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A Translation of Selected Short Stories by Helga M. Novak

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A Translation of Selected Short Stories by Helga Novak

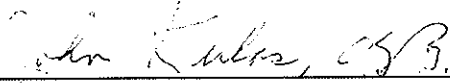
A THESIS
The Honors Program
College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Distinction "All College Honors"
and the Degree Bachelor of Arts
In the Department of German

by
Margaret Zenk
May, 1996

Project Title: A Translation of Selected Short Stories by Helga Novak

Approved by:



Fr. John Kulas, OSB, Professor of German



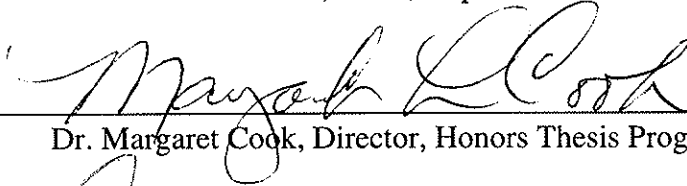
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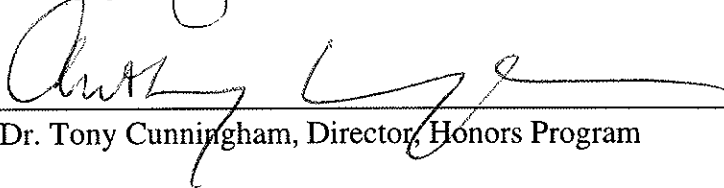
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Copyright Information

“The Fillet Table” (“Der Filetiertisch”), “The Freezing Pan” (“Die Gefrierpfanne”), “The Herring Barrel” (“Die Heringstonne”), “Packing Herring” (“Hering packen”), “The Rubber Gloves” (“Die Gummihandschuhe”), “The Fish Fillet” (“Das Fischfilet”), “The Dormitory” (“Der Schlafsaal”), “Herr Schelsky--a Weaver” (“Herr Schelsky--ein Weber”), “The Organist” (“Der Organist”), “Jonina--the Goods Inspector” (“Jonina--die Gütekontrollleurin”), “Herr Jons--the Boss” (“Herr Jons--der Chef”), “Herr Julius Jons--the Founder” (“Herr Julius Jons--der Gründer”), “Luggage” (“Gepäck”), “Eat Hearty” (“Kräftig essen”), “Bookmark” (“Lesezeichen”), and “Ticket Please” (“Fahrkarte bitte”) were published originally in Geselliges Beisammensein, ©1968 Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt, and were later reissued in Palisaden: Erzählungen 1967-1975, ©1980 Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt. I translated from the versions in Palisaden.

“Stowaway” (“Mitfahren”) was originally published in Geselliges Beisammensein, ©1968 Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt.

“Berenike is Gone” (“Berenike is weg”), “Monologue of a Bookseller,” (“Monolog eines Buchhändlers”), and “Sojourn in a Crazy House” (“Aufenthalt in einem irren Haus”) were originally published in Aufenthalt in einem irren Haus, ©1971, Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt.

Introduction

I have been interested in words and languages as long as I can remember; as a child, I enjoyed both reading and playing word games. As soon as I had the opportunity I began taking German, and not long after that I became interested in translation, a fairly natural pursuit, since it combined two of my favorite activities. Translation is, of course, a more serious endeavor than completing crossword puzzles, but the two activities have some aspects in common, most importantly, the search for a particular word. During sophomore year I took two classes in translation; an advanced course in German grammar that chiefly involved translating excerpts of two or three paragraphs from German and English texts, and a translation workshop in which I translated two short stories from German into English. When it came time to start thinking about an Honors Thesis project, then, an extended translation project seemed ideal. I began looking for material to translate, and while in Salzburg the following year, took another course in literary translation.

Not long before my trip to Salzburg, I decided I would like at least to read more of Helga Novak's works. I had read one of her short stories, "Kräftig essen" (included in this collection as "Eat Hearty"), in *Introduction to German Literature*, and was impressed with her perception of human nature, her dry humor, and her minimalist style. Novak often writes in short sentences, never uses quotation marks, and relates a series of brief episodes rather than a fluid story. In Salzburg, I discovered that she had published two semi-autobiographical novels, five volumes of poetry, and six collections of short stories and prose. I found that her short stories appealed to me, and decided to concentrate on them. The stories I eventually chose to translate come from three of her books: Geselliges Beisammensein (1968), Aufenthalt in einem irren Haus (1971), and Palisaden. Erzählungen 1967-1975 (1980). All of these texts are out of print in German, and none of the stories have been translated into English, although Helen Cafferty, an associate professor at Bowdoin College, has especially recommended (qtd. in Frederiksen, 172) that Aufenthalt in einem irren Haus, at least, be translated into English.

Novak was born in Berlin in 1935. She was a citizen of the former East Germany until 1966, when she was expatriated. The inside cover of Geselliges Beisammensein recounts, "She

studied philosophy and journalism, she was a bookseller, she worked in a radio factory, a fish factory, a carpet factory” (my translation). Many of her stories, most obviously her earlier stories about traveling and factory work, are rooted in personal experience, but as the same cover goes on to point out, we learn little about Novak’s personal life through the stories. For the most part, she simply shares observances, and we get to know her only through the things she chooses to relate, and the dry humor with which she does so. She now resides in Hamburg.

As I worked on this project, two things happened. First, the process affirmed and deepened my enjoyment of translation, of working with words in a very concrete, specific manner. This is not to say that it wasn’t frustrating at times; since the eighteenth century no one has claimed that an exact translation of a literary text is truly possible. The differing connotations of even basic words in different languages, differences in grammatical structures, even the different sounds prevent it. Werner Winter described translation as an attempt to recreate a work of art in an entirely different medium (68); this description illustrates as well as any I’ve read the frustrations of translation. My most vivid personal experience of this was in trying to translate the phrase “undurchdringliches Durcheinander” in “Monologue of a Bookseller.” It was especially hard because I love the sound of the phrase, its guttural, subterranean German-ness, in the original. Its sounds, especially the ‘ch’ are impossible to find in English, and though I like the phrase I ended up using (impenetrable mess), it just isn’t the same. I don’t see translation as entirely impossible, however. Some things do have to be sacrificed, but sometimes words, phrases, even whole sections translate surprisingly well. Translating involves frustration, compromise...but it also involves gleeful moments when a troublesome sentence finally clicks into place, astounding moments when a striking phrase in the original actually works equally well in English on the first try.

The second thing I gained as I worked on this translation was an increasingly strong admiration for and liking of Novak’s work. Part of this, no doubt, comes from the closeness with which a translator must work with the text. A translator deals with every sentence, every word, of a text, and thus notices things that could well pass unnoticed even in a close textual analysis. I enjoyed Novak’s work even before I started translating her; indeed, my liking of her work was a major reason for choosing to translate her. However, as I worked closely with her stories, I

appreciated more and more her use of language, her way of expressing ideas and conveying information in concise, striking, poetic ways. My original reasons for choosing a translation project involved my love of language, but as I worked, my allegiance shifted from language in general to the text in particular.

As Novak is in my opinion a very good writer, this shift was to some degree inevitable, but it raised the stakes for me. Since my mother and many of my closest friends don't read German, it was important for me to translate the stories as well as possible, so that they would be able to discover the enjoyment in Novak's writing that I had already found. More importantly, as a writer myself, I felt very strongly that I should, as much as possible, try to maintain the unique flavor of Novak's writing, which I found especially in the terse, uninflected prose that reveals so much on a second reading, and the occasional, unexpectedly striking or poetic sections. These considerations, more than anything else, informed my reactions to my research in translation theory.

The dialogue of translation theory has been divided for hundreds of years into two basic positions, foreignizing vs. domesticating translation. The best-known formulation of these two types of translation is Schleiermacher's in "Methoden des Übersetzens": "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (qtd. In Lefevere, 74). Foreignizing translation follows the first principle, acknowledging and affirming the foreignness of the original text, and allowing it to show in the translation; domesticating translation adheres to the second, attempting to make the translation as smooth and as seamless as possible. There have been extreme positions taken on both sides. Walter Benjamin favored very literal translation, asserting that doing so brought the translation close to what he called pure language. Of course he realized that such literal translation sacrifices much, if not all, of the meaning of the original, but he questioned the possibility of conveying content in another language at all (78), and so he concentrated entirely on esoteric linguistic considerations. The other extreme, domesticating translation, provided a justification for late eighteenth century translators of Homer, such as Alexander Pope, to veil or excise images in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* which they considered to be in poor taste.

Neither Benjamin's nor Pope's extremes in translating are part of mainstream translating today, but even discounting these extremes, there are significant differences between the two positions. Defenses of foreignizing translation identify retaining a sense of the source language in the translation as a priority, so that the justifications for this position generally stem from linguistic or multi-cultural considerations. The rhetoric of domesticating translation, on the other hand, emphasizes the text as principle concern. Whereas theorists who favor foreignizing translation advocate fairly literal translation, those in favor of domesticating translation suggest free translation as a means to convey the spirit, the heart of the text without getting bogged down in the original forms. Dynamic equivalence, favored by domesticating translators, thus involves creating the same effect in the target language as was created by the language of the original, while maintaining "complete naturalness of expression" (Venuti, 118). This naturalness of expression is acquired by avoiding idiomatic or unusual expressions in the target language.

Though I am wary of the extremes of foreignizing translation, in which linguistic and cultural considerations often seem to overshadow the text, I am not overly impressed by the rhetoric of domesticating translation either. The demands of naturalness of expression hold the translator to unrealistic standards, standards, moreover, which few authors would submit to in their original language. While grammar and ease of expression are a factor in any good writing, very few writers of fiction abide by grammatical rules all the time. Instead, they shape language to their purposes, and translating an innovative writer such as Helga Novak into strictly conventional language would do incalculable damage to the text. I do not favor retaining German syntax when it is awkward in English, but in cases where a literal or near-literal translation of one of Novak's more striking sentences results in unconventional but intelligible English, my instinct is to let it stand. On a practical level, this boils down to a choice of translating the sentence "Selten genug, dass ein nichtssagender Mann nichts sagt!" as "It's seldom enough that a nothing-saying man says nothing!" or "It's seldom enough that a man who knows how to keep his mouth shut actually does!" Neither of these sentences is a strict word for word translation of the German, but the first is considerably closer to the German than the second. Each communicates the meaning of the German accurately, so the chief difference between the two is that the second sounds somewhat smoother in English, while the first retains

more of the flavor of the original. In situations like this, I almost invariably choose the more literal translation.

The one situation in which I do favor a kind of dynamic equivalence is in translating idioms. Literally translated, of course, idioms often verge on the nonsensical. Even when the idiom, translated word for word, makes sense in the target language, it is generally more effective, and entirely consistent with the text, to find a corresponding idiom, even if it alters the imagery of the sentence somewhat. For example, in "Herr Jons--the Boss," Herr Jons tells the workers at one point, "ich habe trockene Schleimhäute, weil mir bei eurem schleichenden Tempo die Spucke wegbleibt" or "I have dry mucous membranes, because your creeping pace takes my spit away." This is not complete nonsense; Herr Jons' point is clear. However, it is much more effective to change the imagery to fit an English idiom: "I'm turning blue, because your creeping pace takes my breath away." This translation retains the effect and humor of the German, where the first example, though intelligible, did not have this impact. Idioms are fairly obviously a special case, however, and even in translating idioms I try to find the closest possible image.

