First Chapter

Georg von Wergenthin sat all alone at the table today. Felician, his older brother, had preferred, after a long time, to dine once again with friends. But Georg still felt no particular inclination to again see Ralph Skelton, Count Schoenstein, or any of the other young people with whom he was otherwise glad to chat; for the moment, he still wasn't feeling sociable.

The servant cleaned up and vanished. Georg lit a cigarette and walked, as was his custom, back and forth in the large, three-windowed, and somewhat low-ceilinged room wondering how this space, which for many weeks had seemed to him as if darkened by a cloud, had gradually begun to regain its former friendly appearance. Involuntarily his gaze came to rest on the empty armchair at the upper end of the table over which the September sun flowed in through the open middle window; and it seemed to him as though he could have seen his father, who had been dead for two months, sitting there only an hour ago, so clearly did even the smallest gesture of the departed stand before his eyes, from his way of pushing back his coffee cup, or putting on his glasses, to leafing through a brochure.

Georg thought of one of his last conversations with his father, which had taken place in late spring shortly before the move to the villa on the Veldeser See. Georg had just returned from Sicily where he had spent April with Grace, on a melancholy and somewhat boring farewell journey before the final return of the beloved to America. He had not

really worked again for a half year or longer; not even the melancholy Adagio that he had heard in the roaring of the waves on an agitated morning in Palermo as he walked along the shore had been written down. He had played the theme for his father, in a fantasy of such excessive harmonic richness that the simple melody was almost engulfed; and as he began a new wildly modulating variation, his father had asked, smiling from the other end of the grand piano: "Where, where?" Georg, as if embarrassed, let the flood of tones die away, and then, warmly as always, but not in so light a tone as before, the father started a conversation with the son about his future, a matter which had in fact been on Georg's mind that day and become heavy with presentiment.

He stood at the window and looked out. Outside, the park was rather empty. On a bench sat an old woman wearing an outmoded coat with black glass pearls. A governess walked by, a little boy on her hand, and another person, much smaller and in a hussar's uniform, with his sabre buckled on and a pistol at his side, walked ahead, looked proudly around himself, and saluted an invalid who came down the path smoking. Deeper in the garden, around the kiosk, a few people sat drinking coffee and reading newspapers. The foliage was still rather thick, and the park seemed oppressed, dusty, and on the whole more summer-like than usual in late September. Georg braced his arms on the window sill, bent forward, and contemplated the sky. Since the death of his father he had not left Vienna, despite many opportunities that had been open to him. He could have gone with Felician to the Schoenstein estate; Frau Ehrenberg had invited him to the Auhof[1] in a kindly letter; and he could easily have found a companion for the bicycle tour through Carinthia and the Tyrol that he had planned for a long time but could not decide on alone. But he preferred to stay in Vienna, and passed the time leafing through and ordering old family papers. He found remembrances going back to his great-grandfather Anastasius von Wergenthin, who had come from the Rhine region, and who had, through marriage with a certain Fraulein Recco, come into the possession of an old, long uninhabitable little castle near Bozen. There were also documents concerning Georg's grandfather, an artillery officer who had fallen at Chlum in 1866. His son, Felician and Georg's father, had devoted himself to scientific, primarily botanical, studies and had taken his doctorate at Innsbruck. At the age of twenty-four he met a young

1. The name of the Ehrenbergs' country estate.

lady from an old Austrian official family who had trained herself to be a singer, perhaps more to escape the narrow, almost poverty stricken condition of her house, than from any inner calling. Baron von Wergenthin saw and heard her for the first time in winter in a concert performance of the *Missa Solemnis*, and the following May she became his wife. In the second year of the marriage Felician was born, in the third, Georg. Three years later the baroness's health began to decline, and she was sent to the south by her doctors. As they awaited her recovery the household in Vienna was disbanded, and so it happened that the baron and his family came to live a sort of hotel- and wander-life. Though business and studies often took the baron to Vienna, the sons almost never left their mother. They lived in Sicily, in Rome, in Tunis, in Corfu, in Athens, in Malta, in Meran, on the Riviera, and finally in Florence; by no means extravagantly, but in accordance with their rank; and not economically enough to keep a good part of the baronial fortune from being gradually used up.

Georg was eighteen years old when his mother died. Nine years had passed since then, but undimmed was the memory of that spring evening when his father and brother were by chance not at home, and he had stood alone and helpless at the bed of his dying mother while the clamor and laughter of strollers poured in offensively loud with the air of spring through the hastily opened window.

The survivors took the body of the mother back to Vienna. The baron devoted himself to his studies with a new, almost desperate fervor. Whereas earlier he had been regarded only as a distinguished amateur, he now began to be taken seriously even in academic circles, and when he was elected honorary president of the Botanical Society, he had more to thank for this distinction than the accident of noble birth. Felician and Georg registered as auditors with the legal faculty. But it was the father himself who, after a time, gave his son the choice to quit his university studies and to give his musical inclinations more suitable development, an offer that was accepted with gratitude and relief. But perseverance even in this self-chosen field eluded him, and often for weeks he could fritter away his time with all sorts of things that lay in his path. It was also this frivolous tendency that set him leafing through those old family papers with such seriousness, as if they contained important mysteries from the past to be penetrated. He passed many hours pondering with emotion over letters that his parents had exchanged with one another in earlier years, over yearnings, fancies, melancholies, and consolations from which not only the departed them-

selves but also other half-forgotten people became newly vivid. The German teacher with the sad, pale forehead, who was in the habit of quoting Horace on their long walks together appeared to him again; the brown, wild young face of Prince Alexander of Macedonia, in whose company Georg had taken his first riding lessons in Rome emerged; and in a dreamlike manner, as if drawn with black lines on a pale blue horizon, the pyramid of Cestius[2] rose up, just as Georg had seen it in the sunset, returning home from his first ride on the Campagna. And as he continued dreaming there appeared seashores, gardens, and streets, about which he hardly knew anything of the landscape or city from which his memory had preserved them. Forms floated by, many perfectly clear, which he had known only once in moments of indifference, while others, with which he must have spent many days at a time, appeared shadowy and distant. As Georg brought his own papers in order while sifting through those old letters, he found, in an old green portfolio, musical sketches from his boyhood that, until their rediscovery, had so completely vanished that one could without further explanation have put them forward as the writings of someone else. By some he was pleasantly but painfully surprised, for they appeared to him to contain promises that he perhaps might never fulfill. And yet he felt lately that something was preparing itself within him. He saw a mysterious but sure line pointing from those first hopeful writings in the green portfolio, to new inspirations. And this he knew: the two songs from the *West-oestlichen Divan*[3] that he had composed this summer, on a humid evening while Felician lay in the hammock and his father sat in a lounge chair on the cool terrace, could not have been done by just anyone.

Georg stepped back from the window as though suddenly surprised by a completely unexpected thought. He had never before realized with such clarity that since the death of his father until now his existence had been, as it were, interrupted. He had not thought during that whole time of Anna Rosner, to whom he had sent those two songs in manuscript. And as it now occurred to him that he could hear her full dark voice again, and could accompany her singing at that musty old piano as soon as he wished, he was pleasantly stirred. And he remembered

2. An 88-foot-high pyramid of Carrara marble finished in 11 B.C. as the tomb of Caius Cestius, a Praetor of the Roman Republic. It lies on the south leg of the Aurelian Wall of Rome.

3. *West-eastern Collection,* by Goethe.

the old house on Paulanergasse,[4] the low gate and the badly lit path which until now he had walked only three or four times, like something dear and long familiar.

Outside in the park a gentle breeze was blowing through the leaves. Thin clouds appeared over the tower of St. Stephen's, which could be seen through the window, across the park and a considerable part of the city. A long afternoon, completely without obligations, stretched out before Georg. In the course of the last two months of mourning, it seemed that all his former relationships had weakened or broken. He thought of the past winter and spring, with their complex entanglements and confused motives, and a multitude of memories appeared vividly before him: the ride with Frau Marianne through the snow-covered forest in the closed *fiaker*;[5] the masquerade at the Ehrenbergs, with Else's pensive, childish remark about Hedda Gabler, to whom she felt related, and with Sissy's fleeting kiss under the black lace of her mask. A mountain tour in the snow from Edlach up to the Rax[6] with Count Schoenstein and Oskar Ehrenberg, who, without any innate Alpine inclinations, gladly seized the opportunity to accompany the two high-born gentlemen. The evening at Ronacher's with Grace and the young Labinski who shot himself four days later; one had never quite found out why—because of Grace, or debts, from boredom with life, or purely out of affectation. The peculiar coldly-glowing conversation with Grace at the cemetery in the melting February snow two days after Labinski's burial. The evening in the hot, high-vaulted fencing hall, where Felician's sword crossed the dangerous weapon of the Italian master. The late night walk after the Paderewski concert during which his father confided in him as never before about that distant evening when their departed mother had sung in the *Missa Solemnis* in that very hall from which they had just come. And finally Anna Rosner's tall, relaxed figure, leaning against the piano, the music in her hand, and her smiling blue eyes watching the keyboard; and he could even hear her voice ringing in his soul.

As he was standing at the window looking down at the park, which was gradually becoming more lively, he felt reassured by the fact that

4. *Gasse* is the word for the narrower, often quaintly winding streets in the older parts of the city; compound words such as "Paulanergasse" are proper names like Paulaner Street. *Strasse* is the more general word for "street."

5. The one-horse carriages still seen all around Vienna and often used as taxicabs or for sightseeing.

6. Rax Alpe, a picturesque mountain southwest of Vienna, elevation 6,584 feet.

he had no close relationship with a single human being, though there were many with whom he could pick up again, in whose circle he would be welcome, as soon as he wished. At the same time he felt wonderfully rested, prepared for work and happiness as never before. He was filled with lofty and bold intentions, and rejoiced in his youth and independence. Indeed, he felt a certain embarrassment that, at this moment at least, his sorrow over his departed father was much diminished; but he found a consolation within himself for this indifference as he thought of the painless end the dear man was granted. In the garden, walking up and down in animated conversation with his two sons, he suddenly looked around as if he heard distant voices, looked up into the sky, and fell dead on the grass, without a cry, without even a twitch of the lips.

Georg walked back into the room, got ready to go out, and left the house. He planned to spend a couple of hours walking around, wherever chance would take him, and in the evening finally to begin work again on his quintet, for which the right mood had finally come to him. He crossed the street and went into the park. The humidity had let up. As before, the old woman with the coat sat on the bench staring at the ground. Children played in the sandy ring around the trees. At the kiosk all seats were taken. In the pavilion sat a clean-shaven man whom Georg knew from sight, and who had caught his attention through his resemblance to the old Grillparzer. At the pond Georg encountered a governess with two beautifully dressed children who regarded him with bright eyes. As he came out of the park and onto the Ringstrasse,[7] he met Willy Eissler in a dark striped autumn coat who greeted him:

"Good afternoon, Baron. Back in Vienna again?"

"I've been back for a long time," Georg replied. "I haven't left Vienna since my father's funeral."

"Yes, yes, naturally. . . . Permit me to once again offer my . . ." and Willy squeezed Georg's hand.

