The Prose of Alfred Lichtenstein eBook

The Prose of Alfred Lichtenstein

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The Prose of Alfred Lichtenstein Alfred Lichtenstein

The Winner

Max Mechenmal was an independent manager of a newspaper kiosk. He ate and drank well; he had relations with many women, but he was careful. Because his salary was insufficient, he occasionally permitted himself to take money from Ilka Leipke. Ilka Leipke was an unusually small, but well-developed, elegant whore, who attracted many men and women with her bizarre nature and apparently silly ideas, as well as with her actually tasteful clothing. Miss Leipke loved little Max Mechenmal. She called him her sweet dwarf. Max Mechenmal was angry all his life that he was small.

Max Mechenmal came from an unfortunately impoverished family. He had enjoyed an excellent education in an institution for retarded children until he was forcibly dismissed at a very early age. The reasons for his dismissal were not available; it seemed to have more to do with the poverty of Mechenmal's relatives than with the fact that he was clearly unbearable. For a while he wandered about homeless, since his family no longer took any interest in him. He supported himself mostly by petty larceny. Once the police picked him up and he was brought to a home for neglected children. In the home he was trained as a locksmith. He knew how to ingratiate himself with his superiors by showing unusual dexterity and willingness. He secretly tormented his younger, weaker comrades, or he set the stronger ones against each other. He had no friends; when he had completed his training and was released, the others were happy.

The unusual skill that Max Mechenmal, because of his technical gifts, had developed in making keys and opening difficult locks he would very gladly have used for breaking and entering, and burglary; he would have liked to have become an infamous burglar.

The proceeds from the burglaries would have permitted him to dress elegantly, to show off with the finest women. The sickening, massive fear of being caught prevented him. He was content to seduce the daughters and servants of the masters for whom he worked, and to commit occasional burglaries that involved little risk. His ambition remained unsatisfied.

By chance the direction of Mechenmal's life was changed. At the end of a day's work, tired and in a bad mood, he was walking the streets. Lights were scarcely visible, although it was very dark. In an elegant ground-floor room, an elderly lady was arranging the fold of her body.

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In front of a basement, dirty little girls were singing the song of the Lorelei. The windows were etched into the pale, sleeping houses like black panes with bright crosses. The conglomeration of houses resembled large, venturesome ships, which lay at anchor or were gliding to a distant, beckoning sea. The little locksmith thought about the last six women he had loved. His attention was attracted by the hideously ringed eyes of a horribly hunch-backed gentleman who smilingly, with marked pleasure, although somewhat fearfully, was looking at him. The locksmith thought: hm—for fun, he remained stopped; with his clear eyes, which shone like polished black buttons on his face, he slyly watched the even smaller gentleman. Embarassed, he took his hat off his head and spoke, stuttering, said that his name was Kuno Kohn, and excused himself —little else could be made out. The hunchback hid part of his face behind thin fingers, coughed, and quickly moved on. The locksmith thought: hm, and went on his way.

Then there was a tug on his arm. He turned his face: the hunchback again stood next to him, still somewhat breathless from moving quickly. Kuno Kohn was very red, but he could, without stuttering, say: Excuse me for causing you more trouble. I always know afterwards what I want to say." This he spoke extremely loudly, to overcome his embarassment. Then he said: "Perhaps you have the time... Perhaps I may invite you to look for a restaurant with me...or may I assume that you have not yet eaten this evening." The locksmith was not against the idea.

In a huge tavern, Kuno Kohn ordered food and beer for Max Mechenmal. He himself did not eat, and he drank little. He enjoyed watching how pleased the locksmith was. Later, probably, he sometimes stroked him timidly on the chin. That pleased the locksmith. At first they spoke of the misery of being alive, of the injustice of fate. After Mechenmal drank his third glass of beer, he boasted of his beloved. That was unpleasant for the hunchback. Up to that point he had permitted the locksmith to talk. And his interest was indicated only by the fact that he shut his blue eyes theatrically and approvingly, as a result of which, for a few seconds, only miserable shadows were visible, or he slowly shook his shapeless head, or he pressed his nervous fingers sympathetically against Mechenmal's leg. Now he began to express his own opinions. He cursed women. His voice seemed at every moment to crack with excitement. He contended that anyone who had the misfortune to be a woman must have the courage to be a whore, that the whore is the essential woman, and that relations with women, incidentally, are more or less degrading. When they left the tavern, Kuno Kohn placed the hard, miserable bone that was his lower arm upon Mechenmal's thick, flabby lower arm. A gold bracelet struck the hunchback's wrist. On the way Kuno Kohn asked Mechenmal to spend the night at his place. The locksmith agreed to the request.

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Kuno Kohn lived in a large, ordinary room, in a summer-house on a side street in the western section. However, the bed was exceptionally wide, almost ostentatious. On the pillow lay yellowish and red flowers. In front of the window stood a writing-table on which there were some books—perhaps Baudelaire, George, Rilke. Near it and on it lay sheets of paper, which were apparently covered with finished and unfinished poems and treatises. On a shelf at a window stood volumes of Goethe, Shakespeare, a Bible, and a translation of Homer. On the table and chairs lay perhaps newspapers and pieces of clothing. Somewhere lay yellowed photos of old people and children. The locksmith looked at everything with curiosity.

