She turned around. "Shall we go skiing to the edge of the cliff?" she asked, and her feeling of freedom came back to her. "Yes, Maria," he answered and went ahead toward the door, a kind of gaiety in his eyes.

Quietly they glided along side by side, slightly uphill, breathing regularly. The air and snow were crisp and the sky rose higher.

"The moral law within me and the eternal stars above me." The feeling of strength that came over him made Karl think of the words of Kant. To walk thus side by side through the whole of life, if that were possible.

Maria watched the glitter of the Wain, her favourite constel-

lation. She had no thoughts. She only felt that this was the most beautiful of nights and that dreams did come true.

The wall of rock took a four-thousand-foot drop. A tiny row of lights that was a train was crossing the valley far below. The plain stretched blue and palely shimmering, so that you could not see where it ended, nor where the sky began. In the west glistened the snowy peaks of the Alps, clear and immovable, row on row.

Maria bent her head backward and followed the gleaming path of the Milky Way. She felt as if she were floating through those myriad lights.

"Now this is life at last," Karl thought, "life just the way it ought to be and even better."

"LeYs go! See who can get back first," Maria cried, and rushed down the slope.

He saw her flying on and followed her, as a hunter follows the game, hesitating, not too fast, but sure of his prey.

He was still in full career when he saw Maria unbuckling her skis and slipping into the hut. At that moment a group of other runners, swinging burning torches, came round the side of the slope. He stopped with difficulty, to avoid getting in their path.

"Come along! We're going to smoke out those Friends of Nature. Heil _____"

Karl heard the cries. They struck him to the very heart, he was so happy now and so far from the reality of ordinary days. He understood at once what they meant. But it was a little while before he moved. The torchbearers had vanished.

Maria came to the open door to see where he was. She saw him turn, slowly gliding forward, but it was not as if he was coming to her.

He uttered no word; he tore off his skis and went past her to the telephone. It took some time to get the connection.

"Karl speaking. Right. Watch out! The Nazis from the Bismarck House are on their way with torches to smoke you out."¹

Maria listened. She heard every word. The answer, too, which

came clearly through the instrument. "We know. Alois telephoned us; just let them come; we're waiting . . ." It made no sense to her.

"Friendship," said Karl and hung up the receiver. His face was stern. The radiance that had filled it before was gone.

Maria went to him and passed her hand through his hair as she had done in the taxi with the glittering windows.

Slowly he raised his head and they looked at each other.

"Karl," she said, after a pause, for the first time.

When late that night the shots with which the friends of Nature drove off the Nazis resounded among the rocks, they did not hear them.

B

ARON WIESNER arrived at Langenbruck on Saturday morning around ten o'clock. The architect from Innsbruck, who had been recommended by a colleague in the Ministry, was waiting for him. He was surprisingly young, and looked rather like a mountain guide, but he proved to be a good choice. He had come merely to introduce himself and to have a preliminary discussion. But urged on by an enthusiastic proprietor who wanted to lose no time, he soon found himself busy taking measurements and wrestling with a thousand details. They spent the day working together upstairs and down. The temporary manager of the estate had to wait until late afternoon with his report. His wife in the great kitchen of the manor house was disappointed too. What the Baron ordered at noon was next to nothing and in the evening he went to supper with the priest.

The architect had the most trouble with the top story. He wanted to base his plans on the style and construction of the manor house. But he met with opposition. A mood of irritation followed until the Baron finally declared that what he wanted was a copy of an unusual room which the future Baroness now occupied in Vienna. The architect offered no more objections but said as he took his leave, "I'll be in Vienna next week and I'll have a look at the studio. It is possible to get the same effect, but a violent attempt to reproduce is always a mistake."

The evening with the priest was a surprise. The Baron had

been a little afraid of his volubility, but the old man seemed changed. He was calmer than he had been the last time, and his speeches were less confused. He reviewed the affairs of the estate, over which he had kept scrupulous watch since the departure of Lilge, with practical good sense and precise insight. It was his advice to close the contracts with the new paper works in spite of the unsatisfactory price. "You must howl with the wolves until you can hang them." Lilge's assistant was a good man, he said, but second-rate; and the machinist recommended by Schrack was a sneak—he had liked the old one better in spite of his free-thinking. "What a pity so many of the Reds are decent human beings." It slipped out. He put his hand quickly over his mouth as if to take it back. "Jesus, if the Bishop heard that!" He gave an uncanny chuckle. But, serious again, he went on. "The Bishop doesn't like me. I am too slack a soldier of the Church militant. I don't rouse the peasants against the anti-Christ. But I always think it would be best if people got on with each other. And you can't start with an anathema. Is Vienna as rotten as they say?"

The Priest addressed this question more to himself than to his guest and his very tone implied a negative answer. A silence resulted in which a winter fly hummed. All evening long the priest had been trying, with cautious gestures, to keep it away from the bread.

"I'd rather keep our village as calm as I can," he went on suddenly. "I don't believe in a holy war. The Crusades, well, they were waged against the Turks eight hundred years ago, in a dark time. How do we know today how it really was then? I understand my superiors less and less. I think there's too much politics in the world."

"It would be fine if we could avoid all politics in Langenbruck," Wiesner said. It sounded nonpartisan but he knew that such a wish implied a willingness to adapt oneself to the stronger, whoever that might be.

Across the table the priest took his hand.

"I'm so glad, Baron Heinrich, that you have come home at

last. It isn't true that the whole world is a home. No one is as strong as that. One has to breathe the same air every day and pass the same tree every day for a whole lifetime or one can neither truly observe nor truly know. The fault of modern people is they are in too much of a hurry. They think they must invent everything themselves and make everything themselves. They have no faith in Providence. That's why they're so impatient and so unhappy, these children. But Our Lord said, Suffer the little children to come unto me. He didn't say, Shoot at them with bullets."

The calloused hand that still grasped the Baron's became suddenly feebler and began to tremble. The healthy peasant red faded from the priest's cheeks, tears started from his eyes and ran down, two straggling little brooks, over the rugged landscape of an old face, and fell to the tablecloth.

"Don't get up, Baron Heinrich. It will pass. But I must get it out. I got a letter, no, only a scrap of paper, a few lines, it's already two weeks ago but no one knows it yet. Seppl, the son of my former housekeeper, God rest her soul, — I let him join the army because he was set on it and I thought he might learn discipline and be safe enough seeing that the war was just over, — Seppl has been killed on patrol duty at the Bavarian frontier. The Nazis shot him. God forgive me the sin, he was my son. Why must people always shoot each other?"

Sobs shook the old man. He dropped his head on the table and hid it in his arms. Wiesner waited a while. Then he got up softly and went out. The winter fly hummed again.

In the morning the ringing of bells and the clear blasts of a military bugle roused the Baron out of a deep unrestful sleep. He floated up out of dreams, out of a sea of dark and frightening images. For a moment he was still held by them, in the next he no longer remembered but knew at once that it had been the same dream, the only dream he ever had: the war.

He got up and went to the window. It was a clear sunny day.

The workers of the estate, followed by their wives, were stamping through the snow to mass. Two fresh young things in wide black skirts and tight jackets and gay wimples were merrily throwing snowballs at a lad who pretended to run away. A grandmother threatened the girls with her prayer book. It must be cold and windy, for the white breath flew from every face. On the village street Heimwehr men marched in rows of four. Their uniforms showed gray and green through the bare branches of the park. A Heimwehr flag was waving above the manager's house. It annoyed Wiesner.

The water in the bowl on the old-fashioned washstand was cold and meagre. The Baron remembered the architect and the plans for the bathrooms that were to be built. At the same time it occurred to him that he had not been inside a church since his father's death.

He dressed quickly. The priest would be happy to see him at the service. He owed him a token of his sympathy, and indeed from every point of view it would be well to be seen at church. It was nearly nine. He left the house without having breakfast. The wife of the assistant manager stood unhappily in the kitchen door.

The little church that stood on a hill in the middle of the village had been freshly painted. In the sunlight its ochre yellow shone brighter than the snow. Churchgoers thronged at the entrance. One company of Heimwehr men was standing there, rifles at rest, another marched up. It was like 1914. The officers stood aside smoking cigarettes. Although the Baron passed at some distance they saluted.

The bell was swinging back and forth in the open belfry. As a child he had always envied the peasant boys who were allowed to pull the rope. Above the entrance hung the big oil painting of the church's patron saint, Saint George on a foam-flecked steed, slaying the Dragon. An artist, a summer guest of the old Baron, had painted it out of gratitude for his extended stay. He had been an elegant, coughing fellow, with white spats, a thin

cane and a French name. Lcblanc — Lelang. . . .? Wiesner had been allowed to open the tubes of colour. The painter had never called him "Heinrich," only "seal" or "little seal." He wondered why. Perhaps for no reason, merely a little joke. Seal . . . little seal ... it was thirty years ago.

Two rows of dark benches, the lectern, the confessional, the altar with three stained-glass windows above it, through which the light fell in streaks . . . Wiesner stopped for a moment on the threshold and looked upon one fragment of the scene of his childhood that was utterly unchanged. The peasants nudged each other and moved apart. A path opened for him. He walked down it slowly but not too slowly, with slightly bowed head. He knew that all eyes were fixed on him and he felt that now he was walking like his father. It was suddenly very marked, the walk of his father in him. Thus he too had gone down the aisle every Sunday, not slowly and not quickly; thus too he had genuflected before the tabernacle, crossed himself and entered the first pew.

For the first time in many years Wiesner was once more sitting in the seat of the lords of Langenbruck. He sat in the corner which his father had occupied all his life. That left two empty seats, one to the far right, where he had sat as a child, and one in the middle, which his mother had occupied. It was a strange feeling. He could hear the rustling of her silk skirts and smell the perfume that used to hang about her on Sundays and had been a secret delight to him during the long hours of the service. At first he had sniffed it out of childish playfulness, later because the tender scent had subtly excited him.

The bell stopped ringing. Peasants' boots scraped among the benches. Heimwehr men stood in the aisles, girls knelt before the altar, A cold draught blew from the entrance. Suddenly there was a great stillness. The priest in his vestments entered. Behind him came two acolytes, well-washed peasant lads, whose white lace surplices were too big for them. The harmonium in the gallery started up in tones that were beyond its strength. Outside in front of the church a trumpet blew the call to prayer.

The priest did not glance at the congregation and celebrated the mass as if he were alone. With silent steps he passed from one side of the altar to the other, bowed over the Gospels, folded his hands and read the Latin Epistles in a low indistinct voice. Wiesner followed his gestures and realized how much of the liturgy he himself had forgotten. He crossed himself when the others did and knelt and rose with them. More and more it seemed to him as if he were acting out a comedy. Furtively he brushed the dust from his knees.

He looked about him. Few were devoutly attentive. The old people, men and women, sat listless. The younger people seemed distraught or impatient under a pretence of seriousness. The Heimwehr men were looking at the girls. One of them, bowed deep over her prayer-book, was flirting with the officers. The acolytes kept swinging the censers and yet there was an odour of sweat and tobacco in the air.

High above the profane earthliness Jesus hung on the Cross, yellow as wax, tall and emaciated. Blood dripped from His palms and from under the crown of thorns down His forehead. There was a statue of Saint Andrew tied to the stake with arrows transfixing his breast and limbs. The silver halo of the Virgin Mary glittered like a hundred knives.

Wiesner leaned back and closed his eyes. The carved and painted horrors were so unpleasant. And he wasn't in the mood for the artistic associations they aroused. The draught was sharp. He thought of the tea he had not drunk.

The priest mounted the lectern and preached. He had pronounced the verse of the day and gone on to expound it, before the Baron began to listen. Words had passed by his ears monotonously. Terms of speech like "A time of trouble, a time of testing and of visitation," "Heaven-willed loyalty to the authorities." Not a word of his own. It sounded like the Sunday editorial in the provincial paper. But suddenly a note of torment came into the voice of the priest. He spoke louder and louder with every sentence, as if trying to shout himself. The phrases ran

quicker and quicker and crowded one another. It was a race between the sermon and something that wanted to be spoken. The congregation became restless. Something was wrong. Wiesner did not take his eyes from him and prepared if need be to come to his aid. There was no need. The old man had himself in hand. He ended abruptly before it was too late. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Amen," he thundered, and ceased speaking. "Gesar's" echoed from the vault, then it was dead silent.

The priest was still in the lectern, supporting himself on the railing as if after great exertion. He seemed to want to add something, but thought better of it and descended. His tread was hollow on the tiles. At the altar he knelt down for the final prayer. "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." The relieved congregation joined him, "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name," and the prayer rolled through the nave.

When Wiesner entered the vestry after Mass he found the country doctor by the side of the priest who had stretched out in the unused confessional and was breathing heavily. The younger altar-boy had scared eyes, the older was hurrying to the priest with a glass of water. The doctor poured a powder into it. "It's his heart; I know him. My respects, Baron," he said. The priest drank with difficulty and his breathing grew easier.

A Heimwehr officer opened the door roughly. "The battalion is assembled, Father," he cried, but he caught sight of the sick man and came a step nearer.

"He can't do it now. Out of the question. Perhaps in half an hour," said the doctor.

The priest opened his eyes and lifted himself a little. His voice was soft but firm; "There will be no consecration! I consecrate neither flags nor guns any more. Tell that to the Major."

"It's not as bad as that, Father," said the doctor, speaking as if to a child, and felt his pulse.

"You don't understand," said the priest.

Dismayed, the officer left. Trumpet signals blared in as the door

opened and closed. The altar-boys, with caldron, aspergill, and censer in their hands, made disappointed faces. They had been looking forward for three weeks to the consecration of the flag. Faces with hands shading the eyes tried to peer in through the barred windows. Someone stuck his head in at the door. "Out with you!" cried the doctor roughly and slammed it shut.

Wiesner leaned in a corner, his hat in his hand. He had understood the priest and wanted to save him from his own indiscretions. Major Schrack was bound to come at any moment.

The faces vanished from the windows. A horseman stopped outside, dismounted, and gave the reins to a Heimwehr man. Involuntarily Wiesner drew himself up, noticed it, and, annoyed, resumed his careless civilian bearing.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the physician, who had also seen who was coming.

Schrack entered without looking to left or right. He advanced three paces, stopped and scrutinized the priest in the confessional as he might a malingering recruit during inspection of the sick. Wiesner observed him from his corner, standing half behind him. The Major wore the uniform of his old imperial regiment, the one the Baron too had worn for four years and then no more. The war was in the vestry.

"Good morning," said the Major and raised two fingers to the rim of his cap in salute. "I hear to my regret that Your Reverence is not well. Is it really so bad that you cannot perform the consecration?" Without waiting for an answer he turned to the physician. "We can strip the ceremony to the essentials." Just so he had always suggested his decisions to physicians in the field, whom he held in little esteem.

The physician stood wavering between the officer and the priest. He had felt the pulse, it was no longer bad, something else seemed to be wrong. Better hold his tongue. The priest sat up. His face grew red and his eyes were hostile.

Wiesner had been waiting for this moment.

"My respects, Herr Major," he said in military manner and stepped forward. "The condition of His Reverence forbids any activity."

Surprised to hear the voice of Wiesner at his back, the Major swung round. It was a hasty movement, controlled too late.

"You here — " He had almost said, "Herr Lieutenant." Then his "*Servus*" came hesitatingly from his lips.

"Yes," said the Baron confirming his presence almost sarcastically. They did not shake hands.

The priest and the doctor looked at each other, aware of the tension between the two men. The altar-boys did not dare to stir.

"Then we shall have to manage without the assistance of the Church." The Major turned back to the priest. "All the companies from the district are assembled. I can't just send them home." There was no regret in his tone. He had never liked the army chaplains either. Then he turned to the Baron. There was no longer any surprise in his voice, only a courteous malice.

"Perhaps you could say a few words to the men, Baron. It would be most fitting."

A smile passed over Wiesner's face and changed quickly from irony to accommodation. The Major was no diplomat. Things weren't so simple as he imagined them to be. "Thank you, Herr Major," he answered amiably, "but it would be most improper for me to take part in public manifestations. I am still an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It would be against every rule."

The Major's hostile gaze sank into the eyes of the Baron.

"Why does he hate me so?" thought Wiesner. He met the hostility without returning it. His face remained calm and friendly. He knew that it was cruel, but he could not give in, not to the Major.

The Major's lips trembled. First rage, then weakness showed on his face. His eyes grew moist and suddenly took on a doglike expression.

This was more than Wiesner had wanted. This lay far back in

wartime; this was the foulness of the canal at San Donna di Piave, the heat and the overexertion of four years, the whole insanity of an unnatural time. He lowered his eyes to the decorations on the Major's chest. He wanted no power over this war-sick man, but the man must not try to gain power over him. And he ought to go now.

"Sorry. But it will soon be different with the gentlemen in the Civil Service," said the Major, and, saluting, he left the vestry.

The physician shook his head. He did not understand and did not wish to. The priest beckoned to the acolytes. He at once became impatient as with clumsy fingers they unbuttoned his vestments. He brushed the boys aside and pulled the vestments off over his head. The heart attack had passed.

"I can go now," said the doctor. "The gentlemen of the battalion are dining with us. May I invite you too, Baron?"

"I may drop in later."

"We'll be having coffee around two."

"Very well, at two."

The doctor wrapped his coarse woollen muffler about his throat and buttoned his long overcoat. He wore no hat. At the door he turned once more. "You'd better go to bed, Father," he shouted; then he was gone. His long gray hair fluttered in the wind as he went past the window.

"I don't need you any more either," the priest said to the boys, who, after the departure of the Major, had taken off their white shirts and put away the utensils of the Mass.

"Praised be Jesus Christ," they saluted with their bright voices and went out.

Wiesner helped the priest into his rough old peasant's fur coat. The old man buttoned it slowly before he turned. "Thank you, Baron Heinrich," he said, "for not letting me talk."

"We want to keep Langenbruck at peace as much as possible."

"Yes, yes," said the priest, after a pause. Hesitantly he took the hand of the much younger Baron, as if he did not quite dare. "You're right. I would have let myself go. I thought I owed it to

Sepl, and I was in a rage too. But of course I would only have made it worse. No, it's not a sin if sometimes one doesn't proclaim the truth. I thank you, Baron Heinrich. You are indeed your father's son. I didn't notice that, at New Year's, when you were here the last time. He too was always so restrained — a great gentleman. I was privileged to be his friend and I should like to be yours too, even though I'm old and childish and my friendship isn't worth much any more."

Their hands clung to each other. The priest stepped to the window to hide his emotion. "They're getting along without me out there," he chuckled and pointed to the square before the church. When he turned every wrinkle of his peasant face was full of peasant slyness. Then he said, serious again, "You watch the parade, Baron Heinrich; I feel well enough now. And I've got to be alone for a while in my church."

Outside Wiesner had to go around the church. As he passed the entrance he saw the priest kneeling at the altar and praying, alone before the empty benches.

On the village street the four companies of Heimwehr were marching past the major, jerking their eyes sharply to the right, but they were not real soldiers, merely civilians in uniform. Schrack sat on his white horse, motionless, bent slightly forward. On the curb to right and left of him stood the village children. Their eyes were as astonished as in the spring — when the circus came. But they were not so merry; they didn't laugh, and they didn't run after the marching troops. It was easy to count the adults. Two wealthy peasants, the owner of the local garage, the hotel proprietor whose son was a Nazi in Bavaria, the schoolteacher and the postmaster. Gold watch chains and silver-headed canes gleamed in the sun. The photographer, who worked for the mountain hotel when it was not closed down, clicked his camera. The doctor, with Hilda in a short fur sports coat, was standing beside their sleigh near the dusty display windows of the general store. It was a grotesque group, with the officer on

the white horse at its centre. The village street lay empty. A few young fellows slouched in the door of the inn. Their attitude was one of studied indifference. Three churchgoers on their way home scarcely turned their heads. Their steps were out of time with the trumpet. The new flag waved at the head of the companies. It whipped in the wind. But its colours were still too new, it didn't look quite genuine.

From the vantage point of the church Wiesner surveyed the scene. He had expected a folk festival and against his will was disappointed. He was embarrassed for the Major. How often as his adjutant he had been beside him when the batteries filed past. The Major had sat in the saddle just as he was sitting now, bent forward a little, motionless, with critical eyes that nothing escaped. As a soldier he had not changed. But the wretched, badly trained troops and the staff of children and political speculators, and the trumpet off-key — all this was bitter. Wiesner was doubly glad that he had declined to speak.

He would have preferred to turn and go home by a detour. It was too late. Everybody had seen him. Moreover the last company had already passed by and he would hardly have to stop if he went down the hill a little more slowly.

When the last of the Heimwehr had passed, Schrack swung his horse about and trotted to the head of the company. Wiesner, returning the greetings of the peasants, knew the men would have to listen to something before they were dismissed. Hilda came swiftly to meet him. Her father followed, hesitating.

"Good morning, Hilda," Wiesner greeted her with a smile. He was always glad when he saw her.

She pressed his hand exaggeratedly. "Don't come, I don't want you to," she whispered. Before Wiesner could answer, she was saying in a loud artificial voice, for her father was now within hearing, "We shall be so happy, Herr Baron." But her eyes still begged him to stay away.

The doctor approached. "I'll fetch you in the sleigh. It's bad walking."

"If you prefer."

"Is it true that you're getting married at Easter and are coming to settle down at Langcnbruck? That's what people are saying," said Hilda, and bit her lips, regretting her own lack of restraint.

"I think so," he replied.

The doctor quietly watched his daughter out of the corner of his eye. He knew how it was with her. "Another one gone, the best of them all," he thought. But she shouldn't show it so plainly.

The clock in the tower began to strike twelve.

"We must go home, Father." Hilda turned quickly and went to the sleigh. Wiesner followed with the doctor and took off his hat. The sleigh was soon jingling down the street.

Behind his back the peasants looked at Wiesner suspiciously. It was not a matter of indifference to them what kind of person had returned, as son of the manor, to be master. There was something stranger than strange about him. Why did he keep his hat in his hand so long? Who were the village quack and his bad girl, anyway? Didn't he notice that they were already gone? The photographer's camera clicked.

The Baron felt the glances of the peasants. But they did not matter to him; nothing mattered. Hilda always gave him a shock whenever they met. She did not want him to come. What was it that he must not see? How had she got to the ball in Vienna and why did the Heimwchr people dine at her father's house? It was bad business for a physician to ally himself openly with any party, even if he was the only one in the district. What game was Hilda playing?

Litde black paths led to the roadway from all the doors of the low houses that lined the street on either side. The snow, pushed aside by the snowplough of the postal service, was piled as high as the windows. The doctor had not exaggerated. There had been a thaw and then a frost; you had to be careful not to slip. Wiesner walked precariously, trying to keep his foothold, an elegant urban figure balancing in the middle of the street feeling himself badly

dressed and his movements ridiculous, A hundred pairs of eyes watched him; from every small window, half-hidden by curtains, they spied upon him: peasants in shirt-sleeves with pipes in their mouths, hard female faces, children's noses flat against the panes. Two neighbours parted hastily as the Baron approached, and disappeared into their houses. Doors slammed and then it was still again and more uncomfortable than before.

Everything had been so different in the morning, so natural and harmless. It was a difference easy to feel but difficult to grasp. The sun shone now as it had shone on his way to church, the snow gleamed, arid the cold air sparkled. But there was something hostile in the atmosphere that the Baron could not explain to himself. It was not curiosity hiding behind those windows. Why weren't the people standing at their doors and exchanging a word or two with him, as they had done with his father? They had all known him, many of them since childhood, and he could not fail to be their friend. Or didn't they realize that? Something was very different in Langenbruck. . . .

It was a relief to enter the little gate to the manor park and take the side path, which was strewn with red-brown sand. He stopped and opened the black Persian collar of his coat, loosened his silk muffler and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Running the gauntlet on that slippery path had made him hot and he confessed to himself that it was not at all easy coming home.

He listened. From the direction of the manager's house he heard the sound of a voice uttering sharp abrupt words which cut, undistinguishable, across the park. But he knew the voice. It was Schrack, who could never put a period to his military criticism. But by what right did the Heimwehr invade the park? Now he noticed that the snow on either side of the path had been trodden by many feet.

He went on, stopped after a few steps, and lit a cigarette, which was uncommon for him before lunch. He would have to give orders to the assistant. In the morning the flag raised without per-

mission, and now the estate turned into quarters for the Heimwehr! If Lilge had been too severe, this man was too lax. One thing was just as bad as the other. That might account for the unfriendliness of the villagers. The peasants distrusted the Heimwehr, otherwise they would have been present at the parade.

Schrack's voice fell silent. The command, "Dismiss," rang through the park and then rose the sound of many men talking. Wiesner went to the edge of the bushes but did not step through. The companies were stacking their guns and lining up by the field kitchen, which was now stationed in front of the assistant's house. Schrack had dismounted and he and the company commanders climbed into a heavy Daimler car, which left by the main road with chains rattling. They could not see Wiesner. But he recognized the owner of the paper works at the wheel.

The wife of the assistant, who had been watching the scene, suddenly saw the Baron approaching. Frightened, she ran back into the kitchen. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach," was her rule for every situation in life. If the Baron enjoyed his food, the prospects were better that he would give her husband the position of manager. Thank God, the rice was exactly right and the veal roast smelled like honey. Not for nothing had she been cook at the Mountain Hotel in the good days. And he must be hungry, the Baron, since he had gone to mass without breakfast. Was he really so devout? He didn't look it.

Wiesner entered his father's spacious study, which was the library as well. The door to the drawing room stood open, and beyond it the door of the dining room. Fires were lit in the broad high stoves of white tile, and it was pleasantly warm, with a warmth that city heating could not achieve. The wintry sun came through windows and curtains and was softly mirrored in the smooth wood of the furniture and in the pictures, and lay in parallelograms on the rugs and floor. The beauty and the friendly quiet of the rooms soothed the anger that had risen higher and higher in Wiesner with every step he had taken on his way home.

He stood still before the portraits of his parents. Right, Leblanc was the name of that painter. This was how he remembered them on their way to church : his father serious, honourable, stubborn, his mother fragile and delicate but with something almost solemn in her smile, a hidden renunciation. Bravely these two had fulfilled their destiny in this house. There had been no conflict and no scenes. And yonder hung the faded silhouette of the ensign who had fallen in Prague. Now Maria was wearing his ring. The sins of the father are visited upon the children. But sometimes the children resolve the conflicts that made the fathers suffer. That should be true of the new life that was to begin in Langenbruck at Easter.

Wiesner preferred to eat alone and in silence and was always glad when the meal was finished. The woman in the kitchen soon learned that. Scarcely had one course been served when he rang for the next. Didn't the Baron like his food ? She was close to tears when she was told to serve the coffee in the study. Then, after the first sip, the Baron said to her with surprising friendliness: "The coffee is excellent, everything in fact is good beyond my expectation. Thank you." You never knew about gentlefolk! "And now," he continued, "I'd like to see your husband."

"He's waiting," the woman said excitedly and went out into the anteroom. She left the house door standing open and in the yard she began to run. The Heimwehr men who were standing about smoking cried, "Is there a fire somewhere?" She was out of breath when she came back with her husband. "Don't talk too much," she whispered as she shoved him through the door.

After the first report on the day before, Wiesner had planned a thorough investigation. But now, turning over the bills, the tax regulations, the contracts to be renewed, the offers, the proposals, the memoranda of all kinds, he found himself uninterested and distracted. He knew that he could rely on the priest's supervision and that on the whole he could let the affairs of the estate run along pretty much as Lilge had arranged them. He examined more carefully only the contract with the paper works. Then he

shoved the papers aside. "Attend to all these matters in consultation with His Reverence," he said, and then, after a pause that was not pleasant to the assistant, "Who gave the Heimwehr permission to camp on the estate?"

"The Herr Major telephoned that I should do it, he said he would assume all responsibility," the man said hesitatingly.

"No one can assume your responsibility for you! Say next time that you must consult me. And that goes too for the hoisting of flags."

"Very well, Herr Baron."

"On this estate we are neither for nor against the Heimwehr. If you are a member that's your private business. It is your duty as my agent to live at peace with all parties. I want to be on good terms with the entire village. Manager Lilge understood this until he exaggerated his neutrality into enmity for everyone. That is not desirable either." Wiesner had a bad feeling after these words. For in fact Lilge had taken the side of the machinist, for justice and against injustice. But he could not explain that to this subaltern who was timidly assuring him that he was not a member of anything, nor could he explain to him why he was no martyr and did not wish to be one.

The telephone rang.

"You can come," said Hilda. "Father is on the way."

"I'll offer my excuses."

"No, come! I can't say more here. Come. For sure!" She hung up.

Wiesner slowly put the receiver down and turned back to the assistant.

"I hope you recognize the limits of your authority now," he said in a friendly tone. "You may as well call yourself manager from now on and move into Lilge's quarters. The increase in salary will be taken care of at Easter when I shall have had time to get a better idea of your work."

In his excitement the man could only stammer his thanks. A good second-rate man, as the priest had said. "I don't need a

first-class one if I am here myself," thought Wiesner, parenthetically. With a smile he said, "Now go to the kitchen and tell your wife. She can hardly wait."

Overjoyed, the manager took his papers and disappeared.

As he went into the anteroom and put on his coat, the Baron wondered what was the matter with Hilda. The doctor had arrived with his sleigh..

They drove through the dying day. The valley lay in the shadow of the mountains and a cold wind was blowing, but it was beautiful. The horses snorted and their hooves tapped sharply on the icy road. The bells on their harness jingled brightly. "All this has withstood life," felt Wiesner.

Halfway there, the big Daimler car came swiftly toward them. The doctor pulled his horses aside. The car roared by; the officers made motions and cried out. But their words could not be understood.

"Something must have happened," said the doctor. "They were all waiting for you and now they drive off."

"The Major wasn't in the car," said the Baron.

From a distance they saw a motorcycle standing in front of the doctor's house. A Heimwehr soldier came through the little garden, stuck a white object into the inner pocket of his leather jacket and sped away.

"It's an orderly," said the doctor.

The waiting-room smelled of medicine. The doctor opened the door. When Wiesner entered the room he had the feeling that he was living this winter afternoon for the second time. Hilda was pouring a cognac, which Schrack, on the sofa, drank before he looked up. "My officers wanted very much to talk to you," he announced, a little too loudly, "but duty called them."

"Whatever is the matter?" asked the doctor.

"That's an official secret, Doctor," Schrack replied and got up and buckled on his bayonet

"I regret very much . . ." Wiesner began courteously, but the Major interrupted him. "We'll talk another time," he said, step-

ping in front of him. His breath smelled of tobacco and brandy, but he was quite sober. The Baron knew from of old when he had had too much, and now a vision of their quarters at the time of the 1915 offensive in the Carpathians came back to him too. A smoke-filled room like this one, too many pieces of furniture, and the daughter of the house. Since every officer wanted to sleep with her none succeeded. But at that time he and the Major had had to leave together, to go into position.

The motor car had come back.

The Major kissed Hilda's hand. In Wiesner's presence the act became distasteful to her, and she looked at him defiantly. He noticed it. Schrack turned. "We shall meet in Vienna," he said casually, but it sounded nasty. The doctor went out with him.

Hilda and Wiesner remained silent and listened to the car driving off. They did not look at each other and they did not move. The doctor reappeared in the doorway. "I must visit a patient," he said after a pause, and left. The door of the house slammed a second time.

Dusk had fallen. Wiesner waited until the sleigh was gone. The bells sounded ever more softly in the distance. Then he asked, "What is really the matter with you, Hilda?"

She did not answer but suddenly she came to him and embraced and kissed him. It was an attack exactly calculated yet unrestrained. He felt the teeth between her open lips. She pressed her body tenderly to him, but the bones of her hips were hard against his own. She was strong. Yet as she sensed his resistance she released him at once.

"It's really over, Hilda, really," he said.

She laughed contemptuously. "Everything is just thought out," she said almost with a cry and went to the other side of the room.

"Thought out?"

"Yes, thought out. Just that," she repeated. "And you won't be happy with her. She'll bore you to death at the end of a year. Look in the mirror and see what is written in your face. It will be attractive, corrupting her. But how long does that last? You

can't play the first great love again; imagine it if you can, but practically it won't do. You're too old for it."

"I had better go," said Wiesner and looked for the electric button.

"Why did you come at all?" Her sharp voice came through the darkness.

The chandelier flamed. Hilda stood with her back braced against the wall, the feet with the brown shoes close together. Tears ran down her cheeks. The Baron telephoned the manor house. He was to be sent for right away. As he put down the receiver Hilda said, "Forgive me. It's the first scene I've ever made." Then she dried her eyes.

"Good, Hilda," he said.

"I shouldn't have asked you here," she continued. "At first I didn't want to, on account of the Major, so you wouldn't see me trying to be nice to him. Then I did want you to see it."

"You and the Major?"

"I'm keeping him in reserve. I don't want to marry a man younger than myself. And the war didn't leave many for virgins of my vintage."

"Don't be cynical," said the Baron, but it did not sound quite serious.

"See how stupid you are, Heinrich," she said with a sad smile. "You really are my eternal love. Oh yes, there is such a thing, and I'm not cynical, only tired, damned tired."

He did not answer.

"Will you drink a last brandy with me?" She poured one out.

He emptied the glass and put it back and went to the piano.

She broke the silence. "I could tell you exactly what you're thinking now," she said calmly and resignedly. "But we'd better not talk about ourselves. I have a piece of news. All the Heimwehr companies but one, which is to stay in the district, are entraining tonight. They don't know themselves where to."

"Schrack said we would meet in Vienna."

"What will happen, Heinrich?"

"It's not important."

"What do you consider important?"

"The next twenty years in Langenbruck."

"And is that all?"

"All."

"You won't succeed. But you have my blessing." She went over to him and pressed his hand.

It was night when the Baron wrapped himself in the robes of his sleigh. In the distance he heard the singing of the old marching song of war. "The birds in the forest, how beautifully they sing." In the bright window Hilda was standing with a cigarette between her lips. The horses had a hard time turning in the narrow street. Then the companies came marching by, and Wiesner had to wait until they had passed. Row on row emerged in the light from his sleigh. They were singing with rough voices. The officer saluted. It was again as it had been twenty years ago. The old song gripped his heart. He felt suddenly homesick for the war. Everything had been so simple. "In the homeland, in the homeland . . ." The song went on and then gradually died away. The street was empty now and Hilda was still at the window.

At the gate of his park two Heimwehr men with bayonets up stopped him but let him pass at once. All the first-floor windows of the manor house were lighted. A campfire burned in front of the big barn behind the manager's house. As the Baron left the sleigh he heard shots in the village. He stood still and listened, looking in through the window. At the desk in his study sat the paper manufacturer in a lieutenant's uniform, speaking into the telephone. The sentries at the door stood at attention as the Baron went quickly by them.

Coming into the room, he heard only ". . . Herr Major," when the manufacturer hung up the receiver and rose at once. He was a tall, bloated fellow with a red face and thin ash-blond hair. "Lieutenant Pilzinger," he introduced himself. "Very sorry to cause you any inconvenience, Herr Baron, but orders are orders." His voice clicked.

"What orders, if I may ask," Wiesner said coolly, "and whose orders?"

"Orders from division headquarters. Company Langenbruck on duty, quarters in the manor house."

"Permit me." The Baron went to the telephone and called up the office of the District Administrator. He was there himself, even on Sunday. As Wiesner heard that oily careful voice he saw the man before him with the pince-nez on his fleshy nose. His information left no doubt that the quartering was a legal measure. The civil authorities had been ordered to co-operate with the Heimwehr in the interest of public security. In certain respects the Heimwehr was to be treated as part of the regular armed forces. The Administrator, without being asked, assured the Baron that he would be indemnified for all expenses or damage.

"Have you any news from Vienna?" Wiesner interrupted him.

"No, but judging from the radio nothing out of the ordinary has occurred."

The Baron acknowledged the information and after waiting a moment asked for long distance. He put in a call for the house on Freedom Square. He got the connection with surprising quickness. Professor Steiger came to the telephone. Everything was normal in Vienna. Maria was still in the mountains. He expected her back by the ten o'clock train.

When the Baron had finished with his call, the manufacturer said in an easy social tone: "We don't know ourselves what's going on, Herr Baron." It was clear that he did know something. Wiesner would not do him the favor of inquiring. "I'm taking the night train to Vienna," he said. "I'll leave orders to have you provided with everything." The manufacturer bowed and was about to speak when the Baron left the room.

The sleigh was still at the door. "To the parish house," the Baron commanded. The street was dark and uncanny. Every curtain was drawn. There was not a gleam of light except from a lantern in front of the inn at the end of the street. Beneath it a

crowd was gathered. Bayonets glinted, and the helmets of two gendarmes. No one stopped the Baron as he passed.

The priest was lying in bed. A jug of red wine stood on the Bible beside him. The doctor was kneeling on the floor, working with an old radio set. White as chalk, the hotelkeeper stood in the middle of the room and stared at the Baron as if he were a ghost.

"I knew, Baron Heinrich," exclaimed the priest, "that you wouldn't leave without saying good-bye) to me."

"How do you feel, Father?"

"Better. The doctor says I'm as strong as a horse. But he never tells the truth." The priest chuckled and filled his empty glass. Shaking his head the doctor got up.

"Against whom are they preparing? Against whom?" The hotelkeeper almost leaped at Wiesner and caught hold of a button on his coat. His bad conscience stood out in his face, his elan of New Year's Eve had given place to a cold fear.

The priest set down his glass. "Don't make yourself ridiculous," he cried. "Give the Baron a chair."

As the hotelkeeper brought the chair he whispered hoarsely, "The Heimwehr people are acting wild; they already feel that they're masters. They even fired shots near the inn."

"Why did they?" Wiesner asked, sitting down without taking off his coat.

"Nobody knows. I passed right on and didn't ask."

"I'll tell you why," the priest said. "Guns must shoot because that's what they're made for."

"Three companies entrain tonight. The one that remains here on duty has been quartered on me," said the Baron.

"Oh, they entrained," cried the hotelkeeper enthusiastically. "Then it's not against us. If only the radio would work!" He knelt down beside the apparatus but immediately jumped up again. "I've got to hurry," he said and ran out of the room.

"He'll play his game until they arrest him," said the priest. "The gendarmes know perfectly well that he's a Nazi." After a

while he added softly, "That son of his, who is a legionary in Bavaria, might easily have been the one who shot my Seppl. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He lay back on the pillows and closed his eyes. The Baron and the doctor looked at each other.

"Don't do that," said the priest. "I see it and I know it and I'm glad that I will not have to stand it much longer. Evil times are coming. And the worst is that the guilt is also mine. I didn't do my whole duty. I was a bad shepherd to my flock. But the Bishop is no better."

"Don't talk so much now," said the doctor.

"Promise me, Doctor, to keep an eye on the Baron, when he comes with his young wife," the priest continued and a smile lit his face as he said "young wife," The Baron noticed suddenly how old and weary of life he was. He got up. "I'll be back in a fortnight, Father. Take care of yourself and have me called up if there is any need."

The priest took his hand into his own trembling one. He raised himself up and solemnly made the sign of the cross over Wiesner and murmured the blessing. Then he fell back exhausted. "He is old and has lost the desire to live," the doctor growled. They waited. The priest breathed feebly and went to sleep.

Wiesner left the parish house with the feeling that he had seen the priest for the last time. The street was empty now, but Wiesner stopped in front of the inn. Out of the darkness of the arched doorway three Heimwehr men emerged.

The sergeant came to the sleigh and saluted. "Sergeant Hans Lackner, Third Company, on night reconnoitring duty.. I report obediently, Herr Baron."

"Lackner?" The Baron asked. The name sounded vaguely familiar.

The sergeant stepped nearer and said with a dash of familiarity, "I'm the new machinist at your sawmill."

"Why was there firing?" Wiesner demanded sharply.

The machinist resumed his official attitude. "We shot in the

air to frighten the Nazis, who were making fun of us. They're all in hiding now."

"Drive on!" the Baron commanded.

The manager's wife was standing in the kitchen door. She had wanted to thank the Baron and give him flowers from the hothouse for his fiancée in Vienna. They would surely keep till morning. But when she saw the Baron she vanished like lightning into the kitchen. He had a face like the devil.

Three minutes later he came down with his suitcase. At the foot of the stairs stood the manager with an armful of papers. "Give me the wood contract," the Baron said, "and be within reach of the telephone every day at six o'clock. I'll call."

On the way to the station the sleigh passed the doctor's house. There was no light there.

XIV

O

N Sunday, after the popular symphony concert, Ferdinand Franze, the best drummer in the world, escaped from Zinserl, his thin shadow. While the detective was waiting as usual near the greenroom stairs, he left the building by the general exit. He rolled through the foyer with such speed and excitement that the usher involuntarily looked after him. The second drummer, his neighbour in the orchestra, had also observed a strange agitation in him, ever since the second intermission, when a shabby, crying girl had visited Franze and stayed whispering with him behind the coat racks up to the very last moment. Afterwards, during the Brahms symphony, Franze had not looked at his notes but had played his part from memory, quite automatically, and had kept moving his lips in a senseless, trembling way. In the last movement he had neglected to come in on the fortissimo, which did not go unnoticed by his colleagues or the connoisseurs in the audience, who were startled out of their absorption. When the young guest conductor, after taking his bows, rushed into the greenroom to call him to account, Franze had gone, without even changing into his everyday clothes, which hung in their place, the huge trousers like a Hag cut open. Not until days later, when Franze failed to come to rehearsal or send any word, did his clothes become an object of investigation.

It was Lenerl, the sweetheart of the motorman Schellcr, who was waiting beside the left Trajan column of the Karl's Church, where Franze had ordered her to meet him. The concert was just over. She saw him from a distance, appearing in the light of the street lamps and again disappearing, bending forward against the wind, as he fought his way across the wide square. He looked back again and again as if afraid of being followed. Gasping he arrived at her side and at once waved angrily for a passing taxi with his ivory-headed cane. He told the driver to go to a certain corner in the Seventh District. "I know a bar there where we are safe," he said when the car had started; then he drew a deep breath.

The last time Lenerl had been in an automobile it had also been with Franze. That was last summer during her happiest time with Schellcr. Franze had taken them on an outing to the Prater and in the evening, when the tram-cars had been overcrowded because a thunderstorm was coming up, he had summoned a taxi at once, without thinking about it. What a lot of money a musician like that must make. She disliked him anyhow. She could not be persuaded that he was not to blame when Scheller suddenly did not want to get married. He was false, he was two-faced, he was part of that cursed political business.

Franze was studying Lenerl. Instead of leaning back properly, she teetered on the edge of the seat, an unsteady little bundle of anaemia and wretchedness. Scheller in his private affairs was too soft. He was in love with his pity for her. If only she wouldn't cry again. . . .

"Did you read the leaflet the Party Council distributed this morning?" Franze asked, only for something to say.

The girl shook her head.

"They're whining for peace again."

"Why shouldn't they?" Lenerl said it with hostility, but the thin pitch of her voice broke, and she began to sob.

Franze crumpled the leaflet, which had been in his pocket since morning. Women's tears made him helpless. He could do

nothing but wait until they stopped. But Lenerl wept, her handkerchief to her face, sobbing, coughing, blowing her nose, until the taxi came to a halt.

The Amor Bar was a cheap night club with a starved piano player, dim alcoves, and dusty hangings. Lenerl was embarrassed to be seen in her shabby dress and with such a fat man who was so much older than herself and in evening clothes besides. What people must think of her! As if they were out for pleasure, Franze ordered a drink with a foreign name. They did not speak until they were served and the waiter had gone away again. Then Franze said softly and earnestly, "Now tell me everything, just the way it happened, and in the proper order." He leaned back, and the cheap red upholstery groaned under his weight.