I am inclined to attribute the effectiveness of translating Helga Novak fairly literally in part to the movements of contemporary English writing, especially that of women writers and minorities. Such writers have explored alternative plot structures and innovative uses of language enough that modern readers are perhaps more accepting of unconventional writing styles than they would have been even fifty years ago. Judiciously stretching the boundaries of the target language is not confined to translators of the twentieth century, however. Franz Rosenzweig points out that, while Luther translated the Bible chiefly into the German spoken by "die Mutter im hause, die Kinder auff ger gassen, den gemeinen Man auff dem marckt"¹ (qtd in Thomas, 204), he also made it a policy "der hebräischen Sprache Raum zu lassen, wo sie es besser macht, denn unser Deutsch tun kann"² (qtd. in Rosenzweig, 197). To translate Novak's stories without altering the syntax to fit English guidelines would render the stories difficult and annoying to read, which makes a completely literal translation foolish. Like Luther, I have no

¹ The mother in the house, the children in the alleys, the common man at the market; my translation.

² to make room for the Hebrew language, when it works better than our German; my translation.

desire to model my own language on the grammatical structures of what is, after all, another language. However, in cases where Novak's use of language is particularly striking, it is not only effective but positively necessary to give her language room, even when it means stretching syntactical rules or creating new, hyphenated words.

Fish Factory

The Fillet Table

Monday

The slab is finger thickness and made of see-through plastic. It is large, rectangular. It rests on an iron frame. The slab rests loose. It is heavy.

Under the slab, along the long side, two glass cases hang on the iron frame; in each of them a neon light burns. The slab appears to be separated into three parts. The long third is bright yellow, the middle dull white, the opposite side is again yellow.

The slab is dry. The glass cases, the iron frame are dry. Pungent ether flows over the slab, drawing tears from my eyes.

Tuesday

The wax-colored slab is dry. It is stained. The glass cases are damp, fogged up. The drops, crushed between their round covers and the slab, look like amoebas under a microscope.

The slab is wet. On the darker middle area puddles form a longer lake.

Wednesday

The slab is hard. Above the lighted rectangle it is scratched.

Fish skin, scales, parts of fins stick to the slab, the frame. Heavy drops run down the iron bars.

They run together below and pool on the floor. Drops fall from the glass cases.

The slab is soft. It is grey and smeared. Under the slab and above the slab it smells rotten.

Thursday

The slab smells like a full refrigerator--left open in summer. The cases now seem to be made of grooved glass. The iron legs are slimy and rough.

Friday

The clean, white, dully shining plastic slab leans on the frame. The glass cases are open and full of soap suds. The neon tubes lie in a basket, draining. Wet, black are the iron legs. They smell of Lysol.

The sides and bottom of the glass cases are dry and sparkling. The neon tubes are inserted. They are dark. The covers are put on and reflect faces.

Polished, the slab lies on the frame. It is cold. It is hard.

The iron parts are dry. Rust spots turn up.

Sunday evening

The table is sprayed with ammonia. The fumes make my eyes moist.

The Freezing Pan

It is light grey and made of zinc.
It is five yards by five yards square and too heavy for a single man.
When it comes out of the freezer, it steams and has a crust of hard frost. It sticks to your hand and takes your skin off. I pack it with cartons full of fish.

The Herring Barrel

It is heavy and full of herring in salt water. The seams between the staves are wet. They are dark like the two iron rings. I pull the cork out. Out of the hole bubbles an acidic brine, gushes oil. I pump fresh water into the barrel.
The new barrels stacked in the courtyard smell of forest, of freshly cut trees. They smell of needles, moss, berries.
The barrels come by ship from Norway. If the upper rings break, the barrels look like open hands with bent fingers. I throw these stars with their separate rays, rings and iron bands in the shed.

Packing Herring

The herring is beheaded and filleted. The fillets are as big as a person's face, but folded up. I lay them flat, I press them, I pack them. The silver-blue backs face down. The light brown flesh faces up.
I pack the herring in cartons--two yards long, one yard wide. I weigh them out. One carton holds ten kilos.
Fish oil, the color of old gold, collects on the table. The yellow spots on the backs of the herring, they dazzle. They prick your eyes.
Time doesn't fly.
Outside is a storm.
Laying the herring flat, pressing it, packing it, weighing it.
My lower arms are covered with glittering scales. They stick like tape and leave little circles behind.
If one doesn't think about the clock, time goes by.
The storm screams, wails, whistles. It takes the crossbars out of the windows and rips apart the house. The rock face opposite the bay is obscured. I want to be in the sun.

The Rubber Gloves

They are blue, orange, yellow.

All the fingers are stiff. They stick out from each other. The inner surfaces are roughened, so that the fish don't slip away. The long cuffs are grooved. Grooves are pressed into the rubber.

Before I pull on the gloves, I sprinkle powder in them. It's supposed to absorb the sweat. In contact with the frozen fish, the rubber gloves get smaller. They pinch.

The Fish Fillet

1

It arrives with other things in a steel tub on the conveyor belt. It comes in a ten-kilo tub and swims in its own juice.

There, where scales clung to the skin when the two fillets still belonged to one fish, is now a see-through skin--like that between egg and shell.

The filleting machine halved the fish. It cut the fish and removed the backbone. A chain made of serrated iron grated the scales off. It went against the grain of the scales.

2

It is as big as the palm of your hand. It is as big as two hands and spongy.

It falls apart in sheets, held together by a red sinew.

Round, convex discs of fish flesh. Thick sheets flake off.

3

Its odor reminds you of a salt water bath, of the drawers in pharmacies in which poultices lie.

4

It is wet. It is the length of an arm and weighs as much as a sheep's head. I cut out the blood clot and the worms, straighten it where the flesh frays.

The blade of my knife is three fingers long and half a finger wide. It looks like a flattened knitting needle and doesn't rust. With a single cut I remove a row of fat from the edge.

5

It is pointed at one end, wider and thicker at the other. It is dented where the fish had gills. It's not a fish. It has no mouth, nor scales, nor bones. It is free of innards.

Some households have pudding molds in the shape of a fish. The fillet no longer looks

anything like a fish. It is always this dripping wet, long mushy piece of pale flesh, drained of its juice. It should be eaten.

The Dormitory

Along its walls stand double bunk beds. Its tables are circled by glowing nails. The Beatles. On the mirror above the wash basin are fingerprints. On the cupboard door cut out pictures of long-haired boys are taped. On Sundays, a couple lies in each bed.

Carpet Weaving

Herr Schelsky -- a Weaver

Herr Schelsky says, I can shoot well, but I am a gentleman. He's wearing galoshes. Herr Schelsky speaks broken Italian, broken German, broken English. He says, I come from the Balkans. I ask him about his fatherland, his mother tongue. He says, I am an orphan.

Herr Schelsky is pock-marked. He has a broad, flat face and black hair. His hair is combed up against the natural growth pattern and sticks up like a black lacquered flower around a centerpoint. I visit Herr Schelsky in his room. I say, do you have something to read. He says, I am pleased to be of service.

On the wall of his room hangs the Playgirl of the Month November. Herr Schelsky is sewing. He's making himself overalls out of heavy linen. He says, don't be shy, find yourself something to read. He has paperbacks, newspapers, magazines, Cicero's "Orator". I take the "Spiegel": Saved by Plotting a New Course. The flag of England as a foresail, Wilson as the figurehead.

I say, when I don't have anything to read, I go crazy.

He says, I get fed up, too.

I say, not fed up, crazy.

He says, no movie theater. Nothing at all.

I say, if only there was at least a bus.

He says, once a European, always a European.

I say, this is also Europe.

He says, certainly not.

I say, yes it is.

He says, and the food. On top of the food are fish eyes instead of specks of fat.¹

He bites off the thread and says, the things have I lost here. There must be meaning behind it. Who or what am I. For ten years I've moved around. I weave here. I weave there. You're in the best hands in the army or in Switzerland.

I ask, in Switzerland, as a weaver?

He says, no, as a political refugee.

I say, someone must have done something to you.

He says, is this thing here nothing.

I ask, are you using the carded-yarn or worsted method here?

He says, I'm using the carded-yarn method here. To produce worsted yarn, the wool is prepared completely differently. It is combed. But here they use carding machines, then the Ringspinn method. The way we spin yarn where I'm from, the yarn has a leader length of let's say three yards. Then the yarn is more uniform, its strength, I mean. Here the leader is about one yard, that is, the height of the spindle. That is not enough. An expert sees that immediately when he holds the thread up to the light. In one spot it is thicker, in another it is thinner. In general, irregularities. Take carpet wool. If the thread

¹ The German contains a word-play: fish eyes are "Fischaugen" and specks of fat are "Fettaugen".

is thinner, as it sometimes is by one or two degrees, then that causes thin spots in the carpet. With each pass of the shuttle, just so much is added to the fabric. That can't be changed. The layman needs something he can step on. The expert sees these spots. On the beam hangs hemp. Yes. The warp is made of hemp.

I stand up. I go to the door.

Herr Schelsky stands up. He stoops down. He says, at any rate, people are already much further along. There are reports of attempts to shoot freely through the air.

The Organist

His job is to add oil to the wool before it comes to the drying chamber. He takes his work casually. He talks with his fellow workers. He chats at every opportunity.

His hair is parted. It is straight and combed with water. It smells of pomade. The water or the pomade have streaked his hair. He says, I am 52. I was an organist for so long, now I need a wife. He snorts into his handkerchief. Frieda hits the table with the palms of her hands and laughs.

The organist wolfs down his food. He doesn't chew it. He swallows half potatoes. He gulps down carrots. He fills his mouth and swallows.

He goes to the pantry. He rattles the cups. He says, I always burp sour. He pours himself yoghurt in a cup. He stirs around in the cup with a spoon until the yoghurt overflows. He drinks. His hands tremble. His fingers are bent, gnarled. He spatters.

Jonina and Frieda are drinking coffee. He says, Jonina, could you lend me your rheumatism salve again. Jonina wrinkles her nose and looks around quickly. She says, rheumatism salve. If only I knew where it was. I don't use it, myself. He says, it's all those years of playing in cold churches. Jonina giggles. She says, you should let your fingers play in warmer corners. He says, that's why I'm here. Jonina purses her lips. She sniffs with her nose in the air and says, your clock always seems to be slow. Frieda laughs. She yells, ha, ha, you old goat. The organist says, I'm telling the boss. Frieda keeps laughing. The organist goes to the telephone. He dials. He waits. He listens. He hangs up. He shakes his finger at Frieda and says, watch out, tomorrow you'll be vaccinated.

The organist is freezing. He says, it's so cold here. He goes to the cook and says, it's so cold here. He goes to the window, which is open a crack, and rattles it. The window is frozen fast. He sticks his handkerchief in the crack. The handkerchief flutters. It flies away. The organist moans. He says, it's so cold here.

On Sunday, his hair is wavy. It shines. He gets going. He leaves wet tracks behind him. The organist smells of pomade and wool. Jonina says, where can my curling iron have gone? The organist runs his hand over his head, embarrassed. He sits in the canteen. The organist spends Sunday in the canteen.