They soon sat down. The conversation, which was lively at first, gradually faltered. Kuno Kohn turned the lamp down. Later he spoke softly and imploringly to the locksmith. Then he offered him the bed. He himself would sleep on the sofa. The locksmith agreed.

Kuno Kohn arranged for a subordinate position for his friend Mechenmal at a newspaper publishing office. Mechenmal picked up his new trade with surprising swiftness, and very soon obtained sufficient knowledge of salesmanship. He changed positions and managed, by means of energy and all kinds of dirty tricks, after a year and a few months, to hold a position of trust as an independent manager of a newspaper kiosk.

II

Because he had a pleasant way of speaking as well as a face that looked like that of an intelligent doll, the former locksmith soon had won a very large number of steady customers, for the most part female. In the morning a dozen saleswomen from a nearby department store, having purposely arrived too early, gathered around his kiosk to enjoy the dirty jokes and cheerful comments of Mr. Mechenmal. The bank officer Leopold Lehmann, who always arrived punctually at eight o'clock, to buy illustrated joke books and theological tracts, sometimes became impatient, because the cheerful saleswomen disturbed him as he tried to make his selection. And the school-teacher Theo Tontod, who tirelessly, and, as a rule, uselessly asked for the modern newspaper, "The Other A," often got to school too late. Around noon, almost every day, the choral-singer Mabel Meier came, on the arm of an old man. She bought colorful, spicy newspapers, or sentimental ones, with long lyrical poems. The old man, who always had a whining expression, sighed as he paid. She was reserved with Mechenmal. At odd hours, Mieze Maier, a teen-ager, also came, and asked whether Herr Tontod had been there. Once Mieze Maier remained longer; from that time on she did it more frequently. Sometimes a fat, agreeable servant-girl of the salesman Konrad Krause was at the kiosk. She said to Mechenmal that he was good-looking, that he had passionately dark eyes and a kissable mouth, asked if he had time on Sundays to go dancing—she

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liked him very much. Mechenmal answered that he would not object to satisfying Miss Frida's inclination occasionally. The servant girl reminded him embarrassingly often of his promise.—Every Tuesday afternoon a certain Mr. Simon, who lived in an open sanitarium, and was always accompanied by an attendant, asked for the magazines for undertakers; if there were not enough available, he went off peeved, cursing the crematorium.—Kuno Kohn also came a few times every week, rarely to buy something, mainly to visit his friend and to make an appointment for the evening rendez-vous.—-Students, ladies, officers, workers bought their newspapers. Only Ilse Leipke, in spite of Mechenmal's repeated requests, refused to come to the kiosk.

This was a whim of Ilka Leipke. She had much time for herself and complained to her beloved many times that the days were more boring than the nights. Ilsa Leipke also loved her sweet dwarf no less than in the early days of their acquaintanceship, even though Mechenmal was increasingly high-handed and nasty in his treatment of her. It went so far that he enjoyed it when she cried; he was never content until he had brought her to tears. Then it gave him pleasure to comfort her. Afterwards, however, he was very good to her; basically, he loved her. He let Ilka Leipke caress and kiss him. He was a bit larger than she, but she held him on her young body like a child. They told stories to each other. They laughed. They kissed. They often went over the story of the way they met. They discovered thousands of new details, or made something up because it was fun. The girl found, a box in which small items lay, a clipping from a newspaper, which read like this:

marriage request

A young, somewhat small, very good-looking man, tired of being alone, is looking for a similarly inclined lady, with honorable marriage in mind. Money an advantage. Send friendly replies to Max Mechenmal.

Or Mr. Mechenmal took out of his wallet a blue letter with violet red spots, which he held out smilingly to the girl. Miss Lepke then read it well, in a gentle, loving voice:

Very honored gentleman!

Read your request for marriage. To my regret I cannot supply capital. For my part I could do without the marriage, of which I have no need yet. I am by trade a woman. I am small (but wow!). I am tired of having boy friends and therefore am looking for a relationship with a steady man. If you find my proposal agreeable, please send me a photo of yourself. I remain your devoted

Ilka Leipke

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When they had embraced and kissed enough, they made up games. Ilka Leipke showed great talent in showing the happily giggling Mechenmal how her friends would behave in corresponding positions. She bent herself into the most surprising positions. She grimaced comically. Mechenmal was able make up fictitious names by the hour, with which he could make reference to certain parts of her body in the presence of other people, without their being able to tell what he meant. So the evenings and the nights that Ilka Leipke had set aside for her friend went by. Often Mechenmal did not have the time to go home. Then she got up, if he was still asleep. Made coffee. In her slippers, dressed only in an old evening wrap, she went out and got pastry from a baker. She placed a white cloth on the table. She arranged everything in an appetizing manner. She prepared some sandwiches for him to take with him. She disappeared again into her bed, where she slept well into the afternoon. Mechenmal, however, somewhat sleepy and weary, but in a good mood, hurried off to his kiosk.