"And what did you do with yourself this summer?" asked Georg.

"All sorts of things. Played tennis, painted, wasted time, spent a few amusing, but more boring, hours." Willy spoke extremely fast, with a deliberate light hoarseness, elegantly, with Hungarian, French, and Viennese Jewish accents. "By the way," he continued, "I've just come back this morning from Przemysl."[8]

7. The name of the wide boulevard that replaced the old city walls during Schnitzler's lifetime and now surrounds the old town with the most important government and cultural buildings.

8. A small city in the extreme southeast of present-day Poland, in Schnitzler's time the northeast of Austria-Hungary.

"Weapons practice?"

"Yes, the last, I'm sad to say. It's still been fun for me, even though I'm getting so much older, to walk around in the yellow lapels, spurs jingling, sabre clanking, a feeling of impending danger in the air, to be regarded as some higher noble by the lower ranks." They walked on along the grating of the Stadtpark.[9]

"Were you on your way to the Ehrenbergs?" asked Willy.

"No, I don't even think about going there."

"I just thought because it's on the way. By the way, have you heard that Fraulein Else is supposed to be engaged?"

"Really?" asked Georg slowly. "To whom?"

"Guess, Herr Baron."

"It must be Privy Councillor Wilt."

"Good grief!" cried Willy. "He'd never consider it. Ties to S. Ehrenberg could complicate his government career, nowadays."

"Captain Ladisc?" Georg continued.

"Ah, Fraulein Else is too smart to get tangled up with him."

Now Georg remembered that Willy had quarreled with Ladisc a couple of years ago. Willy felt Georg's gaze, twisted his blond, drooping, Polish-styled moustache with somewhat nervous fingers, and responded quickly and casually: "The fact that I once had differences with Captain Ladisc cannot keep me from observing that he's always been a drunken pig. I have an insurmountable revulsion, irredeemable even by blood, against people who associate with Jews when it's to their advantage, but who begin to revile them as soon as they're outside on the steps. One could at least wait until one got to the coffeehouse. But don't strain yourself further with your guessing; Heinrich Bermann's the lucky man."

"Not possible!" cried Georg.

"Why?" asked Willy. "In the end it has to be someone. Bermann is no Adonis, to be sure, but he's on his way to fame; and the mixture of master horseman and perfect athlete that Else's been dreaming of will be hard to find. She's twenty-four years old now, and has been more than sufficiently terrorized by Salomon's tactlessness and wit . . . so. . . ."

"Salomon? . . . oh yes . . . Ehrenberg."

"You know him only by the 'S'? . . . S. stands, naturally, for Salomon, and the simple S. on the plaque on the door is a concession he made to his family. If it was up to him, he'd rather appear at Madame

9. The name of Vienna's principal park.

Ehrenberg's social gatherings in his caftan and wearing that certain little curl." [10]

"Do you think? . . . Is he really that pious?"

"Pious . . . Good heavens! Piety has nothing to do with it. It's only malice, mainly against his son Oskar, with the feudal aspirations."

"Oh yes," said Georg smiling. "Isn't Oskar baptized? He's a reserve officer in the Dragoons."

"Oh, that. . . . Well, I'm not baptized either, but in spite of that . . . there are always a few exceptions . . . with good intentions. . . ." He laughed and went on: "As far as Oskar is concerned, he really would rather be Catholic. But the cost of the pleasure of going to confession would be, for the moment, a little too high to bear. It's been anticipated in the will that he mustn't convert."

They had arrived at the Cafe Imperial. Willy stopped. "I'm meeting Demeter Stanzides."

"Give him my greetings."

"Of course. But won't you come in and join us for an ice cream?"

"Thank you, but I think I'll stroll around a bit."

"You love the solitude?"

"Such a general question is hard to answer," replied Georg.

"To be sure," replied Willy, who became suddenly serious and lifted his hat. "It's been an honor, Herr Baron."

Georg extended his hand. He felt that Willy was a man who unremittingly defended a position even when there was no urgent necessity. "Good-bye," he said with sudden warmth. He found it almost strange, as he often had before, that Willy was Jewish. The older Eissler, Willy's father, composer of charming Viennese waltzes and songs, distinguished art and antique collector and sometime dealer, with his giant's physique, had been known in his time as the foremost boxer in Vienna, and with his long, full, grey beard and monocle, resembled more a Hungarian magnate than a Jewish patriarch. But talent, dilettantism, and an iron will had given Willy the affected image of a born cavalier. But what really distinguished him from other young people of his background and aspirations was the fact that he was content not to renounce his heritage, to pursue an explanation or reconciliation for every ambiguous smile, and in the face of pettiness or prejudice, by which he often appeared to be affected, to make light of it whenever possible.

10. The ear lock or *pais*, worn by highly religious Jews like the Hasidim in observance of the Biblical injunction against cutting the hair at the sides of the head or trimming the edges of the beard (Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5).

Georg continued walking. Willy's last question came back to him. Did he love solitude? . . . He remembered how in Palermo he spent whole mornings walking by himself, while Grace, in accordance with her own custom, lay in bed until noon. Grace. . . . Where might she be now? . . . Since they said farewell in Naples she had not been heard from, which, by the way, had been agreed on. He thought about that deep blue night that floated over the water as he went back to Genoa alone after their farewell, and about the strange, soft, fairy-tale-like song of two children clasping each other tightly, wrapped in a quilt beside their sleeping mother on the deck.

He continued walking with growing contentment among the people who passed by in Sunday lassitude. Many friendly feminine glances met his own, and appeared to wish to console him for being alone on this lovely holiday afternoon and, to all outward appearances, carrying a burden of sadness. And once again an image arose in him. He saw himself lying on a hilly field, late in the evening, after a hot June day. Darkness all around. Far below him a confusion of people, laughter and noise, glittering lanterns. Quite near in the darkness the voices of young girls. He lights the small pipe which he only liked to smoke when in the country. By the light of the match he can see two pretty, young peasant girls, barely more than children. He speaks to them. They are afraid because it is so dark; they creep close to him. Suddenly crackling, rockets in the air. From below a loud "Ah!" Bengal light, violet and red over the invisible lake below. The girls vanish down the hill. Then it becomes dark again, and he lies alone staring into the sky with the damp air weighing down on him. It had been the night before the day when his father was to die. And he thought of this too today for the first time.

He had left the Ringstrasse and took the way toward Wieden.[11] Would the Rosners be at home on this lovely day? Nevertheless it made sense to take the shorter route, and in any case he was drawn that way more than to the Ehrenbergs. He didn't long to see Else at all, and whether or not she really might become Heinrich Bermann's bride was almost a matter of indifference to him. He had known her for a long time. She had been eleven, he fourteen years old, when they had played tennis together on the Riviera. She looked like a gypsy girl then. Blue-black curls encircled her forehead and cheeks, and she was wild and exuberant like a boy. Her brother was already playing the nobleman then, and Georg still had to chuckle as he remembered how the fifteen-

11. The name of one of the city's districts, which lies just south of the city center.

year-old, in a light grey button coat, with white, black-embroidered gloves and a monocle in his eye appeared one day on the promenade. Frau Ehrenberg was thirty-four years old then, noble, of large figure, but still attractive, with clouded eyes and was usually very tired. It remained unforgettable for Georg how one day her husband, the wealthy munitions manufacturer, astonished his family and, simply through his appearance, had brought a hasty end to the distinguished image of the house of Ehrenberg. Georg could see him now, just as he appeared for breakfast on the hotel terrace, an emaciated little man with a grey streaked beard and Japanese eyes, in a white, poorly ironed flannel suit and a dark straw hat with a red and white striped band on his round head, and with dusty black shoes. He spoke very slowly, always cynically, even over the most trivial matters. And whenever he opened his mouth, a mysterious dread lay on his wife's face, concealed behind an appearance of calm. She tried to avenge herself by always treating him with derision, but she was no match for his sheer inconsiderateness. Oskar behaved, whenever possible, as though he were not a part of it. An uncertain contempt for his not altogether worthy progenitor[12] played on his features, and he would smile in the direction of the young baron, seeking understanding. Only Else was nice to the father at that time. On the promenade she would happily walk arm-in-arm with him, and sometimes even embrace him in public.

Georg had seen Else again in Florence a year before his mother's death. She was taking drawing lessons then from a grey- and wild-haired old German, about whom it was said that he had once been famous. It was he himself who spread the rumor that he had renounced his formerly celebrated name and left the city of his work, which he never mentioned, when he felt his genius had left him. The blame for his demise, if one can believe his account, was born by a demonic female whom he had married and who destroyed his most significant painting in a fit of jealous rage and ended her own life with a leap from a window. This man, who even the seventeen-year-old Georg recognized as a sort of swindling clown, was the object of Else's first infatuation. She was fourteen years old at the time, with the wildness and naiveté of youth behind her. In front of Titian's *Venus* in the Uffizi her cheeks glowed with curiosity, yearning, and wonder, and dark dreams of future experiences shown in her eyes. She often came with her mother to the house the Wergenthins had rented in Lugano; and while Frau

12. *Erzeuger*. A judicious choice of noun which may also mean "producer" or "manufacturer."

Ehrenberg tried in her world-weary way to engage the ailing baroness in conversation, Else stood with Georg at the window having precocious conversations about the art of the Pre-Raphaelites and smiling over their past childish play. Felician sometimes also appeared, slim and handsome, and would look past things and people alike with his cold grey eyes, mumble a few courteous words, almost contemptuously, and sit down on his mother's bed, tenderly caressing and kissing her hand. He usually left again soon, but not before leaving, for Else, an acrid air of ancient nobility, heartless seduction, and an elegant contempt for death. She always had the impression that he was on his way to a gaming table on which a hundred-thousand was riding, to a duel of life and death, or to a princess with red hair and a dagger on her night stand. Georg remembered that he had been a little jealous of both the swindling drawing teacher and his brother. The teacher, for reasons that never became known, was suddenly dismissed, and shortly after that Felician and Baron von Wergenthin returned to Vienna. Georg played the piano for the ladies now more than ever, others' music and his own, and Else sang the lighter songs of Schubert and Schumann from the score, with her small, rather shrill voice. She and her mother visited the galleries and churches with Georg, and as spring came again, they would ride together out into the hilly countryside, or to Fiesole, where smiling glances would pass between Georg and Else, which spoke of a deeper understanding than was actually present. Their relationship continued to develop in this somewhat insincere manner when they met again in Vienna. Else always seemed touched by the gallant way in which Georg approached her whenever they had been apart for some months. She herself however, grew from year to year outwardly more assured but inwardly more restless. She had given up her artistic aspirations early, and in the course of time she appeared to be destined to move in the most contradictory directions. Sometimes she saw herself in the future as a grande dame, organizer of flower festivals, patroness of grand balls, collaborator for aristocratic charities; more often though, she saw herself enthroned among painters, musicians, and poets, at artistic salons, as a great cognoscente. Other times she would dream of a more adventurous life: sensational marriage to an American millionaire; elopement with a violin virtuoso or Spanish officer; demonic destruction of all men who came near her. Sometimes a quiet life in the country at the side of some capable estate owner seemed the most desirable to her; and then she would envision herself in a circle of many children, if possible with prematurely grey hair, a mild, re-

signed smile on her lips, sitting at a simply set table, and stroking the furrowed brow of her devoted husband. Georg, however, felt that her tendency toward indolence, which was deeper than she realized, would protect her from any rash step. She confided various things to Georg, without thereby ever being really honest with him, for she most often earnestly cherished the wish to be his wife. Georg knew that perfectly well, but it was not only for this reason that this newest rumor about her engagement to Heinrich Bermann seemed dubious to him. This Bermann was a haggard looking, beardless man with gloomy eyes and plain, somewhat too-long hair, who had recently become known as a writer, and whose demeanor and appearance reminded Georg, he didn't himself know why, of some fanatical Jewish teacher from the provinces. All this was nothing which could attract Else, or that she would find touching. To be sure, when one spoke longer with him one's impression changed. One evening this past spring, Georg had left the Ehrenbergs with him and had gotten into such an animated conversation about musical matters that they continued their discussion on a Ringstrasse bench until three in the morning.