On Thursday Lenerl was to have met Scheller, but he had not come and he had sent no word on Friday either. So after work she had gone right from the factory to his boarding house, but his landlady, who was after him herself, would not let her in, would not even unchain the door, "Not in the absence of the Herr lodger," as that goose bumptiously put it. She went on to add with a jeer that Herr Scheller often remained away for days, and nights too, especially lately. Then she had slammed the door.

Next she had gone to the car depots and was told that Scheller had been absent from work the whole week, since Monday, the day she had talked with him last. "No doubt there's a reason," the supervisor of the depots had said, as if he knew something but would not betray it, not for anything. Deathly fear had seized her and she had run as quickly as she could to the district office of the party. Luckily Comrade Hippmann was there. After a hundred questions bagged and forth, during which he had peered at her over his glasses, he had given her an address where she was to inquire. It was the apartment of a teacher in Brigittenau, a certain Heuberger. He was a friendly fellow but insisted that he did not know a motorman Scheller, or any Scheller. She saw

that he was not telling her the truth, but he was just like the others, all her begging and pleading was wasted. "There must be some mistake," he had kept repeating and escorted her outside.

In desperation she had hurried back to Hippmann, but he was no longer there. It was ten o'clock at night, and she had had no food and felt miserable inside and out and did not know what to do. Then in her greatest despair she had remembered what Scheller had said to her after that outing in the Prater. "If anything happens to me, go to the fat one; you can depend on him." But because of all the political secrecy she didn't even know where Franze lived, only that he was a drummer and played in the Concert House. She had gone there, but the whole building was dark. She had searched from door to door until finally she had found the janitor's bell. He couldn't give her Franze's address and he was angry because she had wakened him out of his first sleep. But in the end he had told her that Herr Franze was playing there on Sunday evening.

She had not slept all night. Either Scheller had been arrested or was hiding from the police. She did not know which to believe. A year ago she would have died if her man had been locked up, but since then she had learned a lot. In prison he would at least be safe. She was ashamed to think that way, Scheller wouldn't have liked it. But she imagined how she would visit him and smuggle cigarettes to him. And when he came out perhaps they would marry and lead a quiet life, like an acquaintance of hers who had been cured of his politics by a couple of months in jail. But that was merely a fantasy. In the morning her terror and uncertainty were worse than ever.

At noon after work—it was Saturday by then—still no word from Scheller. She was tempted to go to the police to inquire or to report him missing. But halfway there she realized that this might do harm and instead went back to the district office for advice. There she got a terrible surprise. For they told her roughly, in a most uncomradely fashion, that she had better not show herself any more. When she asked why

they roared at her that she herself knew exactly why and chased her out.

She was so crushed that people in the street turned to look at her. She was back at the depots again, with a tear-stained face. Where else should she go? But there too everything was changed. The motormen turned their backs on her, and the supervisor, who had been so friendly the evening before, sent word that he had no time to see her. It was worse than in the district office. They were not rough to her, but the way nobody spoke to her, or answered a question, had in it a cold contempt she could not bear. Now it occurred to her that at work too everyone had shunned her. She had a terrible feeling of being cast out from the whole world. Yes, that was it. But if she could only find Scheller, then everything would be good again.

When she left the barns, more dead than alive, a stone suddenly shot across the pavement, past her feet; then a second and a third and before she knew what was happening a sharp-edged one struck her on the ankle. She screamed with pain and had to support herself on the next light post to keep from falling. A howl of malicious triumph rose behind her. She looked back and saw a crowd of kids shouting threats at her. At first she didn't understand them. Then a couple of them came nearer and spat at her and cried, "Spy! Heimwehr bitch! Police whore!"

People on the street stopped, and the mothers of the children looked out of the windows, but no one offered to protect her. They all approved. A motorman came out of the barns and egged on the gang still more. "Chase that slut away," he shouted, "and give her something to remember!" She couldn't defend herself. Another stone flew, the next hit her in the back, they whizzed past her from every side. She ran as fast as she could, it was only three houses to the next corner but it took an eternity. The shouting was behind her, the cries died out, the rain of stones on the pavement stopped. Her knees were trembling just the way they did at her first communion, she had a terrible attack of coughing, and there was blood on her handkerchief again.

But in her confusion she ran farther and farther, around many corners, past many houses, through a park. She couldn't stop, she was so ashamed. She reached the Danube canal with those vile cries still in her ears, "Hag, Heimwehr bitch, police whore!" She was tempted to jump into the dirty water.

She left the bridge and sat down on a bench, near the gangway, with her back to the water. It was very cold. She couldn't think but gradually she understood the connection. If Scheller were free nobody would have any reason to suspect her. She could not explain to herself why she, especially she, should be suspected of denouncing him, the man for whom she would have let herself be torn to pieces. Then a ghastly thought came to her. Perhaps he too believed that she was a spy. This idea made her angry and bitter.

She took the next tram to police headquarters. The officials were terribly lazy, it was Saturday afternoon. They did not listen to her and sent her from Pontius to JPilate. Nowhere could she get information, yes or no. At last she was taken to an officer who looked as if he were made of cardboard. He asked her very politely why she thought Scheller had been arrested. She played the dunce and answered, "For no reason really." But he didn't stop questioning her and became more and more insistent. Finally she said because so many workers were being arrested now and started to cry. Her nerves had given out. Then she had to tell him her address and to check up on her he called up the flat register, yes, flat register, that was what he said into the telephone in his high-pitched thin voice. Thank God, she hadn't lied to him. "We shall let you know," he said and dismissed her.

The whole night she dreamed that she was running after Scheller in the Danube, in the middle of the water, in deadly fear. She didn't sink but she could never reach him either. She woke up, covered with sweat, when it was still pitch-dark. The whole day she did not dare to go on the street for fear of the people. Then too she hoped from hour to hour that Scheller would suddenly appear in the doorway. But the door stayed

tight shut and the time until the concert would not move.

Lenerl was silent. Her mouth was dry and she coughed again; so much talk exhausted her. She drank, in one draught, the drink with the foreign name which had stood untouched before her. It felt hot in her stomach. The piano player strummed softly. It was pleasant to listen in spite of her grief. It was only when something terrible happened that there was anything nice in her life, like the time Scheller had bought her a new dress for her sister's funeral, when it was no fun.

Franze sat motionless in the darkness of the alcove. His broad white shirt front gleamed. His asthmatic breath whistled like a small wind. He looked at his gold watch and said suddenly, "Just like Hippmann. These parliamentarians have no idea of the underground work."

Lenerl did not understand what he meant, it only annoyed her. "What do you think, Comrade Franze, has he been arrested or not?" she asked urgently. Franze shrugged his shoulders. He had already told her during the intermission that he had no idea, that he had not even been aware that Scheller, his best friend, had disappeared. When people were under observation it was hard for them to keep in touch. That was the truth, at least as much as he could tell her. He would never get rid of her if he let her know that Heuberger had called him up this afternoon in the Cafe Raimund and asked him to come to an urgent conference at three o'clock in the morning in the coffee-house Naschmarkt, which opened just as all the others were closing.

Franze beckoned to the waiter. There was nothing but cold food, but Lenerl was glad for anything; she was suddenly hungry. In silence they waited to be served. Franze sat with closed eyes and his struggle for breath made her feel uncanny. She remembered a picture in the book which she had liked most as a child in the orphanage. It was called "The Walrus." Franze looked like that, with his little eyes and his masses of gray fat, even though he had no moustache. He talked as he chewed. "You're prob-

ably right, Fraulein Lenerl; if Scheller were out no one would suspect you."

"And why should they if he's arrested? It's so mean!"

"Don't be unjust; we must reckon with every possibility." Franze spread the sentence slowly over the table.

Lenerl did not answer. She thought to herself that he wasn't much help and that she shouldn't have gulped down that strange drink. The knife and fork were suddenly — what a peculiar feeling! — so heavy in her hand. And she couldn't move, the alcove was so narrow. The drummer grew fatter and fatter . . . and not even arsenic pills helped her to put on weight. The music came through a mist. A couple was dancing, all alone and happy, anybody could see that. How they turned. . . . It made you dizzy. . . . She had to close her eyes.

Her head sank slowly against Franze's shoulder. The shirt front crackled. "Ill stain it with rouge — but I was so pale!" she thought, and a tired smile appeared on her lips. "He plays nice, the pianist," she whispered and fell asleep.

Franze went on eating. He couldn't move his right arm, on which Lenerl rested, but he managed with his left, cautiously, over her head. The dessert and brandy were not so good as in the Cafe Raimund. He was sorry for Zinserl the spy, too. He had never kept the poor devil up later than one. They shouldn't have let Lenerl in before the end of the concert, then he wouldn't have funk'd the Finale. How fast asleep she was, with glowing cheeks. The inexperienced Scheller took her morbid hunger to live for genuine passion. But another year and this overhot little flame, Lenerl, would gutter and go out, like her sister. It didn't matter whether Scheller married her or not, only they oughtn't to have a child, that would be a sin.

Many things went through Franze's head, but they were only side thoughts, little gray bats quickly passing through the darkness of his real thinking, where he groped with anxious heart. The third degree was being applied to Scheller day and

night, and no one could help him. He would betray nothing, not if they broke his teeth out one by one. The police had no idea of Heuberger, for because of his military function he had been kept in the background. How careless of Hippmann to send the girl to him. She was jealous of the organization that was robbing her sweetheart of his free time and of all the feelings of private life. Perhaps it was Heuberger who had denounced her as a spy? With the daily arrests and searches you didn't dare trust anybody. In his district, alone, no store of munitions had exploded, because no one but himself and Scheller and Mother Merk, as a reserve, knew where they were situated. No, there was no danger, yet he knew in every nerve that danger threatened. That was the reason he had missed those beats, because it came suddenly, like lightning, into his head that somewhere, in spite of all precautions, something was dead wrong — something frightening, unexpected and unavoidable like a wall in the darkness.

He tried to remember. What had given him that first paralyzing feeling? He heard again Lenerl's broken sentences during the intermission, he stood again on the orchestra platform, drumstick in hand. He waited for the conductor's signal. What had suddenly crippled his arm? What foreboding?

He went over Lenerl's report word for word. He sweated and his heart hurt again. What nonsense was he thinking? The girl was as innocent as himself. Distrust could go too far. Hippmann was a sentimentalist and Heuberger saw spies everywhere. Perhaps this universal suspiciousness of his came from the fact that he had been out of touch with the organization for two weeks, from the fact that that eternal shadow, Zinserl, was wearing down his nerves, from the fact that his heart was acting queerer all the time. After all, he was a very sick man.

Suddenly Franze tore open his eyes and waved his free hand through the air, brushing aside everything he had been thinking. These were poor excuses. He was lying to himself. He had known right away what he really thought. Only he

hadn't wanted to confess it to himself, didn't want to speak it out, that assassination of an idea, that ghastly word: "betrayal."

He struck the table in his excitement. The plates jumped. The waiter hurried to him and cleared the dishes away. "A nervous gentleman, this fat guest; and his floozie has gone to sleep," he thought. Franze ordered a double French cognac. His heart missed more and more beats, he could not get enough air. Why was it so hard to be completely honest with oneself? Because there was always the temptation to shut one's eyes to the contradictions man was born to, contradictions that could never be resolved in the brief span of a life. It was more comfortable to deceive oneself for the few years. This was the reason why there was so much lying in the world, and why things went so slowly. But a double brandy was a blessing. It was the best medicine. His heart began to run again, like a merry sewing machine.

A newsboy came in. Franze tucked Lenerl, who was sleeping as soundly as the good conscience itself, back into the alcove and bought a Monday paper. Of course that big-mouthed Commissar for Public Safety had made a speech again. A few hours ago, at the end of Sunday's warlike review of the Heimwehr soldiers near Vienna, he had said: "I assure you—even if I must be brief—starting tomorrow we will do a thorough job." Thorough job ... Franze's heart stopped. Hot and cold shivers ran down his back. He leaned forward and read the speech once more, he could not trust his eyes, but there it stood, in black and white. Therefore the urgent conference so late at night. Tomorrow it would begin.

He looked at his watch again. Two o'clock, he thought, and smiled. That's no longer tomorrow, that is today. "The peace-loving workers of Austria will take up arms only in defense of a democratic Constitution which the Heimwehr Ministers have equally sworn to uphold." So it ran, in the leaflet of the Party. The old-fashioned idealists of the workers' movement were appealing to the Fascists to respect a formality, and they, already

a thousand times untrue to their oath, were answering with the declaration of civil war. But they deceived themselves. The peaceful workers of Austria were ready to accept the challenge.

Franze paid the bill and gave a cavalier's tip, as was right, because he had tails on and the poor worn-out devils could not know that these were his working clothes. Then he awakened Lenerl. It was some time before she came to, but when they left she was even more embarrassed than when they had come. "What they must think now!" she thought, noticing how the waiter and the pianist looked after them.

"I'll take you home," said Franze and again waved for a taxi. Lenerl had no objection, for the last tram had gone long since. As they sat in the car Franze took out his wallet and gave her thirty schillings in such a fine way that her pride was not hurt. "You're not going to your dusty paper-box factory this morning — you're going to a doctor instead," he said with concern. "And about Scheller you don't have to worry. He is no child. I'll find out where he is and by evening you'll have some message from me. If by any chance you should hear anything from the police, call me up at the Cafe Raimund, and if I am not there ask for the headwaiter, he will tell me what you say. But don't under any circumstances go there yourself, or you'll have a detective on your trail too."

Lenerl was astonished. Franze spoke to her like a father, kindly and soothing — at least she imagined that fathers spoke like that, she had never had one. Scheller had been right. The fat one was reliable. "Thank you for everything," she said heartily when the cab stopped at her house, and pressed his hand. "Friendship," said Franze.

Leaning forward he looked up and down the empty street. While he had been reading the threatening announcement of the Commissar for Public Safety, his heart had stopped beating for so long that he'd thought it was the end. But ever since it had been ticking as regularly as a watch. Riddles no longer plagued his brain. The word "betrayal" had lost its terror.

It sat in the depths of his mind, lifeless and rigid, as if frozen. He was sure that he would not miss his cue now. That great cue for which he had been waiting for seven years. If there was a scoundrel among them, then he must render him harmless, that was all.

He left the taxi at five minutes to three near the Secession Picture Gallery. He walked the few steps to the Cafe Naschmarkt, past the Vienna Theatre, in which he had first worn a dinner jacket. He thought of it now as of a childhood memory.

The market on the square had already come to life. The booths were being opened; swearing cabbies and truckdrivers unloading merchandise were quarrelling over parking spaces. An odour of gasoline and horses floated in the sharp air. Market women with red faces, plump jackets, full skirts over which they wore aprons and moneybags of black leather, watched their wares, and beat their bodies with their arms. Porters, with their high-piled wheelbarrows, built mountains of vegetables and dragged in oxen cut in two. The butchers, with white aprons over their fur coats, were sharpening knives and hatchets. In front of a sausage stand two streetwalkers were having something to eat before going back to their corners to catch the last men going home from the bars of the Inner City. They nudged each other at the sight of Franze's evening shirt which shone out of his half-open winter coat.

The coffeehouse was crowded with coachmen, chauffeurs, merchants, vagrants, and whores. Franze saw the mixed crowd through the window, but there was no familiar face. He went on and took up his stand in the shadow of the nearest house door. It was less windy there too. Hardly had he taken his position, his eyes on the entrance to the cafe, when one of the two girls at the sausage stand came and addressed him.

"Who are you waiting for?" she asked, coming nearer, and pressing herself against him. When he refused her she went

on ingratiatingly: "Don't be so cool to a lady. I just want to be nice to you." And again she pressed herself against him. "Come along. I live right around the corner. I have a warm room and I bet I know what you like."

"I'll give you five schillings if you'll help me pass the time while I'm waiting," said Franze. He was sorry for the child, and it was less conspicuous if he didn't stand there alone.

"But I can't do anything here," said the girl. "The police have their eye on us."

"You don't need to do anything."

"You'll give me five schillings for half an hour?"

"Agreed."

Franze had come at the right time. The first of the comrades crossed the street. It was Schneider, the munitions man from Floridsdorf. Then Heuberger arrived on his motorcycle, parked it, at some distance, and walked quickly back to the cafe. He passed so close that Franze moved, frightened, deeper into the shadow. He seemed like a spy himself at that moment. It wasn't so easy to watch one's own friends. Others arrived at brief intervals. There was Huber from Währing and little Paul from Döbling and Winter from the Eighth District and Heinzl from the Landstrasse. Whenever a taxi stopped up the street Franze knew that another comrade was coming. It looked like a conference of all the adjoining districts. Now that made up the lot. They were all there.

Franze tapped with his cane on the pavement, quicker, slower, pausing, in time with his heart. The growing noise of the market; the chattering, cigarette-smoking child before him whose idea of entertaining him was to abuse her rich and greedy aunt who wouldn't give her a spoonful of soup; the six inside the cafe, waiting for him; his own body, the stupid heart, the freezing toes, the sweat that broke out under his stiff shirt front—he was aware of the whole reality while his eyes surveyed the street for the hundredth time. No, there were no suspicious

figures about. None of the arrivals had been shadowed. Yet something was wrong. He felt it again through and through even if the look of things contradicted his feeling.

The girl before him interrupted the criticism of her hard-hearted relative and said in a compassionate tone, "You're shaking with the cold!"—and added with a sigh, "If you knew how nice and warm it is in my room . . ." She had intended to picture it to him but broke off suddenly. The eyes of the fat man had opened as wide as those of a dead fish. Involuntarily she followed his glance. "Jesus, a raid! I'll come back when the dicks are gone," she whispered, and ran. A police car had stopped in front of the coffeehouse.

Policemen stormed into the place. The door remained open. A tumult arose and then quickly subsided. Cries of command were heard, and a few moments later the prisoners were thrust out so rapidly that they could hardly get through the door of the car. The last man tore himself from the grasp of his captors and raced down the street. Yells to stop him echoed between the houses. Two policemen started in pursuit, too slowly. He reached a motorcycle, pushed it into the road, started it, and jumped on. Shots were fired, but in vain. He dashed off. The roaring of the motor, at first near and sudden, was quickly lost in the distance. Franze stood without moving in the shadow of the door. As the unsuccessful pursuers came back, and passed by putting away their pistols, he heard one of them say, "Without a hitch." He bent over to pick up his stick, which had fallen. He almost sank to his knees, he was so weak, and came up again with difficulty. Good ivory ball, it had not broken. The police car left. A few guests from the coffeehouse, without hats, their coat collars turned up, stood talking on the sidewalk, but they soon got too cold. A wagon of the street-cleaning department, with rotating sweeping brushes, passed by. A rattle and a scratching. Then all was quiet.

"Without a hitch"—unnecessary confirmation. Franze had noted that they gave the fleeing man a definite advantage and

fired far above his head. It had been a comedy. But now he knew. Heuberger was the scoundrel. He must not fail now! Just a few more hours, stupid heart; don't pause, beat, beat. You too, cane, beat the time, one, two, one, two, four quarters, no syncopation, one, two, three, four; don't miss the cue, don't ruin the Finale. . . .

"You're still here? Gee, you're decent. I didn't think I'd see my five schillings."

The little painted child put her arms about him and laughed. "Did you see him get away from them?"³ A swell fellow. They hollered and they fired and he acted as if he didn't know nothing. He didn't care and he got away from under their snottoses."

"Yes, a swell fellow," said Franze. "But if you still want me, I'll go with you now."

"That's talking! And you'll give me twenty-five schillings? It's my minimum price."

"I'll give you twenty-five schillings."

"My name is Liesl," she said, and hung herself on his arm.

Her room, on the ground floor and with a private entrance, was really warm and cosy, after the cold street, anyway. She smoothed the bed and then she took off her things. Under her coat she wore a thick sweater which she pulled off quickly over her head. It made her plump. Then she straightened her hair elaborately and at the same time watched her guest in the mirror. It was her usual precaution. He stood by the stove, his hat and cane in his hands. His eyes were closed, he did not move, and he was breathing heavily. She would have to be careful with him. Either he was a sick man or one of those poor shy creatures who got so terribly excited just because they had finally worked up the courage to go with a girl. But that kind always paid well, out of fear and shame.

Franze opened his eyes and caught Liesl watching him. She smiled quickly. "A mere child," he thought. He had not been

so sad since the death of his boy. Heuberger was a scoundrel. He felt like crying.

Liesl raised her skirt and stripped off a heavy undershp. "Don't mind," she said, "it's so draughty at the corners." Then she came to him and took his hat and stick from him and helped him off with his overcoat. "Where were you in tails?" she asked.

"At a concert."

"I'm not a bit musical. I have no ear for the notes."

Liesl put his things away. When she turned back to him her guest was standing again near the stove, his eyes closed once more, as if in sleep. She hadn't had so queer a customer in a long time. He was too fat, too. "What's your name?" she asked, and glanced at the alarm clock that was ticking on the night table. Four o'clock. Thank God! The fat one was the last to-night. "Ferdinand." It sounded in her ear. She had to laugh at herself, he said it so solemnly. Men were so comical.

"Take your clothes off."

He shook his head.

"No?"

"Have you got anything to drink?"

"You bet!" Liesl opened the lower part of her washstand and produced a half-empty bottle of *Shvovitz*. "That's only for the better guests," she said. "I don't drink myself."

Franze grabbed the bottle and took a deep draught without waiting for the glass which Liesl was wiping with a towel. The stuff was pure alcohol but he felt better at once.

"Well, now, come along to bed," said Liesl.

Franze went up to her. "Give me a sheet of stationery—I hope you have one—and then pay no more attention to me."

"You want to write a letter?" She was frightened to death. "Are you thinking of suicide?"

"No," Franze said simply and shook his head. The tone of it made her believe him.

"That happened to my friend Carla. He hid the revolver

under the pillow and when she made love to him he shot himself. Wasn't that low? Now she has a complex, that's what the doctor says, and she's had to stop working."

"Set the alarm for six, so that I don't sleep too late," Franze said.

Liesl poked about die room and finally found a rose-colored sheet of paper and an envelope behind the gramophone near the window. Then she set the alarm. While Franze was writing — fancy his having a gold fountain pen! — she sat on the bed and watched. There was something about this man she couldn't make out. Maybe he'd had something to do with the raid. Why had he stood there and watched it? But it wasn't her business. Her motto was "What you don't know won't hurt you" — she kept to that.

Before writing the address on the envelope Franze looked up at her. "You're a nice girl," he said.

"Oho, he starts at last," thought Liesl. She pulled up one leg and assumed an obscene position. He had agreed right away to twenty-five schillings. She could get more if she played her game right.

"To the Honourable Frau Josephine Merl." Franze wrote the address slowly in well-formed letters, as he had been taught to do at school. He took care that his pen did not tremble. Ferdinand and Josephine. How well the names went together. They should have been together in life. He looked up and saw the girl on the bed; he had quite forgotten her.

"Don't sit that way. Go to bed," he said. "I'll sleep on the divan."

She neither moved nor spoke. He took off his stiff collar and white tie; at once the fine impression disappeared, he looked almost like a waiter. But he wasn't one. She could tell that from his shoes, because her father had been a waiter. He took off his tails and put them neatly on a chair. His wallet and the letter fell out. Gasping he picked them up. "I'll give you your money now," he said, and laid thirty schillings on the table.

That was grand — she had meant twenty-five altogether. But then he had a lot more money; his wallet was thick. Her fingers twitched, and she held herself back, but she determined to make him give her more.

Franze stretched himself out on the divan. His weight pressed the broken springs down. It was not his bed at home, that was the only thing he regretted. At least Heuberger wouldn't know where he slept from now on. He himself had no idea where it would be. Maybe in the cemetery. In that case the earthly police could follow him no farther. That was to be expected, with his heart. "Not the least excitement or you're a candidate for death." It was easy for the specialist to talk. But the candidate for death had been at his post at the decisive moment. Scheller hadn't dreamed of that when out of pity he had let the fat Franze join the organization.

"Give me another mouthful," said Franze suddenly.

Liesl started up. She had thought he was already asleep. The temptation to steal his money had been strong, though honesty was a business principle of hers. She jumped up and filled the glass and supported his head while he drank.

"Thank you."

"You do pretty well," said Liesl in a complimentary and slightly seductive tone, and slowly unbuttoned her blouse. He did not answer but turned away, breathing heavily as he had done before at the stove. She wasn't sure whether or not he really wanted to be left alone. The shy ones always wanted to be seduced. That was part of it. But this one was different. Such a mood she hadn't yet experienced. Should she simply ask him for another twenty schillings? Maybe he'd give them to her for nothing. He must have a hundred. Maybe it would be better to do a little work.

She stripped the blouse from her shoulders with a slow casual movement and let it fall to the floor. She had on nothing but a rose-coloured brassiere. Black ones were more perverse—but delicate pink, she loved this colour. She didn't really need one

but taking it off excited them. She had the hrmost breasts in her territory. A little small perhaps but that was all right for the better type of customer. She let the brassiere fall and stretched a little, so that her breasts stood out. That was good technique. And this strange one was already opening his eyes slowly, wider and wider. There was almost a look of terror in those eyes. Poor devil!

She slipped out of her skirt and stood with legs apart, rocking to and fro on her toes. It was impudent, but she was slender enough to get away with it. His hand began to move, but there was no hurry. She sat down on the chair and slowly took off her shoes and stockings, as if disinterested and unembarrassed, as if she were alone. This change was part of the programme. Now the strange one watched all her gestures, just as she had wanted him to. It was nothing to lie down for a lad. But it was an art to get a fellow like this to the point where he could enjoy himself. She really took pleasure in the job. '

With a girlish, almost innocent smile, she approached him. He looked at her in such a way that she herself felt how naked she was. "Come," said Franze and moved heavily aside. She sat down so that her thigh touched his hand and she saw how it went through him.

He passed his hands delicately over her legs, softly, gently. No one had ever done that to her quite that way. His eyes were still wide open but changed, and very sad as if he saw something far away that hurt him very much. Then they twitched and were closed again. Two tears rolled slowly down the fat cheeks and into the beard stubble. Tenderly his hand rested over her heart as if listening for life.

It roused her. "You can do anything you like; you can beat me," she said, and with pleasure felt his fingers claw for a moment into her flesh. It was the gentle ones who had the strongest feelings.

He took away his hand. "Go to bed now," he said calmly. The sound was pleasantly severe in Liesl's ears. She couldn't

do anything but obey and go to bed. She put out the light. She did not put on her nightgown but listened in the darkness to see whether he would join her. After a long pause he said gently, "You're very beautiful, Liesl." It floated softly to her and made her almost happy. She was tired too.

Franze listened to the ticking of the clock. First thing in the morning he must send the letter special delivery, so that Mother Merk would get it before she went out to shop and be on her guard. Then he would go to Hippmann and settle Heuberger's account once and for all.

The clock ticked like the metronome of his first boyhood music lessons. But ever softer and softer.

O

THE same night that Ferdinand Franze discovered the treachery of Heuberger, Deputy Hippmann was wakened out of his first sleep and called to an urgent conference. A courier had brought a secret letter from the leaders of the Defence Corps of Linz. They wrote to inform the few comrades in the higher Party circles whom they still trusted that they had reached the end of their patience with a policy of retreat and were unalterably determined to oppose the very next Fascist provocation with armed force. Hippmann was not inclined to take the letter as an empty threat. The voice of Scheller still sounded in his ears. Moreover the threat came at a moment when the Heimwehr Wing of the Government, under the pretence of protecting the Republic, was merely waiting for a pretext to destroy it and toss it on the garbage heap of the young Twentieth Century, already piled so high and soaked with blood. There was no other way of interpreting the declaration of the Heimwehr leader and Commissar of Public Safety, "Starting tomorrow we will do a thorough job."

Although his health was getting worse and worse, Hippmann had not wasted a moment since that meeting with the opposition. Stung by a vision of the ruin of the Party, he had worked day and night on behalf of his formula—Be ready for the worst compromise, but arm for battle. He was negotiating with the

lukewarm friends of democracy in the Government for terms of peace and simultaneously begging the representatives of foreign Socialist parties for weapons. With the first group he pretended to be more innocent than he was, with the second more hopeful. He had had some success in both directions. The wing of the Government opposed to the Heimwehr became more active; a shipment of arms that, thanks to his efforts, had got across the frontier heightened, his prestige with the opposition. He had written the leaflet the Party had been distributing during the past twenty-four hours. The appeal to the Heimwehr Ministers not to break their constitutional oath was in reality aimed at the moderate members of the Government and at the President of the Republic, who as a devout Catholic still took his oath seriously. The great thing was to gain time. The French Government had already made diplomatic representations. A few weeks more and the joint pressure of England and France might counterbalance that of Italy. A few weeks more of patience on the part of the opposition, and the conflict whose outcome no one could foretell would be avoided.

But if the workers of Linz actually defended themselves, how were you going to show up the Heimwehr as the brutal aggressor it was? And show it so unmistakably that in a general outburst of indignation the general strike, without which success was impossible, could be organized? How was the truth to be spread? The press was censored, the radio in the hands of the enemy. If a member of the Defence Corps fired the first shot—what wouldn't the Government propaganda make of it? The defender of democratic freedom, driven to despair by a tactic of slow strangulation, would be played up as a common murderer. Those present at the conference quickly ran the gamut of all the usual considerations. There was only one way out: negotiate with the Government to bring it to reason; frighten it with the threat of impending chaos; pretend strength but at the same time be prepared for compromise; and capitulate in the interest of the common fight against the main enemy, the National Socialists.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, Hippmann immediately telephoned some politicians of the Government party who detested the arrogant Heimwehr counts as bitterly as he did. Their threat to do a "thorough job" starting tomorrow, he said, had aroused immense excitement among the workers. Something must be done or catastrophe was inevitable; then the National Socialists would have the last laugh. He intimated that the moderate Socialist leaders were hourly losing ground. That worked. It was agreed that a compromise should be negotiated at eleven o'clock in the morning. A telegram was sent to the comrades at Linz: "ANNA AND KARL TAKEN ILL." In the secret code that meant: "No action, whatever the circumstances."

On the way home one of the Party theoreticians whose dialectical analysis dissolved every situation in the satisfying concept of historical inevitability admitted to Hippmann that it would have been better to have engaged in the decisive battle in March, on the occasion of the suppression of Parliament. But when Hippmann wanted to know whether he thought the men of Linz would obey the telegraphed order, he could only offer his usual optimistic view of history in reply. He believed in that fetish of idealistic philosophy—the immanent and positive meaning of history. For him what happened was right. Hippmann did not even answer him. Perhaps there were two truths, one valid for brief periods, another for eternity. But he was too exhausted to develop the thought. Then, alone with himself for the few minutes between the corner and his apartment, he suffered from the conflict between his external superactivity, which was ruining his health, and a spiritual lack of interest, which made him feel that everything was already decided. Hansi awaited him in the bedroom, wide awake. She listened to his brief account. She set the alarm clock for nine so that he would have time to prepare for the conference.

At seven, just after the janitor had opened the main entrance, Ferdinand Franze rang the bell under a white enamelled shingle bearing the words: E. HIPPMANN, M.D. He had never known

that Hippmann was a Doctor of Medicine. He had always thought he was a lawyer—he had the gift of the gab. Nothing stirred behind the door. It was a bit early of course. The light was still dim. Franz was about to take out his watch but stopped midway in the habitual movement to his vest pocket. He remembered. . . . Yes, he had given away the watch that jvas his pride. "I'd rather have cash, we're always suspected," Liesl had said. "I'll have trouble selling it." But she had taken it. He needed ready cash himself now; he didn't know whether there would ever be another payday.

She was a good businesswoman, that Liesl. Wakened out of a deep sleep, she had immediately thought of extra profit. And how she could flatter one! And how free and easy she had stood before him in her nakedness, examining the watch under the light to see whether the gold was genuine. Then she had cajoled him out of his chain and his pen too. An unexpected vulgarity showed in her greediness. But a man doesn't really know himself; it wasn't unpleasant to him — on the contrary. He had never been able to understand how serious men permitted themselves to be ruined by some little bitch. Now he sensed how it happened.

He rang again. Leaning on his cane, bent forward and wavering, he waited patiently. His letter to Mother Merk had been dispatched. In three hours, about nine o'clock, they had assured him at the post office, it would be in her hands. The reserve was mobilized, in any case. Nobody could say that there weren't any weapons, and use that as an excuse.

Steps behind the door, and it was opened a little way, not even the full length of the safety chain. A woman's voice asked in a whisper: "What do you want?"

"Urgent Party business. Open!"

"Now? You must be crazy. Come back in a couple of hours." The door was closed softly.

Franze knocked and it was opened again at once. "Let me in," he said angrily.

"I'm not allowed to waken the Herr Doctor." The door snapped shut again.

He pressed the end of his stick against the bell. It began to ring, so loud and shrill that it got on his own nerves.

First there was the curious face of a neighbour, which quickly disappeared, then a second voice behind the door, an exchange of words he could not make out, then the rattling of a chain, and he was admitted. In the foyer stood the frightened maid with a brown winter coat over her long nightgown, and a high-bosomed angry woman with tousled bobbed hair but wearing a rather lady-like negligé trimmed with swan's feathers around the collar.

"I beg you to excuse me, but I must speak to Comrade Hippmann at once," Franze said and hung up his hat.

Both women stared at him as if he were crazy. The high-bosomed lady gasped for air and then snapped at him in a vinegary voice, "My husband went to bed at four, and he's ill. I never heard of such a brutal . . ."

She went no further. Franze opened his sleepy eyes. The light from the ceiling falling through green glass made his face even more gruesome, fat, pale, and weary.

"I have slept only two hours. And I'm ill too. Do you want me to go and wake your husband myself, comrade?"

"Wait here," said Hansi Hippmann, frightened, and opened a door that led from the hall into a little room. Franze passed her, keeping his coat on, his cane in his hand. She was taller than he. His eyes were on a level with her mouth. Her upper lip was hairy. A woman with a moustache—he didn't understand the taste for that. Two steps inside he turned.

"My name is Franze; just tell him the musician Franze."

Hansi Hippmann looked him up and down from top to toe with compressed lips and closed the door.

His eyes quickly became accustomed to the darkness. There was a window through which the dawn was seeping in like mist, in front of it a desk covered with papers and magazines, most of them still in their wrappers ... A typewriter; bookcases along

the walls ... A white bust of Marx with a beard like soap-suds ... A second door ... A big framed photograph of Victor Adler, the founder of the Party . . . Would everything have been different if the old man had not died of a stroke in 1918, just after he had come into power at last? But perhaps his misfortune had been his fortune.

Franze sank into an armchair by the radiator. He pressed the stick between his knees and spread out his hands over the pipes, but there was no heat. He shivered through and through. It had been high time. His breath came with more difficulty than usual in the morning. Insufficient sleep was the worst thing for him, worse than excitement. From Hippmann's he would go straight to a pharmacy. Without his heart stimulant he was lost. Yesterday in his haste he had left it in his street suit. Sad to think of it hanging now all alone, deep in the pit of the big empty Concert House. How stupid of him to think of that now. But the suit was more comfortable than tails. You couldn't breathe in them.

Franze quickly raised both hands to take off his collar and tie, but he had not put them back on when he left Liesl, that spoiled brat. Yet he was choking. He tried to shout for help but could not utter a word. He broke into a sweat of terror. He must not fail now, he must hold out fifteen minutes longer, until Hippmann was told. Thank God he was beginning to feel easier. The room stopped turning, the sparks before his eyes went out. Only the mist remained. But that was good, soft and quiet.

He did not notice that Hippmann had come in until the light was turned on. He wanted to get up but could not lift his weight. His eyelids alone were heavy enough. Hippmann was wearing a long bathrobe, striped green and yellow, and straw slippers like the ones you got at a Turkish bath—What a costume! Hippmann ought to say something! Why was he looking at him so distrustfully? From within the flat came the call of a cuckoo clock, as if from afar, in a forest.

Franze drew himself up with all his strength. "If your wife

told you that I smell of liquor, comrade," he panted, "I'm as sober as a straw mattress."

Before the Deputy could answer, his caller fell back and lay in the chair with closed eyes. He was asleep, or he had fainted.

Hippmann bent over him. He had retained enough medical knowledge not to be deceived by the fumes of liquor. He had wanted to show Hansi how an impudent comrade could be got rid of with a few calm words. Now he saw that this man was no ordinary nuisance. He took his hand; it was ice cold and his pulse was only a flicker. He reached for the telephone. He had better call Wichtl, who lived quite near. It wouldn't be a bad thing for Hansi either if he came.

Franze's breath rattled in his throat. Hippmann listened with peculiar pleasure. It was far in the past, the moaning in the wards, the dim corridors, the sleek linoleum, the endless hospital nights of his youth. It was a rueful memory. How useless the ambition to be a doctor had appeared to him then, the tinkering with sick people who would not have been sick if society had permitted them to live healthily. That was still true. But in acting as he had done on these conclusions, he had fallen into a greater error, the error of wanting to help everybody at the same time. To allay pain, to see a patient breathe again, that at least made for a calm private conscience. The politician was never in the right, because life strode on- and ran over him.

Franze's breath became more regular, the rattle in his throat softer, the pulse surer. He slept deeply with his mouth open. Hippmann released his hand and got up. Perhaps Hansi's misanthropic instincts were right again. He himself was always too trusting. How this fellow looked — without a collar, in tails, the shirt front smeared. Had he come just to have his sleep? They hardly knew each other. They had met for a moment seven years ago during the questioning of the survivors, after the burning of the Palace of Justice. He had remembered, as soon as he heard the name, the whole sad story of his wife and son.

Perhaps his visit did have significance. You could see that he had spent the night in his clothes.

Dr. Wichtl came, plump, gray-haired, red-cheeked, more like a country doctor than a harassed medical officer in a crowded workers' quarter. His determined good humour and jocular bedside manner always made Hippmann nervous. His greeting, "The early bird catches the worm," started things off on the wrong foot. And the way he swung his pince-nez and bent over the musician with a kind of cheer in his gesture, that was plain hokum.

Wichtl determined the patient's condition with a superficial glance. "Is it Monday or Saturday?" he cried. Such night corpses, as he called them, ordinarily only appeared the morning after payday. He sniffed at Franzc's open mouth and threw out a self-satisfied laugh. "Let him sleep it off," he cried merrily. "And as fee for my medical art and science I want to have breakfast. But Hipp, don't wake me up again-on account of a drunk."

"The man's heart is very bad," said Hippmann.

"Possibly, but no doubt he's drunk too much and slept too little, too. When I have something in my stomach I'll look at him again, closer if you wish. I've seen the fellow somewhere. Can't make out."

"Playing with the Workers' Symphony," said Hansi, suddenly appearing in the doorway. "He's the fat drummer the people always stare at instead of paying attention to the counterpoint."

"Don't be so biting, Hansi! Or I'll be afraid. Good morning." Wichtl took her arm in a friendly way and they went into the dining room where the maid was serving coffee. Hippmann looked once more at Franze and followed them.

Wichtl studied Hansi. "Why don't you come to see me again?" he asked.

"No medicine can help me," she answered. She sat staring ahead of her and forgot to pour the coffee.

Hippmann filled the cups.

"It's cold and unpleasant out." Wichtl inhaled the aroma of the coffee and sipped it with enjoyment.

. "How docs it look, the atmosphere in the streets, I mean?" Hippmann asked after a pause.

"Nothing in particular. Quite as usual," Wichtl answered. "Those who have jobs are hurrying to work so as not to be late, and those who haven't are standing at their windows looking on. Fine distribution. Why do you ask?"

Hippmann did not answer. Hansi, roused from her preoccupation, took a mouthful of coffee and snapped maliciously: "Because he's scared."

Wichtl looked up slowly. His clownishness was gone and there was a melancholy expression on his face. "Haven't we a right to be afraid, Hansi?" he asked softly. "When everything that is beautiful and noble, everything we've worked for all our lives, threatens to collapse?" His way of talking was full of flourishes, but this time for some reason the "beautiful and noble" was not ridiculous. Reef spots appeared on Hansi's neck. Hippmann poured himself a second cup. Nothing more was said. Suddenly all three turned to the half-open door.

They heard the creaking of the chair and heavy steps, and Franzc appeared on the threshold. He held his stick high in front of his breast, supporting his chin on the ivory ball. His eyes were glassy and rolled about. The movement of his shoulders ebbed slowly down his immense body. At this moment tjie wooden cuckoo jumped out of his toy chalet above the sofa and began to call out the hour. Franze raised his head. A smile lighted up his face and then went out. He began speaking.

"I beg your forgiveness for everything. May I talk to you now, comrade? I am here at the order of Scheller."

Hippmann rose at once and guided the musician back into the study. Hansi drew together her thick brows, which were shaved between the eyes, and watched her husband shuffling out in his straw sandals. The door had scarcely closed behind him when she groaned, "I hate him, I hate him."

"You know, Hansi, it isn't even true," Wichtl said soothingly. "Don't start so early, nobody is allowed to let himself go like that.

Believe me, you'll be calmer again by and by and things will be as they used to be, but better, wiser. Don't you see what a hard time Hipp is having these days?"

He got up, went around the table, and stroked her hair, as a brother might his younger sister's. "Head up, magnificent Hansi!" The phrase came out of an old memory that the two shared.

Hansi began to sob. "Magnificent Hansi — that was! I'm going mad! Not because of my condition. It merely makes me more sensitive. I feel what's going on more. I can't bear the tension any more. When will it start — today, tomorrow? Continuously I ask myself. I tell you we won't survive it. But I'm not afraid of that; on the contrary. What I can't bear is that everything came out differently from the way we dreamed and wanted it. Somewhere a great error is hidden and I can't find it. I was the first girl in Vienna to have her hair cut short. Remember? I always did what I believed to be right, regardless of anything. And now I have no will any more and can't think any more. Nothing is left of me, nothing. He ruined me and took for himself everything I was. With his logic and his eloquence. He turned my love into a bourgeois marriage and our ideals into a profession, into an everyday occupation and bad politics. I was suspicious once, twenty years ago. But he was the man, he subdued me, yes, in every respect. Oh, how I hate the whole breed of men! The Fascists at least have the courage to admit their male nature, they're not ashamed of murder. Sometimes I'm so deadly afraid that our moral weapons are only hypocrisy." She stopped short and made a gesture as if she wanted to retract all her words. "You can see, by this, that if it lasts much longer I'll lose my mind."

Wichtl let Hansi cry herself out. He had known for a long time how it was with the friend of his youth. He could not help much; she would have to find her own way. That was true of everyone now. But she might have fared better with him these twenty years. But he hadn't subdued her. Now she was angry at Hippmann because he had been the stronger.

Hansi dried her tears. "I'm so ashamed of talking like that," she said suddenly in a changed voice. Something of the magnificence of her youth burned in her eyes. Or so at least it seemed to Wichtl.

"You ought to go away for a few weeks," he said. "It's supposed to be nice at Millstadt Lake now."

"I can't just now. I can't leave Hipp alone. He can't forgive himself for the condition the Party's in. He imagines it's all his fault, as if one man could have prevented it."

They could hear that Hippmann was through with his caller. The musician said good-bye with a loud "Friendship." It sounded so happy that they noticed it. But when Hippmann returned from the hall his face was sad.

"The patient merrily on his way?" Wichtl asked.

"He was quite sober," Hippmann replied, abstractedly. Pressing his hand against his tortured forehead, he went back into the study, leaving the door open. They heard him pick up the receiver. Wichtl wanted to leave, but Hansi's attention was on the study. He waited too, involuntarily, for the telephone conversation. But none came.

Hippmann put the receiver down and returned. "I'd better not telephone," he said, still as if his mind were elsewhere. Then he came to the table. "Hansi, you've got to go to the Defence Corps right away. Get dressed; it's urgent."

"What's the matter?"

"Get dressed first!" Hippmann again stared before him.

With a glance at Wichtl that meant, "You see how he is," she left the room. She was hardly out of the door when Hippmann turned to his friend.

"Cross your fingers for me today, that I'll have a good day," he said in a constricted voice. "God knows what will happen otherwise." He took the doctor's hand. "Promise me that you'll keep an eye on Hansi."