III

Late evening crept like a spider over the city. In the light of Kohn's little lamp the upper torso of Kuno Kohn was a bit bent over the table. On the sofa, breaking the circle of lamplight and stretching beyond it, lay Max Mechenmal, half in the dark. Windows glittered in lush, flowing black. Swollen and blurred objects rose up out of the darkness. The open bed shone with a whiteness. Kohn's hands held papers with writing on them. His voice sounded gentle, dreamy, singing with feeling. He often became hoarse, and coughed like someone who had read much. One could hear: "The old, splendid stories about God have been slaughtered. We must no longer believe in them. But the knowledge of misery drives us to need to believe—the longing for new, stronger belief. We are searching. We find nothing anywhere. We torment ourselves because

we have been helplessly abandoned. Why doesn't someone come, teach us non-believers, who thirst for God." Kohn was quiet, full of expectation. Mechenmal had secretly been amused during the lecture. Now he broke out. Then he said: "Don't take this wrong, little Kohn. But you certainly have funny ideas. This is really crazy." Kohn said: "You have no feeling. You are a superficial being. It is also certain that you are a psychopath." Max Mechenmal said: "what do you mean by that?" Kuno Kohn said: "You'll find that out soon enough." Max Mechenmal said merely, "Ah, so." He was angry that Kuno Kohn had called him superficial. He thought of Ilka Leipke.

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Then Kuno Kohn said: “Death is an unbearable thought. For those of us who are without God. We are damned to live through it in advance hundreds of nights. And to find no way past it.” He became very quiet. Mechenmal wanted to show his friend Kohn that he too could express himself about perverse problems. He thought it over, and said: I have different version, little Kuno, little Kohn. However, it is an emotional matter. I also tell myself thank God for those who have no God. God is nonsense. To waste a word on the topic is unworthy of a thinking man. But listen, I have no need of God—not in life, not in death. Death without God is very beautiful. It is my wish. I think it’s wonderful simply to be dead. Without heaven. Without rebirth. Utterly dead. I’m can’t wait. Life for me is too hard. Too stimulating..”

He wanted to speak further. There was a knocking at the door; Kohn opened it. Ilka Leipke quickly came in. She said: “Good evening Herr Kohn. Excuse me for disturbing you.” She screamed at Mechenmal: “So, I catch you here. So, for this you have abandoned me. You’re only using my body. You have never grasped my soul.” She wept. She sobbed. Mechenmal tried to calm her down. That irritated her even more. She shouted: “To betray me with a crippled Kohn... I’ll report you to the police, Mr. Kohn. You should be ashamed of yourselves, you swine...” She had a crying fit. Kuno Kohn was incapable of responding. Mechenmal pulled her up from the floor upon which she had thrown herself screaming. He said with a changed, stern voice, that her behavior was unseemly, that she had no grounds for jealousy, for after all, he had no obligations. Then Ilka Leipke looked at the hunch-backed Kohn humbly, like a beaten little dog. She was very quiet. She followed the angry Mechenmal out the door.

When Kohn was alone, he gradually became enraged. He thought: such a rude person... and at intervals: How upset the cow had become. How jealous she is of me. One of the few women who please me... and she goes and chooses the little animal Mechenmal. That is atrocious.

Early the next morning Kuno Kohn stood in Miss Leipke’s drawing-room, trembling like an actor with stage fright, When the maid brought Kuno Kohn’s card, Miss Leipke was reading the forbidden pamphlet, “The suicide of a fashionable lady. Or how a fashionable lady committed

suicide.” Her eyes were filled with tears. When she had finished reading the entire pamphlet, she freshened her make-up. Finally, covered only by a silk morning-coat, she appeared in the drawing-room. Kuno Kohn was red up to his ears. Groaning, he said that he had come to apologize for yesterday’s scene, that Miss Leipke did him wrong, that she knew him too briefly. He had, after all, inner worth. Then he spoke in praise of his friend, the worthy Mechenmal; but he did not disguise the man’s lack of a

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refined inner feeling about life. Miss Leipke looked at him with beguiling eyes. He turned the conversation to art. Then he turned the conversation to her legs; she said frankly that she too liked her legs. She had lifted her morning-coat somewhat. With his shy hands, Kuno Kohn carefully lifted it higher-That evening Kuno Kohn sat dreamily in his room. He looked out through the hole made by the open window. In front of him the gray inner wall of the house dropped a short distance. With many quiet windows. There was no sky, only shimmering evening air. And a gentle, occasional breeze, which could scarcely be felt. The wall with the windows was like a lovely, sad picture. Kuno Kohn was surprised that it was not boring. He stared steadily and deeply into the wall. It seemed kind. Friendly. Full of loneliness. Secretly he thought: the wind against the wall is doing this. He sang inwardly: Come, be... loved—a bell startled him.

The postman brought him a letter from the Clou Club. The Clou Club requested Mr. Kohn to read from his works on a certain evening.

IV

Eight days before the appointed evening a placard went up on the city's pillar for notices. On it was written:

Announcement

Kuno Kohn will read from his own works at the Clou Club. Young girls and lawyers kindly requested not to attend.

As the evening approached, Kuno Kohn became increasingly agitated. Two hours before he had himself shaved. When the man asked whether the gentleman wanted powder, Kohn shook his head no, but said: "yes." An hour before Kohn went into a police station and asked for ten five-pfennig stamps and a ten pfennig postal card. (tr. —thinking that he is in the post-office).