It's strange, thought Georg, how much is going through my head today that I scarcely thought about any more. And it seemed to him that he would, on this fall afternoon, gradually emerge from many weeks of numbing preoccupation into the light of day.

He was standing in front of the house on Paulanergasse where the Rosners lived. He looked up to the second floor. A window was open, and white curtains, pulled together in the middle, moved gently in the breeze.

The Rosners were at home. The chambermaid let Georg in. Anna sat opposite the door, her coffee cup in her hand and her eyes directed at the new arrival. The father, to her right, was reading a newspaper and smoking a pipe. He was clean shaven except for two narrow sideburns on his cheeks. His thin hair, of an unusual grey-green color, was combed forward from the temples, and looked like a poorly made wig. His eyes were light blue and red-ringed.

The full-figured mother, with her brow still encircled by memories of lovelier years, looked down in front of herself; her hands, clasped contemplatively together, rested on the table.

Anna sat her cup down slowly, nodded, and smiled quietly. The two elders moved to stand up as Georg entered.

"Oh no, please don't disturb yourselves, please," said Georg.

There was a creak off to one side. Josef, the son, got up from the divan on which he had been reclining.

"It's an honor, Herr Baron," he said in a very deep voice as he straightened the yellow, somewhat spattered sports jacket that he had turned up around his neck.

"So how have you been, Herr Baron?" asked the old man, who stood thin and somewhat bent over and would not sit down again until Georg had found a seat. Josef pushed a chair between his father and sister. Anna gave the visitor her hand.

"We haven't seen each other for a long time," she said and took another sip from her cup.

"You've gone through a sad time, Herr Baron," remarked Frau Rosner sympathetically.

"Indeed," continued Herr Rosner. "We read of your loss with the deepest regret. . . . And your Herr father always enjoyed the best of health, as far as we knew." He always spoke very slowly, as if something else was coming to mind, rubbing his head with his left hand and nodding when he was listening.

"Yes, it came quite unexpectedly," Georg said softly and looked down on the faded, dark red carpet at his feet.

"So, a sudden death, so to speak," remarked Herr Rosner, and all around were silent.

Georg took a cigarette out of his case, and offered one to Josef.

"I kiss your hand," said Josef, who took the cigarette, bowed, and for no apparent reason clicked his heals together. As he was giving the baron a light, he thought he felt Georg staring at his jacket and remarked apologetically and with an even deeper voice than usual, "Office jacket."

"Office jackets come from an office," said Anna simply, without looking at her brother.

"The lady likes to play the same ironic tune over and over," replied Josef cheerfully; but it could be observed from his restrained tone that under different circumstances he would have expressed himself less agreeably.

"The sympathetic feelings were quite general," began the old Herr Rosner again. "I read the notice in the *New Free Press*[13] about your Herr father . . . by Herr Privy Councillor Kerner, if I remember correctly; it was highly respectful. Science has suffered a bitter loss as well."

Georg nodded self-consciously and looked down at his hands.

Anna told about their past summer holiday. "It was wonderful in

13. The *Neue Freie Presse,* the most prestigious Viennese newspaper and at that time a leading candidate for the greatest newspaper in Europe.

Weissenfeld," she said. "The forest was right behind our house, with beautiful level paths, isn't that right, Papa? One could go walking out there for hours without seeing another single human being."

"And did you have a piano out there?" asked Georg.

"That too."

"A wretched little tinkle-box," remarked Herr Rosner. "The sort of thing that can make stones cringe and send men raving."

"It wasn't that bad," said Anna.

"Good enough for little Graubinger, anyway," added Frau Rosner.

"Little Graubinger, by the way, is the daughter of a merchant from there," explained Anna. "I taught her the fundamentals of piano playing. A pretty little girl with long, blond pigtails."

"It was a favor to the gentleman," said Frau Rosner.

"But it must also be said," Anna appended, "that I gave a regular paid lesson as well."

"There in Weissenfeld?" asked Georg.

"To some children, on a summer trip. It's really sad, Herr Baron, that you didn't once visit us out there. You'd certainly have liked it."

Georg then remembered that he had mentioned casually to Anna that he might visit her during the summer on a bicycle tour.

"The Herr Baron wouldn't have found everything in this resort to his satisfaction," began Herr Rosner.

"Why not?" asked Georg.

"The needs of our pampered city folk are not taken into account out there."

"Oh, I'm not pampered," said Georg.

". . . Weren't you out at the Auhof?" said Anna, turning to Georg.

"Oh, no," he responded quickly. "No, I wasn't there," he added less hastily. "They had invited me. . . . Frau Ehrenberg was very kind. . . . I had various invitations for the summer. But I preferred to stay by myself in Vienna."

"I really feel bad that I hardly ever see Else any more," said Anna. "You know we went to the same school together. Of course that was a long time ago. I really liked her. Sad how we grow apart in the course of time."

"How did that happen?" asked Georg.

"Well, it's primarily the fact that the whole circle is not really congenial to me."

"Me neither," said Josef, who was blowing smoke rings in the air. "I haven't been there for years. Frankly . . . I don't know how

the Herr Baron feels about these things . . . I'm not much attracted to the Israelites."

Herr Rosner looked up at his son. "The Herr Baron is often a guest in that house, dear Josef, and it will appear rather strange to him . . . "

"Me?" said Georg politely. "I don't have any particularly close relationship with the Ehrenbergs, though I do enjoy talking to the two ladies." And he continued by asking, "But didn't you give Else singing lessons last year, Fraulein Anna?"

"Yes, in a way. I just accompanied her."

"Would you like to do that again this year?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard from her since then. Maybe she's given it all up."

"You think so?"

"It would almost be for the best," Anna responded softly, "since she really chirped more than sang. By the way," she said, casting Georg a glance that seemed to greet him anew, "the songs you sent me are lovely. Shall I sing them for you?"

"So you've looked at them? That's nice."

Anna had gotten up. She raised both her hands to her temples and lightly straightened her wavy hair. She wore it done up rather high, which made her look even taller than she was. A small gold watch chain was wound twice around her open neck, hung down across her breast, and disappeared in a grey leather waist band. She beckoned Georg to follow her with an almost imperceptible motion of her head.

He stood up and said, "If I may? . . ."

"Please, please, of course," said Herr Rosner. "Herr Baron will be so kind as to make a little music with my daughter. Lovely, lovely." Anna had gone into the next room. Georg followed her and left the door standing open. The white lace curtains of the open window were pulled together and moved gently.

Georg sat down at the upright piano and struck a few chords. Meanwhile Anna knelt down in front of an old, black, partially gilded étagère and removed the music. Georg modulated into the opening key of his song. Anna joined him, and sang Georg's melody to Goethe's lines:

Your glance to comfort me,
Your mouth, your breast,
To hear your voice,
My joy, first and best.

She stood behind him and read the notes over his shoulder. Sometimes she would bend forward a little, and he would feel the breath of her lips on his temples. Her voice was even more beautiful than he had remembered.

There was loud conversation in the next room. Without interrupting the song, Anna pushed the door shut.

It was Josef who hadn't been able to restrain his voice any longer. "I need to stop in over at the coffeehouse now," he said.

No one replied. Herr Rosner drummed lightly on the table and his wife nodded with apparent indifference.

"So, *adieu.*" At the door Josef turned around again and said with controlled firmness, "Mama, if you perhaps have a moment . . . "

"I can hear you," said Frau Rosner. "There aren't any secrets here."

"No. It's only that I'm in debt to you already."

"Does one have to go to the coffeehouse?" asked the older Rosner plainly, without looking up.

"It's not really a matter of the coffeehouse. It's only that . . . You can believe me, I would certainly prefer not to have to sponge off of you. But what can a person do?"

"A person can work," said the old Herr Rosner softly and painfully, and his eyes grew redder. His wife cast a sad and reproachful look at her son.

"So," said Josef, unbuttoning and rebuttoning his jacket, "it really is . . . because of every little florin note. . . ."

"Psst," said Frau Rosner, with a look toward the partially-closed door through which, after Anna's song had ended, only Georg's muffled piano playing could be heard.

Josef answered his mother's look with a contemptuous wave of his hand. "So, Father says I should work. As if I hadn't already proved that I can." He saw two pairs of questioning eyes directed at him. "Oh yes, I certainly have proved it, and if it were only a matter of my good will, I'd have had my own income all along. It's only because I won't simply take everything that's thrown at me. I won't allow myself to be screamed at by my bosses because I come to work quarter-of-an-hour too late once . . . or something."

"We know the story," interrupted Herr Rosner wearily. "But as long as we're talking about it, you're finally going to have to look around for something again."

"Look around . . . fine. . . ." replied Josef. "But I will not work for another Jew. It would make me the laughing stock of my acquaintances . . . of my entire circle."

"Your circle!" said Frau Rosner. "Who's that? Coffeehouse companions!"

"All right, please, since we're discussing it," said Josef, "this is a matter of money too. I have an appointment now at the coffeehouse with the young Jalaudeck. I'd have preferred to wait to tell you about this until it had all been worked out, but I see now that I have to show my colors sooner. So, this Jalaudeck is the son of Alderman Jalaudeck, the famous publisher. And the older Jalaudeck is known to be a very influential person with the Party . . . very close to the editor of the *Christian Daily Messenger*, Zelltinkel his name is. And they're looking for young people of good manners at the *Messenger*—Christian naturally—for the advertising business. And that's why I'm meeting Jalaudeck at the coffeehouse, because he has promised me that his father will recommend me to Zelltinkel. That would be great. . . . I'd be out of the woods then. In a short time I could earn a hundred or even a hundred and fifty florins a month there."

"Oh, God," sighed the older Rosner. Outside, the doorbell rang. Rosner looked up.

"That must be young Doctor Stauber," Frau Rosner said and cast a worried glance at the door through which Georg's piano playing was still coming, though more softly than before.

"So mother, what do you think?" said Josef.

Frau Rosner took her change purse and, sighing, handed her son a silver florin.

"I kiss your hand," said Josef, and turned to go.

"Josef!" said Herr Rosner. "It's somewhat discourteous to leave just at the moment when a visitor arrives."

"Oh, thanks anyway, but I don't have to be included in everything."