Jonina--the Goods Inspector

On weekdays, Jonina has a pair of scissors hanging around her neck. She cuts the protruding fluff and stitches out of the carpet pile. Jonina says, I am actually French. I come from Duncan.

Duncan is in Jamaica. Jonina doesn't speak French. Who knows whether there's a city named Duncan in France.

Jonina is small, round, and she patters. She patters through the factory. She patters through the canteen. She patters here and there, up the stairs, down the stairs.

She wears her steel grey hair piled high. She holds it together on her head with hairpins, clips, barrettes, and combs. The combs are decorated with glass pearls. The student who works there says, those who stick so many pins in their heads like that want to be in control. Jonina wears earrings.

Jonina wears loose silk smocks with red and green Turkish patterns to work. Paisley. The slippery smocks glow, shine. They are always in motion. Jonina wears white stretch socks and sand colored pumps.

Jonina evokes comparisons. Weekdays she looks like the countess in Polish films who has fallen on hard times. Sundays, she is a Boyar out of "Boris Godunov". Sundays she wears a high fur cap and a fur coat that reaches to her ankles.

Jonina chases after the Scotsman. The Scotsman doesn't talk to her. She says, you only laugh on payday. The Scotsman drinks. He doesn't laugh on payday either. He doesn't drink with Jonina.

Sunday evenings, when the girls go dancing, Jonina says, oh, all your hopping around. What's happened to our pretty medleys. No one knows anymore what a one-step dance is. The term "cut-in waltz", for example, doesn't even exist anymore.

Sundays Jonina goes to the city. She puts up at an expensive hotel. She drinks whiskey and buys rounds of drinks.

On her evenings off, Jonina embroiders pillow cases. She uses silk embroidery thread. Her themes are: a child in a wheelbarrow, a child under a tree, a child in a tree, a child throwing a ball, a child sitting on a ball. Jonina shows off her handwork in the cafeteria. The pillow cases are done in pastel colors.

The Scotsman throws wet tea bags on the girls' table. Jonina knits her eyebrows and says, ugh, you should be ashamed of yourself, treating your food like that. She patters in his direction.

Herr Jons -- the Boss

Herr Jons stands in the canteen under the picture of the founder. His face is at the same height as the face of the large wall clock. The wall clock has a glass door in front of the face, the pendulum, and the two pine cones weights. On the glass door there stands in

golden letters: Punctuality is a matter of trust.

Herr Jons gets up every morning at seven o'clock. He watches our every move. He is the youngest son of the founder. He took over the business from his older brother.

He personally hires new workers. He binds them to a contract of one to five years. He prefers foreigners without families.

Herr Jons visits us in the workplace. He is large and fat. His hair is curly, greying. He wears a camel-hair coat, lined with mink. He has a fur hat and a grey suit on. His brown shoes are as shiny as mirrors.

Herr Jons says, work faster. Faster. Don't doze off. Seldom has the market been as good for our sock wool as now. Don't mess up, but work faster.

Those who don't appear punctually, Herr Jons goes to wake up. He goes along the barracks and looks in each window. He says, out. Get a move on. He says, what, you aren't sick.

Herr Jons looks at our throats. He has thin lips and dry skin. He has dandruff on his collar and his shoulders. He says, I'm turning blue, because your creeping pace takes my breath away. He says, already as a child I had to work and learn to be obedient. My father was industrious and strict.

Herr Jons has stomach problems.

Herr Jons visits us in the canteen. He remains standing under the tinted photograph of the founder. The founder has a wrestler's outfit on. He holds himself straight. Around his waist is the embroidered belt of the winner. He was known as the "King of Wrestlers".

Herr Jons says, my father should have seen how you eat. I used a fork and knife when I was three years old. But you spill, and eat the meat first.

His brother blushes.

Herr Jons' brother is older. He eats with us in the canteen. Only sweet noodle soup agrees with him. Ever since his right side became paralyzed, he works in the camp and eats in the canteen. He tickles the girls under their arms. The girls run away from him. Earlier, the brother managed the business; now he is the union official. I say, may I see the wage table. He says, here there is no wage table, and reaches out a hand to me.

The brother shakes his head all the time. He smiles to himself. He walks crooked. Herr Jons pays no attention to him. Herr Jons gets no attention from him.

Herr Jons is President of the Regional Handball Association. He attends important matches in foreign countries. A game takes place in Germany. Herr Jons combines the sport with his business and buys a spinning machine in Germany. The spinning machine is tailor-made for the wool from German sheep. Our sheep are long-haired; the wool isn't very frizzy. The machine is useless here, but the German handball team sends Herr Jons a postcard. The postcard is a photograph. It shows the team, their heads marked with x's. The back of the card reads, our team after the last game and victory in the field series nineteen hundred and. The players marked with x's battled their way up in the indoor league. The card goes from hand to hand in the canteen. Herr Jons takes bread, milk, and potatoes with him out of the canteen. He goes to his villa, which stands on a hill. His house is called "Green Pagoda". The roof looks like a fir tree.

At Christmas Herr Jons gives everyone a box of sweets. He says, children, children. You

seldom allow me to be good.

Christmas is over.

The brother winds the clock. He wipes the glass clean with his sleeve.

Herr Julius Jons -- the Founder

Herr Julius Jons, known as J.J., is no longer with us. He has, at ninety years of age and in full possession of his health, gone away. His departure is said to have been caused by a misunderstanding.

J.J. had, as an eighty-year-old, developed an herbal ointment through the WDA. The ointment protected sheep as well as humans from thinness, coughing, gout, general weakness, varicose veins, and strokes. The ointment was to be applied externally. It was called "Ever Young".

J.J. rubbed it into his face and hands first, but began in time to spread "Ever Young" over his entire body surface.

Ten years later he put it on so thick that one day, rejuvenated into unrecognizability, he must have slipped into a womb. Anyway, he was never seen again.

Here follow some reports, taken from the almanac "Our Century", about J.J.

Unnoticed, Julius Jons succeeded in recovering the mortal remains of the poet Paul Paul from the cemetery in the city of Kaufmannshafen, and in returning them home, sewn into a fleece.

In Kaufmannshafen, the capital city of the motherland, not only 25000 novels from the Middle Ages, of which we are the authors, but also the bones of our great Romantic, Paul Paul, have so far been squirreled away..

J.J. had to submit to being arrested for ten days; today the mortal remains of our poet are displayed in the National Park. Aaben daglig fra kl. 9:00 til solnedgag (dog ikke efter kl. 20.00).²

Nineteen hundred and, OUR FLAG!

J.J. designs a national flag, has it woven in the WDA and hoists it on a sailboat, which he then bravely steers in front of the ships of the motherland, lying off the coast. Nineteen hundred and, J.J. CHOSEN KING OF WRESTLERS.

In the final fight for the King of Wrestlers' belt, J.J. succeeded in pulling the rug out from under the feet of his opponents. He won the title "King of Wrestlers" and will represent us in the next Olympics.

To this day, we encounter J.J. as King of Wrestlers in the canteen. He is depicted in profile, his head held high.

The organist points to the picture and says, I am afraid of his aquiline nose. Frieda says,

² Open daily from 9:00 'til sun-down (anyway not after 8:00 PM)--in Danish.

the eagles are nearly extinct. The last pair lives as a protected species. Jonina says, in the Galapagos there are still supposed to be animals that now only live in books. The organist asks, bookworms?

Traveling

Luggage

We have no money. We have lots of luggage. We carry everything we own with us in suitcases and bags, tied shut. There are five pieces of luggage.

We arrive in a village. The town hall, the church, and an inn with a large hall lie close together.

We ask about work. The innkeeper says, we have our own unemployed. Men among them.

We stay overnight at the inn. The room is cheap. It has cold tiles. The tiles form a pattern of navy blue and brick red. The room has a balcony. The balcony looks over a market.

At the market, voices can be heard hawking, haggling, insulting, praising. Everything is handled and sniffed at. On the fruitstands tower red, yellow, and green pyramids of fruit. It smells like coffee. The pan in the coffee roasting shop turns. Skinned lambs are carried past on long poles. Gerda and I pack. We carry the luggage to the courtyard.

Gerda guards the luggage while I go up to get a heavy suitcase.

I bring the heavy suitcase down. Gerda is gone. I yell, Gerda, Gerda. I go up one more time. I come back down. Two pieces of luggage have disappeared. I yell. I look around.

I run into the mass of people at the market. I am held up. I scream. I turn around. I go back. Only two pieces of luggage are still there. I yell. I cry. I howl. Gerda comes.

She laughs.

I say, where were you?

She says, in the kitchen, snapping beans.

I say, in the meantime they've robbed us blind.

She says, unfortunately not.

I say, the biggest pieces though.

She says, we had too much anyway.

I say, now we have nothing at all.

She says, we've gained a lot.

I say, those things meant a lot to me.

She says, either belong somewhere or have no luggage.

Gerda and the innkeeper have been married a long time now. They have adopted me. I live in the room with the navy blue and brick red tiles and the balcony that overlooks the market.

Stowaway

The captain says, send the women ashore.

There is a woman with the helmsman. She's playing with two mice. The helmsman has bought two white mice. He says, what do they eat while traveling, anyway. The woman

says, lettuce leaves. She sets the mice on his shoulder. One mouse slips into his polo-neck, the other crawls onto his head.

The captain tells the woman, go home.

The helmsman brings the woman ashore. The ladder to the quay lies almost horizontal.

It's high tide. The woman crawls on all fours to land. She says, I want to come along.

The woman stands on the quay.

The helmsman stands on the deck. He says, in three weeks I'll be back. The woman says, I know that, I want to come along.

The helmsman goes in the mess hall. The woman waits. She has dark blond hair and a perm. She is well-endowed. She has a green coat with raglan sleeves on. Her shoes have stiletto heels. She waits.

In the fish room, a sea fish is weighed. It is thrown in polyester tanks. The tanks are white and grooved. On one wall of the hall stand the tanks with sea salmon, on the other, the ones with rosefish. One tank holds one hundred pounds. The tanks will be stacked in blocks after the auction. Five by five. The auction takes place early in the morning.

Now all the tanks stand next to each other on the floor. The hall is glaringly lit.

The woman stands in the light that shines through the doorway. She looks around quickly. She climbs on board.

The ship departs.

The helmsman says to the captain, she is here again.

The captain says to the woman, I find this a bit much. At the sluice gate, you get off.

The woman says to the captain, my husband went down near Newfoundland.

The captain says, oh, is that so.

On the quay at the sluice stands a police officer with a motorcycle. The helmsman puts the ladder out. The woman crawls on land. She yells, I want to come along. The police officer says, you can do that.

Eat Hearty

I am seldom in this city. I am here by chance.

I have an acquaintance in this city. She is very close to me. We conduct an extensive, an intimate correspondence with each other.

I am here by chance. I don't want to meet my acquaintance. I'm only staying one day. I have no time. If I meet her, I have to devote myself to her. She takes total possession of me. She says, what are YOU doing here, or, what are you DOING here, or, what are you doing HERE. I say, absolutely nothing. She pulls me. She sweeps me along. She says, and you didn't call me. I say, I was about to. She says, then it's splendid that we ran into each other. I say, yes. I ask, aren't you on your way to go shopping. She says, oh, no, today's my day for chores. I say, then you must have a lot of laundry to do. She says, I wouldn't think of doing the laundry now that you're here for once. I say, is there a movie

theater near here. She says, movie theater. First a cafe.