When Kohn stepped on the podium, he became calmer than he had expected to be. First he made a slip of the tongue, but then his voice gradually became firm and clear. Very few people were in the little hall, but some critics from the large, influential newspapers were in attendance. The next day one of them declared, in the widely circulated Alten Buergerzeitung, that the poems the poet Kohn, who enlists our sympathy because of his physical handicap, brought to the attention of a sparsely attended hall were not yet ready for publication; however, one might expect something from his muse when Kohn has matured. Another declared, in the Journal for Enlightened Citizens: the overall impression is pleasing, but the poems are not all of the same quality. In addition, the poet had not read well. But the first line of the first verse of the poem "The Comedian" was movingly pithy in expression and feeling.

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After the reading, the president of the club, the gifted Dr. Bryller, thanked the poet, whom he called a budding genius. One of the few whom he personally knew. In spite of the ban against young girls, Ilka Leipke had somehow managed to gain entrance. Mechenmal, who had at first said that he would not come, also appeared. At the break, however, he said that he was hungry, that he was going, and hadn't she had enough of the nonsense. If she did not want to come with him she could stay. She seemed suddenly interested in Kohn's hunch-back. He wished her much luck, asked if he should play the pimp, and left. Ilka Leipke cried a bit, and remained until the very end. She applauded enthusiastically. On this evening she loved Kohn. In a strange mood she took him to her place.

Towards morning a small, hunch-backed gentleman skipped like a ballet dancer along grey, uncertain streets...

Kuno Kohn from now on avoided meetings with Mechenmal. He no longer invited him. He bought newspapers in another kiosk. That suited Mechenmal just fine. His beloved had told him, with a provocative smile, that she had spent a lovely night in her bedroom with the hunch-back.

The hump had not been unpleasant for her; it was not as big and hateful as it seemed to a superficial observer. One could easily become accustomed to the hump.

Mechenmal was furious at Kohn. He was gentler and more indulgent towards Ilka Leipke. He did not show her his jealousy, and never mentioned the rival's name. Ilka Leipke was happy. She no longer thought of the drunken night with Kohn. Kohn was now no less repugnant to her now than he had been before; she rejected further attempts by the poet. She acted towards Mechenmal as though she were still very much in love with Kohn. Once, however, she could not repress making an unseemly joke about Kohn and his hump. Mechenmal laughed heartily.

Sadly, Kohn went to the shore. A publisher had made an unexpected, favorable offer, and paid an advance. Mechenmal happened to find a poem that Kohn sent from the shore to Ilka Leipke. He read:

Song of Longing

The folds of the sea crack like whips on my skin. And the stars of the sea tear me open. The ocean's evening is lonely from screaming wounds. But the lovers find the good death of which they dreamed. Be there soon, sorrowful eyed woman. The sea hurts me. Your hands are cool saints. Cover me with them. The sea is burning on me. Help then... please help... cover me. Save me. Cure me, friend.

He destroyed it. Ilka Leipke was enraged. She said that Mechenmal was coarse. The little man had soothed her with loving caresses. Later he sat down at the girl's writing-table. He took a piece of stationary and wrote:

To Kuno Kohn.

Miss Leipke, my bride, hereby lets you know that she gladly gives up any further poems; they serve no purpose at all. My bride has told me everything. Be assured that your courtship makes us laugh.

Max Mechenmal

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When Mechenmal had mailed the letter he became restless. He was afraid that he had handled things carelessly.

Kohn came back immediately. He went to Ilka Leipke. Showed her the letter. Howling, he asked whether she had forgotten the night with him. She said: “yes.” He moaned. He wept unintelligibly about soul and suicide. Ilka Leipke showed him out. His weakness was annoying to her; even as a child she could not watch anyone cry.

But she was angry at Mechenmal. She began to tease him about Kohn. She claimed that Kohn had often been her guest; and she always found him to be nice. Mechenmal considered her stories to be true. Now he hated Kohn.

He considered how to get of the hunch-back, without being known as the one who got rid of him. It did not take him long to come up with a plan. Kohn died on a Sunday, suddenly, but without strange circumstances. His body was released for burial without any difficulty. In the newspaper “The Other A” Theo Tontod provided a short obituary. And the Club Clou sent a wreath. Ilka Leipke had herself taken to observe the body before the burial. The coffin was opened quickly. In it Kohn lay somewhat askew, because of the hump. The features of his face were distorted in a grimace. His hands were rolled up lumps. Dried blood stuck to his nose and hung over his opened mouth. Ilka Leipke overcame her disgust. She had gasoline brought, took a little silk scarf out of her dainty handbag and dipped it in the the gasoline container. She cleaned the dead nose with the little scarf. Then she left. Calm and weeping. Content with her goodness.

When Mechenmal heard of Kohn’s death, he was very frightened. He could not bear his room. He left the house quickly, not without first having lit a cigarette. Church bells were ringing from the sunny sky. Mechenmal was cold and pale. He kept thinking: if only it doesn’t come out. Or he considered where he might run away. He thought of the trial, of the defense, of prison, chains, letters written to the outside world, the hangman. That he would, as his last wish, be allowed to sleep with Ilka Leipke one more time. He moved through the streets like someone trying to catch up to someone. When it occurred to him that he should not call attention to himself, he suddenly began to walk too slowly. It seemed to him that all the people were watching him.