There was a knock. Doctor Berthold Stauber walked in.

"Excuse me, Herr Doctor," said Josef. "I was just on my way out."

"Certainly," responded Doctor Stauber coolly, and Josef disappeared.

Frau Rosner invited the young doctor to take a seat. He sat down on the divan and listened toward the side of the room from which the piano playing was coming.

"The Baron Wergenthin," explained Frau Rosner, somewhat embarrassed. "The composer. Anna has just finished singing." And she made a motion to call her daughter.

Doctor Berthold lightly took hold of her arm and said courteously, "No. There's no need to disturb Fraulein Anna, absolutely not. I'm not in the slightest hurry. It's a farewell visit, by the way." This last sentence

came as though forced out of his throat, though Berthold smiled politely, leaned back comfortably in the corner, and stroked his short full beard with his right hand.

Frau Rosner looked at him absolutely astonished.

Herr Rosner asked, "A farewell visit? Is Herr Doctor taking a leave of absence? I understood from the newspapers that the Parliament only recently convened."

"I have resigned my mandate," said Berthold.

"What?" cried Herr Rosner.

"Yes, resigned," Berthold repeated and smiled distractedly.

The piano playing had suddenly ended and the door opened. Georg and Anna appeared.

"Oh, Doctor Berthold," Anna said, extending her hand as he quickly stood up. "Have you been here long? Did you perhaps hear me sing?"

"No Fraulein Anna, unfortunately I missed it. I only caught a few tones from the piano."

"Baron Wergenthin," said Anna, wishing to introduce them. "The gentlemen are acquainted?"

"Certainly," replied Georg, and extended Berthold his hand.

"The Doctor is paying us a farewell visit," said Frau Rosner.

"What?" cried Anna in astonishment.

"I'm leaving shortly," said Berthold, looking Anna earnestly and impenetrably in the eyes. "I'm giving up my political career," he then added somewhat derisively. . . . "Better said, I'm interrupting it for a while."

Georg leaned back in the window, his arms folded across his chest, and contemplated Anna from the side. She had sat down and looked up calmly at Berthold, who was still standing, one hand propped on the back of the divan, as though he were about to give a speech.

"And where are you going?" asked Anna.

"To Paris. I want to work at the Pasteur Institute. I'm returning to my old love, to bacteriology. It's a purer occupation than politics."

It had become darker. The faces grew dim; only Berthold's forehead, which was directly opposite the window, was still bathed in light. His brows were twitching. He really does have his own particular sort of handsomeness, thought Georg, who leaned motionlessly in the corner of the window, and felt an agreeable peace flowing through him.

The chambermaid brought in a burning lamp and hung it over the table.

"But the press carried no announcement that Herr Doctor had resigned his mandate," said Herr Rosner.

"That would be premature," replied Berthold. "My party colleagues understand my intentions, but the matter has not yet been made official."

"This news," said Herr Rosner, "will not fail to create quite a sensation in the concerned circles. Especially after the recent tumultuous debate in which the Herr Doctor took part with such determination. Herr Baron has surely read about it," he said turning toward Georg.

"I must confess," replied Georg, "that I don't follow the parliamentary reports as regularly as one really must."

"Must," repeated Berthold indulgently. "One certainly doesn't have to, although the recent session has not been uninteresting. If only as proof of how low the standards of a public assembly can sink."

"It has grown very heated," said Herr Rosner.

"Heated? . . . Well yes, what one in Austria calls heated. One is inwardly indifferent and outwardly crass."

"What was it all about?" asked Georg.

"It was the debate stemming from the interpellation over the Golowski case . . . Therese Golowski."

"Therese Golowski . . . ," repeated Georg. "I should know that name."

"Of course you know it," said Anna. "You know Therese herself. She was just leaving the last time you visited us."

"Oh yes," said Georg, "a friend of yours."

"I wouldn't call her a friend; that implies a certain inner agreement which really isn't present any longer."

"You wouldn't disavow Therese," said Doctor Berthold smiling but sternly.

"Oh no," responded Anna quickly, "that had truly never occurred to me. I even admire her. I admire all people in general who are willing to risk so much for something that is really none of their concern. And when it happens to be a young lady, a beautiful young lady like Therese . . . ," she continued, directing this last remark at Georg who was listening intently, "I am only all the more impressed. You must know that Therese is one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party."

"And do you know what I took her for?" said Georg. "An aspiring actress!"

"You're a great judge of character, Herr Baron," said Berthold.

"She really did want to go on the stage once," Frau Rosner confirmed coolly.

"I ask you, dear lady," said Berthold, "what young woman with some imagination, who lives in such tight circumstances, has not at some point in her life at least played with this sort of intention?"

"It's charming that you forgive her," said Anna smiling.

It occurred too late to Berthold that his remark might have struck a delicate point in Anna's sensibilities. But he continued on with even more certainty: "I assure you Fraulein Anna, it could have gone even worse for Therese. And it cannot be foreseen how much she may still accomplish for the Party if she is not somehow deterred from her course."

"Do you really believe that?" asked Anna.

"Certainly," responded Berthold. "For Therese there are really two dangers: either she'll talk herself out of her head . . ."

"Or?" asked Georg, who had become curious.

"Or she'll marry a baron," concluded Berthold tersely.

"I don't quite understand," said Georg somewhat distant.

"That I just said baron was naturally a joke. If we put *prince* in place of *baron* my meaning will be clearer."

"All right, I think I understand what you're getting at, Herr Doctor. . . . But why has the parliament become involved in this?"

"Oh, yes. This past year—at the time of the big coal strike—Therese Golowski gave a speech in some wretched Bohemian village that allegedly contained an offensive remark about a member of the royal family. She was charged and acquitted. One could perhaps conclude from this that the charge might not have been particularly tenable. In spite of this the public prosecutor appealed, a different verdict was issued, and Therese was sentenced to two months in prison, which, by the way, she is now serving. And if this is not enough, the judge who acquitted her the first time, has been transferred . . . someplace on the Russian border, from which there is no return. Well, we have brought an interpellation over all of this, very timidly in my opinion. The minister replied, rather hypocritically, to the rejoicing of the so-called conservative parties. I have permitted myself to respond perhaps somewhat more energetically than is otherwise my custom; and since the opposing benches have nothing objective with which to respond, they have tried to murder me with screaming and insults. And what the most powerful argument of a certain type of conservative against my position was, you can well imagine, Herr Baron."

"Well?" asked Georg.

"Shut your trap Jew!" replied Berthold with pressed lips.

"Oh," said Georg embarrassed, and shook his head.

"Quiet, Jew! Shut your trap. Jew! Jew! Sit!" Berthold continued, and seemed to revel in the memory.

Anna looked down. Georg felt that was enough. A short, painful silence ensued.

"So, because of that?" asked Anna slowly.

"What do you mean?" asked Berthold.

"Is that why you resigned your mandate?"

Berthold shook his head and smiled. "No, not for that."

"Herr Doctor is surely above these crass insults," said Herr Rosner.

"I'm not sure I could say that. But one must nevertheless keep one's composure in the face of such things. The cause of my resignation lies elsewhere."

"And may one know? . . ." asked Georg.

Berthold looked at him penetratingly, though distractedly. Then he replied obligingly: "Certainly one may. After my speech I went to a buffet. There I encountered, among others, one of the most idiotic and insolent of our free-elected representatives who had been during my speech, as was usual for him, altogether the most obnoxious . . . the publisher Jalaudek. I naturally don't associate with him. He had just set down an empty glass. When he saw me, he nodded at me and greeted me cordially, as though nothing had happened: 'May I have the pleasure of your company for a little refreshment, Herr Doctor?'"

"Incredible!" said Georg.

"Incredible? . . . No, Austrian. With us indignation is just as insincere as enthusiasm. Only envy and hatred of real talent are genuine here."

"Well, what did you say to the man?" asked Anna.

"What did I say? Nothing, of course."

"And you resigned your mandate," continued Anna with mild scorn.

Berthold smiled. At the same time his brows twitched as was usual when he felt uncomfortable or hurt. It was too late to tell her that he had actually come to ask her advice, as he did in former times. And yet he felt he had been clever to cut off his own retreat right from the outset, to present his resignation as an accomplished fact, and his departure for Paris as imminent. For he could see that Anna had once again slipped away from him, perhaps for a long time. That another person could really take her from him for good he could never believe, and to

be jealous of this elegant young artist who stood so calmly with crossed arms at the window would never even occur to him. It had happened before that Anna would drift for a time, as if enchanted, into what was for him a foreign element. And two years ago, when she was seriously thinking of preparing herself for the stage and had begun to study her roles, he had for a short time completely given her up for lost. Later, as she was forced by the unreliability of her voice to give up her artistic plans, she seemed to return to him; but he had deliberately let this opportunity pass by unused. For, before making her his wife, he wanted to have achieved some measure of success in either the scientific or the political field so she would truly admire him. He had been on his way to that. In that same place where she now sat looking him in the face with clear though strange eyes, she had had lying before her the proof sheets of his last medical-philosophical work, which bore the title: *Preliminary Remarks Toward a Physiognomic of Illness*. And then, as he completed his conversion to politics, to the time when he began to give speeches in the electoral assembly, and while he prepared for his new profession with earnest historical and national-economic studies, she had rejoiced in his many-sidedness and energy. All that was over now. Gradually she began clearly to see his shortcomings, which were not altogether invisible even to himself, particularly his tendency to become intoxicated by his own words, to cast a sharper look than before, and he began thereby gradually to lose his confidence with her. He was no longer himself when he spoke to her or in her presence. Today too, he was not satisfied with himself. He became aware, with an anger which he had difficulty overcoming, that he had not explained his encounter at the buffet with Jalaudek effectively enough, and that he should have explained his disgust with politics more convincingly. "You may be right, Fraulein Anna," he said, "to smile over the fact that I have resigned my mandate over this foolish incident. A parliamentary life without theatricality is impossible anyway. I should have considered the possibility of going ahead and having a drink with this lout who had publicly insulted me. That would have been convenient, Austrian, and perhaps the most appropriate response." He felt he was rolling again and went on with animation: "There are, in the end, only two methods for achieving something practical in politics; either through a grand frivolity, which regards the entirety of public life as an amusing play, which in truth is inspired by nothing, enraged by nothing, and which remains completely indifferent to the people whose happiness or misery is being decided. So far, I'm not that way, and I don't know if I ever

will be. Truthfully, I've sometimes wished I was. The other method is: for the cause of what one believes in, to be prepared at every moment, one's entire existence, one's life in the truest sense of the word—"

Berthold suddenly stopped. His father, the elder Doctor Stauber, had entered and was warmly greeted. He offered Georg, who had been introduced by Frau Rosner, his hand, and looked so warmly at him that Georg felt immediately attracted to him. He looked decidedly younger than he actually was. His long reddish-blond beard was only shot through by a few individual grey threads, and his smoothly combed, long hair fell in thick locks to his broad neck. His forehead, of striking height, gave his slightly stocky, high-shouldered appearance a certain dignity. His eyes, when not deliberately looking friendly or clever, seemed to rest themselves under weary lids in preparation for their next encounter.