She takes my arm. She says, when did you arrive. I say, last night. She says, but that's not possible. And where did you sleep? I say, in a hotel. She says, but, but-- We'll fetch your luggage right away and bring it to my place. I say, it's not worth the trouble. I'm leaving in the afternoon. She says, you're leaving in the afternoon, you can't do that to me. I say, don't be upset with me; I don't have much time. She says, what are your plans. I say, nothing in particular. She says, by the way, what came of that affair. I say, of which affair. She says, the affair in your letter before last. I say, in my letter before last. She says, Roland or Ronald. You know what I mean. I say, oh, him. She says, what do you mean, him. You wrote pages about him and said you had no idea what to do. I say, he's gone. She says, just gone. That's unbelievable. I say, yes. Isn't there a movie theater around?

We go up Kaiserallee. We sit down in a coffee shop and smoke. She says, what's with this movie theater of yours. We haven't really talked yet. I say, no. She says, have you had breakfast? I say, no. She says, I'll get us something to eat. I say, I'm not hungry. She says, but you have to eat hearty, would you like sandwiches or cake. I say, nothing. She goes to the buffet. She takes two trays. She speaks with the waiter. I leave the coffee shop through the exit to Königstrasse.

Bookmark

Frau Ruddigkeit is a guest at the Frankfurter Hof Hotel. She follows the bellhop into the elevator. The bellhop carries her luggage. In his right hand he carries two carryalls. In his left hand he carries a suitcase and a carryall. In front, on one of his vest buttons, he has hung the room key. He sets the luggage down in the elevator. The bell-boy is small, old, broad. He looks like he's been crying. His vest is made of Duchess satin. It's red in front and black in back. The bellhop has a Messerschnitt¹ haircut. He watches Frau Ruddigkeit in the mirror in the elevator.

Frau Ruddigkeit has a light blue suede coat on. Her boots are beige and reach past her knees.

Frau Ruddigkeit follows the bellhop into the room. She says, may I give you a tip, since you had so much to carry. The bellhop holds his hand out to her. Frau Ruddigkeit looks down at his hand. The hand is open, relaxed. It lies in the air. It floats. It quivers. The outstretched hand trembles. The individual fingers stand slightly apart from each other. The palm bulges, looks like a crumpled sofa cushion. Frau Ruddigkeit buries herself in the sight of his hand. She takes his hand. The bellhop looks away. She straightens the fingers, bends them in again, pulls on them until the knuckles crack. Frau Ruddigkeit bends the fingers back and over. The little finger makes a right angle with the back of the

¹An expensive, shaped haircut, in which the hair is cut and shaped using a sharp knife.

hand.

The bellhop says, I have no time, they'll be calling me down in the foyer.

The bellhop goes.

Frau Ruddigkeit turns the hand over and over. The skin on the back of the hand is reddish-brown and soft. The hand feels soft. It smells of violets.

Frau Ruddigkeit sends the hand down with the chambermaid. The hand now lies in the guest book of the Frankfurter Hof Hotel as a bookmark.

Ticket please

Kiel looks new. It is dark. I go to the port. My ship is not there. It leaves tomorrow. It will arrive tomorrow before noon and leave again at one o'clock. I see a hotel. In the entry stands a young man. He's wearing a wine-red turtleneck.

I say, do you have a single room?

He says, yes.

I say, I have only a hand bag with me, all my luggage is at the train station in lockers.

He says, room 41. Would you care to pay now?

I say, oh no, I'll pay tomorrow.

I sleep well. I wake up. It's pouring. I go downstairs. The young man has a swollen lip.

I say, may I use the telephone?

He says, why not.

I make a phone call.

I say, hey, it's me, today, at one, yes, I'll come right away, but I have to, I don't have any money, my hotel, oh, fine, I'll pay you back, right away, fine.

The young man stands next to me. He was listening.

I say, now I'll go get the money. Then I'll pay.

He says, pay first.

I say, I have no money, my friend...

He says, I can't afford it.

I say, but I'm traveling further after this.

He says, in that case, anybody could just come.

I say, my friend can't leave her shop.

He laughs.

I say, I'll be right back.

He says, you look that way.

I say, oh, just let me go. What do you want with me?

He says, I don't want you.

I say, some would be happy.

He says, show him to me sometime.

I say, you don't know me yet.

He says, drink tea and wait.

New guests come.

He says, go into the restaurant for a while.

He comes afterwards.

I say, my ship leaves at one.

He says, show me your ticket, please.

He locks the ticket in a money box. I sit in the restaurant and write a letter. Dear Charlotte, I've been a waitress at the "Weissen Ahornblatt" for a week. Near the harbor. If you come by here, stop and see me. Otherwise, everything's going splendidly. Yours, Maria.

Sojourn in a Crazy House

Berenike is Gone

Berenike is gone.

Herr Schäfer says, if this person, who has never in her life had a fixed place of residence, has disappeared, are you surprised by that?

I say, she is twenty-three years old and has four children.

Herr Schäfer says, sad enough.

Herr Schäfer is employed as a social worker by the municipal council.

From the kitchen window, I can look out over the park. Slate roofs and behind them the brand-new green of the trees in the park.

Berenike is gone.

I didn't know her. All I knew of her was what I'd heard from others. The one afternoon that I spent with her, she spoke of Andreas.

He means well, but he's sluggish, she said, if you don't give him a nudge, he forgets to move.

Maybe he's just day-dreaming, I said, and is caught up in his imagination.

Scientists, she said, have no imagination.

At that time, Berenike was in her eighth month and had a silk dress on, russet like her hair.

The oaks turn green last. Tough things grow slowly.

Berenike hangs out.

Berenike secretly goes dancing in the evening.

Berenike steals bracelets and necklaces from the department store, even though she already has more than thirty at home.

Berenike neglects her children.

He who lends Berenike something has only himself to blame.

Who has not yet wanted to change his name. Berenike is in reality named Veronika, bringer of victory. Veronika called herself Berenike, because she didn't want to be named Vroni, as the warden called her. From Stalin to Sarasini, no one is named as we call them.

My father had a feudal estate in East Prussia, she said, all that we kept was the silver cutlery. She had no father, you claimed, and her mother made off with the silver cutlery somehow on the run.

Why shouldn't they have had a feudal estate, I said, maybe that's why she's after clothes and jewelry.

She's after bracelets, you said, because she's never owned anything.

And if that's so, I said, do you begrudge her that?

Even the poorest nobility, you said, doesn't settle on the east side of a city.

This morning, I was finally drawn into the kitchen. Even for stories that are urgent, I get out a fresh tablecloth beforehand.

Berenike's mother is named Clara. Clara lives in the east side of the city, where it's dirtiest. Clara said, if Berenike isn't around, nothing will be cooked here besides coffee. Of the people I knew who knew Berenike, no one could stand her. Her mother maybe, after she was gone. Clara lives in the east side of the city, where it's cheapest.

Andreas' mother is named Martha. Her son is dead.

Even if he really did take his own life, you said, he can't have been so unimaginative. The gas stove, I said, was after all in his line of work. I don't believe it was suicide, you said, Berenike didn't go away for no reason. Pin the blame for everything on Berenike, I said, always Berenike.

The country that Andreas comes from calls itself capitalist. In reality, it is underdeveloped and a colony that doesn't produce much more than raw materials.

You were his best friend.

Herr Schäfer looks after the foreign students, which both of you were. Herr Schäfer asked Andreas to come to the social welfare office.

You are a foreigner and want to marry here, said Herr Schäfer. A good friend, a compatriot of yours, requested on behalf of your mother that we make inquiries about the girl. I've lived here for two years, Andreas said, and I can inquire for myself. You're not aware of the circumstances, Herr Schäfer said, and we are sorry to have to inform you that your fiancée has a criminal record. She has been convicted of aggravated shoplifting and was sentenced to a year in prison.

The good friend was you.

However, your fiancée was released after only a half a year, Herr Schäfer said, on probation, so to speak. She has to report to the district police every week. She has to state where she lives, where she works, where she plans on traveling if she goes on vacation. She has told me all that, Andreas said. As far as we know, Herr Schäfer said, your friend has already written a lengthy letter to your mother. Perhaps you should wait for news from home before you make a final decision.

You were just as unaware of the circumstances as Andreas.

But you knew his mother.

You were his best friend.

The country that Berenike comes from calls itself socialist. In reality, the people in high places took the property of the people years ago, and the great star above the fairground is not red, but rather that of Mercedes.

Berenike could have changed Veronika to Vera, too. That comes from "Vera Icon" and means

image of faith. Whether she is now called Berenike or Veronika or Vera, she is neither a bringer of victory nor an image of faith.

I am searching for Berenike from the kitchen window. Everyone comes by. I expose her, bit by bit.

Martha comes.

The city council arranges for her to be picked up from the airport by Herr Schäfer. Her welcome resembles an official reception. She is invited out, she is pampered, a constant escort is assigned to her. Martha had requested permission to take Andreas' children with her. The children had been cared for in a foster home for four weeks. Although children are not so easily sent abroad, the district council happily agreed to her request.

Martha is there.

Martha says, I've never yet had anything to do with my daughter-in-law, but don't I at least need her consent?

Herr Schäfer says, there's no point of that in this case. Martha said, don't misunderstand me, she could make demands later.

Herr Schäfer says, she won't mess it up for you, the children won't ever get to know their mother.

Martha says, I would prefer that, but nevertheless, I would like to speak with Berenike about it myself.

Herr Schäfer says, unfortunately, that's impossible. There are some incriminating factors.

Martha says, I wouldn't mind visiting her even so.

Herr Schäfer says, I don't believe she can receive visitors.

Andreas left the university shortly after his marriage. Andreas and Berenike left the country secretly and drove to his parents' house. Andreas didn't get a job, because his mother wanted to have him with her. Berenike went to work in a shoe factory, even though she didn't understand the language. Berenike stole things again, shoes and handbags, wristwatches and dog leashes. Berenike was always expecting. Andreas and Berenike came back and went to her mother's house. Andreas registered at the university again, because Martha wanted him to continue his studies.

You say, even with all the ups and downs, I don't understand why he should have taken his life. I say, first let yourself be pulled back and forth between two women, maybe you'll think differently.

Every year a child.

Andreas got up less and less to go to class. When you still shared a room with him, you accompanied him to his lectures each morning. You woke him up, you found him a clean handkerchief, you packed his briefcase for him, you went with him to his department, even though you yourself were studying something completely different. Do you still remember his brown suit with the thin pinstripes? The wide pants were considered old-fashioned then. Later, you accompanied him to his bus stop every day until he got married. You say, Berenike never

took good enough care of him.
Berenike had four children.

The doctor didn't say when it happened. The children slept peacefully. The doctor didn't order an autopsy, so it seems that it was clearly a matter of gas poisoning.

Martha is there.

In addition, I would like to ask, she said, that the medical results and reports be shown to me, as the mother. When things get that far, Herr Schäfer said, everything will be sent to you. And if there are incriminating factors against Berenike, Martha said, it will of course have to come to court; I want to be there. That's no longer in my hands, Herr Schäfer said.