He went back into the study without waiting for an answer, quickly, as if he were ashamed.

Wichtl watched as the long yellow-and-green striped bathrobe, slouching down over the high, bent back, disappeared. Hansi and Hipp, the ideal couple of the year 1900, the great dawn of the century — How swiftly evening had come! As a medical man he could only make the banal observation that they both needed a holiday.

The cuckoo cried again. Wichtl gave a start and hurried toward the door. Nine o'clock. He was already due at the hospital. . . .

Franze, on leaving the deputy's house, had looked around, out of habit, for Zmserl the spy. It was the absence of the detective that impressed him nowadays. "He is waiting in vain now at the Cafe Raimund. Sorry," he thought and was about to move on when he noticed two men across the street in a doorway. They acted as if they were not looking at him. But they were.

Franze walked slowly down the street and as he turned off it carefully looked behind him. The two were still there. He hadn't seen them when he arrived in the early morning. But it had been dark. He had not been followed; he was sure of that. Probably Hippmann and his visitors were under observation. He would find out.

He turned into Gumpendorfer Street and stopped at the first shop-window. It was a perfumery. He lost himself in the display of perfumes, soaps, powder compacts, and toothbrushes. Although he was only pretending it stirred in him longings for a Turkish bath. Monday—that was his day. At the same time he waited tensely. Soon one of those two turned the corner also, passed by, walked down the street, but ever more slowly, and stopped in front of another window display. That was really proof enough, but Fránze determined to make sure. He entered the shop and took so long to decide between almond- and rose-flavored soap that the salesgirl became impatient. When he finally came out the man was still there. He was standing, half-hidden, on the other side of the street.

At the next public telephone Franze called Hippmann. Yes, from his window he could see a man. He thanked Franze for the warning but with doubt in his voice. It was hard to do anything with these parliamentarians.

Franze rolled down Gumpendorfer Street and then went along Lastcn Street to the Cafe Museum. The detective followed him just as Zmserl used to do. It gave Franze an almost home-like feeling to have a shadow again. But he would have to get rid of the fellow, otherwise he couldn't see Mother Merk or anybody else.

Thank God he felt better now. The worst had passed once more. Last night outside the cafe and a while ago he had really thought his last hour might be near. Any moment he might have had a stroke. Then Heuberger could have posed as a hero with his story about his escape.

Hippmann was a better man than he had thought. He couldn't believe his ears, the man knew so much. Scheller had been arrested immediately after a meeting with Heuberger. That had made Hippmann suspicious and he had sent Lenerl to Heuberger to see how he would behave. If he were innocent then he would have no idea that Scheller had been caught; the police had not reported the arrest and only the highest leaders of the Defence Corps knew about it through their intelligence service in the prisons. But Heuberger had not walked into the trap; he had behaved quite correctly and complained vigorously that his connection with the organization should have been revealed in this way. He was also justified in expressing doubts of Lenerr's loyalty. First, everybody who had anything to do with Scheller automatically fell under suspicion and, second, it had been discovered in the meantime that Scheller had been taken into custody on his way to a meeting with the girl, in fact near the place of meeting. That was why Hippmann had been forced to issue a warning against her though he himself was convinced of her innocence.

Franze had listened with open mouth when the deputy told

him all that. What surprised him most was that the Party leadership had a functioning intelligence service. He had considered them in recent years, on the basis of his experience, a handful of law-abiding bureaucrats with nothing on their minds except the problem of how to curb the fighting spirit of the workers. The idea that this might have been a mistake, at least half a mistake, gave Franze a feeling of happiness. Hippmann sounded as if the leadership might have everything in hand. His composure had not been shaken by the arrest of the five during the night. He merely said: "The substitutes must immediately be informed." They seemed to be prepared for any eventuality. Had he pretended to be surer than he really was?

Distrust was ugly but useful. How horrible it would have been if he had taken part in the night conference. But he had become suspicious. He had felt that someone was obviously interested in accusing the innocent Lenerl. Someone — the traitor of course, to direct suspicion away from himself. Yes, that was it. Now he knew precisely — it shocked him to his bones — what had made him miss his cue. So Heuberger had given himself away nevertheless. Sly fox, this Hippmann, to have sent Lenerl to him against all the rules.

So Franze was moved to revise his former opinion of the leadership and gave himself up to the pleasure of an optimistic mood after long despair. Sick, shadowed, purposely limited to the single function of taking care that the weapons were found in a crisis, he had lived in an isolation which for one of his temperament was almost unbearable. What Scheller did not tell him at their meetings, which with the growing danger took place less and less often, he did not know, and he could not ask him much because everyone was supposed to know only his own job. Now the conversation with Hippmann had given him the feeling that the military department of the Party was intact and ready for the right moment.

He looked out of the window across to the exhibition hall of the Secession — looking at paintings had been his Anna's only

interest in art. They were opening the exhibition as they did every day, he could picture the whole thing. The traffic, tram-cars and automobiles, wild taxis and stately private cars, was moving normally. And the people were the same — higher civil servants on their way to the offices, merchants, a slender lady in a riding-habit. Workers repairing the tramway, the traffic policemen, laughing children with scooters. An ordinary weekday. If the Fascists were doing a thorough job it wasn't noticeable and nobody knew about it.

Perhaps their announcement had been merely the usual blustering. They had talked for years of outlawing the Party, of dissolving the unions, of overthrowing the municipal Government. They threatened but never dared. They had to outdo their National Socialist competitors in their campaign slogans, but they could hardly conduct a war on two fronts against eighty per cent of the population. It was one thing to echo the phrases of the Italian moneylender; it was another to risk their whole existence for his sake. The Socialists had given them enough concessions as it was, always out of regard for the international situation. The longer Franze reflected the less probable it seemed to him that the decisive fight was at hand. He had already thought so several times during the last year but the excitement had calmed down, again and again. Life had gone on, the life of the Party too. In old Austrian fashion — live and let live — every time a solution had been found.

Franze ate his breakfast slowly as was his custom, though without the proper appetite. But he was overtired and hot in his overcoat, which he couldn't take off since he was in tails and without collar and tie. Should he go to the Concert House and change? But suppose the police were waiting for him there? He had to sleep somewhere, too, he couldn't stay on his feet much longer. In a hotel or in the waiting room of a railroad station he would be nabbed at once. It would have been nice at LiesPs but too expensive. Perhaps he could get a little rest, at least a few hours, on Mother Merk's sofa. He had to see her anyhow. His

warning letter — she would be getting it at any moment — had been a little premature. He must remedy that. A false alarm always weakened the attention. He had lost his head because of his heart. Thank God, he felt better, even without the medicine. There was still the problem of how to get rid of the soy. But that was simple, if the tall chauffeur was at his stand.

The tall chauffeur was in his place. Franze saw him at once when he entered the Ring. He was talking to his companions, talking was his vice. They all stood about him, their heads together. Franze strolled up to the group, slowly and inconspicuously, like one not thinking of a taxi at all. The detective behind him played the same game, a second easygoing stroller in spite of the cold and windy weather. The chauffeur, who usually saw his fat customer coming, went on talking and did not look up. That did not fit into Franze's plan.

"One hundred Mariahilfer Street," Franze cried in a loud voice, so as to be heard, and himself opened the door of the black Mercedes. But the chauffeurs, deep in their whispered and agitated conversation — there was something conspiratorial in their behavior — did not react, and valuable seconds were lost. The tall fellow finally looked up with an irritated face. He came quickly to the car but it was too late — the spy was in action too.

"Do you see that fellow taking the cab behind us?" Franze gasped. "We must lose him as quickly as possible."

"I understand, comradet With the greatest pleasure. Friendship!" answered the chauffeur. He wiped the mirror, and stepped on the gas. They rushed down the Ring and Franze relaxed. He had already heard "In the name of the law," and felt the hand of the detective on his shoulder, so unstrung were his nerves.

The chauffeur laughed. "He got hold of Edhofer, our best driver. Of course I could give him a sign to let me get away. But watch me fool him," he shouted.

"No acrobatics now!" Franze begged.

"Don't worry!" the chauffeur cried. "Attention!"

They were at the crossing of Babenberger Street and Edhofer quickly drew up closer behind them. The tall driver started very cautiously to take the turn, half-made it, then swung the car unexpectedly around across the street, contrary to all regulations, and ignoring a policeman's whistle he rushed full speed toward the House of Parliament.

"Now he's stuck," he gloated. "Before he can follow us we are off and away. Where to now, comrade?" His whole face beamed.

"Up Neustift Street 10 the Belt."

They left the Ring at the Bellaria and sped on around the Volkstheatre. Franze intended to look across into the Cafe Raimund to see what Zinserl was doing but the car swayed and he was having pains again. Only in Neustift Street did the chauffeur slow down a little, sure that Edhofer could no longer find them. At the same time he turned round and said, as if he had been waiting for this moment, "I've inquired at the transport workers' union whether the general strike will be called, but there was nobody in the office yet who could tell me."

Franze did not understand at first, then the words "general strike" began to ring in his ears and he remembered the huddled heads of the chauffeurs. "General strike?" he asked, leaning forward. But why?"

"What?" shouted the chauffeur, and almost collided with a bicyclist. "You don't know yet? They're shooting in Linz, the military and the Defence Corps. Meyer had a fare from the West Station who'd come on the Paris Express and heard the shooting with his own ears. And Weissmueller who drives the Commercial Councillor to his factory in Floridsdorf every morning came back with the news that they know it there already. And they're having a strike meeting in the Fiat Works. That's why I called up the union; I'm a trusty now."

It took a while for Franze to get himself in hand. "Drive straight into the Brigittenau, down Nussdorfer Street until I tell you to stop." He gave the order with trembling lips. It

had come too suddenly — just as he was imagining that again nothing would happen and looking forward happily to his rest on Mother Merk's sofa.

"Are we really going ahead this time?" asked the chauffeur. "You must know something or he wouldn't have been behind you. I know a detective when I see one. We must resist once and for all before it's too late. The damned Heimwehr announced yesterday what they'd do to us! 'A thorough job.' What a provocation!"

Franze pressed his hand to his heart. He had forgotten to buy his powders. He had felt so fine in spite of his tiredness. They ought to stop at the next pharmacy, but something kept him from asking now. "I don't believe it's possible to avoid it now," he answered. "Will you fellows all go on strike?"

The chauffeur shrugged his shoulders. "A lot of the comrades already don't care, some are even hostile to the Party on account of its eternal backing down. But I believe that if the tramways once stop we will too. It's catching. We'll take care of a few strikebreakers quick enough."

Suddenly he fell silent, whistled, and slammed on his brakes. Two police cars whizzed into the street. Their crews were armed with rifles and wore storm straps under their chins.

"They're going our way," said the chauffeur and began to follow them closely.

Franze felt his heart contract, but the thought of Heuberger was worse than the pain. "I shall be able to tell right away," he thought, and saw instantly that his suspicion was correct. The police cars stopped before a house that was well known to him.

"Turn the next corner and stop there," he whispered. Nothing could have pleased the chauffeur more. He was wild with excitement and eager to know what was going to happen. But when Franze opened the door and got out the chauffeur momentarily forgot everything else. "What's the matter with you?" he asked, frightened — his customer had such a ghastly face.

"It will pass," Franze murmured. He paid him and rolled away, dragging his stick behind him as if it were too heavy to carry.

All of the policemen except four who were left to guard the entrance had vanished into the house. Franze made his way through the crowd that had swiftly gathered. The word "raid" was on many lips, but it did not connote anything to them; it merely created a sensation. Liesl had said it differently in the night. In only a few silent faces serious thoughts seemed to lurk. Some guessed that a Nazi cell had been discovered, others that a search for arms was going on. But no word of Linz yet.

Tranze knew only too well what the police action meant. The house had a big yard and behind it a garden in which, half-obscured by trees, was a building similar to a barracks. It had been built during the war as a convalescent hospital. Later an attempt to use it for a restaurant had failed because it lay too hidden. This circumstance made it an excellent meeting place for the Defence Corps. It had been assigned to companies One, Two and Three, to the staff of which Franze belonged, against the decisive hour. His whole body trembled. One hope was left, that the police had come too early.

This hope proved to be well-founded. The many policemen came back with only three prisoners, young workmen without hats or coats, obviously unemployed men. Franze did not know them but from their rough treatment by the police he concluded that they were members of the Defence Corps or at least that the police believed they were. As they entered the police car and the heavy butts of the rifles thudded against their backs two sharp whistles came from the growing crowd which had already blocked all traffic. A wrinkled old-fashioned lady in a bonnet with a little dog in her muff began to cry hysterically. "Down with the criminals!" It wasn't clear to Franze whom she meant.

The police officer gave the command to clear the street. It was accomplished quickly, without resistance. The horns of the

stalled cars fell silent, the trams clanged and moved on. The police cars drove off, leaving the four sentinels in front of the house. Two minutes later the street had resumed its accustomed look.

When the command to move on had come, Franze had dragged himself along the house fronts. He could scarcely shove his feet forward and his legs were two swollen sacks that hung heavy as lead on his body. Many people rushed toward him, but their faces didn't come clear. No one greeted him or spoke a word. They all left him alone. The street noises were a continuous, distant thunder, the air was thick as cotton and the cold was cutting off his ears. He perceived the concrete world with exaggerated acuteness, and what he knew of it tore his heart.

It was a dark hallway in which he sought refuge. It grew darker, deep night, as he collapsed. But only not to die now, not to die yet——

XVI

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The sharp ringing of the doorbell pierced Mother Merk to the very marrow. Her thoughts had been far away, back in the days of Karl's childhood. She put down her iron and went out, wondering who it could be. She could not see anything through the lookout, because whoever it was stood too near the door. An impatient voice cried, "Post!" She opened the door. It wasn't Herr Schlumper, the letter carrier who had been coming to the house for years, but a younger man. "Mrs. Josephine Merk?" he asked and gave her a letter covered with stamps and with a red label pasted on it.

It was years since anyone had written her a letter. Jennerwein, that polite fellow student of Karl's, had sent her a picture post-card or two. That was all. She got her glasses out of her sewing box. The letter was for her. Josephine Merk. It had come special delivery. Who was in such a hurry? She opened the elegant rose-coloured envelope with her crochet hook but it tore the fine paper lining.

There were only three lines, written in a tall, angular hand. "*Dear Josephine: We are coming to see you soon. Stay home and wait. Anna.*"

Mother Merk felt her knees tremble and she had to sit down. For a while she sat motionless, then she took off her glasses and slowly closed her eyes. "Neustift Street, Siegel's printing establish-

ment, in cellar, under coal. Ottakringer 104, walled into attic, red cross. Old cemetery, main entrance to the right, third row, family plot Prenzel . . . two stores of hand grenades, two of rifles, two of machine guns." Let them come! She knew the addresses by heart, every detail, every circumstance, every step, and lock.

It was some time before she got up to burn the letter. She would have liked to keep it, but nothing in writing—this rule they had impressed upon her. Anna. Franze signed, as agreed, the name of his wife, which was half the password. She wondered what everything would have been like if that misfortune hadn't come to him. Perhaps he would have been happy with his boy and his music and she would never have seen him again. But then his fate would have come to someone else.

She watched the letter and the envelope burn down to cinders. Then she went to the window and looked down the Belt. It wore its usual aspect. People walking quickly in the nasty weather, a few children in the skimpy park, automobiles, horse-drawn carts, the trams as usual. There was no strike. This fact established, she put a stop to the reflections that had come pressing into her mind since the command to be ready. No use pondering, that didn't lead to anything. It wasn't her job anyhow. Franze must have posted the letter very early. Sick as he was, he didn't spare himself.

She went back to her ironing. Karl always teased her because she pressed creases into his skiing trousers. But they had had sharp creases when they had come, two years ago at Christmas, as a present from his English friend and they looked like new again every Monday morning when she put them back in the drawer. She had toiled over other people's things so many years; it was lovely now to keep their own in order. It was a luxury, that little bit of work. The foolish boy couldn't quite understand that. How changed he had been when he came back. She had kept her fingers crossed the whole week end. Surely he had been with the girl he'd been unhappy about until now and they had found themselves. This morning he had kissed his old mother

good-bye|like a crazy one. But he hadn't spoken a word, hadn't told her anything. That was as it should be; a new happiness was a shy thing and easily put to flight.

Mother Merk went into her bedroom and took the drops the doctor had prescribed for those times when the blood suddenly mounted to her head and hectic red blotches appeared on her neck and cheeks. Then she settled down to knitting the new sweater for Karl, beige-colored with a red line around the neck and the lower seam. The rhythmic click of the needles, knit two, purl two, was sometimes more soothing than any medicine. Knitting forced her hands into steady quick activity and thought followed thought like stitch on stitch. She thought most of them twice over; that was no loss because many were, if you looked at them a second time, only imagination. For instance, when a son gets married, it's no good deceiving yourself, he leaves the house and his wife moves into first place. But Karl was her only child — and much more: her whole life, in fact, for twenty years.

She couldn't figure out what sort of plans he was making for the future. His small earnings wouldn't keep a wife. Certainly not a spoiled one. It surely wouldn't make him happy to live on a dowry. But one way or another it was clear that the day was not far off when she would be alone in her four walls. All the things you go through if you live long enough . . . ! First youth, when you are terribly lonely and you search and search until you find the person you belong to. Then the period, so long yet so quickly past, of waiting till the children are grown. Sometimes they are so absorbing, taking everything you have and are, that you secretly long to be alone again. But that comes soon enough, the age when you are lonely, as in the beginning, whether you like it or not. Yet it had also its good side. Nobody needed you any more and you could do what you wished. Only you must still want something, that was the point, or it was like being buried alive. Wanting something, yes, but not running after the children and interfering in their lives.

The dull tumult of motor cars and the trampling of many horses came into the room. Mother Merk went to the window. Mounted police trooped over the Belt. She had never seen so many equipped for battle, rifles over the backs, storm straps under the chins. Behind them roared two armoured cars. It was no longer like every day. But the trams were still running. Now it would be interesting to have the paper, but Karl had taken it with him in the morning and she always waited, out of thrift, until he brought it back in the evening. Was there something in it? Franze's letter and the mounted police and the armoured cars—if only she knew something. But she mustn't leave the flat. Her caller might come just at that moment and she wouldn't be at home. Lucky she already had food for supper in the house.

Carefully she put the red skein over the back of a chair and began to wind the yarn slowly and precisely around a piece of paper till it turned into a ball. It was not her affair whether something was under way or not. She had an order and it was for her to obey it without being curious. Everyone should just pay attention to his own job, then it would be all right.

The new yarn lay on the needle. Now came the coloured border; how she had looked forward to doing it! The red blended with the beige, it was like a painting. Were the lights still functioning? She switched on her floor lamp, and the bulb lighted. Such a tender, innocent thing. Turn it out, wait, remain quiet. Just remain quiet.

The telephone conversation between Pepitta Birkmeier and her agent was suddenly interrupted, and it proved impossible to make the connection again. The wires were simply dead. Frau Birkmeier was in the bedroom—in an apron, with a dustcloth in her hand. She was following attentively the efforts of her temperamental daughter and gave a start when Pepitta hung up the receiver in a rage.

"It has to be of course, just when the old fool has a pleasant

piece of news, the telephone has to stop working," she cried and stamped her foot.

Joseph stuck his head into the room. "Couldn't you possibly carry on your private life with less noise? No one can work with that Shouting."

Pepitta grabbed up the tablecloth and hid her nakedness. She had been surprised by the call while she was dressing and wore nothing but vest, girdle, and stockings. She didn't know why she was so shy with Joseph. She wasn't that way as a rule.

"Go on; I'm quiet."

He disappeared and Pepitta stared thoughtfully at the wintry sky outside. Then she pulled herself together, fetched a little red dress out of the wardrobe and looked at it critically.

"What was the good news, Pepitta?" Her mother had entered hesitantly.

"I'm to go for an audition at the Vienna Theatre." Her tone wasn't at all happy.

"Isn't that what you always wanted?"

"He said I was to put on something elegant and fresh, as if it were understood that I have clothes like that," answered Pepitta and turned the red dress back and forth in the light of the window. "Look at this rag! It's shiny front and back."

"When are your new dresses coming?"

"Not for two weeks." Pepitta quickly evaded the question. It was half a lie. She hadn't even ordered them because her father had borrowed, until the first of the month, the three hundred schillings she had earned at the ball. She didn't want to tell her mother.

"You're all right whatever you wear." Frau Birkmeier looked proudly at her child and wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron. She wept easily and for no reason.

Pepitta, touched, looked at her affectionately and kissed her. Mother always meant well. She slipped into the dress and put on her shoes.

"That Kaiser girl, that cow with the throaty voice, she's already got an engagement for autumn, only because she was able to run to the agent's in a new dress every day. If I slept around the way she does, I'd have an easier time too."

"You shouldn't say such things even in fun, Pepitta." ^r

Pepitta tied her shoe laces and got up. "In fun? I think I'm serious, Mother. Not just for a new rag on my back; I want much more, a thousand times more than that. But you've got to grab life by the throat, and not be backward."

"Good gracious, if your father should hear you, I don't know what would happen."

"Happen!" Pepitta laughed. "Nothing' Since when does anything happen in this house? Oh, he'd make a speech, but inside he'd be pleased that I know myself what I want. Do you really still take him seriously?"

"I forbid you to say such things, Pepitta!" Again Frau Birkmeier wiped her eyes. Pepitta hooked her dress. Then she put an arm tenderly about her mother and said softly, "Forgive me."

"He can't change either," her mother sobbed.

"Right. No one can," Pepitta said. "But that's what worries me. What will become of you when you're both old? Joseph won't earn anything. He has to save the whole world. A few people, that's nothing, that wouldn't be enough for him. But I want you to have a good time, and me too," she said apologetically and tried the telephone again. The connection had been broken off just as the agent was about to tell her the hour of the appointment. The wires were still dead. "I'm going straight to his office. And I'm having luncheon with Maria. Goodbye, Mother. Good-bye."

She looked at herself in the mirror in the hall. It was hard to get anywhere-with that coat. Maybe Maria would let her have her fur jacket again.

When Pepitta opened the outer door she found herself face to face with two men. She could not see them clearly in the dim

hallway. "Are you looking for Birkmeierr" she asked, and remained standing in the middle of the doorway.

"Yes, Fraulein," one of them said in a hoarse voice.

"Don't raise a row, and let us in," said the other. He had a waxed moustache and a manner she didn't trust. She retreated quickly and slammed the door. "A regular servant-girl murderer," she thought. The men knocked. She opened the peephole. "What do you really want? Why don't you introduce yourselves first?" she cried pertly.

"Political police. Open in the name of the law!"

Her breath left her. "Joseph!" she thought. "They're coming for Joseph." What was she to do? There was only one exit. Could she lure them into the bedroom and let Joseph escape through the dining room? But how could she warn him? If she didn't let them in at once, Joseph would hear the knocking and run right into their arms. What an idiot to get himself into such a situation!

She assumed her most innocent expression and opened the door. "Why didn't you say that in the first place, gentlemen?"

The detectives entered. "So young and already so suspicious," said the moustache. "Who are you?" asked the hoarse one.

"I am the daughter," Pepitta smiled.

"Delighted," said the moustache with a slight bow. "Delighted," the hoarse one echoed. The frightened maid appeared; the flat was not yet in order.

"Help the gentlemen off with their coats," said Pepitta, to gain time. They merely hung up their hats and followed her closely into the dining room.

"Don't be nervous, Fraulein, we're not as bad as we look, just as human as anybody," said the moustache and laughed, as if *ht* had made a joke.

"Quiet!" Joseph cried from the next room.

In some astonishment the detectives looked at Pepitta. She hesitated but saw that concealment was impossible. It would be best to take the bull by the horns. "My brother," she explained.

"**He's** studying for the second juridical State examination; nobody is allowed to whisper a word in the house."

"I have a cousin who studies philosophy," said the hoarse detective. "Day and night he sits over his books; it's not good for his health."

"Maybe you'll tell your brother we're here," said the moustache, surveying Pepitta from head to toe.

She opened the door. "Come here, Joseph!"

"Don't bother me," he answered without turning. The cousin of the philosopher gave an understanding nod.

Pepitta almost enjoyed it when she said after a little pause, as if playing a trump card: "Please come! The political police are here."

But she had been mistaken. Joseph didn't jump up. He remained quietly seated. He merely stopped turning the pages. When he looked backward he was as calm as if the police came every day.

"We have orders to search the house, Herr Doctor," said the moustache officially but apologetically. The hoarse one handed Joseph a printed document with several spaces filled in in handwriting.

Joseph glanced at the paper. "Very well," he said. "If you'll tell me just what you're looking for, I may be able to help you."

"Your father's letters and documents; his political correspondence and the plans for the communal building projects —"

"As well as all Bolshevik books and pamphlets," the hoarse one added.

"You're in the wrong place," answered Joseph. "Father's entire correspondence is in his office or in the City Hall. Not even the gas bills are here. And I'm convinced that he never read a Bolshevik book in his whole life."

The detectives looked at each other. That sounded convincing and seemed to fit in with their own estimate of the case. On the other hand it might be a trick. Pepitta wondered why Joseph was so serious. She could hardly choke back her laughter any

more. Since she had realized that they weren't interested in her brother, the whole situation seemed merely funny to her.

"Anyhow, we'll have to poke around a bit," the hoarse one said. Scarcely had he spoken when Frau Birkmeier entered, her steps short, quick, and silent. Her apron was gone. Excitedly she twisted her handkerchief.

"You'll have to wait until the Herr Alderman arrives," she said in her thin voice but with more decision than her children would ever have expected of her. She turned to Joseph. "Call up the shop and tell Father to come home at once."

Joseph knew that, as usual, she had been listening at the door. The detectives recovered from their surprise. Now they looked from the small energetic woman to Joseph, who was taking down the receiver, as if they had a bad conscience. Suddenly Pepitta felt something uncanny in the atmosphere.

"The telephone doesn't answer," said Joseph.

"Then run down and fetch Father," Pepitta cried.

The hoarse one cleared his throat and the moustache said: "There's no sense in that, Fraulein, and please don't be frightened, Frau Birkmeier, but the Alderman Birkmeier was placed under arrest an hour ago and has been turned over to the Gray House."

"Arrested . . . Gray House . . ." Frau Birkmeier turned as pale as a corpse. Pepitta and Joseph went to her aid and the detectives made a gesture of sympathy.

"Why? What did he do? How is it possible?" Frau Birkmeier sobbed and fell into a chair.

"He didn't do anything," said the moustache. "That is to say, he's a political prisoner. We don't know anything more ourselves."

"Who else was arrested?" Joseph asked swiftly.

"We don't know anything," the hoarse one said roughly and threw a warning glance at his companion.

Frau Birkmeier wept quietly. Her energy was gone. Pepitta tried to calm her. "Don't cry, Mother. It's all a mistake. Politically

Father is the most innocent Viennese alive. I'll go to see Dr. Roller; hell get him out, like that!"

"You stay here, Pepitta! I'm going!" Joseph cried.

"No, you've got to stay with me," The mother clung to her son.

"There's nothing to fear, Mother — " Joseph began. He wanted to make haste and get in touch with Party headquarters. But Pepitta interrupted him. "I'll put in any necessary calls," she said significantly, and then with a smile at the detectives added: "These gentlemen would like to search the house. That's their duty, and you know much more about Father's affairs than I do. There is his desk at which he never writes. You may find a few love letters of mine in the top drawer. Goodbye!"

Before Joseph could stop her she was in the hall. From there she called: "Cross your fingers for me; I'm going to the Vienna Theatre to sing."

"Tell the telephone office that our wires are out of order," he called after her.

"Your telephone service has been suspended by order of the police," said the hoarse detective with sudden impatience. He went to the desk while the moustache looked after Pepitta as she disappeared.

It was at breakfast in the dining car that Baron Wiesner learned of the shooting at Linz. It was a little after eight and the express was leaving the valley of the Danube and turning southward past the yellow walls of the thousand-year-old monastery of Melk, whose many windows palely mirrored the gray sky. During the stop at the capital of Upper Austria he had still been asleep and had heard nothing. From the waiter's garbled account he deduced that there had been the usual search for arms in the Socialist Party headquarters. Only it seemed that this time the workers had resisted. Even less instructive was the political discourse which an old man with a bluish wine-bibber's nose, white moustache, and pointed beard was holding for the

benefit of his travelling companions, three elderly sniffing red-cyed women in mourning, who were evidently coming from or going to a funeral. The speaker, dressed in a sort of civilian Heimwehr uniform of coarse gray with broad green facings and cuffs and green stripes on the trousers, kept referring to an authority which must be set up. The shots at Linz were, as he had said before, a signal, and he welcomed it, in mixed metaphors, as the beginning of a great mopping-up of the Red flood, of an excision of all growths upon the body politic, and he saluted this hour, this morning hour of February 12, 1934, while he was having his breakfast on the Paris-Vienna express, coughing and gasping with crumbs in his throat, as the hour of the second birth of Christianity. The ladies in mourning nodded rhythmically, but it was obvious from the absent look in their eyes that they were paying no attention. The most attentive listener was a young German from the Reich with his head shaved despite the winter weather. He listened intently but pretended to look absent-mindedly into the snow-covered landscape.

As the dining car filled up the loud exhibitionism of the old man annoyed everyone. The passengers gave him irritated looks and complained to the headwaiter, who attempted to calm the orator. But he went on to speak of saving the middle classes, of increasing tourist traffic and again and again of a Government with a firm hand. He did not stop until a disrespectful young man, not a bad talker himself, confused him with pertinent comments. Indignantly he paid his bill and left, red with anger, to the relief of the whole car. The sight of the weeping willows following him in single file, like geese, figures with a tragic air, prevented the laughter which would otherwise have accompanied the exit.

A Frenchman and an Englishman had sat down at Wiesner's table. They watched the grotesque departure with the curiosity of foreigners. The Frenchman had remarkably delicate hands with something cruel in their subtle lines. A gold-rimmed pince-

nez from which a black moire ribbon fluttered down rested like a butterfly on his narrow nose. Wiesner thought he must be a physician or a professor of literature. The Englishman looked like a commercial traveller. Wiesner soon perceived that his impressions were incorrect. From the conversation, in English, between these two, it appeared that the Frenchman was a silk merchant from Lyons and the Englishman a journalist.

The bloody events in Linz evoked contrary reactions from the two men. The Englishman was delighted. He had rushed from London pell mell, furious with his editor who had been taken in before by supposed tips from Vienna. Once there was supposed to be a proletarian revolution, another time a Nazi *Putsch*, and nothing whatever had happened. Now, for a change, a *coup d'etat* had been announced by the Austrian Government itself. This time he was scarcely in Austria when the thing seemed to be happening, on the minute. He had already interviewed everyone on the train. No one knew exactly what had occurred in Linz. But it was clear that he had not come in vain. It put him in good temper and increased his English appetite for breakfast.

The Frenchman was disturbed. He crumbled his toast nervously, drank his tea in short sips and after each one raised his head like a drinking hen. He was horrified by words like "*coup d'etat*" "street fighting," "general strike," The journalist threw them at his head with pleasure and did not move a muscle when he cringed under the bombardment.

"Serves you right," the Englishman said with sudden seriousness. "If you had made any concessions to the German Republic there would be no Third Reich today. Italy couldn't murder Austrian democracy, and you, Monsieur Girofleure, could sell your silk in Vienna in peace. But don't worry. You'll do business. Luxury flourishes in bloody periods. Soldiers are generous lovers."

"You can't trust the Germans," said the Frenchman. It sounded more like pity than accusation. Then after a pause

he added legalistically, with the righteous nervousness of a lawyer at bay: "The League of Nations guaranteed the independence of Austria."

The Englishman gave a loud laugh. "And you will fight a European war for the independence of six million people, half of whom can't imagine what good that independence is to them?"

The Frenchman raised his hands imploringly. "No war!" It was like the amen of a prayer.

Wiesner gave only half an ear to the conversation. The journalist was right. The politics of Austria were not determined in Vienna, and had not been since 1918, the beginning of Europe's new order. The Germans and the Italians were in open revolt against the Anglo-French majority bondholders. The small states were carried along, on one side or the other; they had no choice. The right of self-determination of peoples, so solemnly proclaimed, was an innocent American illusion. What a fool Major Schrack was! He breathed into the wind and thought he was making it blow. He was leading his stupid peasant lads into a civil war, they sang the songs of a mighty army, and yet they were nothing but poor little dogs who were only allowed to bark and bite when their Roman master whistled. And two strangers, of whose worlds Langenbruck, in spite of its former tourist trade, had no conception, chatted about Austria's grief to pass the time, without a throb of the heart.

Wiesner watched the landscape, through which the train plunged faster and faster, like a horse that senses the stable ahead. A forester stood with his setter at the edge of the woods. A peasant ploughed his field, the dark brown furrows gleamed. Before a co-operative, beer barrels were being unloaded. Shivering consumptives walked in the park of a sanatorium, the nurse waved at the train. Smoke streamed from the chimney of a factory, another stood deserted amid the hills. Children ran into a schoolhouse door. The more fragments of reality Wiesner registered, the more unlike and absurd its image in the

minds of men seemed to him. The hour of the second birth of Christianity, and that war song forever returning, "The birds, the birds, in the forest." The means of life still governed the content of life, the stomach ruled both head and heart. But the short-lived megalomaniac, man, insisted on interpreting the universe. Beautiful, the waving of the nurse. How honest, in comparison, the fear of these children coming late to school, how unsuspecting the landscape lay. To walk through it, to plough the fields, to stand at the forest's edge—was that not enough?

But there were the telegraph poles beating past the windows, one every second, one, two, three. On the wires between Vienna and Linz the police and the politicians were talking back and forth in confusion—the whole uncoordinated choir of Babel which he hated. No, whatever came or went, they should not wrench him from his life. He had had enough of one world war; these silly skirmishes should not lure him to take sides. It was the daily, calm acknowledgment of the little things—how arrogant the very distinction between "great" and "little"—it was the A B C of life that gave the world breath. The sum of silent unnoticed existences moved the world. The twenty years that still remained to him—he wanted to live them honestly regardless of which flag the tax collector had sworn to honour.

Going directly from the station, Wiesner arrived at the ministry at ten o'clock. The great inner court was crowded with policemen. There was an unusual amount of coming and going in the labyrinthine corridors of the building, from which, a hundred years ago, Prince Metternich had hurled a vain, continuous No against a new age, which was now dying. Uniforms forced their way through the dark-clad dignity of the bureaucracy. Every face was full of meaning. Two members of the Cabinet interrupted their eagerly whispered conference as Wiesner passed.

His secretary gave him, unsolicited, a view of the situation. Many contradictory rumours were going through the Ministry

but this much was certain, that there was serious fighting in Upper Austria. In Vienna and in other industrial cities the wheels of one factory after another had stopped. The general strike was imminent. Moderate leaders of the workers, headed by Deputy Hippmann, were trying to negotiate a compromise. But the order for their arrest had been given. The Government wanted war. It was determined to do a thorough job. These words of the Commissar of Public Safety soared in martial tones from the lips of the little secretary, who had suddenly received the present of a great day in the monotony of his office life.

Wiesner sat down disgustedly at his desk. But in three weeks—even less, by the first of March—he would have escaped from all this incompetence and malice. Langenbruck, he thought, remembering the week end, was no idyll either. But at least the people there lived by comprehensible needs and passions. They took their own chances. They tapped in darkness, seeking their daily bread, and one could live with their errors. It was a backward world but at least it wasn't this fraudulent existence of the so-called State servants who inevitably made themselves masters, whatever they talked, preached, or prayed. Wiesner grasped the receiver. Maria—she was his only truth.

The telephone was not working well, there was a rattle in the apparatus,—the current stopped,—another rattle. . . . An eternity passed before he got his number. Louise answered in the house on Freedom Square. Her mistress had not yet returned. She had called up last night to say that she was staying a couple of days at the Bismarck House.

Wiesner at once tried to call her up. She must come back right away. If it came to a general strike and fighting in the industrial districts along the South Railway, she would be cut off from Vienna. But he was told that the line was not working.

It was five hours before Wiesner was able to reach the Bismarck House, five hours during which the political situation grew more acute. In Upper Austria the Defence Corps was offering re-

sistance even to the regular army. In Vienna the strike kept spreading; the trams had already stopped in the streets. The Government proclaimed martial law, occupied the City Hall, and placed the mayor of Vienna under arrest. When finally Wiesner got his connection he was told that Maria was still on a skiing tour.

Wiesner conveyed the news to her father at the Technological Institute. "Don't get excited," said the Professor. "She couldn't be in a safer place and she's not a bit helpless. You'd better tell your Ministers of State that their actions are scandalous. Drop in this evening and we'll call her up, provided the telephone is still functioning."

Maria had been out since early morning. When she woke the sun was glittering on the snow outside the windows. Outside, the radiance and freshness had taken her breath away. She stood, anxious, high above the sea of clouds which hid the plains in the east as far as the rosy horizon. To the southwest the gleaming peaks of the Alpine ranges rose, blinding white, into the blue of the sky. "What a day!" even Alois had said. But when she left he had warned her, "Don't trust the splendour too much."

She stood on the edge of the plateau, as on the previous afternoon when her eyes had followed Karl's descent. He had dashed down the steep slopes, in a deep crouch, bending to the right, to the left, and again dashing forward. She could still feel his breath on her lips when he had reached the dwarf pines far below. He avoided them in sharp curves which, seen from so high above, were delicate snow flurries, quickly disappearing. She could no longer make him out, there were only the little gusts of snow; they grew fewer and fewer; there was still one, a whiff in the valley mist, the last one. She had returned desolate to the cottage. She was alone, alone as she had never been before. It was wide and empty around her, a melancholy dusk, much emptier than it had been before when she was waiting for life and feeling quite sure it would come to her. It had come with

Karl and was gone with him. She could have cried at the top of her voice; it would not have brought him back. By now he was on the road to the station. With every step the distance between them grew. But at the same time—and this was her consolation—they moved nearer to each other with every second that passed until their next meeting.

Terror had seized her suddenly in the lonely hut, and when Alois came to look after her she went back with him to the hotel, which was now deserted. She sat in the great hall with its mighty wooden beams and felt the quietness in all the empty rooms above her. Alois himself served her with his red hands. He did not avoid her eyes but behind his ease was a delicate embarrassment. A waiter sat at the buffet writing a letter. The pen scratched through the quietness and suddenly she noticed that in her mind she was writing too. . . . Dear Heinrich. You will understand when I tell you quite simply what has happened. . . . She broke off. She mustn't write. She must have the courage to tell him. He would listen to her and not interrupt. Then there would be a long silence and he would wish her happiness. But what would he feel? How little she knew about him; how strange that she had **not** been aware of that before. With Karl everything was different.

Nero slept at her feet and from time to time the pendulum clock struck. She played patience without wishing for anything: all had been fulfilled. It was pure happiness to put the King of Hearts softly beside the Queen of Hearts and to remember, and to think of the future, all at the same time and in confusion, as in a dream. Falling asleep that night she took hold of her own arm as if it were his, and in the morning it seemed so strange that she was alone and he so far away in the city among people she did not know.

She met no one until afternoon. Aimlessly she flew up and down the slopes. When a down-run lured her she gave herself to it and then worked herself up again, up the steepest hill she could find, for the sheer joy of exertion. The sun and exercise

had warmed her so that she had long since taken off both her jacket and her sweater. The light wind through her blouse was pleasantly refreshing like a cool shadow in summer. Once she dashed down into a narrow mountain kettle and stood at the bottom, her heart still throbbing. The new snow settled and the whole mountain thundered dully. Then it was stiller than still. Walls of snow, half sunlit, half deep in blue shadow, enclosed her on all sides. Far above her curved the cloudless sky. Her breathing was the only sound.

Fear came to her from the great loneliness. Through her hollowed hand she cried "Karl!" A feeble echo, only a little wavering of the air, answered. Why was he so far away? If she could only feel him now beside her, and no longer be haunted by the fancy that it might all have been only a dream! Father must find him the right job. He liked him and would do it. Would he be glad about the broken engagement? He had always been against Heinrich. But she had got so lonely and, at the same time, she had wanted to make an important decision by herself, a decision with which her father would not agree. No, something about Heinrich attracted her too. But when she thought about it now, about his hidden knowledge, which had both disquieted her and drawn her to him, she felt repelled. If he had taken her to Langenbruck! At the moment when she had felt closest to him he had said that everything was to be right between them. He probably had a mistress and his scepticism could always anticipate every disillusionment. Or perhaps it was really that he was too old for her.

Thin veils of cloud appeared and gradually hid the sun. By the time Maria had climbed the next hill the wind was blowing ice cold and she had to put on her things again. From the next hill she came to, which was higher, she could look down on one end of a valley. A solitary sleigh was driving through it and the singing of the driver came weakly through the air. Turning around the nose of the slope she caught sight of the church with its childish onion tower and the village houses. She had drifted

far to the west; that meant three hours to the station ... because she wanted to return to Vienna. She had already known yesterday, without admitting it to herself, when Karl was suddenly so far away. She wanted to be near him and be able to reach him at any moment. Then all would be well.

She descended into the valley and overtook the sleigh and passed the village. The clouds flew thicker and deeper. The wind beat against her, a sharp east gale that grew more and more difficult to fight. On level stretches it took all her strength. Her mounting fear of missing the express hurried her on. She tried to talk herself out of it but suddenly all her happiness depended on reaching the train. She had never known how slowly the valley road descended, how far it stretched—still one bend followed another. The farther she went the worse the track became, scraped to the soil by wheel chains.

When she finally reached the town a crowd in the market place delayed her. It was too dark to see what was going on. Someone was making a speech on the steps of the city hall. She took off her skis, shouldered them, and ran on over the icy cobblestones of the street, behind the crowd. Breathless she reached the station, but the express had left.

She had looked forward with joy to wiring Karl to meet her at the station at eight. Now she would have to wait for the seven o'clock local train, which made every stop from here to Vienna, and did not arrive until midnight. That was too late.[^] She leaned her head against the big dirty timetable and it took all her self-control not to cry with disappointment. She had known that she could not make the express; but the impossible should have been possible. She had not succeeded.

The station restaurant was empty and overheated by a small iron stove. It took an eternity for them to bring her some warmed-over food and bad coffee. She was tired to death. She counted the little roses in the frieze that bound the green-leaf pattern of the walls. The heat made her still more tired. She laid her head on the table. She could still hear a freight locomotive whistle

near and shrill but the noises faded. Then the whole station disappeared.

She was sound asleep when a cold draught wakened her. The door to the platform was open, outside men's voices were shouting. Someone was swinging a lantern and — she did not know what it was at first — bayonets glittered in its light. Stiffly she rose and went to the window. Heimwehr men were confronting two workers tied with ropes, the younger of them coatless, in a tattered shirt, shivering, with blood-smeared face. The stationmaster, a tall bloated fellow in a red cap that was too small for him, stuck his fist into the faces of the bound men and shouted at them. A gendarme came running across the tracks and pushed the whole group into the restaurant.

"We caught them with explosives; they wanted to blow up the switches," the stationmaster roared. "Confess, you damned saboteurs! You should be thrown in front of a locomotive."

Not a muscle moved in the faces of the two workers. The Heimwehr men held the bayonets against their backs. The Heimwehr sergeant and the gendarme began to quarrel. The gendarme wanted to arrest the workers and deliver them to the gendarmerie post. The patriotic leader, goaded on by the stationmaster, would not surrender them. They must first tell the names of the others who had fled.

Suddenly the Heimwehr sergeant, who resembled the older of the two workingmen, except that he was younger and more slender, shoved the stationmaster aside and planted himself importantly before the prisoners. A dead quiet descended.

"I'm your brother, Ferdl," he said, "but if you don't tell us who the others were I'll have you both shot here and now."

The man neither stirred nor answered. All eyes hung upon him. The younger worker turned his head. No answer came.