"I knew your mother, Herr Baron," he said rather softly to Georg.

"My mother, Herr Doctor? . . ."

"You will scarcely remember. You were only a little boy of three or four years then."

"You were her doctor?" asked Georg.

"I visited her sometimes representing Professor Duchegg, whose assistant I was. You lived on Habsburgergasse at that time, in an old house that has long been torn down. I could still describe to you the furnishings of the room in which your Herr father, who has left us all too soon, received me. There was a bronze figure on the writing table, a knight in armor with a standard, to be precise. And a copy of a Van Dyck from the Liechtenstein Gallery hung on the wall."

"Yes," said Georg, amazed by the Doctor's good memory, "absolutely correct."

"But I have just interrupted a conversation," continued Doctor Stauber in that somewhat melancholy, lyrical, if superior, tone which was his own, and sat down in the corner of the divan.

"Doctor Berthold had just informed us to our astonishment," said Herr Rosner, "that he has decided to resign his mandate."

The older Stauber directed a calm glance at his son, which was returned just as calmly. Georg, who had observed this play of eyes, had the impression that a silent harmony, which required no words, governed their relationship.

"Yes," said Doctor Stauber, "in any case it didn't surprise me. I always had the impression that Berthold was more of a guest in parliament, and I am glad that he felt a sort of homesickness for his true

calling. Yes, yes, your true calling, Berthold," he repeated as though in response to a frown from his son. "That is not to prejudice anything for the future. Nothing complicates our existence so much as that we so frequently believe in definitives, and thereby lose time being ashamed of a mistake instead of admitting it and simply starting our lives over."

Berthold explained that he wanted to leave in a week at the latest. Any further postponement would serve no purpose. It was also possible that he would not remain in Paris. His studies could make further travel necessary. He had also decided to forgo any further good-byes; as he explained, he had abandoned the associations of former years with the middle-class circles in which his father had an extensive practice.

"Didn't we meet once this past winter at the Ehrenbergs?" asked Georg with some satisfaction.

"That's true," replied Berthold. "We are distantly related to the Ehrenbergs, by the way. The connecting link between us is, strange to say, the Golowski family. Any attempt to explain it more clearly than that, Herr Baron, would be futile. I would have to undertake a walking tour with you through the records offices and cultural associations of Timisoara, Ternopol, and other such agreeable places, and I couldn't expect that of you."

"And anyway," continued the older Doctor Stauber with resignation, "the Herr Baron certainly knows that all Jews are related to one another."

Georg smiled pleasantly. But in reality he was a little disconcerted. He felt that there had been absolutely no reason for the older Doctor Stauber to give him official notice of his relation to Jewry. He knew it quite well anyway and didn't hold it against him. He didn't take it ill in general; but why did they always start talking about it themselves? Wherever he went, he encountered only Jews who were ashamed of being Jewish, or those who were proud of it and were worried that someone might think they were ashamed.

"By the way, I talked to Frau Golowski yesterday," continued Doctor Stauber.

"That poor woman," said Herr Rosner.

"How is she doing?" asked Anna.

"How she is doing you can well imagine . . . her daughter in custody, her son a volunteer living in the barracks at the state's expense. . . . Imagine it, Leo Golowski as patriot! And the old man sits in the coffeehouse and watches while the others play chess, without ten kreuzer to play a game himself."

"Therese's sentence must be nearly over," said Berthold.

"It will be another twelve or fourteen days yet," his father responded. "Now, Annerl," he said turning to the young lady, "it would be really nice of you if you would drop in again on Rembrandtstrasse; the old lady has an almost touching affection for you. I really don't understand why," he added, smiling as he contemplated Anna almost tenderly. She, however, looked down and said nothing.

The wall clock struck seven. Georg got up, as though he had only been waiting for this signal.

"Herr Baron is leaving us already?" said Herr Rosner standing up.

Georg asked everyone present not to disturb themselves and shook hands all around.

"It's strange," said the older Stauber, "how your voice reminds one of your late Herr father."

"Yes, I've often been told that," responded Georg. "I can hardly understand it myself."

"There is no one in the world who knows the sound of his own voice," remarked the older Stauber, and it sounded like the beginning of a popular lecture.

But Georg took his leave. Anna accompanied him to the hallway, despite his mild objections, and left the door—somewhat deliberately as Georg noticed—standing half open. "It's too bad that we couldn't continue with our music," she said.

"I'm sorry too, Fraulein Anna."

"I liked the song better today than the first time when I had to accompany myself. Only it seems to drift a little at the end. . . . I don't quite know how I should put it."

"I know what you mean. The conclusion is conventional; I felt it myself. Hopefully I can bring you something better soon, Fraulein Anna."

"But don't keep me waiting for it too long."

"Certainly not. So, *adieu*, Fraulein Anna."

They shook hands and both smiled.

"Why didn't you come to Weissenfeld?" asked Anna gently.

"I'm really sorry, but you see, Fraulein Anna, I truly wouldn't have been very good company at that time, as you can well imagine.

Anna looked at him seriously. "Don't you believe," she said, "that we might have been able to help you get through it?"

"It's drafty, Anna!" shouted Frau Rosner from the other room.

"I'm coming!" replied Anna, somewhat impatiently. But Frau Rosner had already closed the door.

"When may I come again?" asked Georg.

"Whenever you would like. Of course, I should give you a written appointment, so you'll know I'm home and won't be busy. I go walking a lot, or have business in the city, or go to galleries or exhibitions . . ."

"We could do that together sometime," said Georg.

"Oh, yes," replied Anna, taking her purse from her pocket and producing a tiny notebook.

"What do you have there?" asked Georg.

Anna smiled and leafed through the little book. "Just wait a minute. . . . Thursday at eleven I want to see the miniature exhibit at the Imperial Library. We could go there if you're interested."

"That would be lovely."

"Very good. There we can discuss when you can accompany my singing again."

"Agreed," said Georg, and gave her his hand. It occurred to him that surely while Anna was out here talking to him the young Doctor Stauber must be getting quite irritated back in the living room. And he wondered how it could be that he evidently found this situation more uncomfortable than Anna, who on the whole appeared to be a courteous person. He released his hand from hers, said good-bye, and left.

By the time Georg came out onto the street, it had grown completely dark. He slowly strolled over the Elisabeth bridge,[14] past the opera, toward the inner city, unperturbed by the noise and activity all around, listening to his song in his mind. He found it strange that Anna's voice, so pure and strong in a small room, would break down whenever she stepped out onto the stage or entered a concert hall, and stranger still that Anna appeared to suffer very little from this fate. Of course it was not clear that this composure genuinely represented Anna's true feelings.

He had known her only superficially for a few years; but one evening this past spring they got to know each other a little better. There had been a big gathering at the Waldstein Garden. They ate outdoors under tall chestnut trees. Everyone was happy, excited, and enchanted by the first warm May evening of the year. Georg saw everyone who had come again. Frau Ehrenberg, the organizer of the affair, deliberately matronly with a loose-fitting, dark foulard dress; Privy Councillor Wilt, as if in the mask of an English statesman, with his pompous gestures and that same cheap tone of superiority over all things and persons; Frau Oberberger, with her grey powdered hair, her flashing eyes, and paste-on

14. This bridge no longer exists since this section of the Wien river, which the bridge crossed at this point, was covered over in the course of the city's urban development.

beauty spot on her chin looking like a rococo marquise; Demeter Stanzides, with his shining white teeth and the weariness of an old heroic family on his pale forehead; Oskar Ehrenberg, with an elegance that owed much to the top clerk at a fashion house, some to a once youthful theater singer, and a little to a young man from high society; Sissy Wyner, who sent her dark, laughing eyes darting from one guest to another as though she were bound to each individual through some unique and amusing secret; Willy Eissler, hoarse and jovial, relating all manner of Jewish anecdotes and tales from his military years; Else Ehrenberg, overflowing with tender spring melancholy, in white English lace, with the comportment of a grande dame which made her child's face and delicate figure look charming, almost touching; Felician, cool and polite, with proud eyes that looked between the guests toward other tables, and then past these into the distance; Sissy's mother, young, rosy-cheeked and chattering, wanting to speak to everyone and hear everything at once; Edmund Nuernberger, in whose piercing eyes and narrow mouth could be read an almost masklike smile of contempt for the business of the world, which he saw through from the ground up, and in which, however, he sometimes found himself an active participant, much to his own surprise; finally, Heinrich Bermann, in a suit that was too loose, a straw hat that was too cheap, and a tie that was too light, who now spoke more loudly, and now fell into a deeper silence than anyone else. Later, without an escort and looking confident, Anna Rosner appeared, greeted the crowd with a light nod of her head, and unassumingly took a seat between Frau Ehrenberg and Georg. "I invited her for you," remarked Frau Ehrenberg softly to Georg, who until this evening had scarcely given a thought to Anna. Those words, perhaps nothing more than a passing comment from Frau Ehrenberg, proved true in the course of the evening. From the moment the gathering broke up and began its merry journey through the Volksprater,[15] everywhere, at the booths, on the merry-go-round, by the clowns, and even later as the party, for fun, returned to town on foot, Georg and Anna stayed together; and finally, their heads buzzing from hours of joking and clowning, they fell into a completely serious conversation. A few days later he visited her and brought her, as promised, the piano edition of *Eugene Onegin* and a few of his own songs. At his next visit

15. The Prater park extends for a considerable distance along the south bank of the Danube. It begins at the northwest end with the Volksprater, which contains the actual amusement park, and extends southeast into wooded walking-gardens and parks, with Freudenau at the far end.

she sang these songs as well as some by Schubert, and her voice pleased him very much. Soon after that they took leave of each other for the summer, without a trace of sorrow or tenderness; Anna's invitation to Weissenfeld had struck Georg as only a courtesy, just as he believed his acceptance was; and in comparison to the innocence of their relations up to the present, the tone of today's visit seemed quite peculiar to Georg.

At St. Stephen's Square Georg noticed that he was being hailed by someone standing on the omnibus platform. Georg, who was slightly nearsighted, did not recognize who it was right away.

"It's me," said the man from the platform.

"Oh, Herr Bermann! Good evening," said Georg, reaching his hand up. "Where are you off to?"

"I'm going to the Prater. I want to have supper there. Do you have other plans, Herr Baron?"

"Nothing in the slightest."

"So, why don't you join me?"

Georg swung himself up onto the omnibus, which had already begun to rumble on. They casually related to one another how they had spent their summer. Heinrich had been in Salzkammergut, later in Germany, from where he had returned only a few days ago.

"And in Berlin too," added Georg.

"No."

"I thought that perhaps in regard to a new play . . ."

"I haven't written a new play," Heinrich interrupted, somewhat rudely. "I was in the Taunus[16] and on the Rhine, and some other places."

What did he have to do on the Rhine, thought Georg, though he really wasn't that interested. It struck him that Bermann was staring in front of himself rather distractedly, almost depressed.

"And how is it going with your work, dear Baron?" Heinrich asked, suddenly more alert, as he pulled his dark grey overcoat, which was hanging over his shoulders, tighter around himself. "Is your quintet finished?"