Martha was given four exit visas and the children.

They don't look neglected, she said. We are a socialist country, Herr Schäfer said. If they had been neglected four weeks ago, Martha said, could they be fattened up so quickly? With our efforts anything is possible, Herr Schäfer said. Give me Berenike's mother's address, just to be on the safe side, Martha said. I'm not authorized for that, Herr Schäfer said.

Martha was there.

Andreas lay in the kitchen with his head by the gas stove. The children slept peacefully, which could be because of the escaping gas. But why did Herr Schäfer tell Martha that the children had been wandering around the house all alone? In order to accuse Berenike of child neglect? To explain Berenike's disappearance? The children were admitted immediately to a Home.

No, you're right about that, Berenike didn't mother Andreas.

Puppet show

Dressing Berenike coloring her hair and her expressions giving her a thick stomach her putting necklaces on her denying her her legitimate father accusing her mother dressing her up undressing her again exposing her

Farce

Berenike's mother is named Clara.

Clara writes to the district council, attn. Herr Schäfer. She uses the old script. Herr Schäfer is too young to have learned Sütterlin. Clara's letter is passed around. The workers had to laugh, especially at the old "s" on the end of a word. Clara wants t' have Berenike back home ag'in. Berenike, she writes, has TB, inactive TB, but mebbe the nodules will bust back open. Instead of nodules, Herr Schäfer reads "royfulu".¹ He reads that sentence out loud again and again, only to

¹ In Sütterlin, the script which was taught in German schools from 1915 to 1940, the German word "Kapseln" (translated here as "nodules") looks very similar to "Royfulu"

Kapseln

Royfulu

change the word capsules to "royfulu". Herr Schäfer studied psychology at night school. He has children himself.

Berenike looks like the Veronika of Munich, except that she has always worn necklaces. Her mother, on the other hand, looks more like the Veronika of the master of Flémalle, hundreds of curls hidden under her headscarf. You say, everything I dig up in connection with Berenike is speculative. There never was a master of Flémalle. I say, but the picture exists.

Clara comes.

She shouts at Mr. Schäfer, I haven't the faintest idea where the child's got to. Mr. Schäfer says, "child" is putting it mildly. Mr. Schäfer doesn't know where Berenike's gotten to either.

Clara was there.

It was no small thing to manage to get Andreas' coffin over the various borders. No customs officer, who didn't smell him from far away. The airline companies flatly refused when they heard how long the whole thing had already been dragged out. Therefore, only a train-ship connection was possible. Then the coffin stood around once again in 86 degree F heat at the Wriezen train station, because the export authorization had indeed been stamped, but not signed. I know that at your request the freight was shoved, three days later, into one of the Interfrigo's refrigerated cars. I did what I could for Andreas, you say. Yes, when he was dead, I say.

Clara has a visitor.

Turn right at the East Train Station, then keep going straight ahead. There are no shrubs or flower gardens in front of the houses. The sun beats down on the pavement and on my face. Continually blinded by the reflection of the sun on the window panes, I try to make out the house numbers. A flood of light, and no end in sight. So early in the day, and the street blazes fiercely. Clara has a visitor.

You say, if Berenike weren't a suspect, she wouldn't have disappeared so completely. I say, they let her disappear, so that she couldn't speak out.

Mr. and Mrs. Wipperfurth met Berenike on the stairs as she came home that night. Berenike had the flowery flared skirt and the silk blouse on. She wore at least five necklaces, say the Wipperfurths, and was tipsy. She was in the apartment very briefly, found Andreas, and came right up to our place, say the Wipperfurths, because she knew we were still up.

Clara has a visitor.

First courtyard, second courtyard, third courtyard. Clara lives inside the fourth courtyard in the back. But what can beat a kitchen that smells of coffee? Clara has pulled a house dress over the rumpled slip. She cranks a coffee mill. The first year of their marriage, Andreas and Berenike lived with Clara. After they came back from abroad, they lived at Clara's again for a year. Then Berenike got an apartment, because the fourth child was on the way. Clara has a visitor.

Berenike said once, in my presence no name will be shortened. The little that one has shouldn't

be mutilated. Martha immediately renamed the children. Richard is called Rikki, Barbara is called Babs, Annamaria is called Anni, and Johannes is called simply Jon.

Clara has a visitor.

When Clara grinds coffee, she counts to one hundred-twenty. She says, so, now you can tell me what you want. I say, I'm looking for your daughter. Where is Berenike? She says, that's none of your business, who are you, anyway? I say, I worked with her once. She says, Berenike didn't work often. I say, I got to know her through a friend of Andreas'. She says, then he was certainly no friend of Berenike's. I say, yes he is, and I consider myself a friend of Berenike's, too.

Clara burst with laughter. Her head is full of curls, mottled red and grey, which prance and bob with every movement. Apparently Berenike never had a friend.

She says, Berenike is gone, and I have no idea where she could be. I say, is Berenike your only child? She says, I lost the other two. Everything I could get a hold of, I slipped to Berenike. But no matter what I brought her, she never had enough. She is a libertine, and was always ungrateful. While she was still living here with Andreas, she said to me in his presence, what you call getting a hold of was sheer prostitution; you crawled across Poland on all fours, and always had a man behind you. That is Berenike. I say, where could she have gotten to? She says, I really don't know. Suddenly she starts bawling, I'm such a slut, I'm so immoral that I lost my last child, I didn't pay proper attention to her.

Clara had a visitor.

When all the certificates were gathered up, Andreas was put to rest with sheets, pillows, and cover into a kind of deep-freeze. Even after the coffin was sealed, it went through the hands of many officials. And then that year in Andreas' hometown there was no summer. The earth, frozen as hard as stone, resisted every cut of the spade with all its might. The grave diggers demanded not only more time but also more brandy than normal. Finally they used little explosive charges.

Except for you and Martha, there was no one at the cemetery. The children, you say, she wisely left at home. She seems to want to adopt them, I say, even without Berenike's consent. It's better, you say, if she doesn't even start to ask.

At that time, Berenike was released half a year early, before she had served her sentence. Her mother didn't exactly welcome her enthusiastically. Something's not quite right about that, Clara said, probation for someone like you means having to do some dirty business in exchange. You just don't like me coming home, Berenike said. I wouldn't have minded, Clara said, if you had stayed there the additional half year. Well, you can go in for me then, Berenike said, and let yourself be grabbed by every ass-hole and be called Vroni. I don't trust the good behavior, Clara said, whatever you promised them, they'll take you for a ride. You don't play the poor-little-me role anymore anyway.

Berenike never, except for shop-lifting, had to stand trial again. She stood under probation.

Probation,

in criminal law, a fixed time period set by the court, during which the one convicted can, through good behavior, gain the remittance of a deferred term of imprisonment. A probation officer can

be assigned to monitor the lifestyle of the one convicted.

Clara offered the coffee in enamel cups, I say, but do you know what she laid out for stirring the coffee? Heavy silver teaspoons. I discovered her initials on the teaspoons, and the engraving was indeed old.

There is a vast difference, you say, between a silver teaspoon and a feudal estate, and all refugees claim to have had carpets in their cow sheds.

Who has not already wanted to change his name.

So, out with it, what did they want from you, Clara said. I should go regularly to Korso-Keller again, Berenike said, and watch a few people. They even gave me pictures. Oh, you're supposed to snoop around, Clara said, now I understand. Clara turned red and slapped Berenike in the face. She screeches, you've taken leave of your senses, you stupid thing. For God's sake, I knew they wanted to sell you off. They won't let you go for nothing, they won't give you the half year for nothing, and probation means you're still on a leash. Just so you know, you can't defend yourself publicly anymore if you get into trouble. No matter what I signed, Berenike says, if they try to pin the blame on me, I'll blow the whistle. Before you open your mouth, Clara says, your eyes will give it away. But do you know something, Berenike says, they even gave me a cover name. I should always answer the phone with "Anneliese". Anneliese, of all things, Clara says, and both of them had to laugh.

Who has not already had to change his name.

all fantasy

disappearing like Berenike as if swallowed by the earth going away simply not being there anymore dissolving into smoke then keeping herself hidden becoming evident how many then turn first toward you when you're gone even so no disappearance is to be compared with Berenike's wordless parting to be taken into safe-keeping and again and again to want to up and go

all fantasy

Maybe she landed in the workhouse, you say, on account of child neglect. Maybe she would have brought up all sorts of things in connection with Andreas' death, I say. Maybe she was admitted due to unwillingness to work, you say. I thought she was under suspicion, so why would she be in the workhouse, I say. Isn't that reason enough to suspect her, you say, when she's suddenly disappeared without a trace.

The one afternoon that I spent with Berenike, she spoke of Andreas. He never washes, she said, if I don't wash his feet, he would never think of it himself. Before he left home, I said, his mother probably always washed him. I am not his mother, she said, he is twenty-six years old. Mother's sons have no age, I said. I have no desire to play wash-woman all the time, she said, that was a hundred years ago.

Berenike liked washing laundry as little as washing Andreas' feet. If someone washed, it was Clara.

Workhouse

Reformatory and security institution. According to Section 42 of the penal code, the court can order that those convicted to prison sentences because of vagrancy, begging, prostitution, and degenerate conduct, among other things, be placed in a workhouse in order to accustom them to work and to an ordered life. The placement may not last more than two, for repeated offenses four, years.

Berenike never, except for shoplifting, appeared in court. She was on probation.

That I don't remember much about Andreas, that I barely know Berenike, that I never saw Clara, that Martha pestered me all the time and I never listened to her, that Berenike is said to have neglected her children -- I was not there at the time.

Berenike is gone.

Monologue of a Bookseller

how to survive?
 how to survive the stories and the lessons
 of the stories?
 how to survive the black teeth,
 pulled or decayed?
 how to survive departures and homecomings
 and the possibility of their repetition?
 how to survive being scared to death, in the last
 moment and shortly before the eleventh hour
 to simply stay out of weariness?
 how to survive?

Won't it stop at all anymore, the clattering, the knocking? Someone is pushing constantly on the door handle or hurling his whole body against the door, although everything is closed, locked up, bolted. Yes, closed! I don't want to see anyone or hear anyone, either. Nevertheless people constantly try to force their way in here, to storm my shop, to root about between my shelves and the books. No, it isn't those for whose appearance I'm preparing myself — even if it is through my quiet departure — it is clearly about former customers who call for me and talk to me persistently through the door. As if a bolted door weren't answer enough! Either the occupant is not there, or he wants to have some peace and quiet. For that reason, I wish longingly for a person to talk to, one who listens, who helps me on my way — but I could wait a long time for that. The customers only intrude, grumble, want nothing but to be served. Certainly the books are for sale — until yesterday, anyway, that was the case. And until yesterday I was also prepared to run, to climb, to dust, to advise, to collect the money, to wrap, or to sort everything out and put it away again. Even when complaints came, it is an impenetrable mess in here, not to mention the bad air and the heaps of rubbish under the tables and shelves: on the other hand, it can't be so bad, if they now besiege me. This much is certain, I have locked you out, in order to first think about the matter, to get things straightened out with myself — then we can talk further. That is, we could, if I hadn't decided to evade an unpleasant visit which I expect, to distance myself unnoticed. The only question is: where to?