"I'm not joking," cried the sergeant. "I'll give you ten. One, two, three . . ."

The prisoner looked down calmly, almost paternally, without

a trace of anger, at his brother. Then suddenly he said, "Keep your mouth shut, you good-for-nothing." The younger prisoner laughed. The sergeant's face turned milk-white. He took his gun, lifted it high, and hurled the butt straight into his brother's face. He dropped like a felled tree. His comrade tried in vain to catch him with his fettered hands. It was a helpless, useless gesture.

The gendarme and the Heimwehr men turned at a desperate cry that shrilled through the restaurant. They had not noticed the presence of the girl who now sank down beside the window, her hands over her eyes.

The gendarme leaped to Maria's side. He brought her a chair. Convulsive sobs shook her. Tears ran down her face. She cried like a child.

They dragged out the fallen man. No one paid any attention to the second prisoner. He could have escaped, but he shuffled behind the others as if without a will of his own. The door crashed. The cold draught was cut off.

The gendarme remained and tried to soothe Maria. "It looks worse than it is," he said but his voice too was full of horror. He called Maria by her name and told her proudly that he knew the Herr Professor personally, not only by sight, he had even talked to him. At last the train arrived.

Maria leaned back in a corner of the compartment. She could not get rid of that horrifying sight, of the butt of that gun hurtling down on a good human face. That crash was in the rhythm of the train. She did not sob any more but the tears kept running from her eyes.

In Neustadt she sent a telegram. The conductor put it through for her. "ARRIVE MIDNIGHT SOUTH STATION. BE THERE SURELY. LOVE. MARIA." The prospect of seeing Karl standing on the platform quieted her. She sat motionless, as if in sleep, and would not have moved if anyone had come into the compartment. But no one came.

Twice the train stopped between stations and lost more and

more time. Then in one of the stations there was a frightful tumult. Maria did not move. Just before Vienna the conductor darkened the car and asked Maria to sit on the floor between the seats. "There's a lot of sharpshooting," he said.

She sat on the floor in the darkness. The train passed slowly over a bridge, then went on faster. She thought of Joseph. Now he had what he'd always talked about. The radiators under the seats were red-hot. The noise of the wheels and the creaking of the axles were in her ears. If there really was sharpshooting she could not hear it.

It was after two when the train pulled into the station. She waited until the crowd had scattered and then she looked everywhere but she could not find Karl, and he did not come, and did not come.

Soldiers were bivouacked in the big station hall. Machine guns were guarding the doors. It was difficult to get through. From an indefinite distance strange noises echoed through the night. Perhaps it was the shooting. Now and then the sky grew lurid, suddenly and convulsively. It was like fireworks.

XVII

AT his drawing board Monday morning Karl did not know how to begin, and sat, pencil and ruler in his hands, without drawing a line. Engineer Schremmel, his neighbour, unpacked his lunch to enjoy the prospect of it, as he did every morning after he had painstakingly hung his winter coat in the wardrobe. Karl hated the smacking of his lips. This fellow, vain and not quite clean, with whom he had had to sit for two years table to table, who turned on the heat full force in winter and insisted on closed windows in summer; this cramped office, long and narrow like a tube; the gray day outside; the stupid copying all day long, all year long, for a few schillings and no prospects — Karl wondered how he could stand it all. And only two hours away, Maria and the mountains, the snow, the sky, the hut, and the wind. Yesterday at this hour he was lying awake and motionless; she was still asleep beside him. Her head was against his breast and her whole body moved close to him when he tried to get up. When she woke she opened her eyes just a little, knowing at once where she was. She pressed her lips against his shoulder and smiled and whispered "Good morning."

"Engineer Merk is to come into the central hall," a messenger shouted into the room. He was gone before Karl had heard him aright. "A little tired from your week end," said Schremmel in a vulgar tone and the others grinned. He went out and slammed the door.

He did not know at once what was new about the great hall. The hammers thundered as he came in and the machines screeched. The siren of the running crane which slid under the ceiling screamed. Red and green signals glowed and darkened, chains rattled, motors started and fell silent again; the scene was as it always was. Daylight dribbled dimly through the glass roof and the smoke-blackened windows. The arc lamps blazed. The smell of sour steam, burning oakum, oils and enamels, thickened the air. Yet something was missing or had been added to it.

Karl went down the side aisle and greeted the workers whom he passed. There were none of the usual shouts, no responses; scarcely a nod here and there. Not even the limping Wilhelm, a Platonic sports enthusiast who never failed to ask on Monday how the snow was, left his place. They worked on silently and bitterly. But their attention was directed, as Karl saw when he had passed the great metal stamp and got a better view, to the end of the hall. There Kraus was standing at the door of his partition with two men who did not belong to the factory. They had their hats and coats on and were making violent gestures. All the workers were trying, in spite of the noise of the machinery, to hear what the three were saying. Each one, as often as his work allowed it, stared at the group in debate. Karl knew now what had struck him. The shouting and good-natured swearing that usually went with the work were missing. The men were silent. The screeching, hammering, and thundering of the machinery sounded unnatural, a senseless dead noise.

Before he reached the end of the hall the strangers left by the next exit. Kraus went into his compartment and Karl followed him. Inside sat five of the older men in their faded workclothes, the members of the shop Council. Only Steindl, the chairman, was absent. Their tense expectant faces were on Kfaus, who gave Karl only a brief nod. There was a seriousness in his face that meant nothing good.

"There's no use waiting for Steindl," Kraus said. "The police

dragged him out of bed at five o'clock this morning." The shop Council men, with the exception of Ott, jumped up and shouted in confusion. Kraus moved for silence and continued, "That isn't all. There is shooting in Lmz. The police and the military are storming the Workers' Home. The Defence Corps is defending it. Men have been killed."

The thunder in the hall outside went on. But Karl heard only the silence in the compartment that followed this announcement and the beating of his own heart. It all passed in a few seconds, the silence and the sudden cries of the men—and then, again, the silence before Kraus continued; but during those seconds Karl's whole life passed before his eyes, that meaningless existence which in the last two days had become his dearest possession.

"The promise of the Commissar of Public Safety," Kraus said, and his voice gained strength, "that starting today the Heimwehr would do a thorough job in Austria, was no empty threat. Nobody can say that any more. The Fascists are proceeding to a general attack upon us. No decent worker can have any doubt now what he must do. It is our duty and vital interest to use every means to defend the liberty of the Republic, which is our personal liberty too. I move that this committee at once ask the crew to strike. The members of the Defence Corps are ordered to assemble at their alarm posts. The rest will remain in the factory for the present."

"Has the order for a general strike been issued by the leadership of the Party?" Ott asked.

"I don't know," answered Kraus, "but the Fiat Works and the gas works are on strike and we mustn't wait any longer. Those in favour of my motion raise your hands——Unanimously accepted. Stop the machines and assemble the men."

Karl had not voted. He was not a member of the Council. The others hurried out and he remained alone with Kraus. The noise of the machines ebbed gradually and the sound of voices rose.

"Karl," said Kraus, "I haven't much time. I'm just a common workman and you've always been—I can tell you now—a sort of ideal to me. You know a great deal that I can only long to know. I've learned a lot from you. But in this hour, because I am only a worker, I know better than you what we must do. I haven't any particular illusions. We have often talked about it. All I know is that we must go forward. It's possible that there's a choice for you. I don't know. I sent for you in any case because otherwise I might never see you again."

The machinery had stopped. There were calls for Kraus from the great hall. He pressed Karl's hand. "It would be fine to fight side by side. Think what a good conscience we would have if we survive." He said it slowly and hesitatingly, then he went out quickly. Karl did not follow him. He did not even look through the door, which remained open.

The shouting died. Kraus began to speak. A stormy protest rose at the news of Steindl's arrest; the account of the fighting in Upper Austria was received at first in nervous silence. Then cries of: "Strike! The general strike! To arms!" came from all sides before Kraus had put the strike motion of the shop Council to a vote.

Karl heard the strains of the International rising out of the tumult: " 'Tis the final conflict, let each stand in his place. . . ." They are giving themselves courage, he thought, and involuntarily straightened his own shoulders. But the enthusiasm did not reach him. He was paralyzed. Kraus came back and slowly put on his coat and looked awhile for his hat. Before he went out he stood for a moment in the doorway. Karl neither moved nor spoke. Then Kraus was gone.

Karl was alone in the compartment, delivered to his own indecision and shame. He did not dare go out among the workers. When he finally left he was tempted to slip out by the side door near by. But he went back the way he had come. Groups of men were excitedly debating the issues. Defence Corps members, already out of their working clothes, were saying good-bye. The

older men sat in silence beside their idle tools. No one noticed him.

At the metal stamp he ran into the limping Wilhelm, who was staring in his eccentric absent-minded way up into the big arc light. He gave a start, passed his hand over his blinking eyes, and asked automatically, "How's the snow?" but added at once, "The electrical workers haven't struck yet." Then again he stared up into the light as if it would have to go out any moment.

When Karl returned to the administration building the office workers were all running into the big entrance hall. Doors slammed, shouts sounded through the corridors, many steps came down the stairs. It was exactly like closing-time. Except that there was greater haste and nobody wore overcoats or hats. On the first landing of the stairs stood the chief of the Personnel Department, Herr von Winterstein, colonel in the reserves. It was easy to see, from the respectful distance between him and those he had summoned, how he was feared for the cold sternness that lay behind his elegant manners. He shook his narrow lizard's head in an irritated way and ordered silence. Bookkeepers took off their spectacles and showed the worried eyes behind them; chiefs of departments kept away from their permanent-waved secretaries; the accountants formed a serious-faced group of their own, the technicians and the engineers formed another, more academic one. The draughtsmen of the construction department, white-coated like doctors, flirted with Frauein Kaul, the factory vamp. Schremmel was the last to come from upstairs and went past Winterstein with a series of bows. It grew quiet.

The address of the chief was brief and to the point. The management hoped that the intellectual workers would set a unanimous example of patriotic devotion. If anyone intended to join the strike of the workers he was at liberty to collect the salary due him and thereafter consider himself discharged. Members of the Heimwehr were entitled to leave of absence with full pay. If anyone wanted to ask a question he should do so.

There was silence, and a great turning of heads—no one seemed to want to put himself forward. Then, to the amazement of everybody, a seventeen-year-old boy, with chestnut-brown hair, the messenger Schurl, leaped to the stairs beside Herr von Winterstein. "Comrades," he cried, "don't let yourselves be intimidated!" He got no further. The higher officials protested, Schremmel more loudly than anyone. The chief cashier, standing next to Karl, yelled hoarsely, "What check, that louse of a boy wants to teach us what to do!"

Winterstein raised his hand appeasingly and, with the false politeness of a soldier trying to act like a civilian, he turned to the lad. "You have the floor; sorry you were interrupted." There was obsequious laughter in the hall.

Schurl[^] red to the very ears, pulled himself together. "You needn't act so innocent, Herr Winterstein," he said with an effort. "We all know that you're a Jesuit and I'm telling it to you to your face."

Again he was interrupted by protests. Someone walked out shouting and banged the door. With an evil smile Winterstein asked for silence and requested those present to give their attention to this "bright young employee of the firm."

Schurl fought down his shyness. "All the workers in Floridsdorf have laid down their tools," he cried. "They're shooting the comrades in Linz. Our blood is being spilt. The Fascists are attacking us. There's only one answer: the general strike. Whoever isn't with us now is a traitor."

Unluckily he went on to prove his points. His attack on the chief of personnel had won him some sympathy though nobody dared to show it, and his call for the general strike, however unauthorized, had made an impression. Karl thought that Winterstein's assurance was a mask hiding secret fear. But Schurl destroyed his effectiveness by shopworn Party phrases. He asked for trust in the peaceful force of the toiling masses and spoke of "showing the Fascists the teeth of the people." After the cry for democracy came the crass demand for the whole

power of the State. He tumbled over himself in his speech, mixed up the aims of reform and revolution, did not finish his sentences, became too loud, hesitated and filled the pauses with wild gestures, and could not find a way of finishing.

Some of the listeners enjoyed his torment. The more confused he became the more ironical the exclamations of his audience. Others were disgusted with the whole performance. Herr von Winterstein looked calculatingly over the many heads. No one dared help the boy or show pity for him. Finally someone cried, "Enough." Schremmel and his friends applauded ironically.

Schurl, with tears of rage and an expression of contempt, pushed the brown locks back from his forehead and cried, "Pack of cowards!" and jumped down from the landing. In the midst of jeers and kindly laughter and angry abuse he ran toward the exit, controlling himself with difficulty. Frau Wurm, the director's plump secretary, became hysterical and had to be taken out. She had always had a soft spot for the boy.

Karl was standing at the exit and caught Schurl by the arm as he passed him. "Stay here, you foolish boy," he whispered, and quickly mounted the pedestal on which stood a statue of the founder of the factory. "I would like to make a brief announcement," he cried in a loud firm voice. All heads turned toward him. Herr von Winterstein lifted a protesting arm, but it was too late. Everyone had already turned his back on him, and Karl ignored him.

"It is true," Karl said calmly; "the general strike has begun. Its success will determine whether we can win, by comparatively peaceful means, the fight which the Government and the Heimwehr are forcing upon us. Our factory is joining the battle. I have just been present at a session of the shop Council. All preparations have been made. Whoever is not for us may leave the buildings within ten minutes. Whoever resists will be arrested by the Defence Corps and interned in the storeroom. This is in the nature of a command. It is serious this time."

There was complete silence. Schremmel and the head cashier

and the department chiefs looked for Herr von Winterstein. But he was no longer on the landing. Karl took out his watch. "Five after ten," he said firmly. "Schurl, go over to the action committee and tell them that the administrative building is to be occupied at a quarter past ten."

With radiant eyes Schurl hastened out. "At your orders, comrade," he shouted, and was gone.

Karl got down from the pedestal. His listeners drew back from him. As he walked toward the exit many noticed his sun-burned face and a strange, stern, melancholy look about his eyes that intimidated them still more. With apparent indifference he climbed the stairs. There was silence behind him. Not until he had reached the second story and walked down the corridor to the construction office did he hear confused voices. He opened the door to the tube and looked at all the drawing boards, strangely lonely. He went to his own place. He sat down. The circle gleamed, the beautiful pencils were sharply pointed. The drawing paper shone white, untouched. One could read many things into it. But now everything was already decided.

Schremmel and the other engineers rushed in to get their coats and hats. None of them spoke a word; they were all in a hurry. Karl did not move. Then they were gone again and a cold draught came in through the open door.

Shrill whistles and cries came from the factory yard . . . Karl went to the window. The workers had gathered in the yard before the management office shouting scorn at the clerks and officials who were departing. The telephone operator and his assistant joined the workers and were enthusiastically received. A woman typist stood hesitating in the middle of the yard. Both sides called and waved to her. At length she came to a decision and proudly went over to the strikers. An old man ran toward her and embraced and kissed her. The directors, carrying their briefcases and bundles of papers, got into their cars. The great hand of the works clock moved steadily on. Promptly at ten fifteen the sirens shrieked and howled with sinister blasts;

at this unusual hour the sound was terrifying. The great gates of the factory yard closed behind the last car and strike sentinels drew the latch. A troop of workers marched into the administration building.

Schurl came running through the corridor and shouted, full of excitement and admiration. "We've been looking for you everywhere, Herr Engineer, I beg your pardon, Comrade Merk. You scared those scoundrels and they're all gone except three or four; the whole crew is crazy with joy. We want you to come to the meeting right away and make a speech."

When they arrived in the yard they heard shouting from the gates. The cry, "Police!" rose, spread quickly over the yard and drew the men out of the machine room. Five hundred of them stormed outside. For some obscure reason the sentinels at the entrance opened the gates and a car filled with armed policemen drove in and came to a sudden stop. Next to the driver sat the commanding officer and Herr von Wmterstein. The five hundred workers fell silent. The great red flag that had been hoisted over the administration building fluttered in the wind. Five hundred pairs of eyes took the measure of the enemy. Behind the car the gates closed silently. Police and workers waited for a word of command from the officer. He whispered something to Herr von Wmterstein and then spoke to the driver. The car started to move, but backwards. The muscles of the five hundred relaxed, laughter rose and filled the yard. Amid jeers and cat-calls the police retreated. The sentinels let the car pass and shouted ironically, "*Aitf Wiedersehen*"

At the meeting of the workers Karl warned them against the undue optimism this episode had aroused. "Don't think that it will remain like that," he told the workers. "They'll come back and there will be a *Wtedersehen*, but a bloody one." He felt that they did not take him quite seriously. They had a legal right to strike. The police couldn't change the law. Of course they wouldn't put up with strikebreakers; but they were too well-disciplined to resort to violence. The factory fire department was

at its post as usual and if a man was cleaning a tool to help pass the time he could tell any radical who tried to forbid it to go to the devil. Everything within limits. Not in vain had their leaders imbued them with ideas of right and toleration. They loved these principles and put their trust in them. Rectitude had given their lives a higher meaning. The best tactics were to practise patience, remain united, and not expose yourself. The Heimwehr was a gang of cowards and the police force was manned by poor men exactly like themselves. Hadn't they seen how they turned back full of fear? If all the workers would strike and not move from their places and preserve order, then the Government could pack its trunks. The young fellows and a few embittered ones were always expecting fire and blood. The Engineer Mrcrk had his heart in the right place and was a likable fellow but rather lacking in experience. The applause given his warning was feebler than that which had greeted his arrival.

He stayed until noon and ate with Ott, who had been left in command of the works while the other shop Council men went to a meeting of the general workers' Council of the district. Ott was glad that Karl was going there too. He could let Kraus know of the happy but lightheaded temper of the men. The problem arose whether the workers were to remain after five o'clock or go home. A couple of Communists argued that they should stay and prepare to defend the factory. But this was a military question to be decided by the Defense Corps. In any case it was high time precise orders were received.

About two o'clock Karl arrived at the meeting of the shop Councils. He had walked half an hour to get there. Except for the tram-cars, standing still and deserted in the streets, and the fact that there was less traffic, everything was as usual. Anyone who did not know that a general strike was on would not at once have discovered it. The Heimwehr was absent. Police cars patrolled the city, but that had long since become a common sight.

The meeting of the Councils was held in a hall on the ground floor of the Schlinger Hof, one of the new blocks of model workers' dwellings. The large room was full to overflowing. The air was thick with smoke. The mood of the members was not very different from that of an ordinary meeting. They listened intently to the speaker, who stood next to the table of the chairman on the small stage. Behind him, half-awry, hung a backdrop representing a seascape with storm-swept waves. With difficulty Karl made his way into the hall and finally discovered Kraus at the other end leaning near a window.

Restrained approval followed the warning of the speaker to yield to no provocation whatsoever. The situation demanded the best-conducted strike of all time. Discipline was the chief concern of the hour: a general strike, absolutely serious and controlled. Action was the business of the Defence Corps. Its members were waiting for the order to take up arms. And that order would be issued this time if the Fascists attempted to put force before justice and legality. In that case the Karl Marx regiment of Flondsdorf would reply. But things had not yet come to such a pass and it was important not to furnish the police or the military with any pretext for attack. Should the Fascists nevertheless dare to put their unconstitutional measures into effect, they would be met by a resistance worthy of the high traditions of the workers of Vienna.

The next speaker gave an account of the strike situation. No works, private or municipal, were running in the district. The enthusiasm which followed his announcement was dampened by the further information that there were difficulties in the public services; the mood of the railroad workers and postal and telegraph employees left much to be desired. They had not joined the strike and were still waiting for orders from their unions.

Karl came up to Kraus, who slowly raised his head and looked into his eyes. There was no need for words. Their hands met and no one could see the firmness of their grasp.

"Ott wants to know whether he's to send the men home. The

Communists are agitating for an attack on the local police stations," Karl whispered.

Karl wanted to say something more but he did not get a chance. At that moment a great tumult arose near the door. For the second time that day, he heard the cry "Police!"¹ The entrance and the street outside were suddenly full of uniforms; they pushed into the hall. A high officer called out commands; he could not be heard in the general excitement that seized the meeting. But the words "dissolved" and "arrested" pierced the noise. The chairman on the stage protested but the crowd got nothing but his gestures, his words were lost. The police, however, were not curious. They fell upon the retreating men, tore them from their neighbours, and dragged them outside. Anyone who resisted was beaten to the floor. The surprise on the faces of the workers at this brutal unexpected attack on a corporate body constituted by law was greater than their indignation. It was as though their eyes refused to believe what was happening.

Effective resistance was impossible. The police were in the majority; they manned all exits and herded the workers together between tables and chairs. They were caught in a trap.

Kraus threw open the window behind him and jumped out into a little frozen garden. Karl followed him. They stumbled over wrapped rosebushes, climbed a bare green trellis, tore their hands on the pieces of glass stuck in the top of the wall, and landed on the other side in a narrow courtyard full of thick milk cans, which surprised them even in their excitement. Karl hit his shin violently against one of them; the pain was sharp and he would have fallen if he had not been caught by someone who had followed him over the wall. When Karl turned he saw that it was Schurl. The boy gasped: "I want to be with you when the fighting begins."

They went on running, out of the yard, through a dark corridor, through a doorway; somewhere a child was crying. Kraus looked carefully up and down the street. No police in

sight. They caught their breath and dusted each other off and left the house quietly with an air of innocence.

"To the car-depots, to the Defence Corps!" said Kraus, and went quickly on. Only now did he notice that they were three. "Where do you come from, son?" he asked Schurl.

"I followed Comrade Merk."

"And what do you want?"

"Whatever you and he do."

Kraus did not answer and Karl too remained silent.

After a while Kraus said, "I'm afraid the strike won't be so calm and dignified. The police don't want it to be. If we let them get after us one at a time we're finished. They could arrest everybody in the quarter that way, one comrade after the other. But it won't be as easy as that."

The Government met the comparatively peaceful means of which Karl had spoken with measures that quickly sharpened the conflict throughout the country. Martial law was declared and all armed forces, the military, the police, and the gendarmes, were mobilized. The Heimwehr were really determined to do a thorough job. Former officers donned their field uniforms and put revolvers in their belts. Ever since 1918 they had lived for this day on which they intended to correct history. Young Count Uexcuell, who liked to sleep late, had left his palace at seven o'clock in the morning in a new gray military car. He repeated his orders to the Heimwehr detailed to the lodge that no one was to leave or enter the palace, not even His Excellency his father. Major Schrack detrained his battalions at the Hiitteldorf Station in Vienna as faultlessly as he had detrained his battery twenty years before on the Russian front.

The leaders of the workers, who had counted on a majority at the polls according to election arithmetic, — the elections were not held for that very reason, — had been outplayed. The former heads of the State, deputies, governors, union leaders, who had founded and administered the Republic of Austria, had staked

their all ever since 1918 on peaceful democratic development. By their retreat, farther and farther every year, they had sacrificed the militancy of their youth and conquered even their personal hatred of an enemy who, in violation of the rules of the democratic game, never entered upon discussions and had no use for their two-edged moral weapons. At the decisive moment, which arrived against their will, they were simply shoved aside. Deputy Hippmann was arrested as he was making an appeasement speech to subordinate members of the Government, whose chief worry was the bad condition of the hotel business. The City Hall of Vienna was occupied by troops and the mayor of a capital comprising two million of the State's six million people was given the opportunity of living up to his determination to yield to force alone. Neither his great services to city and State nor his seventy years saved him. He was taken — with all the other so-called revolutionaries, harmlessly worried about the course of the world, who were found at their own addresses — to the big Gray House near the centre of the city, immediately behind the university. Worthy of this historic hour, they walked with lifted heads despite an icy wind, through the gate of the prison. And the turnkeys saluted.

The police officers in the workers' districts did not salute. There was firing in Meidlung in the early afternoon. Police cars stopped before the gate of the great block of communal dwellings that had been opened seven years before by Alderman Birkmeier with his optimistic speech about airy balconies, children's playgrounds, and peaceful power. The troops, equipped with trench helmets and rifles, jumped out of the cars, fired through the windows without warning, and took by storm the building which their commander believed to be a gathering place of the Defence Corps. Panic broke out on the stairs and in the corridors, doors were splintered, windows smashed; the wounded shrieked and mothers mad with fear tried to protect their children. There were curses and cries of command and the tune of a mouth organ and the howling of a dog. But the firing was inhumanly

swift and precise. The surprised occupants, women, children, unemployed workers, and old people, began to resist. Half-armed Defence Corps members — no order to take up arms had yet been given — emerged with old pistols, hunting guns, and home-made hand grenades. The first victims fell.

In Ottakring the police attacked the Sandleiten block of dwellings and the Workers' Home; in Dobling the famous Karl Marx Court. And everywhere with the same success. After their first surprise the occupants offered resistance. Toward evening the members of the Defence Corps were more efficiently armed and the police were driven out of all the houses again. Thereupon the Chief of Police demanded reinforcements. Cannons, trench mortars, and tanks started to move against the workers' quarters. The modern dwellings of the community of Vienna — those proud symbols of a peaceful social policy, the bright neat homes of thousands of poor families — were their objective.

In Floridsdorf, the Twenty-first District on the left bank of the Danube, a city in itself, connected with the other twenty districts only by two bridges, not a single shot was fired until late at night. The police had won complete control by their dispersal of the shop Councils conference. They followed up their success by occupying, without resistance, the whole Schlinger Hof. The fate of the committeemen, who were dragged into police cars or put to flight, had a depressing effect. The people in the houses saw defeat before they knew that the fight had begun. It took some time to pull the ranks together.

An attempt by the police to force the employees of the Leopoldau gas plant to return to work, under threat of execution, was foiled by the silent but unanimous resistance of the men. Beyond that the police, weakened rather than strengthened by frightened Heimwehr men, confined themselves to patrolling the streets. Spies and secret agents, disguised as striking workers, stuck in their noses wherever they could. They tried to track down the Defence Corps but succeeded only in delaying its arm-

ing. The care with which the depositories had to be emptied took extra time. This seemed of no great consequence, seeing that the Fascists were on the defensive here and had concentrated their power on the right bank of the river.

The leaders of the Defence Corps sought, for their part, to avoid open conflict. The important thing was that each fighter be equipped and in his place. The paper plan of defence, worked out months ago, had to be adapted to reality. The district command worked in the deepest reaches of the huge car-barns, guarded from spies by motormen who knew every policeman and every detective of the district. One of the first orders given was that tram-cars standing in the streets be drawn into the barns. They must not hinder the projected offensive of the Defence Corps. But the police were deceived into thinking that the work of the motormen was a sign of a desire to restore order, a gesture against the strike.

The early winter dusk set in. A sharp east wind blew from the broad open plain of the Marchfeld, where Napoleon suffered his first defeat. The streets lay deserted in the impenetrable darkness. Police cars with powerful searchlights raced through as fast as if they were afraid. After they had passed, the Defence Corps patrols moved on. Inns and coffeehouses were empty, and closed early. The strikers had gone home from the factories. Behind curtained windows they sat with their families in the sparse light of candles. No one spoke much. They listened for the firing that resounded more and more clearly from the west bank of the Danube. Radios, which emitted only the lies of the Government, had long since been turned off.

Since early afternoon Karl had been a member of the Defence Corps. Informally and joyfully he had been received into Kraus's company, which consisted of workers from their factory. They got arms toward eight o'clock, every man a rifle, two hundred bullets, and three hand grenades. Kraus relieved his friend of the grenades. "Throwing them takes learning," he said. Wives

and children brought sweaters and jackets and mittens. Karl got rid of his shabby torn overcoat. An old woman whose son, a chauffeur, had died that morning, brought him a well-lined leather jacket. "If he could only have lived to see it finally begin!" she said. "Wear the jacket honourably, comrade; he would have,"

Kraus divided the company into small groups and sent them for supper to a near-by tavern—apparently closed—that belonged to a Party member. He distributed cigarettes and cigars. "Go easy with them," he warned. "No telling when we'll get any more." He recalled from the days of the war how easily smokers lost their nerve without cigarettes.

Towards ten o'clock Kraus was ordered to establish connections with the Defence Corps on the right bank of the Danube. He was to report on the situation in his district to the command of Dobling, which was stationed in the Karl Marx Court or its vicinity. Flondsorf planned a general attack at midnight on all the local police stations in order to clear Government forces out of the district. There was a request for news about the situation on the right bank and in the western districts. The command was especially worried over the complete silence in Brigittenau. It wanted to know whether this district would be able to carry out its task of keeping police reinforcements from crossing the southern bridge to Floridsdorf. They had lost touch with the central command and did not even know its location. After a successful mopping up of the police, the forces of Floridsdorf intended to cross the bridges and proceed against the centre of the city. They were prepared, in case of need, to send assistance to the Karl Marx Court. The district had at this moment about two thousand men under arms. After the first success reinforcements from non-Defence-Corps workers could be counted on.

Kraus started on his way with twelve picked men, all, with the exception of Karl, former soldiers. For the first time in his life Karl carried a gun. It was an unaccustomed, extraordinary feeling but not unpleasant. The wood of the butt was smooth

and hard, the steel of the barrel and the trigger ice cold. The fingers grasped something forceful and implacable; it was simple and unequivocal and inspired courage.

Under cover of darkness the patrol made rapid progress. Avoiding main arteries, they attempted, by roundabout ways, through side alleys and across vacant lots, to reach the northern bridge. Suddenly, firing broke out from that direction—the first shots on the eastern bank. Involuntarily they stopped. A shrill whistle, a call that fell silent at once, then deep stillness; only the humming of the telegraph wires in the blackness above them . . . Then the firing set in again.

"Forward!" Kraus commanded.

XVIII

THE table had been laid for Karl's supper hours ago. Mother Merk sat by the stove and knitted. Soon the first sleeve would be done. The light was bad but she did not need to look very often at her stitches. Her fingers knew them.

The candlelight was reflected in the white plate. Whenever Mother Merk turned her head to listen for Karl or the others, she saw that soft yellow reflection. Her ears were filled with the sound of firing. Ever since dusk it had been rolling like thunder. The windowpanes rattled continuously. Sometimes an ambulance drowned out the rattling, or troops marched across the Belt, drums and trumpets sounding merrily. But the police must be faring badly if the military had been called out.

Mother Merk had stopped going to the window long ago. The sight of the soldiers only alarmed her. Curiosity never had any value. She must wait, calmly, wait until her turn came. And not give herself foolish thoughts. Not even about the boy, and where he was. Not to ask, to control yourself, keep discipline and not let fear rise, above all no fear—that was the thing.

Such an endless day. Waiting, waiting. In the kitchen the gas burner was on, to keep the food warm. The gas works had not yet joined the strike. And—the proof was in her hands—neither had the postal and telegraph services. "ARRIVE MIDNIGHT SOUTH STATION. BE THERE SURELY, LoVE. MARIA." But it W3S past twelve

when the telegram had arrived. So he was not with the girl. "Love," she telegraphed. That was a sure sign; that told everything. Three years ago that English girl used to send wires too, and special delivery notes every second day — that was nothing for modern young people. "Ellen" had been the name. A nice name. But "Maria" — that sounded more serious and more familiar.

At first it had not even occurred to her that the telegram was for Karl. As if she ever received one! She'd better watch out or she'd begin to think herself important. She was there only in case of emergency. If everything went well, nobody needed her. It was rather a good sign that the comrades did not come. She was the fifth wheel. As it should be.

Suddenly the firing moved very close to the window. A machine gun rattled above the roofs. A searchlight flashed its beam across the room; for a second it was brighter than daylight. They were searching the housefronts across the street too. The machine gun stopped but the firing farther away did not diminish. The searchlight returned several times. The ambulances as they passed over the Belt below kept ringing their bells. Now one after the other, without interruption.

She glanced at the telegram on the table. How motionless it lay. "Love. MARIA." It touched her. But she didn't need the machine gun to remind her. She had not forgotten her life and its teachings. The love between mother and child could no longer be the all-important thing. Her heart, only her foolish heart, wanted that, not she herself.

Suddenly the electric bulb in the ceiling began to glow. At first Mother Merk thought it was the searchlight again but it did not go away. Slowly she raised her head and stared, frightened, into the light. It neither flickered nor went out again. The power houses were functioning again. The fighting had come but not the general strike. The railroads had not struck, or the post, or the gas works. Karl was not coming home, not today and not tomorrow. Why lie to oneself? Franze was not coming

or the comrades. They had left her imprisoned and alone. Not to ask, to control yourself, keep discipline and not let fear rise, above all no fear — that was the thing.

"Machine gun depository Anna, old cemetery, third row, family plot Prenzel. Ottakringer Street 104, walled in, garret. . . ." For the thousandth time she was going through her addresses, that were now like a heartening prayer to her, when she heard a sharp knocking at the outer door and a rumbling noise. Her knees trembled and her heart beat. Her turn had come.

"Help me or he'll fall over," a voice whispered in the darkness of the hall. Before she could step out'side Franze rose before her, staggering like a blind man. Behind him came a workman in sweater and cap, a thin small fellow. He let go of the musician and noiselessly and carefully closed the door.

Mother Merk kept Franze from toppling over as best she could. He swayed, his hat awry, his coat open, his collar gone, his shirt front filthy, his stick upside down in his hand. He could not take a step. The little worker helped her drag him in.

Mother Merk was frightened to death when she really saw Franze's face in the light. The left half of it sagged like an empty bag. The lips were bloodless. He tried to open his eyes but failed. He wanted to speak but moaned instead. At last one eye opened. It stared uncannily while a twisted smile ran over the other half of his face. What was intended to be a happy smile came out as a sad grimace. He tried to speak but only a little bark came from his lips. Then he drew one hand up to his chest and the one eye closed again. They dragged him to the sofa and put him down as he was. His hat rolled off but he kept hold of his stick.

The slim man pushed back the table, which he had moved out of the way, and turned with an agile gesture towards Mother Merk. "My name is Andreas, comrade," he said. "But they call me Anderl and you may have heard of me."

Mother Merk had not. The smooth-shaven face with the lock

across the forehead reminded her vaguely of an actor. Also there was something delicate and mobile about the man that she liked. "What happened to Comrade Franze?" she asked.

"Must have had a stroke. He's half-paralyzed and not clear in his head. We found him by accident near a meeting-place that had already been taken over by the police when we arrived. He was leaning in a hallway like a corpse," While Anderl was speaking his eyes moved between the sleeping Franze, Mother Merk and the set table.

"Are you hungry?" asked Mother Merk.

"Yes," he answered frankly.

Mother Merk went into the kitchen and fetched Karl's supper. When she returned, Anderl was kneeling beside Franze. "He's asleep and his heart is beating fast." He got up and began to eat without sitting down. After the first bite he stopped, pulled off his cap and put it on the table. He almost swept the telegram aside but caught it and put it back.

Mother Merk sat down. Her knees were still trembling with excitement. She did not take her eyes from her two guests. The one was nearly dead, the other ate with the appetite of a wolf. He had not spoken the password. Perhaps he assumed that everything was Understood because he had arrived with Franze. Well, he would have to give the password, so that everything should be in order.

The machine gun began to rattle again over the roofs near by. Anderl leaped to the switch and turned off the electric light. The candle was still burning but for a moment it seemed pitch-dark. "They'll fire into the windows, those scoundrels; they don't care who they hit," he said, and returned to the table, where he went on eating.

The searchlight came back and rested on the ceiling again. Anderl stopped eating and waited tensely. Mother Merk caught his mood. It was suddenly gloomy in the room. When the searchlight finally disappeared Anderl sliced the loaf of bread and stuffed the pieces in his pocket and under his sweater. "Iron

ration," he said and put on his cap. He turned to Mother Merk. "Dress warmly. It's cold as hell."

Mother Merk rose but did not move from the spot. "Where are you going so late?" she asked. She did not distrust him, but the password, he must say it, these were her orders.

Anderl looked at her frightened. Then he slipped around the table and stood close to her.

"Comrade," he said hoarsely, "you want the password. I don't know it. You're the only human being now who knows where the stores are. We are betrayed and sold out in the district. Scheller and three others of the command have been arrested; Heuberger has disappeared without a trace. We don't know where the chief command is, and can't find it. The comrades who are ready to fight, a few hundred, haven't five rifles among them. They're waiting for us."

Not a muscle moved in Mother Merk's face. Her eyes wandered to Franze. Anderl had the feeling that he was talking to a stone wall. He stopped, turned to Franze too, but gave up the idea again.

"There's no sense in waking him up. Have pity on him. Your name and address was all we could get out of him, and that was torture. I dragged him along as identification. All he does is go into reveries about Anna and the year '27 if you can make anything out of that."

"Anna 1927! I'll be ready in a moment," said Mother Merk and went into her bedroom.

Anderl, dumbfounded, followed her with his eyes. The door was already closed behind her before he understood. Anna 1927. That was it, that was what Franze with his last strength had been trying to say to him, the whole way. Anna 1927. That was the password. And he hadn't understood him. What luck that he had started to talk about Franze's fantasy, and now it turned out not to be a fantasy at all. If Franze survived, and even if he died, he ought to receive some mark of distinction from the Party. Anderl wiped the sweat from his face.

Mother Merk returned. She wore a long dark coat and a small old-fashioned fur cap over her short gray hair. A comrade of her husband had brought it from Poland twenty years ago. "You look like a soldier," said Anderl. He went to her and shook her hand earnestly. This woman impressed him, you could rely on her, they couldn't have chosen anyone better.

"I'm a scene shifter at the Volkstheatre," said Anderl. "We've taken a huge scenery truck that we can drive around all night and seem natural. We have a rendezvous with it in Kaiser Street at one. We'll just be in time. Do you know all the addresses and how to get to the depots?"

She 'merely nodded, went over to Franze, straightened the pillow and put a shawl over him. Anderl was already standing in the door to the hall.

"We can go now," she said. "But write a note in case he wakes up. You'll find paper and pencil there on my boy's table."

Anderl obeyed.

"My boy's table," she repeated in her thoughts. Where was he now? But . . . not to let fear rise, above all no fear—that was the thing.

She went into the kitchen, took a little bottle of brandy from its hiding place, put it on a tray with a glass of water, and brought it in. If Franze woke up he should have his medicine and a little pleasure.

Anderl had finished the note. "*Friendship. Anna i^T* he had written, nothing else. He showed it to her. "Is that enough?"

"He'll understand," she answered, stood the paper against the glass, and blew out the candle. "He knows where the switch is."

Anderl suppressed a curse over the failure of the general strike. He had better watch his language in the presence of this woman, and he must remember to tell the others to do the same.

No one met them on the stairs and they left the house unobserved. "If we're stopped we're on our way to our work at the picture palace in Kaiser Street to change the signs for the new

programme. You let me do the talking," said Anderl, looking in all directions.

The firing had diminished. One could see nothing at all, only hear; it was deeper in Ottakring. Farther up on the Belt the whole street was filled with soldiers in trench helmets. From below artillery came rumbling up. "Wave at them! We may be watched," said Anderl and lifted his hand and cried hurrah as the cannons and munition wagons passed by. Mother Merk could not bring herself to imitate him.

The searchlight stood in the middle of the park and played over the houses and roofs. "It must be very strong, a thousand watts," said Anderl with professional interest.

They reached the intersection and crossed the Belt on their way to the Inner City. No one stopped them. Two policemen with rifles let them pass. The firing sounded duller now between the houses, really like distant thunder. The wind was icy-sharp too. The streets were empty but the lights were on. Not a shot was heard from the Inner City. "The Seventh District is sleeping peacefully," Anderl said bitterly.

"Where do you want to begin?" Mother Merk asked.

Anderl stopped and tapped his forehead. "You're right, comrade, we must decide."

"Machine-gun depository Anna, old cemetery . . ."

"Impossible. The streets are closed. We can't get there except on foot unless the situation changes."

"Ottakringer 104, garret, walled in, red cross."

"Possible, if we can approach from the rear. I'll have to find out first. That will be my business too."

"Rifles two, Neustift Street, printing shop Siegel."

"That's better."

"Two hundred rifles, ten cases of munitions. No night shift. Janitor reliable, load in the yard without light. Many windows from surrounding houses."

She reported like a seasoned soldier. Anderl could hear Scheller speaking through her. Her voice was suppressed but

firm and distinct; each word she said echoed in her own head, drowned the anxiety over her boy, and strengthened her. With each word she became more and more impersonal, the way she wanted to be now.

They turned into Kaiser Street, which was broader. A troop of mounted police rode by. Ambulances passed them, lighted inside, with bent shadows on the milk-glass windows. Two tram-cars stood at the street crossing where the strike in the power houses had left them. A trembling elderly civilian with an armband was commanding a group of youngsters, one of them in an expensive fur coat, who were trying to hitch a large private automobile to one of the trams. A patrol of the Heimwehr with bayonets that glittered in the headlights of the car was protecting them against an invisible enemy.

"The swine," Anderl wanted to say, but whispered instead, "There's no current for the trams; I don't understand your bulb."

She nodded in her thoughts. The glowing of the bulb had frightened her too. Perhaps since then the strike had changed for the better.

There was no scenery truck, no truck at all, in front of the picture palace. By the clock at the corner it was just after one. "Well walk up the street, they'll come this way, we'll meet them," said Anderl. As they passed the theatre a man emerged from the shadow of the doorway and joined them.

"We are in Neustift Street," he said, in what Mother Merk recognized as the accent of an educated person. "Too many police pass this way."

"Good," said Anderl. "One hundred ten Neustift Street, printing shop Siegel. It's our first address."

"One hundred ten Neustift Street, printing shop Siegel," the man repeated pedantically, stressing every word, and dropped behind.

"That was Comrade Hansel, a college professor," Anderl said after a while. "Many of the educated ones won't stick to us now; you just can't trust the intellectuals."

Mother Merk did not reply. She thought of her son, who was an intellectual too, and strode on more vigorously.

The actual printing establishment of Siegel was in a modern house in the rear of Number no. In the old building on the street were the shop with its printing samples in the window, the small presses, and the offices, including that of the Tennis Club of which Siegel Junior was president and patron. The big presses stood on the ground floor of the house in the rear. In the upper floors were the typesetting rooms and the editorial offices of the small periodicals that the Siegels printed. The top floor was a huge half-empty storeroom. At night no work was done and no one was in the building, which was still and dark, except the watchman Vogel, "our old reliable Comrade Vogel," as Scheller had introduced him to Mother Merk.

She rang three times, very short rings, as agreed upon. At first nothing stirred behind the door. Anderl moved nervously. Then — she hadn't heard any steps — a voice within suddenly asked, "Who is it?"

"Vogel?" asked Mother Merk.

"Yes."

"Anna 1927."

The key clanked in the lock and was turned. One of the heavy double doors opened without a sound. "Well-oiled," thought Anderl. The light of a lantern fell upon him and Mother Merk. "Friendship, comrades," said the voice, out of the darkness behind the light. "Where is the truck, comrades?"

"It'll be here right away," answered Anderl and followed Mother Merk through the doorway. Vogel shook hands with her but said nothing. His lantern, fastened to his breast, moved about when he did, but that was all they could see. Anderl had the feeling that Comrade Vogel was tall and strong.

They could hear the truck approaching. Vogel reached up and pulled down the upper bolt of the other door. Anderl bent down, knocking his head against Vogel's knee, and quickly

pulled up the lower bolt. Then he stepped into the street and lifted his hand. The truck appeared, turned and drove without stopping straight into the yard. It was done so swiftly that the watchman and Mother Merk had to hurry to get out of its way. Anderl closed the doors. "It will be fine when we're out again," said Dr. Hansel, coming back to help Anderl, who had already finished. "Be glad you got in," Anderl answered.

The truck with lights turned off stood in the yard. The watchman's lantern swung around. Pieces of scenery—a tree trunk, a mountain backdrop, a piece of a meadow, two walls of a room—stuck out from the end of the truck. Their bright colours gleamed in the light of the lantern and disappeared again. The chauffeur jumped down from his seat. Anderl and Hansel came through the doorway. Their footsteps echoed on the cement.