"My quintet?" repeated Georg with surprise. "Have I spoken to you about my quintet?"

"No, not you; Fraulein Else told me you were working on a quintet."

16. A mountain range north of Frankfurt.

"Oh yes, Fraulein Else. No, I haven't gotten much further. I wasn't really in the mood, as you can well imagine."

"Oh, yes," Heinrich said and fell silent for a while. "And your Herr father was still so young," he added slowly.

Georg nodded silently.

"How's your brother?" asked Heinrich suddenly.

"Quite well thanks," responded Georg, somewhat surprised. Heinrich threw his cigar over the railing and immediately lit another. Then he said: "You may wonder that I would inquire after your brother, to whom I have hardly ever spoken. But he interests me. In his way he represents for me a perfect archetype, and I regard him as one of the most fortunate people there could be."

"That may well be," replied Georg. "But how have you arrived at this opinion, since you hardly know him?"

"First, his name is Felician Freiherr von Wergenthin-Recco," said Heinrich very seriously, and blew smoke into the air.

Georg listened with surprise.

"You are also named Wergenthin-Recco," continued Heinrich, "but just Georg—and that's not quite the same, is it? More, your brother is very handsome. You're not bad looking yourself. But people whose primary attribute is to be handsome are, in reality, better off than those whose primary attribute is to be gifted. When one is handsome, one is so all the time, while the gifted spend at least nine-tenths of their existence without a trace of inspiration. Yes, it is certainly true. The line of one's life is, so to speak, truer when one is handsome than when one is a genius. Of course that could be better expressed."

What was with him then, thought Georg, a little perturbed. Could he possibly be jealous of Felician . . . on account of Else Ehrenberg?

They got off at the Prater intersection. The great stream of Sunday crowds flowed toward them. They took the way to the main avenue, which was not so busy anymore, and went ahead slowly. It had become cool. Georg commented on the autumn mood of the evening, about the people sitting in the inns, about the military bands that were playing in the kiosks. Heinrich commented at first perfunctorily, then not at all, and finally appeared to be scarcely listening, which Georg found rude. He almost regretted having joined Heinrich, all the more as it was not otherwise his custom to accept such chance invitations without further consideration, and he made the excuse for himself that he had only done it this time out of distraction. Heinrich walked beside him, or a few

steps ahead, as though he had completely forgotten Georg's presence. He still held the overcoat he had thrown over his shoulders tightly with both hands, wore his soft, dark-grey hat pulled down on his forehead, and looked, as Georg suddenly began to notice with consternation, most inelegant. Heinrich Bermann's earlier remarks about Felician impressed him now as being in poor taste as well as tactless, and as time passed, it occurred to him that pretty much everything he knew of Heinrich's literary accomplishments had gone against his grain. He had seen two plays by him: one that took place in lower-class settings among manual laborers and factory workers, and which ended with murder and death; the other, a sort of satirical society comedy, which had aroused a scandal after opening and quickly vanished from the repertoire. At the time Georg was not yet personally acquainted with the author and took no further interest in the matter. He only remembered that Felician had found the play ridiculous, and that Count Schoenstein had expressed the view that, if it were up to him, plays by Jews would only be permitted performance at the Budapest Orpheum Society. In particular, Doctor von Breitner, baptized and objective, had expressed indignation that this upstart young man had presumed to bring to the stage a world that was obviously closed to him, and of which he naturally could understand nothing. While all this was going through Georg's mind, his irritation with the mannerless behavior and persistent silence of his companion began to intensify into a real animosity, and half unconsciously he began to give credence to all the slander that had been directed at Bermann at that time. He now also remembered that Heinrich had been personally unsympathetic to him from the very beginning, and that he had expressed himself ironically to Frau Ehrenberg about the cleverness she had shown in capturing this young celebrity for her salon. Else had, of course, immediately taken Heinrich's side, described him as an interesting and sometimes even pleasant person and prophesied to Georg that sooner or later he would become good friends with him. And as a matter of fact, Georg had retained a certain sympathy for Bermann, which had lasted until this evening, ever since that conversation they had had on the Ringstrasse bench this past spring night.

They had long passed the last inns. Next to them the lonely white road ran straight between the trees and off into the night, and the sound of distant music came to them only in detached broken tones.

"Where now?" said Heinrich suddenly, as though someone had dragged him here against his will, and stood still.

"I really can't help it," replied Georg simply.

"Forgive me," said Heinrich.

"You were so deep in thought," responded Georg, coolly.

"Deep I really can't say. But it sometimes happens that one gets lost in oneself."

"I know that," said Georg, a little reconciled.

"By the way, you were expected in August out at the Auhof," said Heinrich suddenly.

"Expected? Well, Frau Ehrenberg was kind enough to invite me once, but I hadn't accepted by any means. Have you spent a lot of time out there, Herr Bermann?"

"A lot, no. I've been up there occasionally, but only for a few hours."

"I thought you stayed up there."

"Not at all. I lodged down below at an inn. I've only been up there a few times. It's too noisy and chaotic for me. . . . The house is swarming with guests, and I can't stand most of the people who go there anyway."

An open *fiaker* with a lady and a gentleman sitting in it rolled by.

"That was Oskar Ehrenberg," said Heinrich.

"And the lady?" asked Georg, looking at something bright that was shining through the darkness.

"Don't know."

They took the way through a dark side street. Again the conversation faltered. Finally Heinrich began: "Fraulein Else sang some of your songs for me at the Auhof. I had heard a few of them done before, by Bellini if I remember correctly."

"Yes, Bellini sang them in a concert last winter."

"Well, Fraulein Else sang those and a few other songs of yours."

"Who accompanied her?"

"I did, as well as I could. I must tell you, dear Baron, the songs made a stronger impression on me than they did the first time at the concert, despite the fact that Fraulein Else has considerably less voice and artistry than Fraulein Bellini. On the other hand, one must take into account that it was a glorious summer afternoon when Fraulein Else sang your songs. The window was open and one could see the mountains and deep blue sky outside . . . but there was enough left over for you."

"Very flattering," said Georg, stung by Heinrich's sarcastic tone.

"You know," continued Heinrich, speaking, as he sometimes did, with teeth clenched together and an unnecessarily heavy emphasis, "You know, in general it's not my custom to invite people I see by

chance on the street onto the bus, and I readily confess to you that I regarded it . . . how should I put it . . . as a sign of fate when I suddenly caught sight of you in St. Stephen's Square."

Georg listened to him, puzzled.

"Perhaps you don't remember as clearly as I do," continued Heinrich, "our last conversation on the Ringstrasse bench."

Now it occurred to Georg that at the time Heinrich had cursorily spoken of an opera libretto he was working on, for which Georg had offered himself, just as casually and half-jokingly, as composer. And deliberately cool, he responded: "Oh yes, I remember."

"Of course you were not obligated," replied Heinrich, even cooler still, "all the more since, to tell the truth, I had not even thought about my libretto since then, until that lovely summer afternoon when Fraulein Else sang your songs. How would it be if we stopped here?"

The wine garden they entered was rather empty. Heinrich and Georg sat down in a small arbor next to a green picket fence, and ordered their supper.

Heinrich leaned back, stretched out his legs, and contemplated Georg, who was persistently silent, with probing, almost scornful eyes, and suddenly said: "I believe I would not be mistaken if I were to assume that the things I have written up to now have not really appealed to you."

"Oh," replied Georg, turning a little red. "How did you arrive at that opinion?"

"Well, I know my plays . . . and I know you."

"Me?" asked Georg, nearly offended.

"Certainly," said Heinrich with superiority. "At least, I have this feeling about most men, and even consider this ability my own particular absolute, without a doubt. The rest I find a little problematic. In particular, my so-called artistry is quite modest, and there is a lot to object to in my own character. The only thing which gives me a certain confidence is the consciousness that I am able to see into the human soul . . . deep inside, in everyone, honest or dishonest, men, women, or children, heathens, Jews, Protestants, even Catholics, nobles, and Germans, although I have heard that precisely this is what should be so endlessly difficult or even impossible for one of us."

Georg gave a light shrug. He knew that Heinrich had been severely personally attacked by the conservative and clerical press, particularly on the occasion of his last play. But what's that to me, thought Georg. Just another fellow who someone has insulted! It was absolutely impos-

sible to deal with these people without any risk to oneself. Courteously but distant, in a scarcely conscious recollection of the older Herr Rosner's reply to the young Doctor Stauber, he said: "Actually I thought people like you were above attacks of the sort to which you were obviously alluding."

"So . . . is that what you thought?" asked Heinrich in that cold, almost offensive tone he sometimes used. "Well," he continued more gently, "sometimes it's true. But unfortunately not always. It doesn't take much to awaken the self-contempt which is constantly lurking in us; and once that happens there is hardly a fool or scoundrel with whom we are not ready to take sides against ourselves. Pardon me if I say 'we.' . . ."

"Oh, I have often felt quite the same. Of course, I still haven't had occasion to face publicity as often and as openly as you."

"Well if ever . . . You will never have to go through exactly the same thing as I have."

"Why is that?" asked Georg, a little annoyed.

Heinrich looked him squarely in the eyes. "You are the Baron von Wergenthin-Recco."

"Oh, that! Pardon me, but nowadays there is a whole mob of people who are prejudiced against one for precisely that reason—and who really know how to throw in one's face the fact that one is a baron."

"Yes, yes, but you will grant that there is a different tone in it, and also a different meaning when one throws in your face that you are a baron than that you are a Jew, although the latter . . . you will forgive me . . . may sometimes be the more noble. Well, you needn't look at me so sympathetically," he suddenly added roughly. "I'm not always so sensitive. There are other moods in which nothing and no one can hurt me. Then I have only this one feeling: what do you all know, what do you know about me?"

He fell silent, proud, with a scornful look that bored through the lattice work of the arbor into the darkness. Then he turned his head, looked around, and said plainly, in a new tone to Georg, "Look, we are nearly the only ones."

"It's also becoming quite cool," said Georg.

"I think we should walk a little through the Prater."

"Gladly."

They got up and left. On a meadow, which they came upon, lay a fine, grey fog.

"The illusion of summer does not last into the evening. Soon it will

finally be over," said Heinrich with exaggerated oppressiveness, adding, as if to console himself, "So, one will work."

They arrived at the Wurstelprater.[17] Music was coming from the inns and Georg fell in at once with the festive mood, emerging suddenly from the autumnal sadness of the wine garden and a somewhat disturbing conversation.