In a garden two girls, perhaps fifteen years old, were wrestling. When they saw Mechenmal, they quickly sat down on a bench, letting him come nearer. When he was close enough, they laughed at him; one of them wiggled her legs. He hurried away. Behind him one of them cried out: “See how quickly the man moves.” And the other cried out just as foolishly : “Yes, he’s smoking.” They watched him go, then they went back to wrestling with each other.

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Mechenmal gradually calmed down. He thought: They can't prove it was me. I'll deny everything. Ha! Who can prove anything about me... Even if they notice anything!—He threw the cigar away. He felt safer. He whistled with the thought that Kohn could no longer bother him. That he, Max Mechenmal, had overcome the difficulty with Kohn so completely. He thought that he tackled life correctly. That everything went well for him. He had great trust in himself. He thought: No sentimentality now. To lead a decent life, one must be a bastard.

He went home happily.

The Café Klösschen

Lisel Liblichlein had come from the country to the city because she wanted to become an actress. At home she found everything stuffy, narrow, stultifying. The gentlemen were stupid. The sky, the kisses, the girl friends, the Sunday afternoons became unbearable. The most she could do was cry. To her, becoming an actress would mean: to be clever, free, and happy. What that meant, she did not know. She had no way to determine whether she had talent.

She adored her cousin Schulz, because he lived in the city and wrote poems. When the cousin wrote once that he was tired of law and would live in accordance with his inclination to be a writer, she informed her shocked parents that she was fed up with the restricted life; she would pursue her ideals as an actress. They tried in every way to dissuade her from this plan, to no avail. She became more determined, and even made threats. They yielded reluctantly, went with her to the city, rented a small room in a large pension, enrolled her in an inexpensive acting school. Cousin Schulz was asked to look after her.

Mr. Schulz frequently was in the company of Cousin Liblichlein. He took her to cabarets, read poetry, showed here his Bohemian digs, introduced her to the literary cafe Kloesschen, went with her hand-in-hand for hours through the streets at night, touched her, kissed her. Miss Liblichlein was pleasantly dazed by all the new things; soon it occurred to her that most of what she saw was not as beautiful as she had once imagined. Right from the start she was irritated that the director of the theater, the collegues, the literati of the Cafe Kloesschen—all the people with whom she often came in contact, found pleasure in touching her, caressing her hands, pressing their knees against hers, looking directly at her without shame. Even being touched by Schulz became burdensome to her.

To avoid hurting his feelings, as well as to avoid seeming provincial, she seldom showed her discomfort. But once she struck him vigorously on the face. They were in his room; he had just explained the last lines of his poem, "Weariness." They were

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The evening stands before my window, grey man! It would be best if we went to sleep- Then he tried to remove her blouse. Schulz was utterly stunned by the blow. He said, almost weeping, that she must have noticed that he loved her. Moreover, he was her cousin. She said that she didn't like someone opening her blouse. Besides, he had torn off a button. He said that he could no longer stand it. If one loved someone, one must yield to him. He would try to lose himself with other women. She did not know what to answer. Groaning, he thought: Oh, oh. She sat next to him dejectedly.

For the next few days he was nowhere to be seen. When he returned, he was pale and grey. His bloodless red eyes lay tearfully in grimy shadows. His voice had only a sing-song tone, with a mannered melancholy. Schulz spoke mournfully, dreamily, about despair, whoredom, and being torn apart inwardly. He said that he was fed up with the joy of life, that he would soon catch up with his own death. He avoided showing signs of tender feelings, but he often sighed painfully. He flirted theatrically with a longing for dying. He brought his friend to corpse-strewn tragedies, to gloomy film-dramas, to serious concerts in darkened halls.

Perhaps a week had gone by. A woman had sung. The hands of the listeners applauded loudly and long. Gottschalk Schulz passionately grasped Lisel Lilichlein's fingers, laid them gently on one of his thighs, and said: "Isn't it strange how a woman's song grips the soul!" Then he again began to speak imploringly and tearfully of love and yielding. Lisel Liblichlein said that this was boring or disgusting to her. Out of pity—and because she wanted to go up—she finally declared that she would agree to the love if he would give up the business of surrender. Schulz happily pressed her to himself. He stood there dreaming for a long time. He sang: "O tears. O goodness. O God. O beauty. O love. O love. O love..." He dashed through the streets. He had disappeared into the Cafe Kloesschen. But Lisel Liblichlein sat in her small room, awkwardly smiling under a reddish tallow lamp. She did not understand these city people, who seemed to her strange, dangerous animals. She felt abandoned and more alone than before. She thought with longing about her innocent homeland: about the breezy sky, about the laughing young gentlemen, about tennis matches, and she felt nostalgia for the Sunday afternoons—she took off her garters, placed her little bodice on a chair. She was inconsolable.

II

On a transparent summer evening the Cafe Kloesschen was bathed in light. The city sky of dark blue silk, upon which the white moon and many small stars lay, enveloped it. At the rear of the cafe, alone, a long time before he suddenly died, smoking at a tiny table, on which something stood, sat the hunch-backed poet Kuno Kohn. People crouched around other tables. Among them moved people with yellow and red skulls: women; writers; actors. Everywhere shadowy waiters darted.