"Don't make so much noise, follow me down, watch out, stairs," said Vogel, and they followed him on tiptoes. He led them into a cellar filled three quarters of the way to the ceiling with coal. "You must dig away about three yards of coal, till you come to the boxes. There are the shovels."

Anderl and the chauffeur followed the gleam of the lantern. Dr. Hansel looked thoughtful and aloof. He was trying to reckon how the coal could be removed in this narrow place with a minimum of exertion and a maximum of speed. He gave a course on labour-saving methods at the People's University. Meanwhile Anderl and the chauffeur began to shovel and he was in the way.

"Hasn't anyone a light?" asked Vogel. Hansel produced a small flashlight from his pocket. "We'd get ahead quicker if there were four of us," Vogel continued. "But you'll have to punch the time clocks for me, Comrade Merk. Let me show them to you." They left. He closed the door of the cellar and back in the yard he listened. Almost no sound was to be heard from the cellar. Then he explained:

"On each floor of the rear building there are two time clocks,

one on the front stairway, one on the back, which makes eight in all. Old man Siegel's plant burned down once and he's never got over it. I have to go through all the rooms on each floor, but you simply go up the front stairs, then cross the fourth floor through the corridor and go down the back stairs. You punch a clock about every five minutes. When you're through here, go into the front house where there is only one clock on the first floor. That gives you a fifteen-minute period till you begin over again. I think we'll be through loading the cases around three thirty. I'll give you my lantern and my keys. You can punch this clock right now. Yes, that's it, very simple, only tiresome. Don't be afraid if a mouse or a rat jumps your way. I rather like it when I'm alone."

He moved away in his soft felt slippers. For a moment she could hear the sound of the shovels distinctly, then it became duller. Even if she strained her ears, she could just barely make it out. She mounted to the first floor.

It was easy enough to punch the clocks. She had scarcely put the key in the lock when behind a little window a strip of paper moved on with a click and registered in violet type the hour and minute. Now 2:05. Then the machinery stopped again and the thing simply went on ticking like any clock. Strange all the things people thought up! She sat down on the first step of the second floor and put out the lantern.

Here she sat in this strange house in the stillness and darkness of the night. There were thousands of houses in Vienna, now in darkness, and thousands of stairs. Broad and narrow stairs, sharp-edged and round-edged, steep ones in the houses of the poor, low ones in those of the rich — wooden stairs and ordinary stone stairs and marble stairs with red runners. She had washed every kind of stair in her life, with sand and lye, often until her hands were sore and she couldn't kneel any longer.

To have to think of so many stairs! All waiting for day, and for the world to move on. There was something senseless in waiting stairs, just as in waiting people. They were alive, but

not in the time that was but in one that was to be. It was like being dead, except for being conscious and impatient, which hurt. Only three minutes had passed. Two more and then seven times five, that was thirty-five, all together thirty-seven; and then again nine times five, that was forty-five, all together still eighty minutes, almost an hour and a half. Not even a mouse ran through the hallway.

On every floor Mother Ivferk had to sit down and wait for time to pass. The higher she mounted the lighter, if only by a shadow, became the windows of the halls, and the deeper grew the silence, or so it seemed to her. Perhaps what one imagined was really reality. Karl had explained something like that to her once but she had not wholly grasped it. Because — that was her experience — if you imagined something false it was only in your head and outside there was something else. For instance, she was quite sure that she was now doing nothing but her duty in the fight for right and justice. Yet doing it she had to hide and pretend, she had to be silent and creep through the night like a thief and a housebreaker. Something inside her didn't fit with what was outside of her. Perhaps only her lack of education was to blame for that. But happiness was when what one imagined and the real world fitted together, especially when the imaginings of two human beings were the same — they called it love.

This time with Maria it was the right thing. She hadn't had that quiet feeling about any other girl. But love alone wasn't enough for life. One must be in tune with the whole world, for better and for worse, and not with just a part of it. Then it could happen that a person had to get along without love. How had she lived through the many difficult years without her husband? Because, in spite of everything, she had been at one with what was outside her, with what was everywhere and much stronger than a single human being, yes, with the entire beautiful and evil world.

If only the boy weren't making a mistake ... It didn't

matter about her any more, but he had his whole life ahead of him. The thought that he might ruin it was even harder to bear than the uncertainty. But she mustn't imagine that. He was mature, a grown man; a fearful mother easily forgot that. There was only one thing to do: keep discipline, not let fear rise; above all no fear.

When Mother Merk recrossed the yard from the front house they were just carrying out the first case of guns from the cellar. The four men bore it on their shoulders like a coffin. The boards gleamed pale, nobody spoke, they set their feet down softly in the darkness. Over the roofs came a gentle wind that hummed in the wires and brought from far away the sound of firing in the outskirts.

When she reached the yard for the second time, forty minutes later, the cases were all loaded. They had packed them behind the pieces of scenery, in the front part of the truck. Dr. Hansel leaned wearily against a wall his flashlight in his hand. Vogel came up to Mother Merk.

"Thank you very much, comrade," he said.

She gave him his keys and his lantern.

"First we'll deliver this; they're brand-new rifles," said Anderl, spitting on his handkerchief and wiping the coal dust from his face.

"You sit beside me, comrade, I'll help you up," said the chauffeur to Mother Merk, and after a pause, as he was helping her, "My name is Hermann." He had a deep voice and warm pawlike hands.

The motor started and the doors swung open. Hermann backed the truck out and gently, slowly, almost without sound, it moved through the driveway. The street was empty as the car straightened. Suddenly a yellow gleam appeared over the steering wheel. They looked up and saw a window lit in the house opposite the printing shop. A man was peering out. His face was in the shadow but the light was reflected on *his* bald head.

"The electric lights are on," thought Mother Merk; "one of the power houses is working, the other isn't."

Anderl and Dr. Hansel had closed one half of the door and jumped on the truck from behind. When the professor was up Anderl shouted, "Go ahead." Vogel stood in the open doorway and waved to them. The truck moved beyond the lighted window. When Vogel saw that light, he stopped waving.

"It frightened him," said Hermann. Then Anderl's voice came from inside the truck. "Did you see that bald head? I hope he doesn't call the police. They sent a message by radio urging all patriots to notify them of anything suspicious." His voice was hoarse again.

"I think you'd better all get out and let me drive on alone," said Hermann. He turned out of the street behind the *Liebr Augustin* monument and stopped in the darkest corner.

Mother Merk slid down. Hermann pressed her hand firmly. "Friendship," he said. "Friendship," she replied with a solemn feeling.

The cold wind cut. It had been warm behind the motor. She was chilled. Anderl and Hansel came from behind the truck. Hermann waved a greeting and moved on.

"You'd better go alone, Professor; I'll go with Comrade Merk," Anderl said.

Dr. Hansel turned up his coat collar, hesitated a moment, lifted his hat and said politely, "Good night."

"Good night," said Mother Merk.

"Friendship, Professor, Friendship, but you had better disappear now," said Anderl, and the professor went away, a slim figure, bent in the wind.

"We'll cross to the other side of the street," added Anderl.

"Listen!" said Mother Merk after two steps and stopped. Anderl was already standing still. There was the chug of a second car, a screeching horn, the sharp grinding of brakes, then silence. "They're not starting again," Anderl whispered.

The professor had reached the edge of the bushes beside the monument and saw what Anderl and Mother Merk only heard. A police car, which had come up the street, had deliberately blocked the way of the scenery truck. The policemen jumped out and surrounded the truck. Hansel withdrew into the shadow and joined the others.

"The police," he whispered. Anderl looked for a less dense spot in the bushes and bent the naked twigs apart, Mother Merk and the professor followed him. They saw Hermann leaning out and pointing down the street in the direction of the Volkstheatre. The police officer yelled something, it echoed between the street walls, and pointed his revolver at Hermann, who slowly raised his arms above his head and came down from his seat. The police began to pull the scenery from the truck.

"The trick didn't work," Hansel said.

"That bald head informed against us," said Anderl in a trembling voice. Firmly Mother Merk grasped his arm and for a second he looked gratefully into her eyes.

Shouting arose around the truck. The rifle cases had been discovered. The short fat police officer ran gesticulating to the rear of the truck. They handed him a rifle.

"Our good rifles," said Anderl.

The officer shook the rifle in the chauffeur's face and roared at him. The police enclosed the two in a circle and blocked the view. But Hermann was taller than all of them and his head and uplifted arms rose out of the group, visible in the light of the cars.

"He is lost," said Hansel.

"And we stand here and look on; it's a shame." Anderl ground his teeth.

"Pull yourself together," said Mother Merk and tightened her hold on his arm. He felt how it drew him forward.

The three kept their eyes on Comrade Hermann. Suddenly he was gone, only for a second. Policemen flew to right and left;

he dashed through the breach, disappeared between the cars, came out from behind the truck into the shadow of the houses and ran for his life.

The officer lay on the street. Policemen bent over him, others quickly took aim. There were cries and shots. Hermann sank to his knees and fell on his face a few feet from the corner that might have saved him.

"For the love of God," Anderl whispered, tore himself away, and rushed into the street. He had only reached the middle of it when Hermann leaped up and continued his flight. Anderl started as if he had seen a ghost. Then he saw the gleam of Hermann's laughing teeth and understood and wanted to turn and still, in his swing forward, staggered. Hermann cried out something to him and reached the corner. A shot rang out. It was too late; he was already racing up the side street. But Anderl threw up his arms and fell.

The firing awakened the street. Windows brightened, doors creaked, the curious came out. Mother Merk looked for Hansel but he was gone. She joined a man and woman who had come out of a house with a jug of water and a towel.

A policeman kneeled beside Anderl. He got up and said, "It's all over with him." The two people waiting to help stood as if embarrassed.

Mother Merk took the towel out of the woman's hand, knelt down and closed Anderl's eyes, spread the cloth over his face.

The police car drove by into the side street. Someone said, almost laughing, "They won't get that chauffeur. He was a front-line soldier; you could see that."

Mother Merk took a last look at Anderl, whom she had known for only two hours, and left. Not a trace of the professor. Franze must be informed of what had happened as quickly as possible. It was all she could do now. Poor quick Anderl, too quick. But it should not be in vain. Whatever happened, to control yourself, keep discipline, not let fear rise, above all no fear — that was the thing.

At about this time the rattle of the machine gun awakened Franze. The police had not been able to locate it in spite of their powerful searchlight. He reached automatically for his watch but, of course, he didn't have it any more. For a while he lay still and listened to the shooting. It came from all sides, except from the south; the comrades had not penetrated the centre of the city. But that was not to be expected yet. It would take all night to get all the weapons out of their hiding places.

Franze wanted to sit up in one move, but he couldn't. His whole right side was paralyzed. He tried hard; sweat stood on his forehead. Slowly he rolled over; his left leg was alive. He stood it on the floor. At last he sat upright, out of breath and exhausted.

Nothing moved in the flat. They were all gone. Anderl had been so slow, he hadn't understood him. Was his speech any better now?

Franze tried to say "Anna 1927." He heard himself merely babbling. He tried again with all his concentration, loudly and distinctly, and was frightened as he had never been before in his life. For he heard himself barking, barking, just like a little dog. It didn't matter, if only things were clear in his head; he could write and surely it couldn't last. But he leaned back and began to cry very softly.

The searchlight flashed into the room again and Franze saw the brandy and the note. He shoved himself sideways on the sofa until he reached it. He bent over and lit a candle. If his fingers had not been so nimble he couldn't have done it with his left hand alone. Even so the exertion made him dizzy, he could hardly read the words on the paper. Happily there were only a few, he made them out one after the other: "*Friendship. Anna 7927. Anderl.*" So Anderl had understood. Then all was well and he could drink a brandy. So considerate of Mother Merk' He would drink to her health. Without her no one would know where the arms were. To her and to the Josephine of twenty years ago, prosit!

It wasn't the pleasure that it used to be. The liquor made his heart beat faster but gave him no relief. On the contrary. He turned cold rather than hot and a feeling of terror choked him. Where was his collar? He couldn't cry out either, only bark like an idiot. Of course the doctor had been right: no excitement and early to bed. If only Josephine were here now; she would help him. Not to die alone, not so alone.

With all his remaining strength he pulled himself up from the sofa and tottered on his cane, his right leg dragging, to the window. It took him an eternity to open it, but then the air came cold and sharp and he could breathe again. Heavily breathing, he lay across the window sill. He did not notice that the searchlight swept over him, returned and paused. He stared down into the deep broad gorge of the street. A longing filled him to drift down and a sense at last of the salvation . . . not so far away now. . . .

He dragged himself back into the room. The pencil still lay on the table. He took the note and turned it over and wrote, "*Be brave, Josephine. Adieu. Ferdinand.*" He couldn't stoop for his hat, that was too risky. If it got him here it would be a nuisance to her. He blew out the candle. Nuisance wasn't the right word. It might put her in danger. The quicker he left the better.

He tottered through the hall and found the door. He dragged himself down the stairs — one step and drag the right foot after, one step and drag the right foot after — four endless flights. But he had to get out of the house, at least out of the house.

The wind in the street was a last joy. He felt it weakly, a gentle fanning; yes, he was already half-dead. But his heart was working hard again, as if it were paid for it. He must use that. Only to get away from the house. Adieu, Josephine, adieu.

A policeman saw him dragging himself hatless along the housefronts and thought him a wounded fighter trying to escape. He ordered him to halt and took aim, but even as he aimed the man collapsed, near a house that was being built.

Carefully the policeman went up to him, his rifle ready. To his surprise he found a huge fat gentleman wearing tails under his open winter coat. Thinking he had almost made a bad mistake, he knelt down beside him. He had never seen a face like that, but he knew this much, from experience: The man was dying. He was not wounded, no trace of blood.

A second policeman came up. "He's going fast," said the one on his knees.

Franze gasped for air. His eyes, wide open, were staring upward. Suddenly he drew himself up, stretched out his left arm in a gesture of warning and yelled something that was at first thick and incomprehensible, then sharp and clear but in an unnatural tone like that of an insane person: "Don't climb up there, boy, don't climb up there!"

Involuntarily the policeman looked up at the scaffolding. The wind rattled the boards.

Franze sank back; his head hit the pavement; one more groan, and it was over. "The next van can take him along," said the second policeman.

Mother Merk read Franze's farewell. Then she closed the window. "Be brave, Josephine." Her husband had said it too when he went off to the war. Men were always saying that.

Still in her coat she sat down at the table and her hands touched the telegram. The paper rustled. Then she buried her head in her arms and sobs shook her.

XIX

MARIA woke up late the morning after her return from the mountains, although she had determined as she fell asleep to telephone Karl at the factory as early as possible, shortly after eight. During the endless trip home she could not get the sight of the two brothers at the railway station out of her mind and she had suddenly remembered how Karl had looked when he had telephoned the Friends of Nature to warn them against the Nazis from Bismarck House. Since then she had been afraid for him. When he was not at the station to meet the train, her only desire, in her disappointment and weakness, was to hear his voice and to know that all was well with him. On tier way home on foot through streets whose emptiness was only deepened by the marching troops or the occasional police patrols and Heimwehr men she encountered, she pulled herself together. Her telegram had either not been delivered or had arrived late. Karl hadn't spoken of politics in all their hours together. He was not like Joseph. She reached home dead-tired but in a more hopeful mood. Yet when she found her father, whom events had kept awake, waiting for her on the staircase, and the Professor embraced her in an unusual rush of feeling, tears poured from her eyes again. "Yes, it's the end of our beautiful Austria," he said in despair. Her personal sorrow seemed suddenly small and yet — she could not help it — it was all that mattered to her.

A smile was playing round her lips as she opened her eyes, and she felt it linger until reality, moving nearer, dispelled the vague remnants of her dream. She lay motionless, knees drawn up, her head deep in the pillows, and, staring over the edge of the blankets, registered the beloved order of her room. Then she raised her head and listened. There was no shooting below in the square, motor cars were running, and above the roofs church bells sounded as they did every morning.

She got up and went barefooted, with quick steps, into the dressing room to get from her skiing suit the slip of paper on which Karl had written his telephone number. "AUTOMOBILE WORKS, FLORIDS DORF, CONSTRUCTION OFFICE" stood beside the figures, in capitals, like printing. His tenderness did not show in the letters, only his simple forcefulness. She noted the number. There was a rattle in the apparatus, then she heard the sound of the telephone ringing at the other end. Her heart was beating faster. She must announce herself as "Direction," he had impressed it on her, otherwise he would not be called to the telephone. Private calls were strictly forbidden. At regular intervals she heard the sound of the bell and she kept waiting for it again, and still again, though it was clear that no one would answer.

When she went into the studio for breakfast Louise, pale and tense, stood listening at a window which she had opened in spite of the severe cold. Involuntarily Maria stood still "and listened too. She was about to ask Louise to close the window when suddenly the panes rattled and the dull thunder of distant explosions crashed into the room. Louise, horrified, turned away from the window. "Now they're shooting with cannon," she cried and put her hands to her ears.

Maria went to her and put her arm about the girl's shoulder. "I beg your pardon," Louise stammered, trembling from head to foot. Slowly she recovered herself and continued with sobs: "My sister, she called me up. She's desperate. They're striking in the factory where her husband works and he hasn't been home

since yesterday. She's so happy with him. She worships him and they have a little child. He swore to her half a year ago that he would resign from the Defence Corps. But he was only lying to her. If anything happens to him, she'll go crazy. A wonderful good man he is, I'd have liked to marry him myself."

The panes rattled again and again and the explosions came from all directions. Maria had the same feeling she had had in the night on the trip home, that choking in the throat that took your breath away, that feeling of helplessness. She led Louise, who was crying softly, to the couch, and they sat down together.

"I'd like to ask you," Louise interrupted her weeping, and the long silence to which they had both surrendered: "Could I get off this afternoon instead of Friday and go to see my sister?"

"Of course you can. Go right away."

"No, I'll clean up first." She got up and went into the bedroom. Maria in her mind repeated the words, "She worships him." At that moment the telephone rang. Louise turned back and answered it. "The Baron," she whispered and slipped out.

Maria did not move. With every second of hesitation she felt more and more that the telephone, mirroring itself black and rigid in the polished table top, was lying in wait for her. In spite of the heavy artillery fire outside it became very silent in the room. From far away, ever so feebly, she could hear Wiesner's impatient voice: "Hello . . . Hello . . ."

"Yesterday . . ." thought Maria.

Everything had been so simple and clear. Now she felt a fear and depression that was almost like a bad conscience. Was it a bad conscience? She had imagined it would be so easy to tell him that all was over between them. She had not been afraid to see him again. Now she didn't even dare to go to the telephone. With shaking knees, she got up at last.

No answer came when she spoke. But scarcely had she hung up the receiver when the bell shrilled again.

"Hello—"

"Maria! Is that you at last?"

"Yes."

"How are you? I must talk quickly. Is everything all right?"

"Yes, everything . . ."

"Your voice doesn't sound as if it were . . ."

"Oh, yes . . ." She could not say Heinrich. To cut short a too pointed silence she asked, "Is It true that they're using artillery?"

"I can't discuss that, Maria. Promise not to go out; I'll tell you everything tonight. It isn't likely, but if a young man from Innsbruck turns up, it's the architect who is to rebuild the manor house. He wants to see the studio. You will like my plans."

"Yes."

"Why are you so subdued, Maria? All this will be over in two days."

There was a rattle and they were cut off. Maria was afraid the telephone would ring again but it didn't. The shooting had begun again.

While Maria was eating her breakfast as if it were an unpleasant duty, Louise said, "I put your engagement ring into your jewel case. You forgot it Saturday morning."

Maria blushed. She hadn't forgotten the ring, she had meant to leave it behind; she admitted it now to herself. If only he would realize that she was back. No, she wouldn't go out, he might call her up.

In the bathroom she stood naked before the mirror. She was the same and yet not the same. No one could see it and no one was to know. It concerned only Karl and herself. She must not say a word about him. Heinrich had no right to know. For it had been all over with Heinrich even before Karl, when he had gone to Langenbruck without her.

An Innsbruck architect! How imperturbable Herr von Wiesner was. What did he care about the world? Wasn't this the essence of his whole behaviour?-'Her father had said that Heinrich wanted to retire to the country with her. . Perhaps the return of the ring would not touch him, either. If it did, she was not sorry for him. In

her troubled ignorance she had given him every opportunity. But she was grateful now that he had never taken any advantage.

The longer Maria reflected the clearer it became that it must come to a talk between them, and the more nervous she became. Behind his inviolable surface lay something she had always wanted to know. It repelled and frightened her. Perhaps she was mistaken? In spite of everything, what he loved most was his superiority. Rather than show weakness he would resign himself with a sceptical smile. Half a year ago this way of his had impressed her. She took it for strength, for a hidden, adventurous strength against which she wished to measure herself.

She tried to get Karl again while she was dressing but without success. The telephone rang in the factory but no one answered. Neither could she reach the Birkmeiers. The connection with the Technological Institute, which she tried next, was functioning but her father was in his laboratory and she did not like to disturb him. Finally she called up her hairdresser, who answered in his servile voice; "No, indeed, we're not thinking of striking. On the contrary, we're very much at your service."

"Is it very bad in the city?"

"Bad? Complete calm and order!"

"But the firing?"

"I mean here in the Inner City, Fraulein Professor. The seat of war is in the outer districts. The Bolsheviks are holding the communal dwellings but not for long. Do you hear, the artillery fire is stopping. Probably the infantry is set to take them by storm. You can be sure by evening the whole thing will be over. We Christian artisans . . ."

Maria hung up. If it weren't for the fact that Herr Friedrich worked there she would have gone to Pepitta's hairdresser long ago. These Christian artisans talked like Uncle Schlager. He too would be glad, now that the Heimwehr were having it their way.

Nothing moved in the house. It breathed that stillness of the forenoon in which Maria usually came nearest to herself. Now it got on her nerves. Why couldn't people live together in peace?

Suddenly the shooting stopped completely. How accustomed your ears got to it. The infantry was set to take them by storm. It sounded like the history schoolbook, a sentence out of a description of the Battle of Custoza or Komggraetz. But it was reality. And it was happening in these very streets.

It was some time before Maria went on with her dressing. She liked to put on her silk stockings smoothly and then stretch her legs. Everything she enjoyed was suddenly senseless. "You have good legs . . ." She would never forget how shyly Karl had said it. He had meant beautiful legs. Why didn't he call? It couldn't be true, the thing she had forbidden herself to think, ever since last night. He couldn't leave her alone again, not right away. But she knew nothing about him yet. She only loved him.

She started in fright when she heard a knock at the door. It was Johann. "Mr. Joseph is downstairs," he said through the door. "He says I'm not to disturb you, but I think it would be better — He oughtn't to be left alone."

When Maria stepped out on the staircase a waltz began to roar through the house, loud, unexpected, insane. She could not move though she realized at once that Joseph must have turned on the radio. Then, abruptly, the music stopped.

Joseph was not aware of Maria as she entered the library. He was standing in front of the radio in his hat and coat, one arm on the cupboard, his head sunk on his breast. Out of the loud speaker came an energetic voice: "The Government has the situation thoroughly in hand. The attempt of criminal elements to unleash a civil war has been foiled by the unanimous patriotism of all strata of the Austrian people. Abandoned by their cowardly leaders only small groups of the Defence Corps are still resisting in spite of their hopeless situation. The attempt at a general strike has failed miserably. The State railways are running on time; the tramways of the capital will resume service immediately. Armed rebels who have been captured have been

turned over to the Martial Courts. The Government is determined to establish order and security by every means at its disposal. . . ."

With an angry motion, Joseph turned off the instrument and leaned on it. Desperate sobs shook him. It was a long time before he looked up. His face was pale, his eyes dry. "It isn't true," he whispered. "They lie; they must be lying."

"Then all is well," Maria answered a little against her will. It had given her relief to hear that the fighting was over.

"They lie," Joseph repeated, as if to convince himself. "When the men from Floridsdorf cross the bridges, then the real fighting will start."

Maria controlled herself. The men from Floridsdorf! She must not let Joseph see what a blow the word had dealt her. "I couldn't get your house on the telephone," she said quickly, taking cover behind the words.

"Yes," Joseph said and sat down exhausted in the nearest chair. He sucked in his breath and writhed as if in a convulsion, but it passed quickly. He looked at Maria, standing rather helplessly in front of him, and a grateful smile passed over his bloodless lips. Then in his nervous way he ran his hand through his hair and straightened up. "Pepitta will be so glad you are back. She has a piece of news for you. I have one too for that matter. A joke. My father has been arrested."

"Your father?"

"Yes, my father, the social patriot, not I. Imagine him in prison. I'd like to know what he thinks now. Is he sorry he pretended to be a Socialist, or does he believe that everything is a historical error, or is he already playing the hero?"

Joseph talked like a stranger. At the same time his irony had a cold suicidal tone. He became uncanny to Maria. She moved away from him and asked, "Where is Pepitta?"

He went on as if he had not heard her. "Mother is weeping her eyes out. Even the maid in the kitchen, who cares only about her trashy novels, cried. And Pepitta — " he gave a loud laugh — "Where is she? Well, I'll let you guess."

"Do pull yourself together," Maria said.

He continued as if he were talking to himself. "You hear that shooting. And what is my sister doing? She's having an audition in a theatre. She has achieved it at last. At least she knows what she wants, while I sit around and talk. But now I'm going."

Maria barred his way. "What did you mean when you said, 'When the men of Floridsdorf cross the bridges'?"

His eyes gleamed. "Like the men of Petrograd in 1917," he whispered and took her hand.

She wanted to question him further — his answers were never clear to her right away — but he looked at her with an expression that frightened her, as if he wanted to say something important. Instead he bent down slowly and kissed her hand. It was very strange. In her surprise she did not move as he straightened up and rushed out. An impulse to follow him gathered no strength. Like the men of Petrograd in 1917! If only Karl were safe. . . .

She went to the window. Freedom Square wore its normal appearance. A wedding was going on in the church. Carriages adorned with roses stood in front of the portal. The white horses crowded together in the cold. She saw Joseph cross the square and disappear. Where? What had come over him suddenly, to make him kiss her hand like that? He was secretly in love with her, she knew, but he had always restrained himself.

The telephone rang behind her. The shrill sound whirled her about and in two steps she was at the desk, full of hope, yet at the same time feeling it was not Karl. Her father answered.

"You called me, Maria?"

"I only wanted to know . . ." she stammered. She did not want to admit that she had been merely testing the telephone.

"Don't worry about me. I'm working. That's the only way to save one's reason. But the Institute is closed and I'm not lecturing tonight."

"The radio said that calm had been restored everywhere."

"You hear the shooting. Stay at home. I'll be back early."

Maria tried again to call Karl. She knew the number by heart now. Again no answer. If they were on strike it was natural. Father, like Joseph, didn't think the radio was telling the truth. Besides Karl thought she was still in the mountains. If he called up the Bismarck House Alois would tell him she had returned. But what if he couldn't get a connection? Would he think of calling her here? But what if he had other things to do now, like Louise's brother-in-law?

Maria went to the window again and watched the bride and groom and the wedding guests leaving the church. They all turned their heads at the sound of the firing, which seemed to Maria to be coming nearer. The infantry was not yet set to take the workers by storm. . . . The radio was not telling the truth. What truth? There are so many — how angry Karl had been with her for saying that. That was the difference. He had only one truth and Wiesner had many. It came to her suddenly that having only one truth was a very dangerous thing. She had to know where he was! She couldn't wait any longer. Her father had faith in the ultimate triumph of science and went on working, Wiesner thought of his idyll in Langenbruck, Joseph suffered in confusion, Pepitta was pursuing her career — she could imagine them all; only about him, the one who was closest to her, she knew nothing. Even his image was beginning to fade in her mind, the more she thought about him. The features became indistinct. Only the feeling remained, of his mouth, of his forehead. . . .

As soon as dinner was over — she ate a little only on Agnes' account — Maria left the house. A vicious cutting wind swept round the corners. Policemen patrolled the streets in pairs. Otherwise there was no sign of change. Or did people move faster than usual, as if driven by something one did not see? Behind the coffeehouse windows the same life went on — people talking, gesturing, waiters serving, readers buried in their newspapers, cardplayers. Two girls looking at hats in a milliner's window

laughed suddenly, who knew why? In front of the bank stood the porter with his Franz Josef beard, dignified as ever.

Maria walked aimlessly at first and suddenly found herself in a small post-office station. She still hesitated. The room was dim, all the windows yawned, but there were no clerks behind them. Going nearer, she could see them gathered about a loud speaker in the rear. Single words of the announcer came to her: ". . . order . . . energy . . . Fatherland . . ." and the names of cities. Finally she was observed. A young man came to a window and she asked if the special delivery service was working. He cast a careful glance behind him and then, after studying her distrustfully for a moment, he said in a low voice, "Not beyond the Belt." As a second clerk approached he continued in a loud voice, "All postal services are functioning as usual." At the same time he quickly put a finger to his lips. Maria understood. Not beyond the Belt. No farther. Karl lived in the Ottakring District, beyond the Belt.

She felt easier as she set out toward the Ring. Now that only one possibility remained she was no longer in doubt as to what to do. Karl had told her so little about his circumstances; all she knew was his address and that he lived with his mother. In their few hours together the accidents of life had meant nothing—only two days ago and now it seemed an eternity. It didn't make any difference whether his mother liked her or not, she had to know where he was. If she knew she could at least be with him in her thoughts. Without him life had no meaning for her any more, neither space, nor time, nor matter, which were all identical, merely different methods of seeing things, as her father said. He could work, so as not to lose his head. Men were different. They could be self-sufficient. A woman was nothing without a man—she felt joy and smiled secretly, in her heart. It was the first time she had thought of herself as a woman.

At the Schotten Gate the Ring was closed by wire entanglements. People had to go through a narrow passage under the

eyes of the police. Next to the university all kinds of vehicles were for hire, outmoded cabs, private cars, even furniture vans, to take the place of the trams. There were hand-written placards with directions and prices. An open wagon with green benches was already filled and the passengers were urging the driver to leave. But he wanted to make the most of the occasion. "Alser Street Ottakringer to Galitzinberg," he cried. "No danger on this route." He was like a barker in the Prater. At Votiv Church it struck three. Maria stopped for a moment, but she decided to go on foot. Ever since her way and her goal had been plain to her, she had ceased to be in a hurry.

Ambulance after ambulance drew up in front of the General Hospital; they came around every corner. At the Municipal Theatre a placard announced that it was closed. On a tattered poster beside it the words "State of Emergency Declared" could still be read. At the stage door actors-and actresses and stage-hands were standing about, but scattered at the approach of a Heimwehr patrol. On Lerchenfeld Street troops and machine guns and trench mortars passed by, and tanks, which Maria had seen before only in the newsreels. Why did little Austria possess such armaments at all?

The streets she was walking through now were unfamiliar. There was nothing special about them, they looked like all the streets in the middle districts, lower middle class, yet they made her afraid. Many of the shops were closed, their shutters down, gray squares in the fronts of houses, as on a Sunday. There were policemen at every corner. The shooting sounded nearer at every step, and more uncanny. There were yellow flashes in the leaden sky and the earth trembled. Faces crowded the windows and silent people stood at the crossings; passing them was like running a gauntlet. Heimwehr men were bivouacked in the small parks on the Belt. The whistle of a locomotive of the city railway cut the air.

The corner of Kopp Street, Karl had said. But there were two corners. On the left one the street was closed. People who wanted

to pass there had to identify themselves. Maria thought of her student's card issued by the Academy, but she might as well try the house at the other corner first.

In the dark doorway there were no name cards. She didn't want to ask the janitor. She had the sudden senseless feeling that she was doing something forbidden and went quickly upstairs. Three doors faced her at the top of the first flight. It was so dark that she had to step close to every door to make out the names above the bells, strange meaningless names. Second floor. Third. Someone was practising on the piano — with bad fingering, she could hear that; out of an open door came kitchen fumes. The whole house smelt of poverty. From the third floor on, light entered the staircase through small windows that looked out on a gray dirty shaft. It was not so difficult any more to read the names on the doors. At last, on the fourth floor, she knew she was in the right house. From a distance she recognized the four black letters on a little white shield. Merk, that was all. Hesitating, anxious, with beating heart, she went ahead. On the landing she paused to catch her breath. She did not know she had hurried so. There was no sound except those melancholy scales, up and down. She went softly to the door. Nothing moved behind it. If no one was at home where would she wait? She pressed the bell shyly.

She heard a door moving inside, and steps, but they were not Karl's. The lookout was opened. It made a scraping noise, then there was silence full of suspense. Maria felt an eye she could not see looking at her. Next the chain rattled and the door was opened.

The dim light of the hall window behind Mother Merk did not reach into the half-darkness of the staircase. They stood opposite each other, their faces in shadow. Only a moment passed before Maria asked for Engineer Merk, but that moment was full of understanding. Mother Merk knew who it was before her and understood much of Karl's restlessness during these last weeks. This time it was the right one. And Maria knew that

this was his mother. The kinship was revealed in the same reserve, the same unforced, upright, but sturdy bearing. The sense of the predestined and unchangeable that drew her to Karl was even more pronounced in the figure before her, but stranger and more strict. By contrast there was something hearty in the voice with which Mother Merk said, "Won't you come in?"

"If I may," Maria whispered.

Mother Merk switched on the light, looked up and switched it off again. Maria involuntarily followed the movement of her head, the look,—angry it seemed to her,—and did not understand its meaning.

"Everyone calls me Mother Merk, and I suppose you are Maria," said Mother Merk.

"Yes," Maria replied and felt herself blush.

"Keep your jacket on; there's no heat," Mother Merk continued and put her hand on Maria's arm, stroking the fur. The gesture cased Maria a little, and following Mother Merk into the living room she observed that she had on a long coat as if she had been about to leave. But that was not the reason. It was really ice cold. On the table lay some knitting and a telegram.

"I read it; but it did not come until after midnight," said Mother Merk. Did that mean that Karl had not seen it? They sat down.

"The train was three hours late," Maria said, only to gain time while this sober room and this uncommunicative mother grew stranger and stranger to her with every second and the dreadful anxiety over Karl which she had held in check all day began to choke her.

"Three hours late, but they don't strike, the railway workers," said Mother Merk. "Was everything quiet on your trip or not?"

Hesitatingly, with suppressed impatience, Maria answered: "The stations were full of Heimwehr men. Near Meidlung they put out the lights in the train and made me crouch on the floor because of the shooting outside."

"But the train arrived," said Mother Merk without emphasis

but stubbornly. Here again was that second meaning that Maria did not understand. It seemed to be the same thing that was forcing itself upon her from these four poor walls. She was frightened, but the tension in her heart at last gave her courage. "Where is Karl?" she asked in a soft and trembling voice.

Mother Merck did not answer. There was silence, then a machine gun began to rattle quite near, but stopped at once. Maria quivered, but Mother Merck drew herself up. Suddenly she said tensely, and her voice was hard: "He is there."

The answer said merely what Maria already knew, but expression made it real. Tears she had forbidden herself since morning welled up, but the face opposite her, which looked more and more like Karl's with its clear unwavering glance, did not permit her to cry. Its pain, the same as her own — Maria felt it in spite of the strangeness between them — was under control, the same irrepressible sorrow, but more unalterable by reason of an affirmation that lay in those unflinching eyes.

Maria felt two tears roll down her cheeks, tears she could not hold back, but her voice sounded quiet and firm as she said, half to herself, "I must go to him."

It was clear at once that these were only words, an unfulfillable wish. She knew it herself before Mother Merck, waiting till the machine gun fell silent again, answered, not in contradiction but in such a way as to smother all hope: "All we can do is wait." Then the clock on the wall struck the hour in a tone so warm that it accentuated the iciness of the air.

Mother Merck kept her eyes on the clock. "Wait," she repeated suddenly. Only the one word, but behind that, too, was the second meaning that Maria did not understand but that grew stronger and stronger, deeper than her own unhappiness, greater than the sorrow of the mother over her son, mightier than everything — an unknown, hidden force that filled this strange woman and flowed from her. And the more Maria perceived it, the more she also felt the profound likeness of mother and son and her own sense of being ignorant and outside.

"You could do me a favour," Mother Merk interrupted the silence. Her voice sounded now so matter-of-fact that by contrast it stressed the short exchange that had gone before. "Here is some change. Would you bring me a litre of milk and a loaf of bread?"

"Milk and bread," Maria repeated and got up. A yearning seized her, to run and not stop running until she was back home in her own world, where she could understand herself and what was happening to her.

It was dark in the street and searchlights were beginning to play over the houses. The grocer looked at her suspiciously but said nothing. She ran back quickly. The piano student was still playing those scales. Mother Merk was waiting behind the door of the flat and while she took the things into the kitchen Maria waited in the hall.

Mother Merk came back and switched on the light; its sudden glare hurt the eyes. On the clothes rack hung Karl's rucksack. Maria looked at it, past Mother Merk. Then as the silence dragged on their eyes met.

"I am glad for Karl, and you must come back," said Mother Merk. She seemed about to step nearer to Maria but she did not move.

"Yes," Maria breathed and turned and pressed the doorknob.

She hastened down the dark stairs, groped her way out of the house, and ran across the Belt. At Kaiser Street she found a taxi and took it, and sitting in a corner began to cry quietly and resignedly, out of helplessness.

At the Parliament Building Heimwehr patrols stopped the taxi and asked her for identification, and she had to identify herself again at the wire entanglements at the Schotten Gate.

"They put on airs but it's really all over," said the chauffeur. And when she paid him, "You were my first customer in the new era."

She found Louise radiant. "My brother-in-law is back safe and sound," she cried. Then she saw the face of her mistress.

"No one called, Louise?"

"No, no one at all."

Maria ran up to her studio. Entering, she stood still. Light flashed in the sky in the direction of Floridsdorf. A dark rumbling came from far off and the windowpanes rattled.

When he came home, Professor Steiger asked about his daughter and was told that she was in the studio. He climbed up to the top floor, which he did only rarely — but all day long he had had an indefinable feeling of anxiety about her, about her tears in the night, and her distress, which he had only noticed afterwards. This feeling had been intensified by the mood of the whole day, his consciousness of the brutalities going on about him, from which he had tried in vain to escape into science with its remoteness from humanity. This primitive reality was more easily despised than ignored.

Maria turned with a start when the door opened and the light from the hall fell into the room. She had been sitting motionless on the couch ever since her return. She had watched the reflection of the firing in the sky as long as it went on. Now for a long time she had been staring into the black curtain of the night. His mother was right. All that remained was to wait. Her tears had dried.

"Maria?"

"Yes, Father." She got up quickly, relieved that it was not Wiesner.

"You're sitting in the dark."

"It was like sheet lightning, only more regular."

"Do you feel belter than last night?"

"I'm not frightened any more."

Something that was more like shyness than embarrassment lay between them. There was so much in Maria's heart that she could not tell him yet; it was the same with him. He had avoided her for weeks, ever since he had understood that she was no longer a child. So many unanswered questions hovered sud-

dcnly between them. His consent to her engagement had troubled his conscience. He had educated her to independence but could he leave her to her own decisions? Was he letting her go so easily in order to create a place for another? There was no complaint in the letters from Florence but he knew how delay hurt. Why did he not speak freely to Maria about Fraulein Berg? Why did he wait to have her gone? Was he ashamed before her?

"I'm glad," he said and patted her cheek. She followed him and watched him descend the winding stairs. His steps were heavy, his back bent. Was he careful or growing old? There was something strange, unruly, in him since Christmas. Or perhaps everything seemed changed to her because at that time she herself had changed.

When Maria came down to supper Johann was removing the third cover. The Ministry had called to say that the Baron von Wiesner could not come. Maria was amazed at the indifferent way she took the news. She did not even feel relief.

Steiger was standing by the radio. "The Minister of Education," he said bitterly. Out of the loud speaker came a voice that was pretending to be more energetic than it was. The voice issued, in the name of the Government, an ultimatum to the members of the Defence Corps who "in ignorance of the general collapse of their criminal rebellion were still offering resistance to the troops of the constitutional Government." Anybody who voluntarily laid down his arms by noon of the next day could count on mercy. After that deadline no quarter would be given. The speech followed the information that Wenzel Heuberger, Defence Corps leader of the Viennese districts Six to Sixteen, had given up and had urged his companies to lay down their arms. "I beg for mercy for my men who, misled by a blind trust in their party leaders, engaged in the regrettable excesses of the last few days." This ended his declaration.

Johann softly announced supper.

"The Government represents its situation as better than it is," Steiger said angrily.

Maria looked up. "Does it make any difference to you, Father? You were always against politics."

"I only said that politics was not my task or concern."

"And Joseph?"

"He is too young, he knows nothing yet."

"But he's on the right side, isn't he?"

"Only emotionally, with no insight or experience."

"Isn't that enough, if he's on the right side?"

"Perhaps, under these primitive circumstances."

After supper Steiger went up to his bookshelves. He waved at the volumes with a weary gesture and said, "Four thousand years of human thinking, and still no end of murder and hypocrisy."

The sound of futility was so terrible in his voice that Maria took a step toward him. At this moment the telephone rang. She was afraid to answer. But it was Pepitta.

"I'm calling from a pay station," she said in a hurried excited way. "Our service is still cut off by the police. I'm so frightfully anxious about Joseph; he's not home yet. It's driving Mother crazy."

"He was here at noon, Pepitta."

"Did he tell you what he intended to do?"

"Not a word." Maria did not speak of Joseph's strange behaviour. She did not want to get Pepitta any more worried.

"If he should do something rash — I've got a horrible premonition — I couldn't even tell Mother. She's a little calmer because Dr. Koller assured us that the political prisoners were not being badly treated. They say Father is proud that he was arrested and not Joseph. It's quite like him. If only nothing worse happens to the boy."

"How did the audition go, Pepitta?"

"There simply wasn't any. I waited for the director for two hours. He was probably too scared to come in from his country place and the theatres are closed."

As Maria hung up she saw her father beside her.

"Anything wrong with Joseph?" he asked.

"He hasn't been home. Pepitta is scared and so am I. He was here at noon and acted strangely and when he left he kissed my hand in a solemn sort of way — as if it were a farewell forever, I feel now."

Steiger walked up and down. He took a book from the shelves and put it back. Maria stood by the window and listened. It was silent outside and the sky was black.

"There's nothing Joseph can do; the zones of fighting have been closed off," said Steiger — but he did not sound convinced. The telephone rang again.

Steiger answered. Maria went quickly to him and whispered: "Say I'm tired and have gone to bed."

It was Wiesner, as she had expected. She heard her father excuse her and reassure him. She pressed her forehead against the cold windowpane and was ashamed. Why did she avoid him? Why didn't she tell him that she loved someone at last and knew what life was — happiness and unhappiness.

"He couldn't have come anyhow; the offices are working continuously," said Professor Steiger behind her. She felt that he was waiting for an explanation and turned around.

"I'm not going to marry him," she said slowly. There were tears in her eyes but her face was calm and without pain and there was a kind of radiance about it. It made Steiger happy.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Not now, Father. I'll tell you when I can. Good night."

Far into the night Steiger read in his Mommsen, lines read and reread that gave him a sense of the slow movement of human life. Hurrying circumstances seemed only the shallow foam of the sluggish stream of history. While his thoughts sought order in the labyrinth of the invisible world and approached the inner structure of the mystery in the face of which man and his life were trivial, he thought of his daughter with a shy tenderness. And then of Joseph whom he loved like a son. In a creative moment the immature boy had once said:

"Everything ought to be reduced to one sign. Then there will be tranquillity." He himself, as a mathematician, reflected, "To one formula. Then we would be freer."

Maria lay very still and stared at the window. The sky was motionless and black. Sometimes her imagination made it glitter like the little frozen windows of the taxi. It would not be long till morning. Perhaps she would be as jubilant as Louise, who had been so unhappy too.

She whispered into the darkness, "I am with you, Karl, wherever you are."