Today, the whole day, standing over the globe or paging through the atlas.
 Will it be cold or hot? Or windy, dusty, oppressive?
 Still, two kinds of clothing will fit in a suitcase, one for cold days and one for hot days.
 But the weather is usually in-between.
 A suit, four, no three, pairs of underwear, socks...
 I really should put in a packet of detergent
 ...another pair of pants, then two sweaters, two white shirts, and bedding...
 For heaven's sake, that immediately reeks of homelessness.
 Better a sleeping bag.

A sleeping bag is ridiculous.
 Pack, pack, pack -- I'll go crazy yet.
 But a madman really has reason to evade unpleasant visitors.

Even if I put off my departure, there is really nothing more to say, definitely not at all about the shop, which is supposedly so dirty. It may well be that one day it will be taken away from me or the lease will be terminated. Violation of the business laws, in my case those concerning business hours! Oh, what am I thinking, I've been finished with the store for a long time. I must create clarity, organize my thoughts, which lead me astray, bewilder me, drag me here and there. Still I can't get rid of the feeling that I have to sneak away, and in the quickest way at that.

At the moment I am in my apartment, which lies behind the shop and which I've barricaded just like the store. Towards the front is a barricade of shelves and books, toward the back the locked kitchen and then the likewise closed and obstructed door between the kitchen and the living room. All exits blocked! I have closed myself in, sit in a trap.

I go back and forth and listen closely. Nothing! And yet! Ah, how I am warned, laughed at, beseeched, driven out. Yes, driven out is the right word. I drive myself out, chase myself away. And I have barely packed my things, when it stops me again, pulls me back.

how to survive the piles of things?
 how to survive the apartment, the scallops,
 the wallpaper made of sponge?
 the foot sweat and the worms at the foot of the bed?
 how to survive this house and the damaged
 odor traps
 on the knee-caps of its pipes?
 and why not just get up,
 leave everything behind and go away?
 and how to survive this departure, in the consciousness
 that it is final?

Again and again he packs his suitcase.
 Again and again he pages through the atlas.
 Again and again he breaks out in a sweat.
 Again and again he looks for his wallet.
 Again and again he hears voices.
 Again and again he counts his savings.
 Again and again he studies train schedules.
 Again and again he folds up his blanket.
 Again and again he sews on loose buttons.
 Again and again he doesn't know where things are pushing him.
 Again and again he trudges around in his thoughts with old friends.
 Again and again he repacks his suitcase.

Possibly I come to completely wrong conclusions and have no better explanation to provide than that my thoughts finally have to come from somewhere. Even thoughts grabbed out of thin air have a source and are in fact within one's grasp. This much is certain, I expect hourly the visit of some men who prefer even numbers and whose entrance suggests dogged and strenuous rehearsal, similar to, for example, a musical revue. Just taking the high kicks of the leg on the beat alone, these men are in no way inferior to the chorus girls, and even if they do fill out the scraps and strips of the dance costumes with many layers of weather-resistant cloth, still they have the same knack for ornamentation, accurately set sequins, spangles, and outstanding metal accessories.

Coupled with this visit, I expect the last prodding to leave my small bastion, that is, my apartment, if I don't make up my mind to do so sooner, even if the weather is like today.

how to survive this rain, that pastes larkspur
to the windows
and all the rubble from the building sites that it unloads
before my door
and which blocks the broken pipes?
he who raises the glass and drinks
has green roses sprouting from his mouth.
how to survive?
how to survive this rain, that shuts one in
and opens the memory?
how to survive the cloudburst
that closes up the quarters and me,
who holds himself prisoner?

He who constantly studies schedules catches no train.
He who continually prepares for his departure doesn't want to get away.
He who repacks his suitcase all the time will never carry his luggage into another country.
He who pictures all the terrors of the foreign beforehand will still be sitting in his city when it
burns.
He who possesses more than one false passport cannot come to a decision.
He who spins the globe day after day doesn't find the nearest border station.
He who continually sews other coins into his belt won't set foot out the door of his house.
He who calculates each route in advance, for him time stands still.
He who greases his boots every night is surprised in his bed by bad luck.

When I still kept the shop open punctually, and a flood of self-confident, yes, presumptuous customers plunged into the piles of books, skimmed through all the printed stuff with rapid glances and rejected or seized it, then I, in the midst of talkative buyers, naturally heard this and that conversation. Oh, no, I didn't eavesdrop on them, that wasn't necessary. I simply, in passing, caught something, picked something up -- not what they were up to, but rather their ideals, which then inspired me, transformed me into the rummaging, obsequious, helpful

bookseller that I was. Oh, how the disrespect, the wilfulness, the cheerful energy delighted me! How the reckless yet imaginative plans caused me, for my part, to lend all kinds of assistance to scratch on the foundation. Many mice eat away a house. And now I hold my breath and practice being silent and wait for those, that will brush me down, investigate, probe. It's seldom enough that a nothing-saying man says nothing. Yes, I wait for a chance to hold my tongue, on the other hand want to go away, so that I won't have to hold my tongue anymore, then again want to stay, even though then I'd have to hold my tongue, in any case want to survive, even at the risk of always having to hold my tongue. For some time I've felt exactly like that time when I waited in a shed between rabbits and coal for half of class 5b. It is the repetition that confuses me, ties me down, makes me blush bright red, that holds me captive and in the end drives me crazy.

Sukabumi, Herzogenaurach, Gotska Sandön, Inokashira, Strohgäu, Donggala, Rappahannock, Zwölffaxing, Theadelphia, Guaicurus, Nea Epidaurós, Hikawa, Würm, Swenigorad, Les Loges-en-Josas, Thalheim, Irapuato, Wuhan, Ninguta, Madenburg, Yellowknife, Bom Jesus da Lapa, Awa Shima, Torrowangee, Weinhübel, Barankaraschan¹

how to survive?
 how to survive this day and the next?
 how to survive the loud, silent day,
 its transit visa and marching orders?
 how to survive the tipped hats and the speaker:
 now the fronts are clear?
 how to survive the faulty sighting and the aiming error?
 how to survive this day
 and the lock in front of the mouth, and the heads
 and the festivals that still occur?

No, I don't forget the rabbits, and definitely not the coal, either. It began at the old cemetery, right next to the school. The walls still stand, the graves have been leveled and sown with grass, and there they played dodge ball at every opportunity. In the middle of the long recess the ball disappeared. I didn't play, but I was not the only one back then who clung to the old cemetery wall and watched. The ball came flying over and disappeared into the bushes. Not a minute later, Egon Kohlke sprang over the wall, the time was short, he looked for it, the bell for the next hour rang. I ran back, Egon Kohlke came too late, was put in the corner and made

¹Cities from all over the world: Sukabumi and Donggala are in Indonesia, Herzogenaurach and Thalheim in Germany, Inokashira, Hikawa, and Awa Shima in Japan, Rappahannock in America (Virginia), Zwölffaxing in Austria, Theadelphia and Nea Epidaurós in Greece, Guaicurus and Bom Jesus da Lapa in Brazil, Les Loges-en-Josas in France, Irapuato in Mexico, Wuhan in China, Yellowknife in Canada, and Torrowangee in New South Wales. Würm is a river in Germany, near the Rhine, and Gotska Sandön in an island in the Baltic Sea, off the coast of Sweden.

enraged faces behind the backs of the teachers. The ball was gone. They didn't find it after school, either, and on the next day they put me through the ringer. No, I hadn't stashed their cracked, nearly shapeless ball, but I knew who had done it and immediately aroused suspicion, because I flushed and trembled and sweated. I had a lump in my throat and didn't lie once. I was simply silent, even though the rest of the class threatened to beat me up at 3:00 in the afternoon. They promised to come and get me and I, I waited, like now.

Right after dinner, I went over to the shed. Instead of taking to my heels, I parked myself. Instead of arming myself against them with hoe and sickle, I piled up the coal and hid myself behind it. Gerdchen Sommerlatte climbed over the pile of coal first. Four nails protruded from between his fingers. Yes, he held the clump of nail heads and rubber bands in his fist. I have this stabbing and tearing weapon to thank for the scar above my left eyebrow. Hand over the ball, he screamed, and the others joined in, hand over the ball! I very nearly laughed, but I didn't want to annoy the real thief, who, with good reason, screamed loudest. What else happened in the shed is of no importance here. I remembered it, and that is enough!

In the meantime he unpacks again.

In the meantime he dozes again and broods.

In the meantime he unfolds his blanket again.

In the meantime the day draws to its close.

In the meantime he puts half the things in the cupboard again.

In the meantime he lays his wallet on the nightstand again.

In the meantime he spins the globe again.

In the meantime he carries the smaller dresser into the attic again.

In the meantime he sits down again and stares into the distance.

how to survive the streams of those sent away?

the turned out, the beaten

and those that don't move.

how to survive the friends

when one can't rid oneself of the suspicion

that they've jumped from a moving train?

how to survive the fear

that they'll intentionally

avoid each meeting?

and how to survive with the fear

of having survived them?

Although I am completely alone here, still no moment of peace enters. I am surrounded by tradesmen who are renovating the facade of the house. The whole day, hours on end, very high, very loud hisses, or better: whistles. Green, yellow, and powdery grey canopies envelope the house and darken the powder-covered windows. Quiet! Now I hear nothing more, no sound. As if the noises never were, as if I had imagined everything, as if I could hear nothing at all through the thick curtains and shelves. The fact is, the old plaster will be sanded off,

worn away, scrubbed away, brushed off, rubbed off, swirled away. And directly under my window Herr Falbe and the butcher woman gossip about the price of the window cleaners. Or was that yesterday, when I still stood in my shop as a bookseller?

Twenty marks per hour, and because they already have the window done in fifteen minutes, they get eighty marks per hour, claims the butcher woman. Well really, that's none of my business. Someone else will have to pay for my window, if they want it polished. It's unbelievable, first she complains, then suddenly she defends the window cleaner. He who works hard, says the butcher woman, also buys plenty of meat. Certainly, but no books. She doesn't suspect that I'm reading her lips. No, my name doesn't come up. It would've been nice for me to hear the two of them talking about me, even if it wasn't advantageous. Ah, how quickly they let an old bookseller go by the board. For them I am already no longer there.

And now he packs his suitcase again.
 And now he studies his atlas again.
 And now he suffers from difficulty in breathing again.
 And now he looks for his wallet again.
 And now he hears voices again.
 And now he counts his savings again.
 And now he reads train schedules again.
 And now he unfolds his blanket again.
 And now he listens carefully to something again.

On the other hand, it could have its good side, if they think I'm gone. If someone asks about me, they'll just say, he has been gone for a long time already, we haven't seen him for days, heaven knows, where that man's gone to. In that way I can mislead them and cause them to look for me in a place that I have not yet reached. Finally they will give up on me, as everyone will work it out that I must have long ago crossed one of our borders. That's a ray of hope. Admittedly, I have not learned to be patient. I cannot wait. Perhaps for that reason alone, I want to anticipate the one who expects me, whom I expect. Enough of that! The main thing is, I'll find a way, a way out.

how to survive?
 how, in the entrails of the city
 to survive the vehicles, that make
 one sharp turn after another?
 how to survive the Mephisto-waltzes of the public transportation,
 like flashing lights and sirens?
 how to survive the wickerwork of dead roots
 under the rotting avenues
 witnesses of my marathons?
 how to survive the city?