In front of a carousel, from which a gigantic barrel-organ was pouring a fantastic organ-like potpourri of melodies from *Il Trovatore* out into the open, and at whose entrance a hawker was inviting the crowd on trips to London, Atzgersdorf, and Australia, Georg again remembered the spring party with the Ehrenberg circle. On this narrow bench, on the inside of the circle, Frau Oberberger had been seated with the cavalier of the evening, Demeter Stanzides, at her side, to whom she had evidently just related one of her incredible stories: that her mother had been the mistress of a Russian archduke; that she herself had spent a night with an admirer at the Hallstaedter cemetery, without anything happening, naturally; or that her husband, the famous traveler, had conquered seventeen women in a single week in a harem in Smyrna. In this red velvet-upholstered wagon Else had reclined across from Privy Councillor Wilt, ladylike, charming, rather like in a *fiaker* on Derby day, and had understood how to project, through her demeanor and expression, that she, when it came down to it, could be just as childlike as other simpler, more happy people. Anna Rosner, the reigns held lightly in her hands, respectable, but with a rather sly look on her face, rode on a white Arabian; Sissy rode on a black horse, which not only moved in a circle with the other animals and wagons, but also rocked back and forth. Under a flamboyant hairdo, with an enormous black feather hat, her mischievous eyes flashed and laughed, and her white skirt fluttered and flew above the low dress shoes and filigreed stockings. Sissy's appearance made such an impression on two strange men that they called out an unmistakable invitation to her, whereupon a short, mysterious conversation took place between Willy, who was right on the spot, and the two rather disconcerted men, who at first tried to rescue their position by casually lighting new cigarettes, but quickly vanished into the crowd.

Even the booths with the "illusions" and lantern slides had their own special memories for Georg. Here, as Daphne transformed herself into

17. The children's carnival within the Prater, which featured a puppet theater among other children's attractions.

a tree, Sissy whispered a soft "remember" in his ear to remind him of that masked ball at the Ehrenbergs when she had lifted her lace veil to give him, but not him alone, a fleeting kiss. Then came the booth where the whole group had itself photographed: the three young ladies, Anna, Else, and Sissy, in a genial pose, the gentlemen at their feet with uplifted eyes, so the whole had something of the appearance of an apotheosis from a magic farce. And as Georg recalled that little experience, today's farewell from Anna hovered before his memory and seemed filled with the most delightful promises.

A conspicuously large crowd was standing in front of an open shooting gallery. Soon the drummer was struck in the heart and beat with rapid whirling movements on the drum skin; then a glass ball which was dancing up and down on a stream of water burst with a light tinkle; now a camp sutler hurriedly raised the trumpet to her mouth and blew the alarm; then a door sprung open and out thundered a tiny train which dashed over a suspension bridge and was swallowed up by another door. As a few of the onlookers gradually moved along, Georg and Heinrich pushed their way forward and recognized the sure shot of Oskar Ehrenberg and his girlfriend. Oskar leveled the gun at an eagle, which was swaying back and forth near the ceiling with outspread wings, and missed for the first time. He laid the weapon down indignantly, looked around, caught sight of the two men behind him, and greeted them.

The young lady, the weapon at her cheek, cast a quick glance at the new arrivals, took deliberate aim, and fired. The eagle dropped his stricken wing and moved no more.

"Bravo!" cried Oskar.

The lady laid the rifle down on the table in front of her.

"That's enough," she said to the boy, who wanted to load up again, "I won anyway."

"How many shots was that?" asked Oskar.

"Forty," answered the boy. "Comes to eighty kreuzer." Oskar reached into his vest pocket, tossed a silver gulden on the counter and accepted the attendant's thanks with condescension. "Permit me," he said, putting his hands in his side pockets, bowing slightly from the waist and putting his left foot forward, "permit me, Amy, to introduce the gentlemen who were witnesses of your triumph. Baron Wergenthin, Herr von Bermann . . . Fraulein Amelie Reiter."

The gentlemen lifted their hats and Amelie nodded her head a couple

of times in return. She wore a plain, white-patterned, foulard dress with a light, bright yellow coat hemmed in lace over it, and a black, but very cheerful hat.

"I am acquainted with Herr von Bermann," she said. She turned to him: "I saw you last winter at the premiere of your play when you came out for your bow. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and I'm not just saying that out of courtesy."

Heinrich thanked her warmly.

They walked along between the booths, which were becoming quieter, and past the wine gardens, which were gradually emptying.

Oskar hung his right arm in the left of his companion, and then turned to Georg: "Why didn't you come up to the Auhof this year? We were all very disappointed."

"Unfortunately I wasn't in much of a social mood."

"Naturally, I can imagine," said Oskar, with the appropriate seriousness. "I was only there a few weeks myself. In August I strengthened my tired limbs in the waves of the North Sea; and I was on the Isle of Wight, of course."

"It's supposed to be very nice there," said Georg. "Who is it that always goes there?"

"The Wyners, you mean," replied Oskar. "At least while they still lived in London, they went there regularly. Now only every two or three years."

"So they brought the 'y' back to Austria with them," said Georg, smiling.[18]

Oskar remained serious. "The old Herr Wyner," he replied "has won his right to the 'y' honorably. He went to England in his thirteenth year, was naturalized, and as quite a young man became a partner in the great steel mill which is still called Black and Wyner."

"But he got his wife from Vienna?"

"Yes. And since he died seven or eight years ago, she has resettled here with the two children. But James was never at home here. . . . You know that Frau Oberberger calls him The Lord Antinous.[19] He's back in Cambridge now, where he's studying Greek philology, of all things. By the way, Demeter was in Ventnor for a couple of days."

18. The original Austrian spelling of the name would have been "Wiener." There are almost no uses for the letter 'y' in unadulterated German.

19. A notably handsome youth from Claudiopolis in Bythnia, and a favorite of the Roman emperor Hadrian, with whom he traveled. His likeness is often depicted on ancient statues, busts, and coins as the ideal of youthful beauty.

"Stanzides?" asked Georg.

"Do you know Herr von Stanzides, Herr Baron?" asked Amy.

"Yes indeed."

"So, he really exists!" she cried.

"Yes, but now listen," said Oskar. "This spring she bet on him at Freudenau and won a heap of money, and now she wonders whether or not he exists."

"Why do you doubt the existence of Stanzides, Fraulein?" asked Georg.

"Well, you know, whenever I don't know where Oskar is, it's always: 'I had a meeting with Stanzides,' or: 'I was riding with Stanzides in the Prater.' Stanzides here, Stanzides there, it sounds more like an excuse than a name."

"Now please be still for a moment," said Oskar gently.

"Not only does Stanzides exist, but he has the most marvelous black moustache and the shiniest black eyes that there could possibly be."

"That's possible, but when I saw him, he looked like a clown. Yellow jacket, green lapels, violet bow tie."

"And you won forty gulden on him," continued Oskar with humor.

"Where are the forty gulden?" sighed Fraulein Amelie. . . . Suddenly she stood still and cried, "I've never ridden on it!"

"That can be fixed," said Oskar plainly.

It was the Riesenrad[20] with its lighted cars, which was turning slowly and majestically before them. The young people passed through the turnstile, climbed into an empty compartment, and vanished upward.

"Do you know who I got to know this summer, Georg?" said Oskar. "Prince von Guastalla."

"Which one?" asked Georg.

"The youngest one, of course, Karl Friedrich. He was there incognito. He gets along very well with Stanzides, a remarkable man. I can assure you," he added softly, "if people like us were to say a hundredth part of the things the prince does we'd spend our whole lives in the dungeon."

"Look Oskar," cried Amy, "the tables and the people down there! Like little toys, aren't they? And that mass of lights way over there is surely Prague, don't you think, Herr Bermann?"

"Possibly," Heinrich replied and stared through the glass pane with wrinkled forehead into the night.

20. The immense and famous ferris wheel in the Prater amusement park.

As they left the compartment and walked out into the open, the Sunday bustle was fading.

"The little one," said Oskar Ehrenberg to Georg while Amy walked up ahead with Heinrich, "doesn't suspect that we're walking together in the Prater today for the last time."

"Why for the last time," asked Georg, without any deep interest.

"It has to be," replied Oskar. "Such things shouldn't last longer than a year at most. By the way, after December you can buy your gloves from her," he continued cheerfully, but not without a tinge of melancholy. "I'm setting her up with a small business. I owe it to her to a certain extent, since I pulled her away from a more or less secure situation."

"A secure situation?"

"Yes, she was engaged, to an etui maker. Did you know there was such a thing?"

Meanwhile Amy and Heinrich had stopped in front of a narrow circular staircase which led boldly up to a platform, and were waiting for the others. All were in agreement that they couldn't leave the Prater without having ridden on the roller coaster.

They rushed through the dark, down and then up again in the rumbling wagon, under black tree tops; and the low rhythmic racket gradually intoned for Georg a grotesque motive in three-quarter time. As he came down the circular staircase with the others, he already knew that the melody was for oboe and clarinet, with cello and double bass accompaniment. It was obviously a scherzo, possibly for a symphony.

"If I were a contractor," declared Heinrich with determination, "I'd build a roller coaster many miles long, that went over meadows, hills, through forests, dance halls, and had lots of surprises along the way." In any case, he went on, the time had come to bring the fantastic element of the Wurstelprater to a higher culmination. He himself had a tentative idea for a carousel that would rise up, and would, through a unique mechanism, spiraling ever higher above the ground, finally arrive at the top of some sort of tower. Unfortunately he lacked the necessary technical expertise for a more precise explanation. As they went on he conceived of burlesque figures and groups for the shooting galleries, and finally spoke of the pressing need for a really grand puppet theater, for which original writers should write profound and entertaining plays.

So they finally arrived at the exit of the Prater, where Oskar's coach was waiting. Packed in, but in good spirits, they rode to a wine restau-

rant in the city. Oskar served champagne in a private room. Georg sat down at the piano and improvised on the theme which had come to him on the roller coaster. Amy reclined in the corner of the divan, and Oskar whispered all sorts of things in her ear, which made her laugh. Heinrich had become quiet again and turned his glass slowly back and forth between his fingers. Suddenly Georg stopped his playing and left his hands lying on the keys. A feeling of the dreamlike quality and purposelessness of existence came over him, as it sometimes did when he had been drinking wine. It seemed many days since he had come down that poorly lit stairway on the Paulanergasse, and the walk with Heinrich through the dark autumn avenue lay in the distant past. On the other hand, he suddenly remembered as vividly as if it had been yesterday, a very young and very wicked creature with whom he had spent a few weeks in cheerful meaningless dalliance many years ago, rather like Oskar now with Amy. One evening she had kept him waiting too long on the street; impatiently he had left, and he never saw or heard from her again. How easily life sometimes goes by. . . . He heard Amy's gentle laugh, turned, and his glance encountered Oskar's eyes which were looking for his over Amy's blond head. The look seemed angry to him and he deliberately turned away and played a few more tones in a melancholy folk song style. He felt a need to write down everything that he had experienced today, and looked up at the clock which hung over the door. It was past one. He and Heinrich came to an agreement through a glance, and the two stood up. Oskar indicated toward Amy, who slumbered on his shoulder, and made it known through a smiling shrug that he couldn't think of leaving yet under the circumstances. The two others gave him their hands, whispered good night, and left.

"Do you know what I did," said Heinrich, "while you were improvising so beautifully on that horrid piano? I tried to work out that material I spoke to you about in the spring."

"Oh, the libretto! That's interesting. Would you care to tell me about it again?"

Heinrich shook his head. "I'd like to, but the problem is, as it turns out, it really isn't there. Just like most of the rest of my so-called material."

Georg looked at him questioningly. "In the spring, when we last saw each other, you had a whole mass of things in mind."