AT THE time Maria told her father that she would not marry Wiesner, Karl was standing at his post behind one of the barricades which the motormen of Floridsdorf had built of overturned snowploughs, paving stones, mattresses, and sand. That had been done in the afternoon, after the garrison of Schlinger Hof had sent word that the great tower, their main defence, from which their machine guns had been repelling all attacks, had been demolished by a direct hit of the artillery. The district command ordered the men to hold out as long as possible and they fought for every flight of stairs and for every corridor until after dusk. It was night when they withdrew, those who were left, to the tram depots. There, for hours now, they had been waiting for the pursuing enemy.

Karl's eyes tried to penetrate the darkness. Above the black, empty chasm of the street, the low heaven flared up pale yellow each time that the sound of cannon rolled hither over the rooftops from the western bank. A light snow was falling. The light from the clouds was reflected, more feebly, in the windows of the houses. The panes in the dark walls showed up, foggy and dead, like the eyes a blind man opens. From the Workers' Home and the railway station could be heard now and then the short coughing of a machine gun. Except for this an uncanny silence pressed heavy on the entire district.

Behind him Karl could hear the voices of his comrades, who lay waiting their turn in the depot, sheltered from the sharp east wind. In the depths of the big hall a wounded man was crying. Probably the nurse had no morphine left. All afternoon she had been giving hypodermics. The girl reminded him of his mother in her laconic, unassuming severity.

"All quiet," Karl reported, as Kraus came out.

"They haven't time for us. The Heimwehr are looting the Schlinger Hof. They chased all the people into the big courtyard and they're making them stand at attention in the cold, with their arms raised high, women and children too. They strike down anyone who doesn't obey or can't stand it."

"And the military?"

"Waiting for reinforcements. The radio caught a conversation between the commanders."

"Then the old box is good for something." All afternoon Karl had failed in his efforts to get in touch with the central command of the Corps.

Behind the cover Kraus lit a cigarette and inhaled. Then he handed it to Karl.

"We had better keep an eye on Ott, he can't stand the gaff," Kraus said after a moment in which both listened to a far crying that arose and died again. "He's sitting in there all alone on the steps of a tram."

"Was it so bad?" Karl asked. He had been summoned from Schlinger Hof to the car-barns to operate the short-wave sending apparatus, and had left before the bombardment had set in.

"I just counted. I have forty-seven men left out of a hundred." Kraus's voice was quiet and firm as usual, he might have been relating, on a mountain tour, a story about the World War. But Karl knew how he felt. He gave him back the cigarette. "You should get an hour's sleep before it starts again."

To this Kraus did not reply. The glow of the cigarette threw a reddish gleam on his face, but it remained gray as lead. "I've been on the roof," he began again. "The firing is going on in

all the outer districts. You can see it distinctly, by the explosions. On the Laarberg light rockets are shooting up, red and green, as in the war. Only around Karl Marx Hof everything is quiet. I'm afraid they've lost that too."

Kraus was annoyed with himself. He had forbidden discussion among the comrades inside, and he couldn't hold his own tongue. It didn't matter with Karl, who had never taken a rosy view, but the misery, the contrast between yesterday and today, was better left unexpressed. Not twenty-four hours ago he had been with his patrol on the west bank in the Karl Marx Hof. Proud and confident, the comrades had refused the reinforcements he had brought them. They simply wanted the men of Floridsdorf to protect their flank and hinder the southward advance of troops from the Klosterneuburg garrison. At dawn he had returned, with the good news and with no casualties, to his own district where all the police stations had meanwhile been occupied. There was a shortage of trained leaders—they had been arrested one after the other during the last weeks—nevertheless, everything looked promising, better than was to be expected, until the first reverse. At daylight they lost the fire station from which they could have kept the police headquarters in check. They could not even prevent the capture of the firemen, who had joined the Defence Corps with their chief. Soldiers and the armoured cars that suddenly appeared had forced them to retreat to Schlmger Hof. Now that was lost too. It was stupid to let yourself be depressed by it; they still held all the other communal blocks, the Workers' Home, the railway station and the car-barns. That would give the State's power plenty to do. The comrades on the west bank could count on Floridsdorf to protect their flank. But it was so dead silent over there! The worst sign was that from the roof he had seen the night express go by as he did every night from his flat. But he mustn't think of home either.

Again the wind brought that crying through the darkness. It sounded much nearer now, a strange howling, louder or softer

with the wind, but nearer and nearer, from behind the bend in the street.

"They're searching the houses and driving the people out," said Kraus. "We'll soon know exactly. I have a patrol out. They'll be back any minute. Don't mistake them in the dark."

"Where is Schurl?" Karl asked. The lad had not left his side the whole day; an hour ago he had disappeared.

"I sent him home to put on something warm. He lives near here. Maybe his mother won't let him out again," Kraus answered with sly amusement in his voice. Then he listened once more. Karl too turned his head into the wind. The crying beyond the bend had ceased; instead they heard the chugging of motors and the rumble of wheels.

With one leap Kraus reached the door of the depot and cried into the hall, "Alarm!"

The men came out. Their voices and heavy steps and the thud of their guns deadened the distant rumbling. Then it was silent again. They listened for the enemy. Not a word was spoken. Karl could not make out who it was that came and lay down beside him behind the barricade. But from the way it was done, carefully, gently, without pushing, he thought it must be Ott.

Suddenly, there at the bend of the street, nine hundred feet ahead, the night became light and glaring. Sharp searchlights struck the houses at the right; they were four white circles that moved forward, grew, and blended together, catching windows and signs, with their silly, everyday inscriptions, and lifting them out of the darkness. The hammering of motors and the roar of wheels came nearer, louder and louder, and resounded from the walls with brutal, nerve-shattering force. The armoured cars were not yet visible, they would come around the corner any moment.

"Lie low! Keep your heads in! Save your ammunition and don't shoot without orders," Kraus commanded.

Suddenly, as if it had been cut off, the roar of the wheels was silent. The searchlights came to rest on the housefronts halfway between the bend and the barns. The motors hammered more feebly, stopped, started again weakly. Karl heard Ott whispering beside him as he did in the canteen when he didn't want anyone at the next table to hear him. "Wrong tactics, entirely wrong. They wouldn't listen to me. Playing the military. Competing with an army, a modern army, such madness!"

The commander of the garrison of the barns, one of the few old leaders the police had not caught, came out of the barn.

"Forty-seven men," Kraus reported.

"Attention," said the commander. "Our machine guns on the roof will cut off the street behind the armoured cars. Let them approach. They don't mind rifle fire. We found that out at the Schlinger Hof. Have your hand grenades ready and throw them all together. That's the way to finish them. We must hold the barns, whatever comes. The comrades on the other bank are fighting. It's our duty now to draw as many forces toward us as possible. They shall not say that Floridsdorf failed. We have nothing to lose. The gallows is waiting for anybody who gets captured. But anyone who falls dies for our ideal: Freedom!"

"Freedom," a dull chorus answered.

"A Herr Captain," Ott whispered sarcastically. "A hundred men through the main sewer canal underground into the centre of the city to blow up the ministries. That would have finished these Christian murderers by yesterday. Wrong tactics from beginning to end. Nobody listens to me."

"I'll sneak up on them along the dark housefronts and get them from the side. Quick! Grenades!" cried Weissmueller, a factory foreman, and turned on a flashlight, covering it against the enemy.

"Agreed," Kraus answered. Weissmueller, a huge fellow, high and heavy as a mountain, tied a bunch of hand grenades to his belt, jumped up on the barricade and down the other side. With the cry "Freedom!" he disappeared into the darkness.

Suddenly the light of the searchlight at the bend went out, but not entirely—a weak shine remained like fog over water. *Singer Sewing Machines—Wood Depot—Metndl Coffee—*Karl could still read the signs, and "Grand Hotel" on a big movie poster, but the head of Greta Garbo was in shadow. He remembered the salesman in the train Saturday, and the way he had raved about her.

"They might as well come,"¹ said a nervous voice.

"They're afraid of Weissmueller," a bass voice answered. It was meant to be humorous but no one laughed.

Kraus distributed the grenades. "Wait for the word of command. When I say 'Now'¹ tear the fuses. Then I'll count one, two, three. At three throw the grenades under the cars, all at the same time."

He did not give grenades to Karl or Ott.

"You two watch the housefronts to the right and Schneider and Herzog those to the left. Don't let anyone sneak through along the walls. They'll try it."

Karl knew that he had not been given hand grenades because he had never learned to throw them. He wasn't really a soldier. With this feeling he gripped his rifle and felt his cartridges. His pockets were full; he still had all he'd been given the evening before; he hadn't had to fire a shot. The patrol to the Karl Marx Hof the night before had been a mere walk; in the morning he had been in reserve and then he had been summoned here from the Schlinger Hof before the fighting began.

For practice he aimed at a shadow which took on, in his imagination, human shape. But he felt that it was only a target and not a human being. Perhaps that was the explanation why men could shoot at other men as if it were nothing. Was he afraid of it? He felt himself gritting his teeth and pressing firmly against the barricade. Thank God it was dark. At least it hid his restlessness from the others. But it also increased the distance between him and his neighbours, created a new loneliness for each man. He listened for the hammering of the motors

behind the bend, but the more he listened the stiller it grew around him. The cannonade on the west bank had ceased. Ott whispered no more. Only the wind gave a sharp and evil whistle, cold and thin. They might as well come.

The tension expanded time as the darkness did space. Kraus was still distributing hand grenades after what seemed to Karl an eternity. Suddenly a sharp cry cut through the night, a woman's cry, shrill and unnatural, a cry of total horror, drowning out the weak hammering of the motors but coming from there, behind the bend, first moving nearer and then, dying, farther away. A moment of deep silence followed, in which there was nothing but the black night and the hard rifle in his hands; then the cry was repeated. No, it only began and broke off, suffocated into a second of breathlessness. Then as if at a signal the whole street behind the bend broke into a hundred cries, a thousand, shrieking between the walls, above the roofs, through the darkness, as if the whole unseen district were but a single cry.

Suddenly Ott sprang on the barricade and shouted with a power one would never have suspected: "The Heimwehr are massacring them. Forward!"

Kraus pulled him back and down. Others too had leaped up and yelled in confusion for an instant. A few shots detonated near the bend of the street and cut off both the crying there and the shouting here. Then again it was quiet, dead quiet and all that was heard was the hammering of the motors and the groans of the wounded man in the car-depot, which started up again, or had never stopped.

The voice of the commander came through the darkness. "Anybody who can't control himself might better lay down his gun and go home." But his admonition was no longer needed. The workers lay quiet on the barricade again. The searchlights glared full force from behind the bend and moved forward; motors and wheels thundered. Any second the tanks would appear. The attack at last!

It was still some time before the armoured cars came into view, but when they did the defenders of the barn no longer cared. Another sight had rivetted their eyes and strained every fibre of their hearts. In the bend appeared not the expected enemy but men with hands above their heads, the disarmed comrades of the patrol, whose return Kraus had been awaiting. There was an outbreak of curses, then a sudden silence on the barricade. For these prisoners were followed by row on row of civilians, filling the whole width of the street, but only women, children, and old men. Among them, using them as cover, marched the police. Lighted from behind by the glare of the searchlight, the mass turned slowly towards the car-depot. The armoured cars drew nearer, moved round the bend, and their searchlights turned from the housefronts to the depots. Now the living barricade of the State's might halted, opposite that other barrier of iron and sand over which waved the red flag of the people. Horror paralyzed the mass. But only for a moment; the police began to beat them and run gun butts into their backs, mercilessly driving them on. Bayonets flashed high among those heads, went down as the gun butts hit the backs, rose high again, disappeared; and a heavy stumbling forward movement set in and was gradually accelerated. The roaring and rumbling of the armoured cars drowned out the cries of pain. Now and then a scream flew up and out from the depths, like a frightened bird escaping. But the hostages moved on, relentlessly driven forward, the whole width of the street, nearer and nearer.

On the barricade Ott was the first to find his voice. "They understand civil war," he cried. There was something diabolic in his tone that went through everyone.

"The scoundrels," shouted the man with the bass voice, in contempt.

"What are we to do now?" asked a nervous voice.

"Wait for the command!" cried Kraus.

Shots crashed in front of the barricade. The leader of the

captured patrol had made a sudden dash for the car-barn. Now he lay in front of it, in the brilliant rays of the searchlight, his face on the pavement, alone in a pool of his blood.

The armoured cars stopped midway between the bend and the depot. The police ceased to press their hostages forward. The glowing light of the cars streamed over their heads; they stood, pressing together, a dark wall, no faces showing. Lamenting voices and the wails of children came to the barricade, borne by the wind.

"We'll give up our good position," Ott whispered. "Fools."

"We can't shoot our own people," Karl answered.

"Why can't we?" Ott hissed. "War is war."

No other word was spoken on the barricade, but it was as if they were moaning in unison, so heavy was the breathing of the defenders.

"Don't shoot without orders!" Kraus cried senselessly into the silence. The hour struck from a near-by steeple.

Karl counted the strokes while he took aim at the trench helmet of a soldier. At the word of command he would have to pull the trigger, whether he wanted to or not. Life had become so primitive.

On the flanks of the barricade, far away behind the houses, machine guns began to rattle. Sparse rifle fire replied. From the east, perhaps only because the wind came from there, the firing sounded stronger.

"They're surrounding us," someone cried.

"What on earth is the command doing?" Ott whispered. "Either or, attack or retreat. Are we to lie here until they take us?"

In the next second a tremendous detonation resounded from behind the armoured cars. A mine flew up over the barricade and exploded on the roof of the car-depot. A rain of glass and wood and iron hurtled down.

Through the noise of the explosion came the order to retreat. "Toward Garden City, Company Kraus protecting left flank."

Hardly had the voice of the commander sounded when Kraus, again the old soldier, gave the order: "Evacuate the barricade, through the depot to the side exit, then leave in wide formation." A second mine exploded in front of the barricade.

Karl saw the body of the leader of the patrol flung far up, and the pressure of the air threw him against the wall of the depot; he was pushed into the throng at the entrance and thrust into the darkness inside. He ran like all the others toward the cries of the wounded man, passing between two rows of trams, to the side exit. A third mine exploded on the empty barricade and sand rained down on the glass roof, making a strange noise that was distinguishable through all the tumult. Then the machine guns of the armoured cars came into action and drowned out everything else.

Kraus collected his men at the side exit. The searchlights were already beginning to reach the housefronts opposite. Evidently the armoured cars were moving up as they fired. "Over into the side street," Kraus commanded.

In the side street Schurl was suddenly back at Karl's side. He was carrying the radio. "I ran home, but there was no food in the house," he gasped. "The old saloon-keeper downstairs gave me some rum." He handed the bottle to Karl. "When I got back you'd left the barricades. I stumbled over the radio and I thought I'd take it along."

Karl took a mouthful of the rum, which burned his empty stomach. All day he had only a cup of tea and a slice of bread.

One of the advance guard came hurrying back. The road by which Kraus's company was to retreat, parallel to the chief force, had been occupied by the military. Kraus turned toward the barns and saw the side exit illuminated by the searchlight.

"We're cut off," said Ott as if he had expected nothing else.

"We'll cut them off," answered Kraus and commanded, "Train the machine guns on the barn door."

"We have only one round of ammunition; the boxes were left behind."

"What a filthy business . . ."

"Opposite, there's a passageway," cried Schurl.

"Where?"

"Three houses down, through the driveway."

"Let's go."

The company reached the driveway just as the advance guard, farther down, at the corner, started shooting. At the other end of the street, near the depots, hand grenades exploded and the machine gun of an armoured car stopped firing.

"That was Weissmueller," said Kraus. The next moment they saw a tall figure whirl round the corner and run down the street along the housefronts, more and more slowly, until it began to totter. Karl ran out and dragged him into the driveway.

"That old iron box won't drive much farther," Weissmueller said and collapsed.

"He won't need a doctor any more," Ott whispered.

"Forward!" Kraus commanded, grinding his teeth.

The driveway led into a big courtyard filled with trucks. "Straight ahead, there's a gate in the wall," Schurl cried and whispered to Karl, "We always used to play here as kids."

When they unbolted the gate and opened one half of it carefully, they saw that the square beyond was occupied by soldiers. An assault would be madness.

"This is the end," said Ott. Hardly had he spoken when their advance guard, retreating before the soldiers who were moving into the street, reached the driveway.

"Run to cover," Kraus commanded. "Keep quiet, but if they find us,— well, I won't be taken alive. Friendship and Freedom!"

"Freedom!" It came back like a vow.

They hid behind the trucks. Kraus, Karl, Ott, and Schurl crouched behind a woodpile near the entrance, through which the whistling wind brought the sound of hobnailed boots. It

was not long before a patrol entered the driveway, their flash-lights sharp. Schurl grasped Karl's arm as soldiers started into the yard, straight toward them.

At this moment a light appeared in a glass door that led from the house into the driveway. A man with a lantern appeared behind it. The soldiers turned around but lowered their guns at once. The door opened and a tall man with a red-blond moustache, in a fur jacket and Tyrolese hat, came out. The leader of the patrol, a cadet, turned up his flashlight and revealed a typical Heimwehr face.

"Thank God, the army!" said the man. "I own this place. My name is Kummerer, captain of the reserves. I was afraid you were Defence Corps people."

"Did any come through here?" the officer asked.

"Not a soul. I've been waiting for them all evening." With a significant gesture he pulled a revolver from his pocket.

"Thanks for the information, Captain," said the officer, clicked his heels, and saluted. "Into the next house," he commanded.

"G, '«^ *auf* the captain called after them, "*Gliic^ auj!*" and followed them to the street. The miners' greeting sounded strange in his mouth, strange and out of place, but also like something beautiful out of another time and another world, this word out of the school reader. It rang in the ears of the men behind the trucks while they listened to the steps of the patrol going away and slowly loosened their fingers on the hand grenades.

From the movement of the captain's lantern they could see that he was peering up and down the street and then coming slowly back into the driveway. But now they got a great surprise. He did not disappear through the glass door again, but walked out into the yard. Suddenly raising his lantern he called in a low voice. "You might as well come out. They're gone."

None of the men stirred.

"I'm not an enemy. Come on out!"

Kraus had a vague feeling that the man could be trusted. He got up and went over to him while his men waited tensely in their hiding places.

"I've been watching," said the captain and pointed with his lantern toward the street. "They're moving on. Later you fellows can simply disappear."

"So you sympathize with us?" asked Kraus. It wasn't a stupid question but it wasn't clever either, he felt. A great exhaustion had come over him, he could hardly hold himself upright.

"You remind me of my company in 1914," said the captain in an almost dreamy tone, which was as unexpected as the "*Gluck auf!*" had been before. To Kraus in his exhaustion it seemed to come from far off, and that made it still more strange.

"Come out," he called to his men.

Slowly, with heavy steps, as if their short respite, their suspense over whether the-patrol would find them, and then the captain's surprising behaviour, had been more exhausting than everything that had gone before, than the two sleepless days and nights and all the excitement, they dragged themselves from their hiding places and gathered behind Kraus. The captain flashed his lantern into their faces, from one to the other, with the expression of one who has something bitter on his tongue.

"At least you're no cowards," he said almost to himself, then he assumed a military bearing. "Let there be no misunderstanding," he continued in a cold, sober tone, "I protect you only because I detest the insolent Philistines in the Government even more than I do your leaders. You can rest in the stables over there until the coast is clear. You must be gone by daylight. Is that a bargain?"

"It's a bargain," answered Kraus.

When the captain opened the stable door, thick warm air streamed out. The frozen men dragged themselves into it as into a bed.

Kraus kept Schurl back, "You know the quarter?"

"Yes, comrade, every inch, at your orders," Schurl answered, proudly.

"Make your way to the Garden City, where you will find the district command. Tell them we're cut off! here, twenty-three men, two machine guns without ammunition, and the radio. Ask for orders. It's nearly two. If you're not back by four I won't expect you. Do you understand?"

"Everything — and I'll be back," said Schurl and disappeared.

When Kraus went into the stable he heard the captain's voice: "Everything goes wrong for you. You're good fellows. But your leaders are worthless: these Jews."

Kraus grasped the situation. "You've spared us because you're a Nazi and you want to make converts," he interrupted; "but save yourself the trouble and stop your foolish talk."

Angrily the captain raised his lantern.

"Look at me all you like, I won't forget you, either," Kraus said threateningly.

It was some time before the captain answered, then he said merely, "Stick to your bargain. Disappear before daylight."

"We will," Kraus said and, waiting until the captain was gone, surveyed the stable with his flashlight. There was a long central aisle. On one side were stalls in which horses stood, on the other cows. The men were sitting on bales of pressed hay and straw. A few had already fallen asleep.

"I've sent for orders. Meanwhile we can rest," said Kraus. "Herzog, you slept last night. Go and watch the driveway, unarmed. Nobody must see you. If you notice anything suspicious give the alarm."

Herzog, a small man in mufti, slipped out.

"And you go to sleep; you won't have more than an hour or two."

"Hadn't we better — " said Ott but got no further. An angry murmur interrupted him. The men stretched out as best they could between the bales of hay.

"We have to know first whether there's still a way open for

us. At least we're safe here for a time," Kraus said to Ott. "And don't set fire to the hay with your cigarettes. Get some rest. You need it, too."

Ott did not answer but neither did he lie down, and he went on smoking.

Karl placed the radio on a box and turned the knob. "The accumulator is too weak," he said as Kraus stepped over two sleeping men and sat down beside him. Karl felt that his friend was finished; no wonder, it was Wednesday already, and he had had no food or sleep since Monday.

Kraus tried to straighten himself up.

"Don't worry," said Karl. "When Schurl comes I'll wake you."

"Just half an hour, half an hour," Kraus murmured and fell forward, asleep. Karl caught him, laid him down beside the others, and sat down again in front of the radio. That afternoon he had been in touch with the district command of Favoriten at the other end of the city. If they heard his voice now, they would know that Floridsdorf was still at its post.

"DCF . . . DCF . . . Defence Corps station Floridsdorf. The Government is concentrating reinforcements. . . . DCF, DCF." He repeated the message at short intervals again and again. It helped him to stay awake too.

Ott smoked nervously. Karl watched the lighted tip of his cigarette in the darkness. After a while he said, "I'll stay awake alone, Ott. You should sleep too."

Ott remained silent for a long time, then he suddenly bent forward and whispered softly, "The Nazi was right. That's what it's come to, that the Nazi is right."

"Go to sleep," said Karl, annoyed. Yesterday, Ott had agreed with the Communists, who wanted to take hostages, today he sympathized with the Nazis. He was a weak, sick fellow, always going to extremes. "DCF, DCF, Defence Corps Floridsdorf. The Government is concentrating reinforcements, technical troops from Korneuburg— DCF, DCF — Defence Corps Floridsdorf."

The intervals grew shorter and shorter. The words seemed to gather in his mouth and the darkness to grow cloudy before his eyes. It cost him an effort to keep them open. He mustn't fall asleep. That much was clear. The hands on his wrist watch crawled like snails, but they looked rather like spiders. If only nothing happened to Schurl. "DCF — DCF — Defence Corps Floridsdorf."

Ott's cigarette had gone out long ago. Only a fine thread of light that came out of the bulbs in the radio box was visible in the darkness, and the heavy breathing of the sleeping men sounded like the gurgling of water. The horses stamped in their sleep and the cows moved heavily. "DCF — DCF—Defence Corps Floridsdorf. . . ."

"You know that nobody can hear you," Ott said suddenly, and went on in a whisper that seemed to be addressed more to himself than to Karl: "The great silence of the woods . . . We don't know anything about warfare. To stand eternally for peace and compromise and then suddenly rely on force — madness. Of course everybody leaves us in the lurch. Yesterday at this time ... an illusion, beautiful, gone . . . gone . . ."

Ott's voice grew lower and lower. He stopped and Karl heard him sink against the wall. Now they were all asleep. Through an open window of the stable came a cold, fresh draught, and the irregular sound of distant firing, with now and then the rattle of a machine gun. The crackling in the receivers at Karl's ears made no sense. "DCF — DCF — Defence Corps Floridsdorf. . . ." He was doing his duty whether it helped or not.

Perhaps it was only his body's craving for sleep and the empty painful feeling in his stomach and the weariness in his head, this whole business of being half-dead, that repressed and blunted everything. But the thought of his mother and Maria no longer cut his heart as it had done all day. He could think calmly of them now; he even had a sort of detachment. It was not hard to imagine what his mother was going through on his account.

But she was not indulging in tremors or petty fears; she was keeping herself upright. He could take a lesson from her. He would not have been able to look into her eyes if he had gone home from the factory at noon on Monday. He would have said that it was too late for resistance — as it had been, in his opinion, ever since spring; but it would have been only an excuse. Kraus was right. The ones who survived would have a good conscience. But he had better not think of the future, not yet. He could depend on his mother, whatever happened. And on Maria? He found that hard to imagine. They had been happy together for twenty-four hours; everything had been right, they had been as one, undisturbed, because they had forgotten everything, this whole wretched world. But that world had quickly made itself felt again and refused to be ignored. "You cannot step out of your time," as Franze had said. What was Franzc doing now?

"DCF — DCF — Defence Corps Flondsdorf. . . ." He could have refused. Was there any sense in risking one's life for a lost cause? But you can persuade yourself of anything once you abandon certain fundamental decencies. Yes, Maria, you said there were many truths. But you never meant it. Your heart, too, had just one truth and you stuck to that, happily and absolutely. You will understand that that is just what I am doing now. You can't experience a great injustice from your childhood on and then run away because the fight against it is neither well-timed nor very skilful. If you want to go on living and being yourself, you must stake everything on your truth, happily and absolutely. It doesn't matter what the outcome may be. I don't know you yet, Maria; I look too much at your beauty and breathe your very breath. I don't know yet what your soul is like. But according to my feeling, your truth and mine seem to coincide. Someday you will understand my truth and we will be happy, even if we don't dare see each other.

The stable door opened and Karl was startled out of his reverie. Schurl came proudly back. He had executed his commission perfectly. And he had brought good news. Karl wakened Kraus.

Everything had gone well. It had not been difficult to find the command. The comrades were digging regular trenches in the Garden City against the infantry, which was moving into the district down from the Bisam mountain and from over the railway bridge, protected by an armoured train. But the Floridsdorf end of the Reichsbrücke and Goethe Hof and the railway station were in the hands of the Defence Corps, which was strong enough to repel all attacks. Only the Workers' Home had been lost. But the second battalion was preparing to take it back by open assault. Kraus was not to worry about this, he was to take his men immediately and reinforce the garrison at Goethe Hof, where they had enough ammunition but too few machine guns.

"Did you meet any soldiers?"

"In the main streets they are patrolling every corner. Out here there's not even a cat."

"Then wake them all up."

Schurl shook the sleepers. They started up and gripped their rifles. Karl awakened Ott. He opened his eyes and, still half-asleep, he whispered, "But no one can hear you." Then he began to shout, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" Karl put a hand over his mouth.

"Don't make trouble," Kraus said seriously to Ott, who was coming to himself.

"You never would listen to me," he answered in his quiet voice and picked up his gun.

"We're marching along the riverbank to Goethe Hof," Kraus explained. "Advance guard Effinger and two men, rear guard Schneider and two men. No random shooting. The chief thing is to arrive as quickly as possible and without losses. They need reinforcements. We must ignore everything else. Let's go — not a word!"

The next moment Kraus planted himself in the path of Effinger, an old war veteran who was about to walk off with some horse blankets. "The blankets stay here," ordered Kraus. "We're not bandits!"

"War is war," said Effinger, but good-humouredly let the blankets slide from his shoulders. Schurl caught them and put them on the feed box.

Before the troop set out through the gate in the wall—the military had disappeared from the square—they picked up the body of their fallen comrade Weissmueller from its pool of blood and laid him in one of Kummerer's wagons, placed his rifle in his hands and closed his eyes. Schurl said with tears in his voice, "The tank lies empty beside the car-depot. It's dead too." Then they marched off.

After the warmth of the stable the night seemed icy. There was no firing any more on the west bank. Schurl had heard a rumour that the comrades from Ncustadt were marching on Vienna. "Rumours," Ott whispered.

Suddenly firing was heard from the direction of the Workers' Home. "That's our counterattack," said Kraus. Soon they would be able to tell whether the soldiers were using the new machine guns or whether the Defence Corps men were attacking with hand grenades. As one machine gun after another fell silent, Kraus said, "We're after them at last."

There was no one in the streets. Yet their progress was slow because the advance guard had to reconnoitre at every corner. On the riverbank they marched in more regular formation. It was still pitch-dark when they reached the bridge and were saluted by the comrades, who had dug trenches opposite the bridgehead. It turned out that the Floridsdorf end of the bridge was also in the hands of the military. An attack upon them was now being prepared. The comrades in the trenches, who had not shared in the events at the Schlinger Hof and the car-depot, were in a confident and hopeful mood. Food, not plentiful but warm, and enough cigarettes were sent to them from Goethe Hof. Kraus's men drew new life from the soup that was given them.

The situation in Goethe Hof was like that in Schlinger Hof before the attack, except that children and women who did not wish to stay had been evacuated and sent to peaceful parts of the district. Cries of joy greeted Kraus and his machine guns. His

men were given bread and tea and cigarettes and could really go to sleep and dry their wet shoes on the hot pipes of the central heating system.

It was bright daylight when they were called. Karl woke out of a heavy dreamless sleep in a flat with lace doylies scattered about but with pictures of Marx and Lenin on the walls. Kraus was standing at the window looking through a spyglass. For a moment he looked funny to Karl, holding the glass in his hand like an admiral.

"They've issued an ultimatum," Kraus told him. "If we don't hoist the white flag by eight o'clock they will bombard us." He gave Karl the spyglass.

Batteries were drawn up on the opposite shore. Their muzzles stared across the broad stream, round and black. Behind them stood a great mass of people held in check by the police. The whole Volkswehr Park was filled with them.

"They are going to watch it like the theatre," said Karl bitterly. For a while they looked at the ice floes drifting down the Danube. There was something Kraus wanted to say but could not. Instead he said, "Ott lost his mind. He ran toward the Government troops throwing-hand grenades until they got him. There he lies."

Karl saw the body below, its face turned to the earth, its arms outstretched, like the patrol leader the night before in front of the barricade.

"Our situation is hopeless." Kraus wrung the words from himself. "We're fighting on out of a sense of honour and to set an example for those who will come after us. But not all of us should sacrifice themselves. I'd like to say something to you——"

Karl interrupted him. "Don't say it," he said.

When on the stroke of eight the first shot against Goethe Hof was fired Karl gave Schurl a slip of paper on which were written a name, an address in the centre of the city, and a telephone number. "If anything happens to me," he said, "call up that number. The young lady is also to tell my mother."

BEFORE leaving home Wiesner called up the house on Freedom Square. At first the line was busy. Then the maid surprised him with the information that Maria had gone out — so early — without either saying where or leaving a message for him. Was the Fraulein well?. . . Well? The word was echoed in a wondering tone. Yes, except perhaps a little nervous from the shooting. But Fraulein Pepitta had called up in despair five minutes ago, also too late. Her brother had not been home since yesterday.

Wiesner slowly put down the telephone and went to the window. Sharp and black, the naked trees stabbed the sky. The view stretched wide in front of him. It was only beyond the centre of the city that the sea of roofs was lost, gray in gray. The shooting in the near-by Sixteenth District, which had gone on all night, had ceased toward morning. From the east there still came the rumbling of a muffled cannonade, slow and regular. The rattling of the windowpanes was slight but annoying.

Wiesner was in a self-reproachful mood. Since that painful Sunday afternoon with Hilda he had met nothing but contradictions. It made no sense. Maria could be ill in the evening and well in the morning. She knew that he would call and yet left no word. But did he not love this casual untroubled way of hers? Did he not feel himself superior to it? Did it not attract him too?

His breakfast was brought to him as usual with the paper and the mail. The architect wrote that he was in Vienna with his plans. In the afternoon he would call at Freedom Square and he expressed the hope that he would meet the future Baroness and the Baron. On the spot many problems could be speedily worked out. The tone of the note seemed untroubled by any of the occurrences of the moment; it gave the impression of normality, which the newspapers confirmed. The resistance of the Defence Corps seemed to be broken and the strike movement was receding.

Wiesner felt a relief that was not untinged by bitterness. Though partisanship was against his principles, in his heart he had wanted the Heimwehr and Schrack and the paper manufacturer to lose. He did not like Platonic sympathies, especially in himself, nor did he wish to be deflected by pity. He was against any ideas that glorified the herd. This thought strengthened him. But he did not deceive himself; his thinking might be merely another expression of his longing for an untroubled life with Maria. This longing, at least, was genuine and honest.

On the way to High Street a thunderous greeting tore Wiesner from his thoughts. "Salute, Herr Baron. Salute" Robinson was leaning over the railing of his terrace and beckoning with huge black field glasses. "Good sight, the bombardment!" he cried.

Wiesner mounted the icy steps that led, in this modern villa, directly up from the garden. With beating heart he took the field glasses which Robinson handed him. As he adjusted them to his eyes it was like turning back the years. It had been in 1918 that he had occupied an observation post for the last time. That was on the roof of a house in San Donna di Piave under heavy fire from the Italians. Their batteries had stood in front of Treviso; farther to the west the Campanile of Venice gleamed in the pitiless sun. It seemed like yesterday — the plain, the blown-up casas among torn vineyards, the broken disabled pontoon bridges half in water.

Now another landscape came into focus. The leaden ribbon of the Danube on which white spots floated, the snow-patched

meadows on the bank, the rim of houses in Floridsdorf. Little shrapnel clouds appeared in the circle of the glass, just as they had long ago, and then flew by in the wind.

They came in groups of six, bluish white, almost gay in the turbid air of the winter day. Out of the roofs fountains from exploding grenades rose and fell back upon themselves black as coal.

He had the feeling that Captain Schrack, not the lawyer, but the young officer, was standing behind him and laughing at the stories of the little lieutenant of Battery 3. None of them had any cares. Peace demanded new decisions daily; war was a rest. There was always an unequivocal objective and the task of destroying it. Everything was decided, and the nearness of death set them free.

Wiesner returned the field glasses. His hand was trembling. It was difficult to live and think at the same time. He leaned against the railing and looked over the roofs of the villas, into well-kept gardens through which ran deserted white gravel paths lined with rosebushes well wrapped against the frost. War and care—the idea that both were life did not offer any real help either.

Robinson, the military expert, was talking. "They're bombarding one of the communal buildings opposite the Reichsbrücke. Wonder how long the Defence Corps will hold out. Everywhere else they have run up white flags. Idiots, to barricade themselves and wait until they are shot to pieces. They should have attacked right away Monday night and stormed the Inner City. Now they're finished. I'm sorry for those boys. But it's the result of this unnatural pacifism. One must love war and believe in it not only as a means in time of need but as an end in itself. That's the secret of victories."

Abruptly and rudely Wiesner turned to go. Robinson accompanied him. Silently they walked down to the main street. A servant girl blushed at the sight of the former actor. The old policeman at the church saluted. From a wagon of the city ad-

ministration yellow sand was being thrown on the icy street. It was a morning like any other, and Robinson inhaled the cold air in deep breaths, with delight. His chest expanded like a bellows under his red sweater. In front of the shop he suddenly took Wiesner by the arm.

"The Government and the Heimwehr are digging their own graves," he said in a low careful voice and looked around to see whether anyone could hear him. "These workers they're shooting down were their only protection against us. Now it's our turn."

Wiesner drew away from him.

"No sense in playing hide-and-seek any longer," Robinson said with an unfamiliar seriousness. The clownishness he ordinarily displayed had suddenly disappeared. "You understand whom I mean, Baron, and you will have another chance to decide whether you want to join us or not. Colonel von Kleist will visit you again on his way back from Belgrade. Salute!" He half-extended his arm in the Nazi greeting and went into the shop.

Wiesner went on slowly to the stopping-place of the trams, which were running again. The cars were half-empty; passengers who knew each other exchanged greetings but there was none of the usual conversation. It was as if everyone wanted to avoid the first word, and this produced a hushed, embarrassed mood. The conductor, omitting his "Good morning," sold tickets without looking at anybody.

Wiesner was not surprised that Robinson knew of Kleist's visit and that they had not yet given him up. The conquest of Europe was being organized very thoroughly. Now they were trying to intimidate him. He was prepared for anything. At Langenbruck they would send the hotelkeeper to try the same kind of blackmail that the Heimwehr had used to drive out Lilge. The Heimwehr people would now redouble their efforts to force him to make common cause with them. Well, he would have to drink a bottle of wine with the hotelkeeper and sell his lumber cheap to the paper manufacturer. It was an error to take one's own time and above all any local event too seriously. Austria's fate was not

being decided in Austria, and Central Europe, for all its tumult, was not the world.

A workman entered the car with a loud greeting, "Freedom!" Contemptuously he surveyed the other passengers, who looked up fearfully, and sat down next to an elderly and bitter-looking lady who moved away from him in terror and at the next stop ran out to a policeman, evidently demanding the worker's arrest. The representative of the State, a pale tired fellow, got on the car. While he was still hesitating, the conductor ran through the car and as if by accident opened the forward door, which was usually locked. The workman used the opportunity, stepped out and jumped from the car, again shouting "Freedom!" The policeman turned back in the midst of malicious whispering. The conductor, who acted as if he did not know what had happened, received approving looks from all sides. But what good was this ex-post-facto attitude? Nobody would have raised a hand against the arrest of the worker.

"Nor would I," Wiesner said to himself. For a moment he had considered protecting the man. It had been less an inclination than a move in a private game. He had resisted a much more serious temptation two days before, Monday at noon, at the very moment the Government was launching its *coup d'etat*. His first impulse had been to leave his office as a protest, then he had thought better of it. No declarations of war, and no heroic gestures that would do nobody any good and make his own future more difficult . . . Otherwise he might lose Langenbruck before he had really conquered it.

While he was studying the depressed faces of the passengers and wondering where Maria had gone so early, he repeated to himself the arguments with which he was opposing the pressure of the time, this whole period of the disfigurement of life, whose causes, he reassured himself, no system of thought and certainly no party programme had yet really grasped. Perhaps he was just running away from an unfamiliar future. Yet even that was preferable to joining, out of sheer cowardice, mass armies in

whose slogans he did not believe. No, even if Bodo von Kleist were to win he would still lose. To try to live through this tiresome peace, and to do so peacefully, that was probably one's mission if one could use such a pretentious word.

At the Schotten Gate they were removing the wire entanglements, and Wiesner's secretary had already resumed his everyday office face. He reported that fighting was going on only in Flondsdorf. Wiesner asked to be connected with the house on Freedom Square, but before the call went through he got an urgent summons to confer with his immediate superior.

The department chief, an unadulterated bureaucrat, received him with his usual restraint but in some way he was more human. The change was in his tone.

"The foreign powers are besieging us for information," he said softly. "We must get them quieted down. They think we are firing on women and children. It makes a bad impression."

He paused and stared at Wiesner with eyes blank of expression but by this very fact conveying what he did not say. That "It makes a bad impression" suddenly did not sound cynical any more, only sad.

"Mere denial is not a pleasant thing and you're too good for it, Herr Baron," he continued. "It is simply this way—" He started to make a wide cordial gesture but gave it up. "It is simply this way, that someone who believes what he says is better at denials. Conviction convinces." He fell silent, his face expectant.

After a moment's hesitation Wiesner said lightly: "I'm leaving the service in a fortnight. Wouldn't it be advisable if my successor assumed his duties at once — with the beginning of the new era?" The afterthought was his only acknowledgment of the suggestion he had heard.

The department chief came to him, evidently relieved. "Good," he said, "good. Turn over your portfolio. We'll give you leave of absence for these two weeks. My nephew, God forgive me, but it makes little difference any more, was appointed to succeed you

half an hour ago. He's a Heimwehr man and eager to prove himself since there is occasion."

Wiesner understood. It was only natural. The Heimwehr people had conquered the streets and now the jobs. And the chief had seven half-grown children to take care of; of course he made compromises. He needn't on that account be embarrassed and shuffle his papers.

"That's all," said the chief in his sharp official voice. But then he raised his head, leaned forward, and continued in his most confidential manner. "We'll meet when you take leave formally, Baron. But I would like to tell you now how pleasant it was to work with you. In the old Monarchy you would have had a great career, but there is no room left for European spirits. I envy you your liberty: it is a luxury beyond my means." The low words seemed to pierce Wiesner.

When he got back to his office Pepitta was on the telephone, tears in her voice. Joseph could not be found anywhere. If she at least knew that he had been arrested she would be happy. Wiesner promised to ask at police headquarters and told her to call back in half an hour. Then the Heimwehr man came in, disguised as a diplomat—black morning coat and striped gray trousers.

The handing over of the portfolio was an empty formality. The man took no interest in the past. He recited his Heimwehr slogans about the new old Austria. But what difference did it make? The negotiations with Germany were at a standstill anyway. The calls concerning Joseph Birkmeier were the last Wiesner put in on his office telephone. The information he received and passed on to Pepitta was not very helpful. The police had arrested thousands of people and were arresting more every minute. It would be days before the list of names could be completed.

There was no connection, but the disappearance of Joseph and Pepitta's terror — her love for her brother came to the surface now — made Wiesner nervous about Maria. Turning over his desk to the Heimwehr man, he asked himself for the hundredth

time where she had gone so early, why she did not call and what her illness the night before had meant.

On the tower of the Minorite Church the stroke of one o'clock rang out as he left the Ministry and made his way toward Freedom Square through the lightly falling snow. After a few steps he turned to look back at the old facade of the famous building. There, a year ago, he had assumed his duties, envied by many and not without hope himself that he was entering a larger and more significant sphere of action. He realized how unobtrusive his departure was. The high curtained windows mirrored the sky and reminded him of the windows of the cloister of Melk. What moved him now was not the ordinary feeling of farewell with which he had left the legation buildings in London or Berlin. A whole period of his life was coming to an end. He could count four already: the school years, the war, the university, the diplomatic service. In each period society had organized his life for him. Now he was alone, discharged to himself at last and for the first time. Poor Hilda, she could not imagine that the four irrecoverable years he had lost in the war were no longer of any importance now. Because he was starting life from the beginning, where it had been interrupted. But with this difference, that the bad experiences were behind him.

With a sense of release, of lightheartedness, that overcame the gnawing disquietude underneath, he turned from the building and crossed the square. The shooting from the east was more powerful now and from the south came the far, almost indistinguishable hacking of machine guns. Not only Floridsdorf was fighting on. In front of the coffeehouse stood a group arguing. He could hear the battle and see the perplexity of the people, but he did not care. He had his own world, into which he had found his way at last. He had long been lost but it was not too late.

He knew at once from the face of the maid that Maria had not returned. But she had telephoned that they were not to expect her at noon. That was all she had said. Again she had left no

message for him. It hurt him now more than in the morning. He did not know what to think. But outwardly he gave no sign.

Louise went to the window and watched him go slowly toward the corner and stand there, lost in thought, for a long time. She could feel with him and was sorry for him too, but not for anything in the world would she have betrayed what she was thinking.

Maria had called up from a telephone booth. Two excited men knocking at its window hurried her. But she would have made as much haste as possible even without them. She was in a hurry herself. She had a taxi, which had been hard enough to get, waiting at the curb. She had run the whole length of Ferdinand La Salle Street before she met it. The Reichsbridge was already closed and the Volkswehr Park, too, though people were massed in front of it wanting to see the cannons shooting. She was sail trembling from the thunder of the guns, so near at hand, and also from exhaustion—she had been running so fast—when someone, noticing her despair, had advised her to try the northern bridge. Her only hope was that it would still be open.

"I doubt whether we'll get to Floridsdorf; our Christian Government isn't through with its murder there yet," said the chauffeur when she came out of the telephone booth and jumped into the car again.