My capitulation! I prepare, then, my final and last pitiful capitulation. Still, I'll have to stay in

the city, this loud, disgusting, wearing city. It is a spacious and safe hideout. And what compels me then to become witness of the surrender of my small, dusty fortress? He who is curious still has hope. In order to satisfy this curiosity, I will stay in the city. It can't be so impracticable to cast a stolen glance from time to time at my shop. That's assuming, of course, that one could

take leave of one's own face. And how to do that? No idea; this question, too, finds me unprepared.

Again and again he packs his suitcase.
 Again and again he pages through his atlas.
 Again and again he breaks out in a sweat.
 Again and again he looks for his wallet.
 Again and again he has mislaid his passport.
 Again and again he hears voices.
 Again and again he studies train schedules.
 Again and again he polishes his shoes.
 Again and again he trudges around in his thoughts with his old friends and relatives.
 Again and again he repacks his suitcase.

That, too, I have not forgotten: the grey, poorly heated apprentices' hostel, our spokesmen as uncouth assistants of the staff and the caretaker, no leaving after nine, and lights out at ten. In spite of this I defended my room, my barricade, when they wanted to throw me out; I blockaded everything and locked myself in. I had Gerda Weber, the girl who was serving her apprenticeship with the same bookseller as me, to thank for the whole thing. No, that is not right. If someone was at fault, then it was the apprentice master himself.

Bookseller Schaff enforced the observance of two regulations strictly. First (this applied to the female employees), here no one will serve customers in long pants, but rather in skirts! For the other, there will be no reading at work! Gerda was very enthusiastic about a book called *Encyclopedia of Female Needlework*. Enamored of two combined alphabets (the so-called outer letters, stuffed, broken apart letters, and a pattern of inner letters, drawn directly out of the vise), she began in the dreary summer months to embroider monograms. No matter which pairing was desired, the thick and thin letters always allowed themselves to fit together and devoured each other. On Gerda's handkerchiefs, blouses, and stockings, thick lines, borders, and diagonal stripes broke out all over--colorful gilets of G and W, and every five minutes Gerda sprang up and consulted the encyclopedia.

It didn't take long, and bookseller Schaff had the whole household section bundled up onto the top row of shelves. When Gerda climbed up, he wandered around under the ladder. I didn't stand for that and switched the instructions for household crafts above with the philosophy books below them, so that Gerda had her book at eye-level again. Twice there were violent arguments; the third time Schaff made good his threats and terminated my apprenticeship for disobedience and recalcitrance. With that, I lost the right to a place in the apprentices' hostel.

I have never yet reacted to persuasion. There was nothing left for them to do but to tear down

my room fortifications with chisels and grappling irons. The first sweat-dripping faces looked in, and in spite of my fear, I had to laugh again. Revenge is frightful. How long ago that all is. No one told me in time that histories and stories can be repeated.

how to survive?
 how to survive the stories and the lessons
 of the stories?
 how to survive the black teeth
 pulled or decayed?
 how to survive departure and homecoming
 and the possibility of their repetition?
 how to survive being scared to death, in the last
 moment and shortly before the eleventh hour
 to simply stay out of weariness?
 how to survive?

My deadline has arrived. I do not speak of open ultimatums, rather of the deadline which I set for myself. The day has gone, the night is past. On my wanderings through my apartment I end up in front of the mirror and chase plans through my head and am beset with strange ideas and lose track of everything again. Yes, I really should lie down. To be wide awake is perhaps more useful than making preparations. It must be curiosity that prevented me from departing, the same curiosity that doesn't let me sleep tonight. I want to see the amazement when they bump into my hurdles, barriers, and obstacles, when they blindly, with delicate firemen's axes, spitting burlap and chaff, strike holes into the furnishings.

My preparations declare me guilty, they will claim. And if that's so? The street-sweepers draw up. Their glaring protection and weather bibs will-o-the-wisp along the building, and I am dog tired and let myself fall flat and am incorrigible and arm myself against my imaginings and insist that it's a great mistake to go to sleep now of all times.

Palisades, or Sojourn in a Crazy House

The birds chirp. They warble, flute, scold, screech.
 Sister Margret says, we like observing them, because they devote themselves to life.
 And in between, the crows.
 Sister Margret goes through the dormitory. She claps her hands several times in a row,
 and shouts up! out! Wake up now!
 At five o'clock in the morning, wake up.
 Devote yourself to life.

no no please no shots which make me stiff the shots are to make me stiff no no please no
 shots which make me stiff

First we crowd around the washbasin in groups of six. Hedwig washes later. She pulls
 the folding screen out from behind the medicine cabinet and sets it up carefully around
 the washbasin. The folding screen is so low that everyone can see how she dabs hurriedly
 at her armpits with the washcloth.

Saying on the calendar for April 22.

"God chastises the proud, to the humble he gives mercy."¹

Our nightshirts are coarsely woven and white. They are buttoned in front and open in the
 back. When we wash our faces, we hold the shirts together in back with one hand.

oh, you are from Berlin my fiance is also from Berlin I have a fiance in Berlin at the
 moment I lost him like I have lost my purse with all my papers in it when I didn't know
 anymore what was going on I really didn't know anymore what was going on then I lost
 my bag and my fiance waits for me in Berlin surely we'll meet there sometime

Wait	Get up. Get dressed. Make the bed. Set the table. At 5:00 get	Wait
Wait	up. From 7:00 to 8:00 wait for breakfast. Wait for the bread,	Wait
Wait	for the butter. Wait for the morning coffee, grey and thin as	Wait
Wait	silk stockings, for the morning milk. Talk about the weather,	Wait
Wait	about the flowers, the trees in the park. Wait. Wait for the	Wait
Wait	next meal. Wait for the doctor, the pills, the walk. Wait for the	Wait
Wait	evening meal, for nighttime. Always wait for the night.	Wait

Not allowed to have matches. Not allowed to have scissors. Not allowed to have nail

¹Luke 1:52, part of the Magnificat: "He has brought down the powerful from their
 thrones, and lifted up the lowly. (*The Harper Collins Study Bible*, NRSV)

files. Before you came, I filed my nails with sandpaper, and even that under supervision. Not allowed to close the bathroom door behind oneself. Not allowed to lie down during the day. Walking around. Moving. Knitting, writing.

The story about the blue jeans is not even worth talking about.

I say, Sister Margret, give me my blue jeans back. I can't go around every day in the rose-colored dress. Sister Margret says, it's entirely out of the question for you to go around in blue jeans here. It's not proper. Besides, your blue jeans are dirty, while we attach importance to cleanliness. I say, my blue jeans are not dirty, just faded. Please, just give them to me. Sister Margret says, I have locked up your blue jeans, and they'll stay there, too, until you've left this institution. I say, if I don't get my blue jeans, I'll break the cabinet open. Sister Margret says, in your own interest, you won't do that. If you haven't learned obedience yet, then you'll learn it here.

I spit at Sister Margret's feet.

She laughs and says, don't excite yourself, it's not worth talking about. The rose-colored dress is actually quite pretty. No one here has such an attractive dress. I say, the dress is too good for this cage.

Saying on the calendar for April 23.

"Be subject to all human authority for the sake of the Lord"²

Knitting. Day in, day out, knitting. I don't knit. I write. I have been allowed to write. I don't knit. You knit. She knits. Those two knit. You all knit. They knit. Knit. Purl. Right left. Left. Left. Left. Two. Three. Four. In straight lines around the curve. The whole thing turns around. March. March. Stand still. Don't get out of line. An army of stitches on the move. The bayonets are the needles. For that reason they are locked up at night, so that no one gets hurt.

The bells ring.

All bells ring and the cowbell too.

And the gong that calls us.

And the bell resounds when we pass on.

Anyone everyone once at any time

Where did you get those earrings? My mother had earrings just like that. Here! Get rid of them. Take them out. Give them to me.

I scream.

Immannuela hangs onto my ears. She pulls, doesn't let go.

I bellow. I hit her. She falls down. I fall next to her. My earlobes get hot and swell up.

² 1 Peter 2.13, which in the Harper Collins Study Bible (NRSV) reads, "For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution."

Amadeus Mozart's aria "Already Spring is Smiling." On that day you brought me meat at visiting time instead of flowers. Dried smoked ham. Tell me, don't you get enough to eat here? No, I don't eat that fodder. But the meat that you brought along I stuffed in my mouth nearly before you left. Meat. Eat meat. When you come again, bring me meat and fruit. No flowers.

Köchel Catalogue 580 "Already Spring is Smiling."

Please take part in our work at least once. Don't you have any interest at all in helping your fellow humans?

Don't stop writing now.

Patterns for baby clothes go from hand to hand. And circular knitting needles. Baby clothes for the poor, mentally confused, unhappy expectant mothers.

Have you no heart, no compassion for others?

Where would I be headed, if I, too, wanted to begin to knit. I will be careful. What do I care about expectant mothers, whether they've lost their marbles or not.

Nonsense, forget that about the meat. I'm coming out. On the next visiting day I'll be out.

Then we'll go eat meat and drink. Then we'll go with a bottle of vodka out to a meadow without a fence. Do nothing. Just sit. Dose. Imagine yourself far away. Don't brood.

Either you write or you knit.

Please, no flowers. Meat.

"Already Spring is Smiling."

I need a clean shirt from my suitcase. I say, Sister Margret, allow me to put on a clean shirt. Sister Margret says, your things are not marked, so you may not use them. Mark your shirts, mark all your things, including your compact, toothbrush and toothpaste. Then you may have access to all of it. I say, since I won't be staying, it wouldn't be worth it for me to mark all my things. She says, then you don't need a new shirt, either.

To be completely happy. After a short outing in heaven, fell out of the clouds and landed here. In a house that consists of long corridors. Why I would want to go away, you have never understood. So many misconceptions. So many distortions. So many false statements. And the pressure in my throat when I saw you again. A wall of thick, clean glass between us. Oh, never again to listen when you speak. Because it doesn't ever reach me.

Saying on the calendar for April 24.

"Slaves, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only the good and friendly ones, but also the wrong-headed ones."³

Haha.

³ 1 Peter 2.18, which in the Harper-Collins Study Bible (NRSV) reads, "Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle, but also those who are harsh."

Shhhh.

It is dead quiet. The woman doctor begins to practice reading. She is taking a do-it-yourself course in acting. -e-i-ei-a-i-ai-o-i-oi-.

On visiting days the woman doctor is often visited by two older men. One of them calls her Mademoiselle, while the other refers to her as Signorina. In reality the woman doctor's name is Gerda. Gerda must have suffered a stroke. Her right leg is lame. Her right eye is shut, while the left is normal. With this open left eye she smiles. If she cries, the tears trickle out of her closed right eye. On our walks in the park, Sister Margret asks us to push Gerda's wheelchair. I wouldn't dream of pushing the wheelchair, especially not uphill. I walk along beside Gerda and offer her a cigarette. We smoke together, and her left eye smiles.