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Kuno Kohn was not thinking of anything special. He hummed to himself: "A fog has so gently destroyed the world." The poet Gottschalk Schulz, a lawyer, who had painfully flunked all the tests he had taken, greeted him. A beautiful girl was with him. They both sat down at Kohn's table. Schulz and Kohn collaborated with the enthusiastic little Lutz Laus, to produce a monthly journal, "The Dachshund," designed to refine the level of immorality. Schulz told Kohn that the Dachshund-Laus would soon invent a godless religion on neo-legal principles, for which purpose he intended to call an organizational meeting in a nearby movie-house. Shaking his head, Kohn listened. The lovely girl ate cake. Kohn said sadly: "Laus can touch people and get things done. But there is no longer a Jesus to make us believe. We die every day more deeply into empty, eternal death. We are hopelessly pulled apart. Our life will remain meaningless theatrics". As she ate, the girl looked on, with a cheerful look emanating from the uncomprehending reddish brown eyes on her clear face. Schulz had sunken into gloomy thoughts. The girl said that her whole life also was a spectacle, and therefore she didn't find it to be so meaningless. In the acting school, in which she was preparing for a career on the stage as a sentimental lover, hard work was done. Mr. Kohn ought to drop in sometime, to convince himself about it. Kuno Kohn looked at the girl ardently for a while. He thought: "Such a small, stupid girl." But he soon left.

Outside, the lyric poet Roland Rufus suddenly seized his arm firmly and excitedly, saying: "Have you read the review written by a certain Bruno Bibelbauer in the monthly medical journal, in which it is claimed that the reason for my paranoia is that I imagine that I have some paralysis. Everyone looks at me strangely; I am famous. My publisher is giving me a large advance. But—ah, I must not say it—I am incurable." He went immediately into a better wine-restaurant.

A horse hobbled by, pulling a carriage, like an old man. The hunchback Kohn idly leaned against a Catholic church, thinking about existence. He said to himself: "Yet how odd existence really is. And yet one props oneself up, somewhere, somehow, without connection, irrelevant; one could just as well continue for better or for worse, anywhere. That makes me unhappy." Before him a small, silent whore's dog had stopped, had listened humbly, with glowing eyes.

A fiery glass wedding coach hopped by. Inside, in a corner, he saw the pale, expressionless face of a bridegroom. An empty carriage arrived and Kohn climbed in. He said quietly: "A seeker without a goal... a man drift..... unknown to everyone... One has a frightening longing. O that one might know for what."

The streets glimmered whitely when he opened the door of the house in which he lived. In his room he looked silently, with a solemn sadness, at the pictures of men, all of whom were dead, which were fastened to the wall. Then he began to remove the articles of clothing from his hump. When he was wearing only undershorts, a shirt, and socks, he said, murmuring and sighing, "Gradually one goes insane..."

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In bed his mind slowly emptied. The reddish brown eyes of the girl in the Cafe Kloesschen came into his mind as he fell asleep.

Strangely, on the days that followed, these eyes also shone often in his brain. That surprised him. Frightened him. His relationship to women was odd. In general he had an aversion to them; his urges drove him to boys. But in certain summer months, when his soul was shattered and inconsolable, he often fell in love with a young, childlike woman. Since he was rejected and mocked most of the time because of his hump, the memory of these women and girls was terrible. Therefore he was cautious at these times. He went to a prostitute when he felt danger.

Lisel Liblichlein had taken him by surprise, without his having had any premonition of it. In vain he thought of the pain of failure. In vain he imagined that Lisel Liblichlein might be one of the many delicate creatures, confused in their wonderful ignorance and longing for happiness, who can be found everywhere on earth, resembling one another... On a soft evening, full of greenish yellow street-lights, full of umbrellas and street filth, stood a small, hunch-backed man anxiously waiting at the entrance of an acting school.

III

Sometimes a poisonous, searing wind arose. Like thick, glowing oil, the sun lay on the houses and on the streets and on the people, Small, sexless little people with bent legs hopped senselessly around the front garden, enclosed by an iron fence, of the Cafe Kloesschen. Inside, Kuno Kohn and Gottschalk Schulz were fighting. Others happened to be watching. Lisel Liblichlein sat apprehensively in a corner.

The reason for this had been: Mr Kohn had accompanied Miss Liblichlein from the acting school to her home several times. When Schulz learned about it, he became, without cause, jealous. He began to say terrible things about Kohn. Lisel Liblichlein, who saw through her cousin, defended the hunchback. This made Schulz even angrier. He declared convincingly that he would shoot himself. He didn't do that, but threatened that he would shoot her too. At that point she stopped seeing him.—Lisel Liblichlein needed a man with whom she could discuss her important, ordinary experiences. After the quarrel with Schulz she chose Kohn out of some vague instinct. Thus it happened that she made an appointment to meet him at the Kloesschen at noon on the day of the fight, in order perhaps to consult with him about choosing a dress, or about his interpretation of a role, or about some little event. At the moment Kohn arrived, about to ask what the girl wanted, Gottschalk burst in, stood before him with a red, swollen face, and called him an unscrupulous seducer of young girls. Kohn tried to reach up and slap Schulz' face. Then each hit the other, furious and silent. The sign for the lavoratory-attendant, which had previously read, "My institute is here, entrance there," lay shattered on the ground. Suddenly Schulz' hand violently struck Kohn's

hump. The hand had a bloody wound, and the hump was injured. Pale as a corpse, Schulz cried out: “The hump is critically wounded.” Then he had himself taken by a waiter to a first aid station. He ignored Lisel Liblichlein entirely.