Maria had wakened at dawn. The silence that then to her ears meant merely the absence of shooting alarmed her more than the cannonading in the night. It took forever to get light. At eight she called up the factory which, contrary to her fearful expectation, answered as if the day before had not been. She was connected with the construction office and in her confusion she asked straight out for the engineer Merk instead of pretending that the main office was calling, as Karl had strictly impressed on her. But it made no difference. An astonished voice asked, "With whom do you wish to speak?" Then with brutal irony it had added: "You'd better get in touch with the Defence Corps, if

there is such a thing any more, or, even better, with the police,¹

An hour later Maria had been in the flat on the Belt. Mother Merk was still knitting. Evidently Karl had not been home. Maria could only surmise it, because his mother did not mention him by so much as a word.

"It's Ash Wednesday," she said. "I've been downstairs and I know how things look in the city. Bunzl, the salesman in our Co-operative with the false diamond ring on his ringer, shouted at me, 'It's the end of the carnival.' I understood him. I always knew he was a provocateur."

She spoke with the expression of one listening to something that could not be heard, and Maria would not have understood the toneless monologue had she caught only the words. But her own alarm made her feel the hidden meaning, a grief so great that it was inescapable and so irremediable that a double submission seemed the only defense. Her own terror and weakness suddenly seemed unworthy of that fate which she knew, more clearly with every hour since she had left the mountains, to be ordained for her—she did not yet quite grasp it, she did not really understand what was happening to her, but she was convinced that it was inevitable. She would have to follow Mother Merk's example.

"I didn't denounce Bunzl to Franze because I was afraid that my suspicion that he was a spy might be false. But once when he was inciting some women who were in his shop against the Government and one of them, the wife of an unemployed radical, was about to tell him what her husband was saying at home, I interrupted the harmless creature and said, 'It's the fault of the bad times, not of the Christian Government!' The women all drew away from me as if I were a leper and I passed through them with my secret good conscience that nobody knew anything about, least of all the police. No, I didn't give myself away and I obeyed all commands to the letter."

"She has been crying," thought Maria, trying to follow the incomprehensible sentences and not even grasping the words.

She sat, embarrassed, on the edge of a chair in the icy room, watching the toil-worn hands at work, gazing upon that face which yesterday had been so like Karl's and was today so strange and pale and transparent, with different eyes.

"When I went out this morning," Mother Merk went on, "I left a note in the door that I'd be back soon. But no one was waiting when I returned. They leave me alone. Franze 'at least might give some sign when his attack has passed, he must know what's going on inside of me, the fear and the loneliness. But perhaps he thinks I can bear everything alone, men think that, if a woman doesn't weep. All night I sat at the window and watched the searchlight and listened to the firing. At half-past six, on the minute—it was still night—all was over in our neighbourhood. The Workers' Home had to surrender; their ammunition had run out, the people say. And not a shot was fired in Franze's district in spite of the perfect organization he was so proud of. And all the depositories are still full except one. And no one knows where they are except one solitary human being who can do nothing but wait. Perhaps no one will ever come again and yet that person must be ready for the password. One other human being knew it, but not for long. Poor quick Anderl, too quick . . ."

When Mother Merk fell silent Maria did not dare speak of Karl. They heard the bells of the tram-cars on the Belt and in the house someone was again playing that C major scale. The knitting needles noiselessly caught the wool and strung stitch on stitch.

Unexpectedly Mother Merk laid aside her work and rose and faced Maria. "Run, run back as fast as you can to where you came from!" she said in an angry voice as if she would rather be left alone, and with a decisiveness that allowed of no objection. "Run, and forget, so that you won't have to bear it all your life. I know what it means— Run, quickly."

Maria had risen too. At first the outburst had perplexed her. But then the hand that was shoving her toward the door began

to tremble and to cling to her in inexpressible terror. Maria put her arm about Mother Merk, supporting her. It was only for a moment but it brought them together.

"I'm finishing the sweater today," said Mother Merk with a confused smile and Maria plucked up her courage and told her of how she had called up the factory and of the answer they had given her.

"Yes. He's not in the factory," said Mother Merk. She was suddenly in control of herself again and more like Karl. After a time in which she looked at Maria with an expression of great love, she continued softly: "I meant well. But you are not so, you are the right one. If you find him, let me know right away." She took Maria's head in her two hands and kissed her. Her cheeks glowed but her lips and fingers were ice cold.

Those words, "If you find him," still rang in Maria's ears. They had driven her from one end of the city to the other and filled her with impatience as she drove in the taxi through strange neighbourhoods filled with the movements of an ordinary day. The loud-speaker of a radio shop droned out the Blue Danube Waltz. It made her think of the ball, and the Tyrolian lieutenant—the way he said "Magnificent!" That had been less than a week ago.

The Flondsdorf Bridge was not closed, but only people who lived or worked on the other bank were permitted to pass. Maria told the Heimwehr man in command the truth, that she wanted to search for someone in Floridsdorf, and was turned back. At the next corner she left the taxi. "That's right," said the chauffeur; "try again and flirt with the officer."

She turned to the bridge and was soon wedged in the long, slow-moving line of people who wanted to cross. It reminded her of the demonstration. But then Karl had been behind her. Gruff Heimwehr men kept the people in order. If anybody seemed suspicious to them they seized him and searched him for weapons. Every face was grim; there was not a loud word; neighbours

scarcely whispered to each other. Farther ahead a woman became hysterical and violent and was dragged off by police.

When Maria finally reached the gate she was turned back again. Begging did not help. They did not listen and shoved her aside. With tears of rage and despair in her eyes she found herself outside the line in which she had waited an hour. In front of her a flight of stone steps led down. Involuntarily, as if it might bring her nearer to her goal, she descended the stairs and walked between two gray warehouses that smelled of oil, down to the edge of the riverbank.

The wind was still icier here than up above; it whipped the gray waves over which the floes pushed unsteadily. The opposite shore, a dismal gray-brown line with clumps of bare trees and roofs that scarcely rose above the dike, lay under a cloud of smoke that came from a fire farther inland. To the north, on the slope of the Bisam mountain, a battery in action, small and neat as a toy, was visible to the naked eye. To the south, opposite the Reichsbrücke, shrapnel exploded. The whole picture reminded Maria of a newsreel of distant wars. But it was Vienna and reality.

"If you find him . . ." The voice of his mother admonished her again. But it was so hopeless. Even if she could cross the river, where should she look for him? Now she was confronted with the impossibility of her task, which, all the time she had been chasing about the town, she had not admitted to herself, out of helplessness and because anything was better than idle waiting.

Perhaps all her anxiety was groundless? Karl simply could not come back because the bridges were closed. The telephone hadn't been functioning, his mother didn't have one, and he thought that she herself was still in the mountains. She tried to hope against all hope, as she had last night, but she couldn't do it any more. The factory was working again and he was not at his job. She should ask the Defence Corps or the police. He was somewhere yonder in that dusk, fighting or arrested or wounded or . . . She thought the word and forbade herself to think it and thought it again and

then spoke it, at first softly, then loudly, crying it into the wind — ". . . dead ..." "... dead . . ."— as if she could make it harmless. She sank down on a coil of rope that lay at her feet and hid her face in her hands. "O God, let him live," she whispered; "let him live."

Darkness fell. The arc lights flamed up on the bridge and were mirrored in the stream. On the opposite shore no lights came on. The cloud of smoke merged into the sky and slowly the hill, from which the battery was sending up sheet lightning, also sank into the growing darkness. The wind blew sharper and tore on invisible obstacles in its path.

Maria watched the landscape disappear. Her tears were gone. With every falling shadow she grew calmer. She had never wept for anyone before. Fear left her, too. When a siren screamed upstream she rose, stepped on the edge of the slope, and said softly, "I'm going now."

The tram-cars were still few and crowded. But there was a long row of taxis. The streets were lit up normally again and the police and soldiers had disappeared. Porters at coffeehouses and restaurants were opening the doors to their customers. The firing was drowned out by the noise of traffic. Or was it over? There were no more listening groups standing about. On Freedom Square the chauffeur said, "Now they've surrendered in Floridsdorf too." Both of them looked up at the sky, which remained black. In sudden happy expectancy Maria ran into the house.

Her hope was short-lived. Only Pepitta had telephoned, about Joseph. No one else. "The Baron talked to her; he is waiting upstairs—" The Fraulein went on without listening, and Louise had to interrupt herself. In the kitchen she told Agnes and Johann: "She went up the stairs, slow, like she was dead-tired, but it was something else. I'm afraid for her." Johann murmured, "No one need be afraid for our young lady."

Maria opened the door to the studio and stopped short on the threshold. Wiesner — she had expected him to be in the library,

which she had passed noiselessly — and a strange young man were on their knees looking at architectural drawings which they had spread on the carpet.

"Maria!"

Wiesner was hurrying toward her, but stopped suddenly at her look and did not touch her. The young man behind him got up with startled eyes.

She understood who he was and what they were doing — planning to rebuild the manor house for her. Silently she crossed the room, carefully avoiding the plans, entered her bedroom and closed the door.

She had not long to wait. A short exchange of words, steps going away, steps coming nearer, and Heinrich called out that the architect had left. She had registered every sound as she watched the darkness outside the window. No more sheet lightning. They had surrendered. Why did a more desperate fear then choke her, stronger than before, a different fear that encompassed her whole life? She was not afraid any more of dealing Heinrich an inevitable blow. Only it must pass quickly.

She went into the studio and stood for a moment as if not knowing what to do. The light blinded her. Then she said without preamble: "I won't marry you." Her voice did not tremble but her heart was beating hard.

The designs were still in his hands. Slowly he put them down on the piano. The stiff paper rustled. Then there was silence again. Did he reach toward the bookshelf to steady himself? Or was he smiling? She had spoken her last word, which she had been practising in her thoughts for days, to which nothing was to be added; and now she was surprised by the absence of any visible effect. What did she expect?

Someone was coming up the stairs. Irritatedly, Wiesner looked at the door, which was opened after a brief knock. Louise came in with tea. "Agnes sent me," she explained, excusing her unbidden appearance.

"Agnes was right," Wiesner said when Louise was gone.

"You look chilled. The tea will warm you and then you can explain quietly to me what has happened."

There was a kindness in his voice against which all her muscles tightened. But she remained silent and sat down obediently. There should be no scene. Strange that he shouldn't feel how *passe* he was for her!

He watched her drink, break the rolls, and, soon, begin eating hungrily. A warmth came over her tired face and brightened it. Passions of which she herself was unaware betrayed themselves. How wrong Hilda had been! To be bored with this girl! She had said "I won't marry you" and then buttered her roll. "You frightened me," he wanted to say lightly — but he suddenly found that he could not.

She raised her head and looked at him. Her quiet glance went through him; he could not catch it, could read nothing in it. He only felt in her motionlessness and quietness a quivering of the nerves, a hypersensibility and exaltation that threatened to communicate itself to him. What did she have against him?

She wanted to rise but at his restraining gesture sank back on the couch. A hostile look came into her withdrawn face. It was becoming to her. How beautiful she was, her slender resisting body half-reclining.

In his imagination, with a tense feeling of delight, he stripped her. He loved her more than ever. Did she want to torment him or punish him because he had refused to take her with him to Langenbruck? "For once the uncommon," she had said, and was now ashamed of the avowal. Would she take refuge the next moment in his arms, overcome with tears, as on the evening of their engagement? He already heard himself calming her, not like a teacher but with the authority for which she longed.

"Please go now."

"No, Maria."

The silence of the house, which during the period when they were moving toward each other had often united them, now

seemed to hold them apart. He suddenly-felt the wall against which his thoughts were powerless, and a feeling of uncertainty came over him, as if everything were wrong.

"Why do you speak so?" he asked, divided in himself. Instead of embracing her he talked.

It was only the first of many questions that he asked in vain. Motionless, she looked down and did not answer, however much he tried. He changed his tactics and told her that he had left his office, not quite voluntarily and forever, and of his disappointment at not finding her at noon. He spoke of Langenbruck and got the designs from the piano but did not spread them out. Then, more nervously, he asked again:

"Why did you refuse to see me last night? Where were you all day?" He had never been so impatient with her. What was she doing to him?

His words did not reach her. Before her eyes stood the Danube landscape. It was so far to the other shore. "If you find him . . ." And she could only think of him.

Wiesner went to the window and stood for a while. He persuaded himself into new patience and sought a way out, hunted for an idea, a word that could change the mood. Why was she suddenly behaving so badly? It was not like her. If she did not answer now he would go and wait for her contrite call late that night. Or perhaps it would come early in the morning, as if nothing had happened between them.

He sat down beside her. She did not stir and her eyes spoke only the incomprehensible. That look could mean anything; it excited him and sent the blood to his temples. And what fear was gripping him? He refused to think what he already thought. Maria had always been raised above the usual suspicions, and he had his bad experience behind him. . . . And yet obscene fancies were slipping into his brain. Now was the time for him to go. He knew it but could not, any longer.

"Say that all is well."

That all is well, she repeated in her mind. That all was well,

that Karl was safe and would come back like Louise's brother-in-law. And Joseph too. And that Karl's mother would be her mother. It helped her to think these things, as if the hope brought her near to fulfillment. She was moved and her heart trembled. The tension of the day relaxed and tears of relief flowed from her closed eyes.

"Maria, my dear . . ."

Sympathy and joy were in his voice. Tears at last! He drew her to him and felt the delicate body against his own, and the quiver of her fear thrilled him.

Maria resisted with an angry energy that could not be misunderstood. He did not release her and yet was conscious of the contradiction that lay in his fighting for the life he desired to lead by means wholly at variance with it. But the surge of mastery which moved him now was stronger than any scruples, and the expression of hate and shame that twisted her fairy-tale face only incited him further.

She resisted him with unexpected strength, for in the joy of power he was experiencing he had still expected a half-yielding. Not till she was ready to give in would he let her rule.

Suddenly she became weak, but not in the sense he desired. Her head fell back and she grew pale to the lips with horror. She breathed a word he did not understand. To whom was she calling for help? Whom did her eyes behold?

He drew away from her. He knew now that everything he had imagined in secret self-torment, to heighten the joy of possession, was true. Everything is just thought-out, Hilda had said. And evidently not even thought-out correctly. There were the paper plans, but life escaped him. Was Hilda always right?

Maria sat up and straightened her dress. She looked at him calmly and with a touch of surprise, as if he were a stranger.

"You don't love me," he said.

"No."

He went to the piano and back. But it was not that he wished to say any more. At that moment someone knocked.

She waited until he had his tie in order, then she called, "Yes, Father."

The Professor opened the door. "How do you feel, Maria? Agnes tells me . . ." He stopped and looked at the two.

"I've got to speak to you, Father." She said it very soberly, but the next moment she was at his side; she embraced him and clung to him, her whole body trembling, and he put his arms about her.

Wiesner left the studio with the intention of going into the library. But when he passed Johann, who was standing at the entrance to the dining room, he told him to say that he would call up later and left the house. He would not endure a discussion of the irrational behaviour of a girl with her father, even if the father were Professor Steiger. The conflict between himself and Maria was their affair and he must not take it too seriously. He had lost his patience at the wrong moment, when he had had neither time nor opportunity to conciliate her. Of course she did not love him. Love was a result, a completion, not a beginning. It was a wonder she had endured the unnatural tension as long as this without rebelling. Her desire to accompany him last Friday had been as intense as her contrary reaction today. It would be best to hasten the day of their marriage.

It was snowing, windless and soft. The hush of the streets quieted the hostile voices within the Baron which jeeringly advised him to drop all these optimistic interpretations and try to find out who had been poaching on his preserve. The sudden revulsion she had showed in her resistance had not been imaginary, nor the conscious determination in which there had been no trace of enticement.

He passed the Ministry and saw a light in the window of his office. He crossed the Ring. He walked along the park and at the Volkstheater, which was dark since no plays were permitted, he thought of Elli. He walked on aimlessly, then took a taxi and drove back into the Inner City.

The coffeehouse was only half-full. He ate alone. If one could force oneself to outer order in a difficult situation, inner order was often re-established. At his usual table a heated debate was taking place. Sonnenschein and Schlesinger were shaking their fists at each other. Kafka, as usual, was reading his paper; Gerda Hilz, who must have been advanced to a more official status, sat docile at his side. Zettel slept. Elli was nowhere to be seen. Nor Mia Kertesz. It would have been ironical to have a talk with Hippmann now, on the use of moral weapons.

Suddenly Sonnenschein stood at Wiesner's table. "Don't you talk to us any more?" he asked challengingly.

"On the contrary!" Wiesner smiled, and offered him a seat.

"He distorts everything with his dirty opportunistic arguments," Sonnenschein said, continuing his quarrel with Schlesinger. "Was it a crime to defend the Constitution? Were we to submit to these semi-Nazis to have them save us from the real ones? Idiocy! Our defeat is victory in comparison to a tame surrender. Don't you agree?"

"Perhaps, in the long run," Wiesner answered, to please him. In ten minutes he was going to call up the Steiger house.

Sonnenschein grew absorbed in recounting the atrocities which the Government troops were said to have committed. Wiesner kept looking at the clock. At last it was eight.

Steiger answered promptly; he must have been at his desk.

"How is Maria?"

"Better."

"May I speak to her?"

"I think you'd better not. She meant what she said. The engagement ring is in front of me now. I had to promise to return it to you at once. But you were gone. Do call on me some day soon at the Institute."

When Wiesner returned to his table Kainz had established himself next to Sonnenschein; he was telling him that the head-waiter had offered to marry Mitzi and she had asked his advice. Then Koller arrived from his office. He was worn out. He was

to act next morning as counsel for the first Defence Corps man to come before the Martial Court. The man was seriously wounded but all of Koller's protests against holding the trial had been rejected. Now he wanted to play bridge but there were not the right partners. That increased his rage. They would not even let him see Hippmann, who was also his client. He was not interested in politics but he was indignant over the violation of juridical formalities.

Wiesner listened with half an ear while he reflected that Steiger was evidently in full accord with the breaking of the engagement. To invite him to come to the Institute was equivalent to forbidding him the house.

Schlesinger followed Sonnenschein and they continued their fight. Wiesner took his leave after learning from Kainz that Elli was playing somewhere in the provinces.

A watery snow was falling now, and Wiesner meant to take a taxi. But he walked the whole way home. There were no girls in the streets through which he passed, yet he looked out for one at every corner. He was not sure what he would have done if he had met one, for the eternal longing and the terror of ever-recurrent disillusion tore him in two. He thought of the happy lovers of Pompeii, whom the lava of Vesuvius had buried alive in their sleep two thousand years ago—parallel skeletons, the contours of their young bodies forever impressed on the sands. Nothing separated them. They embraced each other and the idea of love itself.

The windows of the Schilker flat were lighted. Silhouettes with raised glasses were outlined behind the hangings. Robinson was right. You had to be in love with force, not as a means in time of need, but as an end in itself.

Wiesner looked long into the hall mirror before he took off his coat and hat. If your hand did not tremble you could kill, not merely blind yourself. But that would be no solution.

He went to the window. The lights of the city twinkled deli-

cately and cheerfully through the murk and the darkness. Five thousand unburied men lay beneath those lights. Men shot, stabbed, struck down. But you could not see them. And down there Robinson was singing, "*Deutschland, Deutschland uber dies.*"

It was not until midnight that Professor Steiger was able to reach his colleague Schlager, who, representing the victorious ideology of the Heimwehr, had that afternoon been made chief of an important department of the Ministry of Education. He begged him to do everything in his power to find a certain acquaintance of Maria, an engineer named Merk, who had fought in Floridsdorf with the Defence Corps and to save him from the vengeance of the victors. To Schlager this telephone call was the climax of a thoroughly pleasant day. Sharply he rejected the assumption that he could use the authority of his office for any private interest. Justice must take its course. Personal feelings no longer counted. The same principle, he asserted, applied to the obsolete rules by which Steiger had administered the Institute. Therefore he had already sent out word that Steiger should come to see him in the Ministry.

Steiger hung up the receiver as Schlager began to talk about the great day that was dawning. He went up to see how Maria was feeling. Thank God she knew nothing of his call.

The light was burning. She had fallen asleep and was smiling in a dream.

O

N THURSDAY afternoon, when the information window at police headquarters was closed for the day, Pepitta gave up the fruitless search that had led her since early morning, after a frightening visit to the morgue, from hospital to hospital and from prison to prison. Since Joseph had disappeared on Tuesday she had not had any sleep, and now her head rang with the stories of misery which she had been hearing all day long from those others who were searching for brothers, husbands, fathers, and sweethearts. On her return home, as she dragged herself through the dark doorway, a man's voice spoke to her out of the depths of the cellar staircase. "Comrade Birkmeier!" She stopped as if turned to stone. She did not even dare look in the direction from which the voice came.

"I must talk to you, comrade," it whispered. "It's impossible upstairs; the police may come any minute. Tell me a safe place where we can meet, but not public. It's about your brother Joseph."

"Is he alive?"

"No."

With one leap the stranger was at Pepitta's side, supporting her, as he whispered, "Pull yourself together. He died happy. I mustn't be arrested. Think of a safe place."

"He died happy," repeated Pepitta to herself. Then a spasm of crying seized her.

"His last thought was about you," said the stranger, not hastily now. "'Find my sister. Pepitta's all right just the same.' Those were his last words before he closed his eyes, without a sigh. Let him be an example. You are Pepitta?"

"Yes. ... It will pass in a minute."

She drew away from the stranger. "Wait for me in front of the Schotten Church. The house where we'll meet is not far from there, on Freedom Square. I'll come right away. I just have to go upstairs to see how my mother is."

"Don't keep me waiting. I can't stay on my feet much longer."

The stranger disappeared. Pepitta wanted to go up the stairs but she could not do it at once. For support she clung to the ankle of the bronze youth who stood at the foot of the staircase on a little pedestal, holding high the light that never burned. As children she and Joseph had thought the figure a work of art that really belonged in a museum and they had been so proud of living in such a noble house . . .

"The Frau Alderman is asleep," said the maid, coming from the kitchen into the anteroom when Pepitta opened the door of the flat. "The doctor was here and gave her a powder. It will last until morning, he said. Her nerves need a rest."

"I'll be at the house on Freedom Square," said Pepitta and turned at once to go. The maid followed her into the hall. "Have you found Herr Joseph, Fraulein?" she asked, sobbing. Pepitta did not answer and ran quickly down the stairs.

There was nobody in front of the Schotten Church when Pepitta arrived, out of breath. She wouldn't be able to recognize the stranger because in the darkness she had not seen what he looked like. She would have to post herself under the light so that he could see her. How had he known her? "She's all right, just the same, Pepitta." Those were Joseph's last words.

After a moment a man passed her and said quickly, without looking at her, "Go ahead. I'll follow you."

She walked down Schotten Street to Freedom Square, the strange steps behind her. When Johann opened the door, the

whisper came, "Do you know for sure that we are safe here?" She merely nodded.

"The Herr Professor and the Fraulein are upstairs in the library," said Johann.

Pepitta went on to the staircase without stopping. The stranger followed her, his hat in his hand. Johann looked after them with foreboding.

At the stairs the stranger gripped Pepitta's arm. "Where are we?" he asked.

She turned and looked at him for the first time. Tired eyes in a dishevelled, unshaven face. "Don't worry," she said. "Joseph was at home here."

"Call me Walter," said the stranger, relieved or too exhausted to question further. He fell behind Pepitta, who ran quickly up the stairs and opened the library door without knocking.

The Professor was sitting in his wing chair. Maria was at the window with her back to him. Neither moved, as if they had not heard the door open. The Professor seemed to be waiting for an answer from Maria, so tense was his face. A minute or so passed before he turned his head slowly away from his daughter, and it took him some time to realize that Pepitta was standing on the threshold. But then, half-surprised, half-shocked, he rose and went toward her, calling her name in a tone of anxiety.

Maria heard him and turned abruptly. Her eyes were full of tears. Pepitta saw it at once, and, wondering that she herself did not cry, stepped aside and made way for the stranger. The Professor stopped at the sight of him but Maria moved quickly toward him in a surprising, incomprehensible excitement; the tears vanished from her eyes as if suddenly wiped away. As surprisingly as she had moved forward, Maria halted in confusion beside her father.

Pepitta heard herself say, "Herr Walter, Herr Professor Steiger, Fraulein Steiger." As if names made any difference now. She sank down on the nearest chair, sobbing.

"Good evening," said Walter. Before the Professor could return

his greeting he blurted out in a provoking, almost attacking tone, "I am a Defence Corps man. The police are after me."

"Come in. You needn't worry," answered the Professor and then he too turned to Pepitta, who had recovered herself in Maria's embrace and looked up. "Don't be shocked," she said, "Joseph is dead."

Not a movement nor a sound followed that word, which hung in the stillness like a black flag. Pepitta felt a trembling in Maria's hands and saw the contradictory expression in her face, as if she did not understand and yet had known the terrible news for a long time. The Professor clenched his hands in the pockets of his coat. It was as if they had forgotten the stranger until he himself reminded them of his presence. Exhaustion and a touch of impatience sounded in his voice, as he said, "He died happy."

"Yes," said Pepitta as if she believed it.

After a short while, when he had shaken off his weariness, the stranger told them what had happened. The Workers' Home, whose Defence Corps regiment had put up a stiff battle, had had to be surrendered the morning before on account of a shortage of ammunition. The defenders who were left retreated into the sewers, with the intention of going on with the fight somewhere else. As long as it was light they dared not let themselves be seen, and they had to have a few hours' rest anyway; but in the evening they came out onto the street—starved, and almost choked from the thick, stinking air. But they were still near the Workers' Home. They had been wandering in a circle underground. The street was empty and dark, and they moved slowly to the corner with their machine gun. There Joseph appeared out of the darkness—and brought the bad news.

They spent the night in a building lot, hidden behind wooden fences—waiting, all of them, for a sign that the fight was still going on. . . . But the shooting had stopped everywhere, and the scout they sent out came back with the report that the street-cleaning trucks were operating on the Belt just as they did in

deepest peacetime. Whereupon they were given the order to bury the rifles and the machine gun, and the last command as well — to return to their wives and children, with the resolve to come back someday.

The stranger had got that far in his story when he suddenly fell silent, and his head sank. The girls' eyes did not leave his face. The Professor pushed a chair toward him, but the man paid no attention. He was staring into space, and then all at once he began to talk again.

"The comrades left the building lot one at a time. Joseph stayed with me, and then we left together, last of all. The whole district was full of patrols, but we had almost reached the Belt, creeping along the walls in the shadows, when we were shot at without warning, and from pretty far away. ... A stupid business. It caught Joseph. I helped him around the corner and down a stairway. He died in my arms. It was over quickly. 'I didn't accept baseness, so everything is good,' he said. Then he began to talk in fantasies about a new and better organization; a Tarty of the Humane' he called it, and it didn't sound ridiculous in his mouth. And the whole time there was a happy light in his face. The patrol ran past us; they must have thought we were farther down the street. It wasn't till later that I realized my flashlight had been shining the whole time. At the end he was quite clear again. I'll never forget how he said it, seriously and solemnly: that only those would live who were willing to die. But the last word of all was, 'Find my sister; Pepitta's all right just the same,' "

Nobody broke the silence that followed. The Professor was staring straight ahead. Maria looked at Pepitta. She wasn't crying any more, but the whole expression of her face had changed. She was suddenly older—a different person appeared, with a nasty coldness about the mouth and eyes, and this added a pricking pain to the great fear with which Maria had so long been filled. The voice of the stranger, quiet and weary as it had been, roared in her ears. His words reverberated through her just as Karl's mother's had. Behind them lay that second meaning

that made her helpless; she did not yet understand it, she merely knew it was something she couldn't stand up against and something that had more power over Karl than his love for her. She had come this far in her thoughts since yesterday, since she had given up going out and did nothing but stay in the house and wait. . . . Perhaps the second meaning was the content of the strange world out of which he had come to her but into which he had so quickly returned. This explanation did not help and only raised new questions. Was it really a better world, perhaps the very world for which Joseph had longed?

"I must sleep now, only sleep, please," said the stranger.

Maria exchanged a glance with her father, and led the man upstairs to the guestroom. He took off his shoes while she was turning on the heat. She went into the bathroom to see that everything was in order. When she returned he was already lying on the bed, asleep, still dressed, covered with his overcoat. She went down into the kitchen and ordered a thermos bottle of hot coffee and something to eat put in the guestroom in case the stranger should wake up at night. Passing the open library she heard her father's voice. "That's right Pepitta, life always goes on."

Pepitta stayed for supper. It was a sad half-hour. Once she broke the silence to say softly, "I really believe that he died happy. But how can I explain it to Mother? And Father will never be able to argue with him again."

The Professor saw Pepitta home and took it upon himself to have a search made for Joseph's body and arrange for the funeral. When he returned Maria was playing one of Mozart's sonatas, the beloved gay figures. She was completely absorbed and did not stop when he entered. He sat down and listened, more and more touched. The high heavens bent and the larks sang. Never before, it seemed to him, had Maria played so well. She reached the end and got up from her seat. The anxiety that had deepened every day since her return from the mountains had van-

ished from her face. She looked tired, pale and transparent, but that helpless, desperate look that had frightened him so the evening he had come home from the Institute was gone,

"I understand music now," said Maria softly. "Music is orderly and unaccidental, the opposite of life."

"No, Maria. Art is only a part—"

"I can answer your question now, too," she continued. "Yes, I love him and I belonged to him, but I don't know, it isn't the way it ought to be, it's already so far in the past. I'm waiting for him to come back, but I don't tremble any more for him and I am not longing for him. I just wait. I'm not even sad. That's why I cried, for myself, because I'm not happy any more, not even in my pain."

"You are very grown-up, all at once," said the Professor, after a long pause.

"Yes, Father," answered Maria and went quickly over to him, "and so please don't be angry if I touch on something now that you never talked to me about. Why don't you marry Fraulein Berg? I won't stand in your way."

Again it was some time before the Professor spoke. "I was not sure, Maria, that you felt this way, and I didn't want to hurt you, not at any price."

"But I understand you, Father."

She saw the doubt in his eyes and stopped. Trusting another person was such a difficult business. Before, when she had known nothing about life, nothing had stood between them. Why was it different now? A light red rose in her cheeks when, still more softly, she continued. "You have been alone long enough, for my sake. I am not a child any more."

He took her hand. "I haven't been alone only for your sake, Maria. You are very like your mother. It all goes deeper than you know."

The telephone rang and the Professor, feeling that he had already said too much, welcomed the interruption. Maria turned abruptly to the desk, out of the intimacy of their talk, the first

real one she had had with her father since she had grown up. He had already started toward the telephone, and in her fright she could only stare at the instrument, holding herself taut lest she run after him and snatch the receiver from his hands.

It was Schlager. Steiger had ignored the summons to the Ministry, but the newly appointed department chief did not touch upon official business. It was in the old tone of their friendship that he reported having tried very hard to find this engineer Merk but, unhappily, without success. Steiger thanked him in words that could have no special meaning for Maria, and went on to speak of Joseph's death, without mentioning the Defence Corps man's presence in the house. "Can't you do something about getting Pepitta's father released from prison?" he asked. "The alderman is politically harmless and he belongs with his wife now."

Maria pressed her fingernails into her palms. Again she had thought that Karl was calling at last. She heard her father talking; obviously Uncle Schlager was behaving himself. The way he had called Joseph "young man" — she hated him for that. Why did Father always relent toward him? "The alderman is politically harmless." "To be beaten is no disgrace." "The Party of the Humane. It didn't sound ridiculous in Joseph's mouth." They all might have been sentences in a foreign language. Heinrich would not have resented her ignorance — on the contrary . . . but for bad reasons. He was more wrong than any of them.

"Schlager is decent at bottom. He barks and carries on his low tricks out of stupidity," said Steiger, putting down the receiver. "He will try to get Pepitta's father freed."

Maria stood motionless. She was waiting for her father to return to their conversation. It had started in the right way but it had been only a beginning. Her heart was so full. A single word now and perhaps she could open it and by expressing what was disconnected find the connection between her own sense of things and reality itself.

But the tone in which her father resumed the conversation did

not help her. "We do understand each other again, Maria," he said in a formal tone. "It makes me happy, however sad the circumstances. But we don't want to hasten things. Neither you nor I." He stepped toward her and drew her to him.

Suddenly it was unpleasant. "Yes, Father," she said, moving tenderly away from him. "I want to say good night now." She stood still a second, undecided, her great eyes wide and turned toward him — child's eyes, he thought; then she left.

The Professor listened to her light steps flying up the staircase and the soft opening and closing of the studio door. Her change of mood did not surprise him. She was learning now that being grown-up, even if you and another person were one, meant being alone in the end and bearing it. In contradictions, and by them, the human being grew. He repressed the impulse to follow her. How were you to make experience plausible to inexperience? Insoluble problem. Joseph hadn't listened to him. But Maria? Partly because she was a girl, she had a deeper connection with life that protected her. He had no fears for her.

That night Professor Steiger wrote a long letter to Florence about conditions in the city, the victory of the Government, and Joseph's death. Only at the end did he put the good news. "You must no longer have any fear that Maria will resent you. She asked me today of her own accord why we do not marry. Nothing has escaped her. I expect my dismissal from the Institute any day. I do not want to leave voluntarily. It may be that we, Maria and I, shall visit you very soon."

The next morning brought rain and fog. The moist window-panes dulled the light, and it was so still in the house that Louise, in spite of being more accustomed to what she still thought of as her new position, was once again conscious of that constraint which testified to her respect for art and science. But for days there had been something else in the air; Johann and Frau Agnes in the kitchen felt it too even if they didn't want to acknowledge their worry. They couldn't even allow

her to talk about it in the evening. They cut her off when she had scarcely opened her mouth. "There's no talk about the family in this house." But it wasn't out of a desire to gossip that she wanted to talk, but out of concern, because somebody ought to help the Fraulein.

In the morning the Herr Professor had left for the Institute as usual and Fraulein had breakfasted at eight. Everything wore its normal appearance but that was really a fraud. In spite of the secrecy about the guest — the Professor had sent him up his razor and Johann had to clean and press his things but not a word was spoken about him — in spite of him and in spite of Herr Joseph's terrible end, which couldn't be hidden, and the fact that the Baron stayed away and did not telephone either, in spite of all that and the stillness in the house, there was another reason why things were not quite right, a reason she could only speculate about to herself.

When Maria came downstairs, followed by Louise's covert glances, the guest was sitting at her father's desk and telephoning in a subdued voice. At first she did not recognize him; he looked so changed — shaved, fresh, full of energy. He was a worker or a former worker, vaguely resembling Karl but older and with a kind of ease about him. Undisturbed, his eyes on Maria, he continued his conversation to the end. Then he rose.

"Your father sent word to me that I should make myself at home here," he said, excusing himself and yet not, with that hidden provocation in his voice that had caught her attention last evening.

"Good morning," she answered, "I don't want to disturb you. Of course you should feel at home. I only came to ask whether you need anything."

"I am very grateful," said the stranger and they stopped suddenly. For the first time he really saw this girl.

"Will they come over the bridges?" she asked abruptly, explaining after a pause: "The workers of Floridsdorf, like the workers of Petrograd in 1917."

The man's eyes opened wide. "Are you in the Party?" he asked, full of hope.

"No."

He stood for a moment undecided, then he blurted out in a husky voice, "Yes, they will come over the bridges, in one year, in five, in a hundred, I don't know when, only that they will come. But today, today everything is over." His voice became surer as he spoke, but to Maria's ears it merely sounded as if he were trying to convince himself. He grew more excited as he continued. "Now revenge rules. The Martial Court has executed the commander of the Floridsdorf fire brigade." He handed Maria the newspaper from the desk. Trembling she held it in her hands, without looking at it.

"What is it"⁵ asked the stranger, frightened. She had become so pale. She shook her head almost imperceptibly and sat down. The stranger stood helpless in front of her. She looked straight ahead, past him. It embarrassed him. He wanted to say something and couldn't. There was a tenderness in her face he did not dare to disturb, and in her whole attitude, the way she sat upright, a little forced, formal, as if on a duty call.

He went silently back to the desk. The girl sat motionless — it was like looking at a picture — the profile, the tenseness, the listening air. Wind and rain beat softly against the windowpanes. "Over the bridges."

Suddenly he said, "You asked whether I needed anything. It's not much but it's a confidential matter."

"You can trust us."

"I want you to mail a letter for me. Here's the money for the stamps. But don't put it in the next box. The best thing would be to send it from another district. The farther away the better."

Maria rose terrified. "I can't leave the house," she said, adding after a quick intake of breath, "but Pepitta is coming. She will take the letter along." Before the stranger could explain that that suited him, she ran out of the room.

Full of irritation, he went to the window. A dark, rainy

square, that was all he could see, but it was pleasant to stand behind the thin lace curtains and feel safe. When he turned, his eye caught the bookshelves. All these books . . . There were almost as many as in the library of the Workers' Home that now lay torn to piece' under the debris. Perhaps the girl read too much—and read in a vacuum, that was the trouble with educated people. Would the workers come over the bridges? A beautiful question, but it wasn't so simple and romantic as that.

Pepitta did not keep them waiting long. She seemed unchanged, though her laughter did not ring through the house as usual. Maria had wondered how best to help her, but Pepitta always helped herself.

"You will be astonished what troubles I have," she said. "I want you to lend me your red afternoon dress and the fur jacket again—I swear it's the last time—and if you want to be especially nice, give me a few drops of your perfume."

"Of course, Pepitta, everything, but —"

"Explanation at the back of the book," Pepitta interrupted. "The producer of the Vienna Theatre condescends to come to town, since the theatres are allowed to open again, and the talented Fraulein Birkmeier is to be granted an audition at half-past two this afternoon."

"And you will be able to sing?"

Pepitta embraced Maria. "I must," she whispered. "If only on the family's account. There is no idea of releasing Father from prison; I've just come from the lawyer. Who will pay the rent and everything? But I don't want to pretend to be better than I am. I'd have to sing anyway, and better than ever. There's a devil in me. I must reach my goal. That's what Joseph meant by 'She's all right, just the same.'"

While Pepitta tried on dress after dress, to decide on the red after all, the conversation touched another danger-spot when Maria asked about the things Pepitta had bought with the Uexcuell fee. "When will they be ready?" Pepitta laughed shrilly. "I lied to you. They weren't even ordered," she said in

a hard voice, and again that new face of hers appeared. "My father borrowed the money from me. He was going to give it back to me on the fifteenth, that was yesterday. Now I can wait."

They ate together in the studio because Pepitta was afraid to talk to the Defence Corps man before she went to the audition. When she left she readily took his letter and promised not to post it until she got to the Sixth District. In the hall she made a final pirouette in front of the mirror. "Now it only depends on how I sing," she said excitedly, already stirred by stage fright. Maria wished her good luck and looked after her as she jumped into the car which Johann had called. He hid his disapproval. Maria waited until he came into the house. "Fraulein Birkmeier has an audition. It's her profession," she explained. The telephone rang.

Johann started to take the call but, suddenly at the end of her control, Maria passed him and answered with beating heart. Johann noticed how she began to tremble. He retired discreetly but stopped just inside the pantry door.

It was Wiesner.

"Maria! How good it is to hear your voice! I simply must see you. I can't live without you . . . Maria . . . Maria . . ."

"Yes, Heinrich."

"I'm at the Imperial. Please come. Promise me that you will come. I'll wait. . . ."

"Yes."

She said "Yes" in the certain knowledge that she would not go, and put the receiver down without a farewell, before he could say anything more. Slowly walking upstairs she thought how much pleasure he always got out of waiting. It was merely a memory. She meant it rather nicely but suddenly the thought took on an additional, ironical meaning that she did not intend. He was not responsible for her ordeal.

Passing the open door of the library she saw the stranger again at the telephone. If only he wouldn't keep the wire busy too

long. He was beaten and not beaten. Karl would be that way too. Now if she could only go to his mother . . . With her, in the room in which he lived, she wasn't so alone. But she couldn't leave the house. Any moment he might give a sign. The fighting had been over for almost two days. He must give a sign. The waiting would soon be over. She felt it. Then she wouldn't be so helpless.

Louise was arranging flowers in the hall when a knock sounded on the house door. She opened it. A young fellow stood outside, wet and shivering in the cold, a little piece of paper in his hand.

"Does Fraulem Maria Steiger live here?" he asked. "I must talk to her personally." A happy premonition filled Louise. "Come along with me," she cried excitedly.

The Fraulem was doing her dramatic exercises, the difficult words and sentences, again and again. You could hear it even from the stairs. . . . What patience she put into it! Nobody was allowed to disturb her, but Louise opened the door without waiting for an answer to her light knock. "News, Fraulein . . ." she said, swallowing "of the engineer" at the last second, and pushed the boy into the studio.

"Comrade Merk sent me," said Schurl. "He's wounded in Floridsdorf and would like you to come." He spoke very softly. He hadn't imagined the engineer's love so fine, so beautiful.

A few minutes later Maria left the house with Schurl. She gave him money so that he could call for Karl's mother in a taxi while she went ahead.

On Thursday morning at eight o'clock the defenders of the Goethe Hof, who had ignored the Government's ultimatum and the demand that a white flag be raised, saw the cannon on the other bank spitting fire. They held firm under the uninterrupted bombardment that followed, and beat back infantry attacks, their ranks thinning with every hour, until late dusk when the order was given to clear the building — "Retreat, direction gas works Leopoldau." They fled through the back exits into the

darkness of the fields. From one window of the half-demolished building the voices of two children kept shouting farewells for a long time. It was Felix and Minnerl, who had appeared in the forenoon from God knows where. The two had gone from one defender to another the whole day, crouching as they ran past the windows, distributing ammunition and scanty food. Felix had counted every hit that shook the house. Two hundred and five had been his last figure. Karl turned as he ran and waved to them even though they couldn't see him in the darkness. Then suddenly the voices died out.

The Workers' Home, the Garden City, the railway station, and the Schhnger Hof, which the Defence Corps had retaken, had had to be cleared at the same time. The military was moving with growing superiority into the district. From all directions came the sound of explosions and rifle fire. Nobody knew where friend or enemy might be found. Kraus tried in vain to keep his men together. Many of them were wounded or too exhausted to go on. Karl and five other men who were dragging themselves along a factory wall, not far from the automobile works in which he had once worked — it seemed so long ago — had been separated from the main troop. Suddenly a police car, with search-lights playing, came dashing down the street. As they ran for cover hand grenades thrown from the speeding car exploded. When they tried to go on only three remained alive and Karl could not get up. A splinter had torn his thigh and penetrated to the bone. Warm blood streamed down his leg. He bit his tongue to keep from crying with pain; then for one beautiful moment all the stars lighted up until a veil fell over the sky, tender and dove-gray but growing darker and darker. Then he no longer knew anything.

The comrades who were not wounded took the bloody belts of the dead and tightened them with all their strength around Karl's leg to keep him from bleeding to death. Then they scraped a pile of snow together from the edge of the street and rubbed him with it, his face, his neck and his breast. They had

to go on. But where could they go with Karl? That was another question, but in no case must they be caught. The Heimwehr made short work of prisoners, wounded or not.

The cold and pain brought Karl around. The wound burned and the belts cut like knives. Two excited voices near his ear, yet far away, were explaining the situation to him. He remembered his last thought before the attack, that he would never again sit in the tube. Kraus lived not far from the works. Perhaps his wife Bertha could hide him if the comrades could carry him there.

They met two Heimwehr patrols but it was not difficult to avoid them, for the street lights were not functioning yet. It took two hours, an eternity, to go the short distance. The house was pitch-dark from top to bottom. Karl was too weak to give the whistle with which Kraus called his children when he came home from work. It was the same whistle they used to signal each other in the mountains. But one of the comrades listened closely and imitated it, and the house became lively, as if it had only been waiting — yet remained lightless, ghostlike, with doors swinging and windows opening in the darkness.