I say, Gerda, why are you here, anyway? Gerda says, all of my acquaintances suddenly died on me, so suddenly, everyone around me died, one after another gone. I say, I, for example, took sleeping pills, too few, as you see. Gerda laughs. Sister Margret says, I must ask you to change the subject. No one here is interested in why anyone is with us. I say, why is everyone listening, then? Sister Margret says, because it has to do with the outside. But we have here, for good reasons, the duty of radiating merriment to each other through our cheerful-relaxed behavior. I say, then you will have to change yourself a good deal.

All at once Gerda starts crying with her closed right eye.

Sister Margret says to me, see what comes of it. Then she says, don't cry, there will be no crying here. Stop crying! Stop crying immediately!

Sister Margret fears that Gerda could be contagious. She takes over the wheelchair. I offer Gerda another cigarette.

On the hill, we meet the men's section. The men set up benches for us. They shake our hands and say good afternoon. We talk with them about the weather, the flowers, the smell of fresh birch trees. Gerda enjoys talking with the men. She is nice to them. I let myself slide down the bank and remain lying in the grass.

How peaceful it is.

Not allowed to talk about our sicknesses.

Not allowed to tell anyone why we are here.

Not to find out from the others.

Nowhere learn repression so well as here.

Christa says she foresaw the Israeli blitzkrieg. And she grabbed the steering wheel while her uncle was driving because he can't listen. I ask her why she jumped from the balcony. She says, because of the war in Vietnam. Christa says I should not, under any circumstances, speak with her doctor about it. I say, what do I care about your doctor. She says, and the television is also corrupt. The television in Switzerland tells lies. For that reason, I went there and asked them to let it be, once and for all. I challenged them to defect to our side. I say, who brought you here, then? She says, my mother, she is

divorced and married again. She and her new husband deceive each other, too. I asked them not to do it anymore, but they denied everything and brought me here. I say, but you're still in school, aren't you? She says, yes, I am sixteen, and now I am missing so much. I say, when you get out, you can continue school. Christa says, but don't tell my doctor that, you see, they didn't want me in school any more. I implored the teacher to join our side, and then he went to my mother and said, first, that I was at risk, and second, that a young girl like me shouldn't concern herself with politics. I say, don't let yourself be driven crazy by the fact that everyone lies. You must learn to understand why people do that. Can't you get books which explain why they lie, why no one is interested in Vietnam, why you shouldn't concern yourself with politics. Christa says, I don't have any such books. I say, I'll give you some. As long as I am here, I can talk about politics with you. And don't give a damn about your uncle, the television, the teacher, and about your mother. Christa says, but really they all are so good to me, and I am also in the children's choir.

Permitted to write, so write, as if the devil's after me. Don't stop writing, or else be forced to knit. Nothing more to write, nothing more to tell. Just the activity counts. The act of writing. The holding of the pencil. The letters count, the words, the pages covered with writing. Continue. Keep writing. Don't stop. Head high. Sister Margret says, if you don't write, then please knit. You'll certainly be able to knit pot-holders, won't you? Don't shut your notebook. Don't let your arms hang. Don't rest your head. I cannot knit. I'll be out soon, maybe even tomorrow. Why learn to knit? Get the calendar. Read the calendar published by the Swiss Reformed Church. Copy down the sayings from the calendar. The main thing: write.

Crap.

Sister Margret throws a ball of yarn on my notebook. And here's a pair of needles. Just in case you should stop writing. Does it absolutely have to be pot-holders, even though I never touch a pot? But I have seen you eating, and nothing less than cooked food. Knitting? Never, never ever. Don't stop writing at any price. Then rather not eat any more. Not eat any more at all. Write. Write.

there there there it flies bumps into the ceiling like a blow fly it flies around the angel circles under the ceiling the poor thing is freezing because he is not dressed right he always tows the big palm tree around behind him the heavy tree on his shoulder he circles under the ceiling bumps into it casts shadows the trunk throws shadows the angel would like to have a rest may not lie down not lay himself down flies flies may not rest so that the trunk doesn't fall on our heads he carries it on his shoulder around with him when the angel sweats it rains

Sister Margret has a black dress on, made out of sateen. She has a white apron on that smells like chlorine and feels like wrapping paper. She sits by the radio and knits.

It is bad enough when someone forgets to put out salt for wild animals.

Anita, you too put your flowers in the hall in the evening.

Listen, everyone, an airplane carrying one hundred seven persons crashed over Japan.

That is a delightful play suit, have you finished it in light blue, make one in pink, too, after this.

For these little mittens, use size two needles, otherwise the stitches will be too loose, and the little tykes will freeze. Immanuela, where did you get that necklace? You know that you're not allowed to have necklaces. Take it off immediately, you all could get hung up on something.

Turn in your handiwork, we're going to the park now. There are still some needles missing, no one hold back their needles.

The needles are locked up. Sister Margret squats in front of the sideboard and puts away the handwork. She's wearing backless slippers, her toenails stick out of them in front.

The mobile on the ceiling consists of five half walnut shells. Each of them has two tiny sails. Five small boats swing back and forth under the ceiling. They dance in the breezes. I watch the boats as they lurch and twist around.

Each day we spend three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon in the recreation room. Handwoven tablecloths on the tables, green handwoven cushions on the chairs, the floor lamp has a pleated shade covered with handwoven material.

The floor of the rec room is covered with carpet tiles. The windows are barred and are made of brownish glass. Together, the pattern of the grillwork and the brownish glass depict bull's eye panes. The various diamonds of the grille are set with pictures out of colored glass. Colorful birds, sitting on the edges of colorful nests. Bars. Ha ha. Bars. Because I am not permitted to stop writing. That's what. Continue. Continue writing. Don't let up.

Somewhere there is still a square centimeter of stuff that I haven't mentioned yet.

Before I forget it, the calendar published by the Swiss Reformed Church hangs on the china cupboard. Yes, yes. If nothing else occurs to me, I'll copy down the sayings from the calendar. Under no circumstances let your head sink onto your arms, onto your notebook, onto the table. I have a headache. I ask to be allowed to lie down. During the day no one lies down. Whoever lies down is tempted to brood. To what else can one not also be tempted. Exercise, fresh air. You will see how quickly the headache is gone.

The doctor says, here you have a sheet of paper, now write out your curriculum vitae neatly. I say, I don't really want to apply here. He says, everyone hands in a C.V. I say, unfortunately I have none. He says, what, at your age, no C.V.? I say, I bumped it off. He says, well, bring it back then. I say, I am as if newly born. The doctor says, you know, I actually wanted to be a concert violinist.

Waltz melodies are on the radio, then Handel, then Sister Margret turns it off, then silence

reigns. Please, please, some more Handel. Does anyone here have anything against turning off the radio? No one is really listening anyway, are they? Kiss my ass, well, then, no more Handel. Clicking of needles. Gerda practices reading. -o-i-oi-a-u-au-. Au au au au au. No moods please, no rage, no temper tantrums. He who goes berserk, stays in here longer. Be dependent. Enjoy being dependent. Laugh, fool around, joke, dance, jump. Hug yourself. Cuddle with Sister Margret. Cackle, giggle, radiate merriment. Hihi. Sister Margret says, pack up, we're going to play badminton in the yard. Oh God, I thank you that this dream of mine will be fulfilled. Playing badminton. You are so blasè. It is simply not possible to please you. What do you want, anyway? Guess. Out. I want out. Then we can talk more.

Why not stop writing. Why not knit then. Have they already gotten this far with me? In this place even the bath towels are hand-knitted, knitted out of fine cotton yarn. What a luxury. Knitted bath towels. Who can still afford that today. And why not knitted washcloths, with red and blue tags. Each of us gets two knitted washcloths, the one with the red tag is for above the belly button, the one with the blue tag is for below it. But please set up the folding screen. I demand a bathtub. Sister Margret says, I can't promise it. I say, but you did promise me it. She says, we'll see. You may remind me about it again tomorrow. Besides, you can wash yourself in the dormitory. You can wash yourself completely and everywhere. Just don't forget to put up the folding screen.

Sofia had a visit. Her cousin was there.

Her cousin brought her a big bouquet of tulips. The tulips are red and yellow. They are already open. Fat cups are enthroned on the fat stems. Sofia said, please, don't worry your head about me. I have a charming seat by the window. I'm doing well here. Just look around you. I feel very secure. I'd always dreamed of such a window seat. No, no. At home I never had such a lovely window seat. Oh, these bright flowers, take them back. What am I going to do with flowers on my long journey? They will only wilt on me. Put them in a vase for me at home. You don't need to worry about me anymore. I am in good hands. I never expected such a marvelous window seat, when I came. And now, my dear, you must go.

The cousin said, but we still have two, three minutes left. Why should I go already?

Sofia said, but your time, your precious time. And the train will go soon. Go now, I want to sit at my window seat again. Isn't it beautiful?

The cousin said, well then, see you later.

Sofia said, why?

The cousin said, but we don't want to give up hope.

Sofia said, what hope?

The tulips lay in front of the cousin, on the table. Sofia went into the dormitory and sat down at the window.

In the evenings, we hang our clothes over chairs. Each person hangs his clothes neatly over a chair. Then we carry the chairs with our clothes up the hall and put them up, rank

and file, in front of the entrance to our section. At 8:00 pm the doors to the hall are locked. Bed time. Those forgot something in their pockets can get it tomorrow. Now it is time to sleep.

A complexly laid out but symmetrically built house with enclosed gardens and a park surrounded by sharply pointed palisades. Inside, the house is dominated by its corridors, getting wider, getting smaller, climbing, dropping away, and outside by formal gardens and the park. Floors and corridors are separated by electric sliding doors, which are controlled by means of a secret number system.

Outside lies the institution-owned farmyard, with milking machines, manure wagon, pigs, and cows. How it rattles, stinks, rings, dings.

And no butter on the sandwiches. Dry bread makes cheeks red.

So we can't get at our clothes at night. But where is the exit. Around which corner? And how wide? And how long? And the numbers to open the doors? And what for, anyway? They'll let me free anyway. They'll be glad even, when I go.

now what
 the right to love
 the right to be afraid
 the right to make oneself scarce
 the right to say shit at everything
 the right to be by oneself
 to get oneself straightened out
 to be at home alone
 where else
 the right to hit out
 the right to drive people or oneself up the wall
 the right to be good
 the right to love
 what else

Back side of the calendar page for May 1.

"What a great decision confronts the Christian woman of today. In our modern social order, women will soon be put on an equal footing with men in every respect. As a result, much in their lives automatically shifts from the inside to the outside. This contradicts the natural calling of women. The hard masculine world must be balanced by a gentle and quiet spirit. Woman possesses this spirit, and she needs to draw a line against all the alienation in life which, through commercials, fashion trends, and so-called public opinion, threatens us.

So now we want to enjoy a change.
 Go to the park.

To the hill where the men's section plays cards.
And smokes and plays dice and goes back and forth.
And greets us and sets up benches for us.
Where we play Ring Around the Rosy and throw rubber balls and skip rope.
I lie down far away in the grass.
When someone speaks to me, I say,
take off, leave me in peace.
And spit at him.

A swarm of pure white pigeons minces over the green meadow.
Sister Margret calls, don't you all see, don't you all see, how beautiful that is?
She shouts out loud with joy. Disturbed, the pigeons fly away.

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