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Kohn did not pay much attention to his injured hump. He sat down again at the table with Lisel Liblichlein, and ordered tea with lemon. She saw how ever more clearly blood was oozing through his threadbare jacket.She called his attention to the bloody jacket; he became frightened. She asked if she should bind the wound—He said bitterly, to touch a hump would not be pleasant for her. She said, blushing sympathetically, that a hump was human. She said that he could come to her place. The hump must be cleaned and cooled. Then she would apply a dressing. He could spend the afternoon at her place...

Happily and hesitantly Kohn agreed to her suggestion. They sat into the night in Lisel Liblichlein's little room. They talked about souls, humps, love.-From that day on the writer Schulz was missing. An acquaintance had last seen him in the evening, in front of the display window of a shoe store. "Hot Heroes"—a journal for romantic decadence —received a special-delivery letter, in which Schulz reported that, for pyschological

reasons, he was on the point of taking his own life. Some people regarded this as nothing really new. Most people were excited. The newspapers carried exciting notices. A fund to find Schulz' body was established. An owner of a factory donated a tasteful coffin.

Woods and fields were searched. All the lakes were probed with long poles. No trace of Schulz was found. They already wanted to give up the search, when they found him disfigured, in a middle-level hotel in a distant suburb. On a windy pond he had contracted influenza, which had kept him in bed for a week. He was found on the creaky steps of the hotel, covered with many blankets and shawls, experimenting with the idea of carrying out his intention of committing suicide. It was not difficult to dissuade him, and he was brought in triumph back to the city. The coffin was sold off. From the profits and the remainder of the fund to find Schulz' body a party for Bohemians was organized-Gottschalk Schulz himself was enthroned as Faust, world-weary, in a corner. The gifted Doctor Berthold Bryller appeared as one of the wealthy literati. Lutz Laus played the Pope. The high school teacher Spinoza Spass—the clown of the Cafe Kloesschen—had wrapped a Siegfried-costume around his belly, and given himself a Goethe haircut. The lyric poet Mueller soon lay like a green, drunken corpse. Kuno Kohn, who had made a formal reconciliation with Schulz, came as himself. Lisel Liblichlein also came with him, wearing a rustic outfit. The others scuttled back and forth wildly among themselves, screeching like Chinese, chimpanzees, Gods, nightwatchmen, sophisticates. The whole crowd from the Cafe Kloesschen was present.

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Lisel Liblichlein danced on this tumultuous, screaming night only with the hunch-backed poet. Many people watched the strange pair, but there was no laughing. Kohn's hump pressed hard and heedlessly, like the edge of a table, against the delicate others. It seemed as though he had the constant desire to press his hump against a dancer. He never failed to say, in a falsetto voice, "pardon," with unashamed courtesy, when a crazy woman cried out or someone blissfully snarled "damn." Lisel Liblichlein held on to the poet with one hand holding the hump like a handle, and with the other had she pressed Kohn's square head gently to her breast. In this way they danced like possessed people for many hours.

Kohn's hump became steadily more painful for the other dancers. They tried to express outrage. The people in charge of the party informed Kohn that he was requested to refrain from dancing. With this kind of hump one should not dance. Kohn did not resist. Lisel Liblichlein watched as his face became grey.

She led him to a hidden recess. There she said to him: "From now on I shall tutoyer you." Kuno Kohn did not answer, but he accepted her sympathetic soul like a gift in his water-blue troubadour's eyes. Trembling, she said that she suddenly loved him so much that it was incomprehensible.., she would never again let his arm go... she had not know that one could be so wildly happy... Kuno Kohn invited her to visit him the next evening. She accepted gladly.

Kuno Kohn and Lisel Liblichlein were the first to leave the giddy celebration. They moved through the heaven-bright moonlit streets, whispering. The poet in love cast fantastic shadows with giant humps on the pavement.

When they parted, Lisel Liblichlein lowered her head and kissed Kohn's mouth several times. Thus Kuno Kohn and Lisel Liblichlein parted... He said that he was pleased that she would visit him the next evening. She said, very quietly, "I... oh... also..."

On the well cared-for streets, the carefully arranged houses stood like books on shelves. The moon had scattered bright blue dust on them. Few windows were lit, shining peacefully, like the eyes of lonely people, with the same gold-colored look. Kuno Kohn went home thoughtfully. His body was dangerously bent forward. His hands lay firmly at the end of his back. His head was hanging low. The hump towered above, an adventurous, sharp stone. At this time Kuno Kohn was no longer a man; he had his own form.

He thought: "I wish to avoid being happy. That would mean giving up the longing that transcends all fulfillment, which is my most exquisite meaning. To degrade the holy hump, with which a friendly destiny has endowed me, through which I have experienced existence much more deeply, more unhappily, more wonderfully, than people perceive, to a burdensome superficiality. I wish to develop out of Lisel Liblichlein her higher being. I want to make her utterly unhappy..."

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While the poet Kohn was thinking these thoughts, the poet Schulz at last was stabbing himself with a salad knife. He had observed Kuno Kohn and Lisel Liblichlein in their confidential conversation in the hidden recess. He had seen how they had gone off together. He tried to drink and eat away his grief, to no avail. After he had eaten and drunk for some time, he was insane. He sang: "Death is a serious matter... Death has no time for jokes... Death is an urgent need..." Then he timidly and hesitantly stuck the first knife that he could get his hands on into his left breast. Blood and the bloody remains of salad spurted around him. This time the attempt to kill himself was crowned with success.