"Sure, there are plenty of notes. But there's nothing more there than sentences. . . . No, words! No, letters on white paper. It's just as if a death's hand had touched it all. I'm afraid that the next time I pick up

the thread again, it will fall apart like tinder. I'm having a hard time, and who knows if a better one is coming?"

Georg was silent. Then, suddenly remembering a newspaper article he had read somewhere about Heinrich's father, Dr. Bermann, the former deputy of parliament, and suspecting a connection, he asked, "Your Herr father isn't well, is he?"

Without looking at him, Heinrich answered: "Yes, my father is in an asylum for the depressed, since June."

Georg shook his head sympathetically.

Heinrich continued, "It's a terrible thing. And even though I haven't had very close relations with him lately, it's still worse than one can describe."

"Under the circumstances," said Georg, "it's quite understandable that your work isn't going well."

"Yes," answered Heinrich, somewhat hesitantly. "But it isn't only that. To tell the truth, in my present state of mind this matter plays a relatively unimportant role. I won't make myself out to be better than I am. Better . . . ! Would I be better?" He gave a short laugh, and then went on. "You see, yesterday I still thought it was that everything possible was happening all at once that was oppressing me so much. But today I again received irrefutable proof that completely trivial, even foolish things have a deeper effect on me than really important ones, like, for example, the illness of my father. Disgusting, isn't it?"

Georg looked down. What am I doing here with him, he thought, and yet why did he find it entirely obvious?

Heinrich continued speaking with teeth clenched together and an excessively forceful tone: "This afternoon, to be specific, I received two letters. Two letters, yes . . . one from my mother, who visited my father in the asylum yesterday. This letter contained the news that he's doing poorly, very poorly; short and sweet, it will not last much longer." He took a deep breath. "And naturally, all sorts of things are contingent on that, as you can imagine. Difficulties of various sorts, grief for my mother and sister, for myself. And now just think; at the same time as this letter, another one came that contained nothing of significance, so to speak. A letter from a person I was close to for two years. And there was a passage in this letter that seemed a little suspicious to me. One single passage. Otherwise this letter was, like every other letter from this person, very sweet, very nice. . . . And now imagine, the memory of this one suspicious passage, which someone else would not have noticed at all, pursued me, tormented me the entire day. I don't think about

my father, who is in an asylum, or about my mother, or my sister, who are in despair, only about this insignificant passage in that stupid letter from a by-no-means-important female. It devours everything else in me, makes me incapable of feeling like a son, like a man. . . . Isn't it awful?"

Georg listened with shock. It seemed strange to him how this sullen and gloomy man suddenly opened up to a casual acquaintance like himself, and he couldn't fend off a painful embarrassment over this unexpected candor. In addition, he did not have the impression that he owed this confession to a particular sympathy of Heinrich's, but instead he sensed a lack of tact, a certain inability to control himself, something for which the words 'poor upbringing' that he had once heard applied to Heinrich—wasn't it by Privy Councillor Wilt?—seemed very descriptive. They passed by the Burgtor.[21] A starless sky lay over the silent city. There was a light rustling through the trees of the Volksgarten,[22] and from somewhere could be heard the noise of a rolling wagon moving off into the distance.

As Heinrich fell silent again, Georg stood still and said, in the friendliest tone possible, "Now, I must bid you good night, dear Herr Bermann."

"Oh!" said Heinrich. "It's just occurred to me that you have accompanied me all this time—while I've related to you, or better, to myself in your presence, these tactlessly unvarnished stories that you couldn't have the slightest interest in. . . . Forgive me."

"What is there to forgive," replied Georg gently, finding himself a little surprised by Heinrich's self-criticism, and gave him his hand. Heinrich shook it, said "*Auf Wiedersehen*, dear Baron," and, as if he suddenly regarded any further word as an importunity, walked off hurriedly.

Georg watched him with sympathy and revulsion at the same time, and a sudden, free, almost jubilant mood came over him in which he saw himself as young, carefree, and destined for the happiest future. He anticipated the coming winter with joy. Everything possible was in prospect; work, pleasure, tenderness, and it hardly mattered where all this happiness would come from. He lingered a moment at the opera. It wouldn't be much of a detour if he went home by way of Paulanergasse. He smiled at the memory of window-watching in former years.

21. A monumental arch at the southwest end of the Heldenplatz courtyard, next to the Imperial Palace, or Hofburg.

22. A section of park along the west leg of the Ring which contains a model Greek temple known as the Theseus Temple since it was originally built to hold Canova's sculpture group *Theseus Slaying the Minotaur,* now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Not far from here was the street where he had on many evenings looked up to a window behind whose draperies Marianne would show herself if her husband was asleep. This woman, who was always playing with danger, the seriousness of which she herself didn't realize, had never been really good enough for Georg. . . . Another memory, more distant than this one, was much more dear to him. In Florence, as an inexperienced seventeen-year-old youth, he had spent many a night walking back and forth before the window of a beautiful young girl who had been the first woman to surrender her innocence to him. And he thought of the hour in which he had seen the beloved walk, on the arm of her groom, to the altar where the priest would consecrate their marriage, and of the glance of eternal farewell she had sent him under the white veil. . . . He was at his destination. Only the two lamps at the ends of the short street were still burning, so he stood across from the house in complete darkness. The window of Anna's room was open, and the lace curtains pulled together in the middle still moved gently in the breeze just as they had in the afternoon. Behind them it was completely dark. A gentle tenderness welled up in Georg. Of all beings who had not concealed their attraction to him, Anna appeared the best and the purest. Also, she was the first who contributed a real sympathy toward his artistic aspirations; a more genuine one in any case than Marianne, who would send tears rolling down her cheeks no matter what he played for her on the piano; a deeper one than Else Ehrenberg, who only wanted to protect her pride in being the first to recognize his talent. And Anna was better suited than anyone else to counteract his tendency toward frivolousness and carelessness and to spur him on to purposeful and productive activity. Already last winter he had thought of looking for a position with a German opera company as conductor or rehearsal accompanist; at the Ehrenbergs he had spoken casually of his intentions, which were not taken very seriously, and Frau Ehrenberg, motherly and prudent, had advised him that it would be better to go on a tour through the United States as a composer and conductor, whereupon Else had boldly added: "And an American heiress should not be scoffed at." While he was remembering this conversation, he was very attracted to the idea of venturing out into the world a little, wanting to acquaint himself with foreign cities and people, to win fame and love in a far off place; and he felt in the end that his present existence was, on the whole, far too bland and monotonous.

Finally, without ever having taken leave of Anna inwardly, he had

left Paulanergasse and soon was home. As he entered the dining room he noticed that light was coming from Felician's room.

"Good evening, Felician!" he called loudly.

The door opened, and Felician, still fully dressed, came out.

The brothers shook hands.

"Did you just get home too?" said Felician. "I thought you were long asleep." As he spoke, he looked past him, as was his manner, and tilted his head to the right side. "What were you doing?"

"I went to the Prater," replied Georg.

"Alone?"

"No, I met some people. Oskar Ehrenberg and his girlfriend, and the writer Bermann. We were shooting and rode the roller coaster. It was very enjoyable. . . . What's that in your hand?" he interrupted himself. "Did you go walking like that?" he added jokingly.

Felician let the sword he was holding in his right hand shine in the light of the lamp. "I just took it down from the wall. I'm beginning in earnest again tomorrow. The tournament is coming up in mid-November. And this year I want to challenge Forestier."

"Oh, my!" cried Georg.

"An impudence you think? But it's still a long time until November. And what's strange, I have the feeling that I learned something during the six weeks this summer when I hardly had the thing in my hand. It's as if my arm got some new ideas in the meantime. I can't really explain it to you."

"I understand what you mean."

Felician held the sword stretched out in front of him, and contemplated it with tenderness. Then he said, "Ralph asked about you, Guido too. . . . Too bad you weren't along."

"Did you spend the whole afternoon with them?"

"Oh, no. After dinner I stayed home. You must have already gone out. I studied."

"Studied?"

"Yes. I really have to get going. I want to pass the diplomatic examination by May at the latest."

"So, you've definitely decided?"

"Absolutely. It makes no sense for me to stay in the Governor's office. The longer I sit there, the clearer it is to me. But the time hasn't been lost. It's taken into account if one has spent a couple of years in civil service."

"Then you might be leaving Vienna already in the fall."

"That's to be assumed."

"Where do you think they'll send you?"

"If one only knew."

Georg looked down. So the farewell was near! But why did that suddenly bother him so much? . . . He had decided to leave himself, and he had only recently talked with his brother about his plans for next year. Was he still not taking him seriously? If only one could talk to him openly again, like a brother, like on the evening after their father's funeral. Truthfully, they only really found each other when life revealed its sadness to them. Otherwise there always remained this strange reserve between the two. Evidently it couldn't be otherwise. One had to be satisfied to talk in the manner of good acquaintances. And, as if resigned, Georg asked, "What did you do this evening?"

"I ate with Guido and an interesting young lady."

"Well?"

"He's in love again."

"Who is she?"

"Conservatory student, Jewish girl, violin. But she didn't have it with her. Not especially pretty, but bright. She cultivates him, and he respects her. He wants her to get baptized. A strange relationship, I tell you. You'd really have enjoyed yourself."

Georg was looking at the sword that Felician still held in his hand. "Would you care to fence a little?" he asked.

"Why not?" replied Felician, and brought a second foil from his room. Meanwhile Georg had moved the large table out of the middle of the room against the wall.

"I haven't had one of these things in my hand since May," he said as he grasped the sword. They laid their jackets down and crossed swords. In the next second Georg was touched.

"Again!" cried Georg, who found it a joy to be able to stand opposite his brother, in bold posture, the flashing, slender weapon in his hand.

Felician could score as often as he wished, without being touched himself a single time. Then he lowered his sword and said, "You're too tired today, there's no point. But you should start working out at the club again. I assure you, it's too bad, with your talent."

Georg rejoiced in the brotherly praise. He laid the sword on the table, took a deep breath, and went to the open, wide, middle window. "Wonderful air!" he said. A single lantern was shining from the park; it was completely still.

Felician walked up behind Georg, and while Georg leaned with both hands on the railing, the older brother stood upright and swept the street, park, and city with one of his proud, self-assured looks. They were silent for a long time. And they knew that each was thinking of the same thing: of a May evening this past spring when they were coming home together through the park, and their father had greeted them with a silent nod of his head from the same window where they were now standing. And both shuddered a little at the thought that they had spent the day so happily, without remembering with pain the dear man who now lay buried in the ground.

"So, good night," said Felician, softer than usual, and gave Georg his hand. He squeezed it silently, and each went to his room.

Georg switched on the writing table lamp, took out some music paper, and began to write. It was not the scherzo which had come to him three hours ago as he had rushed under the black tree tops through the night with the others; nor was it the melancholy folk tune from the restaurant; but an entirely new theme that emerged from a mysterious depth, slowly and irresistibly. It seemed to Georg that he had only to let something incomprehensible go its own way. He wrote down the melody, which he imagined sung by an alto voice or played on a viola; and he heard a strange accompaniment with it, which he knew could never fade from his memory.

It was four in the morning when he went to bed; at peace like one whom nothing harmful in life could ever touch, and for whom neither loneliness, poverty, nor death held the slightest fear.