When Karl awakened his first impression was of a soft smell of iodoform, and it called up in his mind a vague picture, of an old man bending over him with a thin sharp knife in his hand that mirrored itself a hundred times in the thick glasses he wore. Behind him had appeared the frightened face of Bertha. That must have been long ago.

With an effort he opened his eyes. Bertha sat absorbed in thought behind a small table on which stood a photograph of herself, but it was not Kraus's flat, this strange room. The wound did not burn any more. It was now rather a drawing pain and a throbbing through the whole thigh. He could not move his leg but it was still there. He had wanted to cry out that they shouldn't take it off but he hadn't been able to bring out any sound. However, the old man had only cut out the splinter, he could tell that now.

It was raining outside. "Have *I* been asleep long?" he asked

and was shocked by the weakness of his voice. Bertha raised her head and her stern face lighted up with joy.

First she brought him some soup to eat, then she told him. It was now Friday. The Defence Corps had assembled once more, for the last time, on Wednesday night. The firing had stopped on the right bank and the radio news from the whole country, even if it wasn't true, had dashed every hope. Kraus and some of the other comrades had decided to get through to the frontier. They must have made it. Bertha took a telegram out of her handbag. "ARRIVED SAFE" it said, and came from Czechoslovakia. A wonder she got it!

Karl listened to her and to the rain outside. He waited patiently, and also out of weakness, but still she did not say what he wanted to know. Finally he asked, "Does my mother know where I am?"

"It was to have been a surprise for you," answered Bertha with a smile. "Before Kraus left he sent a boy to me, that was night before last, but on the way he was arrested on suspicion. This forenoon when I was at home for just a moment he arrived; a policeman, a friend of his father's, had let him out. You can imagine my fear for Kraus. That telegram came only half an hour later. Now the boy — I had to feed him first — is on his way to the Inner City and to your mother. I wanted to let her know yesterday but I couldn't leave for very long at a time and telephoning or writing is too dangerous."

Karl closed his eyes and did not answer.

Bertha took the thermometer from the washstand and put it under his armpit. A little time passed and she thought he had fallen asleep again, when he said abruptly, "Tell me the truth about my leg."

"You needn't be afraid," she answered, and it sounded true. "The bone is not touched. You can probably ski again next winter." Looking at the thermometer she added: "The doctor is coming at five. He can explain it to you." She didn't tell him that his fever was rising.

His look wandered over the room. "Whose flat is this?"

"It belongs to a friend. She's away and I had the key. Don't worry. It's a better house. You're safe here."

"Thanks for everything, Bertha." He wanted to go on but his eyes closed.

It was already getting dark when he woke up again. Before he had his eyes quite open he knew that Maria was in the room; Bertha, standing beside her, was putting on her hat. She whispered, but he heard it distinctly: "I'll be back at five." Then she went out softly and closed the door. Maria did not move. Didn't she see that he was awake?

He raised one arm toward her.

For another second she did not move; then she flew to him, bent over him, sank on her knees and pressed her lips on his. Throwing his arm about her he pulled her to him. Suddenly he felt her tears.

"No tears."

"Out of happiness, Karl."

"Yes, now we will be happy."

They fell silent, talked in the quietness of the dusk, and fell silent again, absorbed in the feeling of being together once more.

"I went to your mother's, to look for you."

"When did you return from the hut?"

"On Monday night, out of longing."

"My mother must like you."

"My father is happy about us."

"He knows?"

"I told him."

"I can't sit up, Maria. Kiss me once more."

Dusk became evening.

"I want to turn on the light," she said hesitatingly.

"I must look terrible, unshaved —"

"I noticed that already —" The little laugh in her voice ended abruptly, against her will, as the light fell on his face.

"Is it so bad?" he asked, suddenly disquieted.

"No, you only look very tired."

"I'm very thirsty, Maria."

She went into the kitchen for fresh water. It was more serious than Frau Kraus said. He must have proper care. When his mother came, — how long it was taking' — she could run downstairs and call her father.

Karl drained the glass. His eyes blazed out of dark caves. He pressed his lips together.

"Do you have great pain?"

He shook his head. A softer gleam came into his eyes and then a look of joy, like the time in the mountains when he had said that about her legs. She knew he was thinking that she was beautiful, and blushed. She sat on the bed and held his hand; sometimes he increased the pressure of his fingers. Then, again, he asked for water. She brought a wet kitchen towel and put it on his head. He smiled his thanks and closed his eyes. ,

It was nearly five. Where was the doctor? And his mother should have been here long before this. In her agitation Maria went to the window. The street, a small side alley, lay in darkness. Only one street light burned. At the corner was a telephone booth. She could be back in a few minutes. Karl must be taken to a hospital, to a private one that the Heimwehr couldn't enter easily. Perhaps Frau Kraus exaggerated when she said they also abused the wounded. But Joseph's last friend had also said, "Now revenge rules."

"Where are you, Maria?" Karl suddenly called in a voice full of fear. He tried to sit up but fell back. She sat down again beside him and took his hand, which was burning hot.

"There is no difference between a great and a small injustice. Ott is right," he whispered feverishly. "We tolerated the small injustice and must now suffer the big one. DCF — Defence Corps Station Floridsdorf. . . . No one listens to us. It was too late but horses and cows dream like human beings. Then they shudder in their sleep. They haven't a good conscience either.

We must travel far away Maria, through many countries. Perhaps the world isn't like this everywhere."

Maria changed the towel with trembling hands; she heard his heavy breathing and listened for sounds in the street that would mean that Frau Kraus was returning, or that the others had come. But there was dead silence, except when Karl spoke, and whenever he did speak, the confused words cut into her heart.

"We must think everything over," Karl was whispering again. "Perhaps it's really not the human being that's to blame but the times and the circumstances. We have to decide that first. It's easy to act in time of danger; to see ahead and avoid danger, the abuse of power and all the dead, that is difficult. To serve science . . . But science does not know how to avoid danger, not yet. Perhaps it will someday, if the world still exists then. We must think everything over, from the beginning again, but nobody can wait to be wise. We will not wait either. Now we have to live, Maria, now, don't leave me alone, not any more."

She kissed him and whispered, "We'll think everything over. We'll move to the hut and be alone day and night above the clouds. Sometimes Alois will visit us or Nero or on holidays your mother and my father. But for weeks we will be alone, only you and I, without times and circumstances. It will be beautiful, Karl--"

She could not go on. Tears of fear suddenly choked her voice.

"You are crying again."

"Out of happiness, Karl."

"It will be beautiful," she repeated, then the pressure of his hand became weaker and his eyes closed. But he opened them again at once. Two wrinkles appeared in his forehead and with an effort he said, "I know I have fever, Maria, but that only makes it so that I can think everything at the same time, and talk too. Otherwise I am so clumsy. But I'll say it to you right away. We will live a few weeks in the hut or a whole year,

summer and winter, but one cannot step out of one's time. Franze—you must learn to know him—found it out. There is no such thing as an idyll. We have to carry the responsibility the human being has, not run away from it. It is born with us, and only afterward the rights come. We cannot flee."

"We don't want to," whispered Maria.

He sank back, in his face a gleam that did not come from the fever. Then he lay silent.

Behind the walls a clock struck.

Maria bent over him as he slept and breathed a kiss on his hot forehead. He moved his lips in happiness. Cautiously she rose from the bed. Now she could telephone.

She was about to leave the room on tiptoe when shrill whistles sounded from the street. She went to the window and, after a second, opened it to listen.

Men came running around the corner toward the garden wall beside the house opposite. With one jump they were on top of it and over, whistling, waving, and shouting. "Quick, the dogs," she heard, and then, "The block is cut off," as they called back someone who was running down the street. The man returned.

"The block is cut off." That was the reason why the doctor didn't come, and Karl's mother and Frau Kraus. Maria's brain was working clearly in spite of her terror. Now she was alone with Karl, cut off from everything and everybody. And they were hunting the Defence Corps people.

Heimwehr men dashed around the corner. They pulled their guns to their cheeks and shots rang out. But the last fugitive was already over the wall. When the pursuers reached it a head appeared above it, an arm, a revolver. Two shots, and a Heimwehr man was twisting on the ground. The next moment a great open motor truck, accompanied by a troop of Heimwehr soldiers, rolled around the corner, its lights illuminating the street. It stopped under the street light in front of the house. It was a transport for prisoners, men and women, a miserable pack of

people loaded into it like cattle. The Heimwehr men went off in groups and stormed into the neighbouring houses.

Maria turned around and took three steps into the room. "They also abuse the wounded." It sounded in her ears. She turned off the light and listened. Nothing. Only the crying of the wounded man and the trampling of many boots in the street. When they came she must not show any fear. She must be friendly, not arouse suspicion. They must believe her when she said that nobody was in the flat.

Karl moved, unruly in his fever.

Gun butts pounded on the door.

The Heimwehr soldiers stepped back a little before the tender, pale girl. Then the first one asked, "Defence Corps people hidden?"

"No."

"Who lives here-"

Only she herself noticed that she hesitated. "An engineer of the automobile works," she said, to impress them.

"Is he at home?"

"No, only me."

The three turned to go. At this moment a voice sounded, coming nearer in the darkness of the staircase: "Search every flat, turn it inside-out. Don't believe that whore."

Maria drew back before the intruders. "Out of the way," shouted the commanding voice. A giant of a man pushed her into the room and laughed as he switched on the light and saw the man in the bed.

"He's sick," pleaded Maria.

The man snatched the blanket from the bed. There it lay, the thickly bandaged leg.

"Downstairs with him," came the command.

Maria threw herself between Karl and the Heimwehr man. "He's ill," she cried again. The big fellow seized her and pulled her away from the bed. "Take her along too," he said.

She was pushed out of the flat, and down the stairs and into

the street by the yelling Heimwehr men, and hustled into the truck. The helping arms of prisoners received her, while Karl was dragged out of the house, and thrown up into the truck, which started to move slowly, rumbling over the pavement. The prisoners pressed themselves together and made a bed for him with their coats, which they took off in spite of the rain. Somebody said proudly, "That's Comrade Merk. I was with him at the car-depot."

Maria hovered over him. When the truck passed under the street lights she could see his face. His lips moved silently.

"Karl," she whispered, "Karl."

Light and darkness played over his face, incessantly. It was a long journey, but he never answered.

It grew colder and the rain turned to snow. In the courtyard of the police prison stood a great mass of people, hands raised, faces turned to the walls. The new prisoners were forced to join them. Karl remained lying in the truck. Now he gazed at her, a wild happiness in his feverish eyes. She held his hand tightly, oblivious of orders, until she was torn away.

THE block was no longer cut off. Mother Merk and Schurl stood before the empty bed in the ransacked room. In the Inner City, the President of the Republic was receiving the Heimwehr Minister, who had lived up to his promise of doing a thorough job. His breast was decorated with the Grand Order of Honour, and the thanks of the Fatherland were conveyed to him for his "intelligent, energetic and wisely restrained conduct of the defence war which had been forced upon him." Following this communique, the radio announced the sentences of the Martial Courts which had been carried out all-over the country. In Vienna a worker whose wounds "could not be recognized as illness in the sense of the law" had had to be carried to the gallows on a stretcher. "The radio doesn't know everything," they said bitterly in the workers' quarters, where the number of arbitrary shootings was no secret, and the silent executions, which consisted of not giving medical aid to wounded Defence Corps men, were recognized for what they were. The prisons of the Heimwehr ran with the blood of the wounded.

Mother Merk saw Maria's coat on the floor beneath an overturned chair and picked it up. Schurl and the doctor who had followed them in could only stare at her, as she stood before the bed, immovable and ghastly pale. But at length she spoke. "They have taken the girl along too."

At this moment Frau Kraus came into the room. She had heard in the street what had happened. "They took them to the police prison, the people say," she told them and added shyly, "I'm the wife of Karl's friend, Kraus."

Mother Merk still did not move. Schurl looked from her to the others, hack and forth, helplessly. He wanted to say something but did not dare, so great was his respect for the mother of the engineer. The doctor, a weak old man, started to cry like a little child. "I'm finished. I can't go on," he whispered.

"There's a whole group of wounded waiting in the sewer under the Schlinger Hof," said Frau Kraus quietly. "There are no doctors who dare to go. Nice Samaritans!"

The old man took his bag. Slowly his quiet steps receded.

"Schurl, you take the tram into the city to the girl's father," Mother Merk said suddenly. "Tell him what happened. Here, take the coat along. He'll be able to help his daughter better than we would. Besides, she's completely innocent. I'm going to look for Karl."

Professor Steiger, returning home from the Institute, had just learned from Louise where the Fraulein had gone when Schurl, for the second time that afternoon, arrived at the house on Freedom Square. While he was telling his story, Herr Walter came downstairs and saw the Professor's expression. "That's the way it is under the terror," he said.

"Where is my daughter now?" asked Professor Steiger.

"At the police prison in Floridsdorf probably," answered Schurl, "but we don't know for sure."

"First you must get an order of release from police headquarters. Otherwise you will never get her out," said Herr Walter.

The doorbell rang. It was Pepitta. She waved a piece of paper. "I have my contract. I'm engaged. Ingenue soubrette at the Vienna Theatre!" she shouted joyfully, then suddenly fell silent. The Professor went to the telephone and called Schlager, who was ready at once to intervene. He thought it would be best if they

drove together to police headquarters. Steiger put the receiver down and left the house without another word.

Pepitta, who had followed the telephone conversation, stood breathless, as if stunned. "Who is Engineer Merk?" she asked, but as if her thoughts were elsewhere.

"The fiance of the Fraulein," said Schurl. "I'm so worried about him. The Heimwehr will kill him, an intellectual who stuck with us. Not much will happen to the Fraulein. He's the one we must help. He's in much greater danger. You should have heard him speak at the meeting. He had no illusions."

Pepitta slowly folded her contract and put it in her handbag. Then she went upstairs to the studio with Louise, to put on her own clothes again.

"The poor Fraulein," Louise sobbed.

"Yes," said Pepitta. "Nice times." And after a pause, "I had no idea that an Engineer Merk existed."

"They found each other in the mountains," said Louise, "and they loved each other very much. I knew it all the time. It tore my heart apart, what the Fraulein went through the whole week, ever since she came back from the Rax. But she didn't say a word, not a word of complaint. Once, after New Year's, the engineer was here for supper. He is a man, not as elegant as the Herr Baron, but much younger and a man."

"How stupid I was," said Pepitta. Now many things came back to her. At the ball the relationship between Maria and Wiesner had seemed for a moment entirely wrong, but in her own happiness she hadn't thought of it again.

Herr Walter in his shabby coat came out of the guestroom as Pepitta in her shabby coat left the studio. "You are moving out?" she asked. "The police may come, you can never tell how soon," he answered.

"I have a friend, a doctor. You could sleep in his flat at least for one night," said Pepitta.

"And who will concern himself about Comrade Merk?" asked Schurl as the three went out together.

"The Herr Professor, you can be sure of that. And perhaps I can do something myself," answered Herr Walter.

"I'll try to find out where they are keeping him," whispered Schurl and disappeared.

Pepitta looked after him and said bitterly, "And now I have my contract."

It grew colder again and the rain turned to snow. Mother Merk and Frau Kraus, who in spite of the two children at home had not left her side, were standing in a crowd of scolding, crying women in front of the Floridsdorf police prison. Half-grown children pushed themselves forward to the door to ask the guards whether their fathers had been arrested, but even their pitiful pleading did not help. They got no information and no one was allowed inside the dark, barred building. Some who already knew that their missing relatives were there had brought along small packages of food and warm clothes. They could not deliver them. Twice the street was cleared by the police but each time the crowd came back, and it did not become smaller even though from time to time one or another of the waiting people would be called away because husband, brother, or son had been found. You could easily tell by the faces whether he was safe, wounded, or killed. Or by the way they ran off, wordlessly or with loud cries. The empty places were filled again at once. The wind and the snow drove the women and children closer and closer together, and in the very compactness of the crowd the grim hope grew that the commander of the police would have to give in if they did not move from the spot.

It was after eight when Schurl found Mother Merk and Frau Kraus. Now that he was there Frau Kraus went home to get something to eat. It was three hours before she came back; in the meantime the block in which she lived had been cut off. She tried to persuade Mother Merk to come to her house to sleep; it was not likely that they would get news about Karl so late at night. But Mother Merk answered merely, "I must wait."

And the tone permitted no opposition. So Frau Kraus waited too. But about midnight when, in spite of its determination, the crowd was melting more and more rapidly, Mother Merk spoke. "You should be fresh tomorrow morning. The comrades under the Schlinger Hof will need you. It's better that you go home, Frau Kraus." As she said this she leaned on Schurl as if she expected him to remain with her. She seemed to like the boy.

Two hours later the policeman who had been rudest in keeping order and driving people away—probably, like almost everybody else now, he was afraid of his superiors—told them that the Heimwehr had taken their prisoners to the barracks in Stadtlau. The waiting people thought that he was only trying to get rid of them, but Mother Merk looked at him closely and then said, "Come on, Schurl. He isn't lying."

It was a long way to Stadtlau in the falling snow and the darkness. It was dawn when they arrived at the high wall that surrounded the low buildings. The guards at the door insisted that there were no prisoners at all in the barracks, but from behind the walls they could hear cries and soon one truck after another arrived with new prisoners from the raids. When the doors opened they could see into the yard, which was full of prisoners standing in the cold with their hands raised.

In the early forenoon, the ringing of the church bells, which the Government had ordered as a sign of victory, sounded out across the snow fields. Frau Kraus arrived. She had asked around the police prison, when she did not find Mother Merk and Schurl, and had heard about the barracks. Schurl could not keep his eyes open any longer and slept as he walked up and down; Mother Merk had made him keep moving because of the cold. But he would not go home. They were standing now at a considerable distance from the barracks, behind a row of guards which the Heimwehr had put there. If the prisoners were still groaning the sound could not carry that far. Mother Merk took a few sips of coffee from the thermos bottle Frau Kraus had

brought and ate a roll. She did not speak a word and she did not take her eyes off the barracks.

"In the city everything is normal again. It looks like any other day, the factories working; except that a great many people are going to look at the ruins. But the comrades are secretly distributing leaflets they printed last night," said Frau Kraus.

"It's not over yet," said Schurl, suddenly awake again.

"It's never over," said Mother Merk.

"We must find a lawyer who can do something about Karl," said Frau Kraus. "I don't think staying around here makes much sense. You will only make yourself sick, Comrade Merk, if I may say so."

"A guard promised me he'd find out how Karl is," answered Mother Merk.

"I'll go and call the Professor. Perhaps he knows something," said Schurl.

About noon he came back. He had telephoned twice but the Professor was not at home and they still had no news at the house on Freedom Square. Mother Merk sent Frau Kraus back to her children.

Hard as they looked for him, the guard did not come out of the barracks, but at three o'clock sharp the main door opened and a crowd of prisoners, hands raised, was driven out and down the street to the Stadtlau railroad station. The guards held their guns ready to shoot. But a small thin fellow tried to escape. He reminded Mother Merk, as he ran, of poor quick Anderl; a shot, and he too lay stretched out.

Karl was not among the prisoners. Mother Merk and Schurl ran beside them, a long piece of the way, until they were absolutely sure.

"He couldn't have walked with his wounds anyhow," said Schurl.

"It was only a hope," said Mother Merk.

They turned and went back. Schurl screwed up his courage. "We should go home," he said. But Mother Merk sat down on

the milestone not far from the barracks door where there was nobody standing now, not even a guard. The whole landscape was bleat and deserted.

"Who knows whether he is inside?" Schurl started again because he was growing more and more afraid. Mother Mck was ghastly pale, just as she had been the day before, standing beside the empty bed, but now her face was sunken from great weariness.

"He's inside all right," said Mother Merk after a while, in a low voice that shocked Schurl. He himself could have cried from exhaustion.

Suddenly the big barracks door opened again and two trucks moved out. They were covered but one of the tarpaulins was not big enough. You could see the load. Dead-wagons. They drove quickly away.

Mother Mck had risen. She took two futile steps toward the trucks, looked after them, and fell, before Schurl could reach her. She lay as if dead on the frozen street. Two tears, the first ones, and the only thing alive about her, glistened on her lashes.

In the Danube marshes the sun set.

Steiger and Schlager had been received at police headquarters by a high official. He took down all the details and had Floridsdorf on the telephone for a long time — "There's a fine confusion," he remarked aside. He declined to intervene in any way for Engineer Merk, but he ordered a search made for Maria, who was to be brought as soon as she was found to police headquarters. "I cannot release the Fraulcin without a formal questioning," he said apologetically. The proposal that Steiger, in company with a police officer, be allowed to look for her in Floridsdorf was sharply rejected as being against every rule.

At the Heimwehr headquarters, where Schlager went alone while Steiger waited in the street, the assertion that a girl had been kidnapped by Heimwehr troops under the circumstances de-

scribed was dismissed as "an atrocity story, but an investigation of the case was finally promised "after the work of mopping-up in Floridsdorf has been finished." An attempt to reach the young Count Uexcuell by telephone from the house on Freedom Square was not successful. The Herr Count was commanding the Heirnwelhr regiments in Styria, where the fighting, despite the official news, was apparently not yet over.

Calls to police headquarters later in the evening brought no result. At about one o'clock the Minister of Education finally answered at his flat. He was full of sympathy and promised to do everything within his power. Steiger put the receiver down with a feeling of despair. "I shall never forgive myself if anything happens to Maria. You live in the same house, father and child, but you don't know."

"You live and know nothing at all," said Schlager, and emptied the bottle of wine which Johann, as usual, had brought him.

After a night spent in self-reproach and in fruitless calls to the police Steiger drove to Floridsdorf. It was still pitch-dark. The officer in command of the district to whom he finally made his way was obviously irritated by the interest his superiors had shown in a woman prisoner whom he could not find. He advised Steiger to report his daughter missing; the routine way very often brought quicker results.

But it was not until Monday evening that they heard. Maria's name had been found on the list of patients in the police hospital. How she had got there was not revealed. When Steiger passed through the vast, stuffy ward, down an aisle of closely ranged beds, and finally stopped at the post of one, Maria was sleeping, her breath quick, her cheeks flushed. The blackboard on the wall above her bed registered a temperature of 103. But the police doctor made no objection to her being removed to private care. Steiger got the order of release in the course of the night, and the next morning Maria was lying half-unconscious and delirious in a private hospital.

Her fever rose still higher and for more than a week she lay

between life and death. "She ought to pull through," the doctors assured the Professor. "She has no will to live," the nurses said as they relieved each other. On the tenth day the crisis came; on the eleventh, the fever began to drop and her breathing grew quieter. When, after a long sleep, she was conscious for the first time, she looked fixedly at her father. At last she moved her hand a little; and as he grasped it, the joy of recognition came into her eyes.

For days she lay quiet and did not speak, even if someone spoke to her. Her apathy was frightening. She did not acknowledge her father's careful and tender questions; she merely looked at him and soon closed her eyes. Until one day she said in a very low voice, without emphasis, but as if she wanted to relieve him of his sorrow and his fear of having to speak it out for once, "He died, Father, I know it."

Then, before Steiger could answer, she sat up and her eyes grew great with horror, as if she had only now, afterwards, understood what she had uttered. In the anxiety for her that seized him, he answered, against his will, for it was only a crumb of false hope he was offering her, "One doesn't know, Maria. He is missing."

"Missing," she repeated tonelessly with a slight shake of her head. Then she sank back onto the pillows.

Steiger said nothing of his attempts to find a trace of Karl. Almost certainly he lay buried in one of the secret mass graves into which the Heimwehr had let their victims disappear. Nor did he tell her about his visit to Mother Merk, who had declined his offer of help almost angrily. "As far as money goes, I am better off now than ever before in my whole life," she had answered without explaining. At the same time red spots appeared on her neck and she continued, "The less we know of each other the better. I should like to visit your daughter and bring her something of my son's to keep, but the only thing for her now is to forget him and everybody ought to help her. She can in time if the memory is not opened up every day. She is young

and can still have a good life. That's the only thing that counts now."

There was no longer any snow when Maria was taken for a walk for the first time in the garden of the hospital. She was light as a feather on the arm of the nurse. More than once she stopped, slowly and painfully raised her head, looked into the clear sky and seemed to listen with her whole being, but it was not to the piping of the birds in the branches and no sound of the town came into the remote world of the sick. When the nurse asked what it was she heard she shrank away as if she had been caught doing something wrong and begged to be led back indoors.

"We must try very carefully to bring her out of herself," the doctor said, and would always begin his daily visits with harmless remarks about the world outside, the weather, or a play he had seen the evening before, casual sentences that might perhaps bring a positive response; but he never achieved his object. Maria would listen patiently, quietly, but with a seriousness in her pale, tender features, a seriousness so deep and so remote that it rendered every word banal and meaningless. She took no interest in the life to which she would soon return, and the stronger she grew, the clearer it became that she was protecting the destruction of her existence as if it were a private possession with which she wished to be alone.

Maria was able to leave the hospital at the beginning of April. It was a beautiful day. The air was as light as the new wine the peasants were pouring out on the slopes of the Vienna forest — and as sparkling and treacherous. In the people in the streets one sensed a stirring of those long-suppressed feelings of which winter is no friend. On the drive home Maria sat slightly bent forward in the car and looked with astonishment out of the window. At Schotten Gate there was no barbed wire. She seemed pleased when Louise, Johann and Frau Agnes greeted her in the hall, but she went quickly ahead and up the stairs. Only at the landing

before the open library door did the Professor and the nurse catch up with her. In the studio she went straight to the flowers on the window sill and seemed to study them for a long time. When she turned and looked about the room her glance rested on a shelf. Slowly she went over and took down two blue paper rolls that lay there on the books. Louise felt terror go through her limbs. Those were the blueprints Herr Wiesner had forgotten on his last visit, and it hadn't occurred to her to take them away—but the Friiulcin had already put the rolls back without opening them, quite indifferent.

In the afternoon Pepitta came, her arms full of primroses. The Professor received her first and asked her to be careful with Maria, to say nothing that could excite her and not stay too long. His warning was unnecessary, Pepitta thought, as she went up the stairs. At six she was supposed to meet Wiesner, who had at last returned from Langenbruck and was willing to intervene for her father, and naturally she wouldn't say anything exciting, but when she arrived at the studio door her heart was beating fast.

She needn't have been afraid, she thought, a little later. Maria looked frail; in a way it made her still more beautiful, but she was calm and her behaviour was quite normal. She knew right away that the primroses had come from the Ucxuell greenhouse, Pepitta described how she visited the old Count once a week. He was so feeble, after a cold, that he wasn't able to sprinkle his wild flowers himself, but he talked about them all the more. Here Pepitta censored herself and did not add that he also talked about how stupid and vile human beings were in comparison, asserting that flowers and bushes and trees were a higher form of life because they needn't move and didn't talk. But such an antihuman philosophy could offer no comfort to an unhappy person. She knew that from her own experience. She went on talking, but she restricted herself to the Academy, school gossip—how her classmates, especially Mitzi Kaiser, envied her the contract. Even here she had to refrain from saying that two of her schoolmates had been expelled for political con-

spiracy, and described instead the rehearsals for the last production of the term.

Maria suddenly interrupted her. "Don't try so hard, Pepitta," she said in a low voice. "Say something real. How are your parents?"

"Father is still in prison," answered Pepitta hesitantly. "Like everybody else."

"Instead of Joseph," Maria said. "I can't forget the way he kissed my hand when he said good-bye."

"A miracle has happened to my mother," continued Pepitta. "First it looked as if she would die of grief, but one morning she went into the shop where everything was upside-down — you can imagine how much good I'd be in a place like that — and since then she has been running the business better than my father ever did. Nobody would have suspected that she had so much ability. She came to life just as if she had been suppressed for ages, but I wonder how long it will last. And every Saturday she goes to the Central Cemetery and lays a bouquet of red carnations with a red ribbon on Joseph's grave; and, of course, that's strictly forbidden. One of these days she will be arrested too."

"Karl has no grave," said Maria.

They fell silent. It was getting dark. Searchlights began to play on the sky outside the windows.

"Those everlasting military exercises —" said Pepitta contemptuously, but she could not go on. Maria had started up. Her hands rose convulsively to cover her eyes and ears. Her whole body was shuddering.

Pepitta stepped softly to her side.

"Maria, pull yourself together," she whispered. "It's hard for me too. I'm just play-acting. My brother is dead, my father is a broken man, my mother is on the way to being crazy, and my first love — I know you saw everything at the ball — threw me over for fear I might compromise him in the new old Austria by having such a family. The only thing I have is my contract, but life is no musical comedy. Yet in spite of that — I haven't the

slightest reason to think so — perhaps tomorrow — I feel it — or day after tomorrow, it will be magnificent again." Tears poured from her eyes.

"I can't cry," Maria said tonelessly.

A week passed. There was no perceptible change in Maria's state of mind, in the frightening indifference with which she appeared to shut out her surroundings. Sometimes, the nurse could get her to take short walks in the Volksgarden or along the Ring, but most of her days she passed in the studio, sitting by the flowers at the window or playing the piano — but never anything but scales. Their monotony, endless and bare of feeling, tired even the nerves of the nurse, and heightened Steiger's fear that Maria was in danger from herself. The doctor advised a radical change of scene; but when Steiger proposed an early vacation trip Maria lost her indifference for a moment and begged him, terrified, not to make her go. He promised. It was then that he told her that he had been dismissed from the Institute at the end of February. He had been afraid to break the news to her, but she accepted it without apparent interest and sank back into apathy, until one morning, while Steiger was opening his mail at the breakfast table, she said unexpectedly: "You don't receive letters any more from Florence?"

"Fraulein Berg has gone to relatives in England," answered Steiger after a pause.

"Forever?"

"Yes, Maria."

They both listened to the bells of Schotten Church calling the world to morning Mass. Then Maria said as if to herself: "It's because of me. It's not right."

"No Maria, there was a different reason."

She seemed content with his reply but after a long pause she returned to the theme. "You said once that I was so like my mother and that everything was much deeper than I knew. . . . Perhaps that is the reason. . . . Did you mean that after so many years you can't forget?"

"Yes, Maria, that, too."

She gave him an inquiring look and ran her hand uncertainly over her forehead as she spoke with an effort. "I don't know whether I am like that. I don't understand myself now, but at the same time it is as if I were closer to life, to the real world. . . . You must still have patience with me."

She spoke it out and then rose quickly as if she were frightened by herself. In the doorway she turned with a helpless movement. "It's egotistical," she said, trembling, yet with a hint of the old lightness in her voice, "but I'm glad we are going to stay together."

The next day she begged him to drive her to Mother Merk's and to wait for her downstairs in the car. "I'm well enough now," she said to ward off objections, and repeated the assurance more than once on the way, as if to confirm it to herself. "I am well enough to behave as I should."

A tremor ran through her as she climbed up to Mother Merk's flat, and grew more violent the higher she went. She could hear Karl's steps on these stairs, many steps of many years.

Mother Merk opened the door. "So you've come," she said, at length. A young fellow came out of the kitchen behind her. It was Schurl.

Again they sat opposite each other. There was no shooting outside and no knitting on the table. On the wall hung a photograph of Karl in a black frame, an enlargement.

"You still have a hundred leaflets to run off," Mother Merk said and Schurl went into the smaller room. A rolling sound and the swishing of sheets turned over started up behind the door.

"He lives with me now. He is a dear boy, a little unruly," said Mother Merk. "I'm not lonesome. On Sundays, if it doesn't rain, we meet— all the comrades and Frau Kraus— in Hik-teldorf, in Franze's garden plot. I learn a lot from them."

"Franze . . ." Maria repeated the name. "Karl said I must learn to know him."

"So," answered Mother Merk. "But no one can learn to know him any more. He died too."

The rolling behind the door grew louder in Maria's ears while she kept her eyes on the photograph. Perhaps it was not a good likeness; it made him seem strange.

"The comrades say," continued Mother Merk suddenly, "that life is much greater than a misfortune that happens to anybody, even if it's the greatest one. I must learn that wisdom a second time:'

"Our personal life is only half of life," whispered Maria, "there is no idyll and you cannot step out of your time. We are not alone on earth. That was what Karl said before they came — in his fever — but it is the truth. I know it now too."

"The truth," repeated Mother Merk.

"A good truth," Maria continued, more and more as if she were speaking to herself. "I know it now. It was difficult to grasp, to really understand it so that it didn't make you unhappy, but almost glad on the contrary, really able to live."

The rolling sound stopped and Schurl called through the door. "The hundred are finished."

"Then wrap them up. Hansel and Hermann will be here any minute."

Dusk fell and the photograph slowly blurred before Maria's eyes. Silently she rose.

"We are printing two thousand leaflets every week now, we alone," said Mother Merk, and her voice gained strength. "They can shoot and hang many of us but they can't silence us."

At the door she suddenly drew Maria to her, held her close, and kissed her.

"The Herr Baron Wiesner reminds me more every day of the Staff Officer in 1918 who always sat at the second window until one day — " Somebody called for his check and Herr Otto had to interrupt his reminiscences.

" — until one day he did not come any more and the papers said he had shot himself in despair over the lost war," Friiulein

Mitzi finished the story to herself as she threw the metal checks on the trays of the waiters. She knew all of Herr Otto's stories by heart and they bored her. If she imagined that in spite of this she might accept his offer of marriage, she got the creeps. But she hadn't really turned him down yet because marrying him would be the best, or in any case the safest, thing to do. The new waiter she'd fallen in love with at Christmas time was now a fugitive in Czechoslovakia, in Brno, because in February he had stuck with the Defence Corps people. He wrote letters full of longing, begging her to follow him, but she had heard enough from the secret Party courier who brought her father weekly bundles of the illegal workers' paper from over the frontier. She knew how the political icfugees lived and she also knew that she as a foreigner would not get a permit to work. Maxl, her brother, was also abroad now, with the Nazi legions in Bavaria. You would think from his fresh letters — how they got past the censor was a mystery — that it would not be long before they marched in and chased away the "bloody Government," as he called it. Her father also called it that, but still he didn't want it chased away by the Nazis, who in his opinion were even worse. The Government and the Nazis must disappear from the earth, he said. But how? He was less clear about rhat and he certainly didn't have great hopes. So he became more listless every day and it was wretched at home. If she thought shout the prospects some guests were offering her — Why, only yesterday the Herr writer Kainz, who had an exciting detective novel running in the *Tageblatt* and who knew everybody in the coffeeshouse, had asked her with a meaningful look whether she didn't want to go to supper with the rich Herr Schwarz. That would have been a way out. Her heart started to pound as she imagined the luxuries he could give her but this thought wasn't of any real help either. She simply wasn't adventurous enough. She was a coffeeshouse cashier and probably it was her fate to remain one. The fortuneteller didn't say one word about a man on hand, only of one far away. That was the waiter in Brno,

the fiery devil. And according to the prophecy, Herr Otto would remain unmarried too.

Baron Wiesner had been back from Langenbruck for a week now. He had intended to stay only two days, to make his official farewell visit to the Foreign Ministry, which he had postponed again and again, to interview a trained agronomist whom Professor Schlagcr had recommended, and also to intervene on behalf of Pepitta's father. Pepitta had written him a heart-breaking letter. He had put all his connections to work to help her but without success. Human considerations had been subordinated to political ends. The ruthlessness with which the Socialists were being hounded was intended as a warning to the Nazis, who now thought their hour had come. Robinson and Frau Schilker wore a victorious look and were already entertaining the police captain of Potzlcmsdorf.

Wiesner came to the coffeehouse every afternoon and stayed longer than he really wanted to. The voices of tragedy and comedy around him sounded pleasantly in his ears. The vast, endless futility, as the old priest in Langenbruck would have said, if he were still alive.

The literary table had survived the February days without great losses. Only the Hippmanns were missing. The former Deputy was sitting in prison and his wife was confined in an insane asylum.

Anna Taul, in her usual biting way, had given Kafka the nickname "the Herr Manager," in honour of his turn from literature to the corset business. Now he always sat aside with his friend Gerda Hilz, discussing her affairs. Elli Falk was living with Mia Kertesz. The situation in Central Europe had become too insecure for Herr Kertesz; he had gone to London, Mali, the envy of all her women friends, was in Paris again for the openings. That explained the absence of her boring husband, and gave Schlesinger more time to fight with Dr. Sonnenschein about the future of Austria and Europe. Koller had not touched a bridge card for three days after the execution of the wounded

worker he had defended but now he was making up fee it. His wife Sophie was working frantically, as she said herself, on a new biography, and the subject was a secret. She got a good deal of wear out of her deep look and showed impatience whenever Dr. Sonnenschein grew excited. "Politics is the least interesting thing in the world," she remarked to Wiesner. "The smallest private conflict is more interesting. Human beings are important, not issues." Wiesner moved away from the sleeping actor Zettel, who was threatening to fall against him. He thought to himself that Sophie also was in flight — deleting the "also"¹ at once, because he knew that there was no flight for him. He always got back to himself again, and to the vast, endless futility of it all.

"The workers of February died voluntarily for the idea of a better world inhabited by better human beings. They were true heroes and their example will work through the centuries," said Dr. Sonnenschein emphatically, pounding the table with his crippled hand. The permanent melancholy of his face offered a sad contrast to his vigorous words.

"Heroes!" shouted Schlesinger. "That stupid word again! Most people are heroes, whatever that means, if the occasion calls for it or if they are trained for it. Who fought in February? The Defence Corps, out of corps spirit, because it was conditioned to it, just as the military fought. But the workers, they looked on while their advance guard was shot to pieces. They didn't even strike. They were trained to drop the ballot in the box. The conception of the proletarian as a superior human being is a stupid fiction and therefore you lost. I am for the elite!"

"The elite! The power-hungry, the exploiters." Sonnenschein went into a rage. "Like the opportunistic swindler you are, you have no feelings for the idea of morality. Go on laughing. However deep our humiliation, in the end we will be victorious, Go on laughing. *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite!*" Sonnenschein's hand was still pounding after he had fallen silent.

"He's still in the Eighteenth Century," Schlesinger sneered. "Am I not right, Herr Baron?"

"The question is," answered Wiesner,—without looking up, and against his will: as a rule he didn't let himself be dragged into debates,— "whether there is an idea — 'In the beginning was the Word' — or whether the human being acts as well as he can from occasion to occasion — 'In the beginning was the Deed.' But perhaps this leads too far."

"The idea decides," shouted Sonnenschein.

"The belief, the superstition, the stupidity," snapped Anna Tnul.

"Superiority, yes, power!" laughed Schlesinger. "You don't want to recognize it because you have none, because you are too cowardly to rule."

It bored Wiesner. The Eighteenth Century, the Middle Ages, the Romans, the Greeks; if he contemplated the eternal tussle that was history, it bored him. That was the real, suicidal truth. If he could go to the hotel in the Fourth District where he had taken off his uniform in 1918, and correct at last the accident of his survival. . . .

On February 17 — it was now more than six weeks ago — he had waited until late evening for Maria at the Imperial, and the next day he had gone to Langenbruck for the funeral of the priest. A few days later, a letter came from Schlager telling him Maria's whole story and, after another few days, the engagement ring had arrived from Steiger, also by mail. The weeks passed. He played the master of the estate, as his father had done, visiting the neighbours and giving parties that had less and less of the stimulating novelty of the New Year's fete. Then came the evening with Hilda. Schrack declined at the last moment, the doctor was called to a patient, and he was left alone with her. It had clearly been arranged. She told him that she was going to marry Schrack, who had risen to be a member of the Tyrol State Government in Innsbruck, Wiesner didn't take her

seriously, yet protested out of politeness, but she was in earnest.

"Do you want to marry me, now that your attempt to play the young lover again has ended unsuccessfully?" she asked, with a hidden pleading in her tone and tears in her eyes.

Perhaps he was making the mistake of his life, but he could not answer. She stood erect against the wall like a condemned man who looks into the muzzles and waits, but still he could not answer. It was ghastly silent when she left — and next Sunday she was marrying Schrack.

"Do you believe that this attack of insanity, this atavism, is a conception of the world, is the beginning of a culture?" Sonnenschein whispered, trembling and hopeless.

Wiesner felt a pull at his heart as he answered sharply, "I'm not interested." He rose — Pepitta had at last appeared in the revolving door.

He led her to an empty table and explained to her without ado that hopeful as he himself had been a week ago she must not count on seeing her father for months. The only one who could free him was young Uexcuell, but he didn't have enough influence there.

"I've tried him," answered Pepitta. "He sometimes comes to tea with the old Count. Once when he saw me to the door I took heart and was about to ask him for my father's freedom. He cut me short right away. But as he looked at me he had an idea. I saw it very distinctly. If I would sleep with him I could have anything from him. But I can't bring myself to it and Joseph would turn over in his grave."

They sat awhile in silence before Pepitta went on, as if thinking aloud: "He wants to sleep with me mainly out of malice against his father; and the old Count once said to me, 'It would be a marvellous way of spiting my son if I made you an offer of marriage, but it would also be a blasphemy.' They hate each other. The young Uexcuell always behaves very nicely to his

father, but, if *you'll* excuse me, Baron, that's probably only aristocratic manners."

With this remark, to which Wiesner smiled assent, the conversation trickled out until without preface Pepitta said, "Maria came home."

"I know," answered Wiesner. Not a word more.

He sat alone for a time after she left. The literary table was empty now. The afternoon guests were almost all gone, the evening guests hadn't yet arrived. Herr Otto stood beside the buffet entertaining Fraulein Mitzi. At a near-by table two men with provincial faces that looked strange in this cafe were discussing the impending victory of the Nazis. Wiesner could not help hearing bits of their talk. "Did you see the Jews and the Arm-chair Bolsheviks . . . But it won't be long now . . . One Reich, one nation, one leader."

"An attack of insanity, Herr Dr. Sonnenschein," thought Wiesner; then suddenly Elli Falk was standing at his table — young, attractive, knowing.

They went to supper together. Elli told him that the Kertesz menage was moving to London and that she had to look for a flat. Wiesner offered her his. She could have it until the lease ran out, he was going to travel, indefinitely. Elli was delighted and they agreed that she should come the next day at noon to see the flat. After supper they went on to Kobenzl, where they had spent that first evening, which had ended too early, almost a year ago. Elli got her champagne and it was a mild spring night. But around twelve Wiesner drove her back silently into the Inner City to the cafe. When the car stopped Elli didn't leave it and after a pause she said, "Why not? I'd like to see the flat right now."

Wiesner leaned forward and gave the chauffeur his address. They were already driving across the Ring when he said, "Yes, why not?"

When the car turned into Potzleinsdorf Street the whole village seemed alive in spite of the lateness of the hour. Police-

men were racing through the streets, windows were thrown open, whistles were blowing shrilly. Robinson was standing on the terrace of his villa and his tremendous laughter resounded through the gardens. Frau Schilker stormed out of the house shouting "*Heiir*" and for a second it was unpleasant to Wiesner that she should see him with Elli, but in her exaltation she did not seem to notice anything and hurried down the street. Then from the balcony Wiesner and Elli could see the source of the excitement. On one of the foothills of the Vienna Forest, where once the Turks had drawn up their lines when they besieged the city, burned a gigantic swastika, flaming through the night.

It was the first mild evening after a long hard winter, but it was not only the spring that kept many people awake. Defence Corps men were slipping through the workers' districts, from house to house, distributing their leaflets about inalienable human rights. In the German Embassy the conspirators were discussing their plans. In the palace of the Government appeals for help to Italy were being composed. Mother Merk was listening for Schurl in the next room, on Karl's sofa; the boy often cried out in pain in his sleep. In her mind she went up dark stairs, through black cellars, past dank or dusty walls, stooped in low halls and under rooftrees. Five arms depots had never been discovered; she alone knew where they were. She had been the reserve, and now she was the vanguard front. And the password was still "*Anna 1927.*"

Professor Steiger was writing a final farewell letter to England. Maria lay wide awake. She had cried for a long time. Now her quiet thoughts enclosed her whole life, all the fairy-tale years and the sudden reality, the great challenge.