IV

Lisel Liblichlein appeared the next evening earlier than the agreed upon hour. Kuno Kohn opened the door, holding flowers in his hand. He was visibly happy; he said that he had scarcely hoped that she would come. She placed her arms around his bony body, sucked him to her body, and said: "You dear humped little dummy... I love you so much—"

The ate a simple evening meal. She stroked him when something tasted good to her. She said that she wanted to remain with him until early morning. Then she could celebrate the beginning of her eighteenth birthday with him...

A church bell announced the new day.. The first loud breaths were like groaned prayers in Kohn's dusky room. There Lisel Liblichlein's young soul-body had become a temple; she had endured pain with touching matter of factness, to sacrifice herself to the hunch-backed priest. She had said: ``Are you happy now"—She lay dissolved in dream and emotion. The thin skin of her eyelids enveloped her.

Suddenly fright ran through her body. She had fear like claws in her face. Her eyes, torn open and screaming, were on the hunchback.

Lisel Liblichlein said, without expression, "This—was—happiness—" Kuno Kohn wept.

She said: "Kuno, Kuno, Kuno, Kuno, Kuno, Kuno... What shall I do with the rest of my life?" Kuno Kohn sighed. He looked seriously and with kindness into her sorrowful eyes. He said: "Poor Lisel! The feeling of complete helplessness that has come over you I have often felt. The only consolation is: to be sad. When sadness degenerates into doubt, then one should become grotesque. One should live on for the sake of fun. One should try to rise above things, by realizing that existence consists of nothing but brutal, shabby jokes." He wiped sweat from his hump and from his forehead.

Lisel Liblichlein said: “I don’t know why you are going on like this. I don’t understand what you have said. It was unkind of you to take away my happiness.” The words fell like paper.

She said that she wanted to go. He should get dressed. The naked hump was embarrassing to her...

Kuno Kohn and Lisel Liblichen said nothing more until they parted forever at the door of the house in which the boarding school was located. He looked into her face, held her hand, and said: “Farewell—” She said quietly: “Farewell.”

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Kohn receded into his hump. Destroyed, he moved on. Tears smeared his face. He felt her sadly gazing at his back. Then he ran around the corner of the next group of houses, stopped, dried his eyes with a handkerchief, and hurried off, still weeping.

Like a sickness, a slimy fog crept into the city, as it grew blind. Street lights were gloomy swamp flowers, which flickered on blackish, glowing stalks. Objects and creatures had only chilly shadows and blurred movements. Like a monster, a night bus reeled past Kohn. The poet called out: "Now one is again entirely alone." Then he encountered a fat, hunch-backed woman, with long spidery legs, wearing a ghostly, diaphanous skirt. Her upper body resembled a ball lying on a high little table. She looked at him temptingly and sympathetically, with an amorous smile, which the fog contorted into an insane expression. Kohn disappeared immediately in the greyness. She groaned and then trundeled on.

Sluggishly day limped closer, smashing the remains of the night with an iron crutch. The half-extinguished Cafe Kloesschen, a gleaming fragment, lay still in the soundless morning. In the background sat the last customer. Kuno Kohn had let his head sink back on his trembling hump. The scrawny fingers of his hand covered his forehead and face. His whole body cried out noiselessly.

The Virgin

Maria Mondmilch was the only child of the art-historian Doctor Maximilian Mondmilch and his lovely wife Marga Mondmilch. Mrs. Mondmilch is said to have been at one time a scullery-maid in the cafe in which Mr. Mondmilch—who at the time was a student—-drank tea, read newspapers, and smoked. After the birth of the child she had secretly left her spouse, supposedly to spend a few weeks with a champagne-waiter. Thereafter she fooled around alternately with very different men from very different social classes. She returned when she learned that the incurable Doctor had been brought to a mental institution for diseases of the brain. She carefully looked after the mortally ill man for the short time before he died. Then she married a wonderful coachman, who idolized her.

Doctor Mondmilch's illnes was first discovered when he wanted to commit a criminal offense against his eight-year old daughter. Fortunately the atrocity was able to be prevented at the last moment. The child, frightened in heart and mind, was placed in the care of the madman's brother, the excellent Moriz von Mondmilch, a first-class administrative officer. The last word of the dying art-historian was, "Maria."

A curious affection developed between the uncle and the niece. Nothing happened that could have been construed as illegal. The passion between the child and the old man aroused the jealousy of old Mrs. Minna von Mondmilch. After the marital discord had become too burdensome, the angered civil servant felt compelled to agree one year

later to a separation from his ward. He also had to consider his daughter, who had become a young woman. The parting was hard. His Excellency Moriz von Mondmilch had a crying fit.

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Maria Mondmilch arrived in a large city. The strangers with whom she boarded were paid a large amount of money. But otherwise they did not concern themselves with Maria Mondmilch. She exchanged secret letters with the noble uncle, filled with overflowing longing for life and hopes for adventure. The consciousness of constantly having something to hide gave her a solemn, inexplicable superiority. Maria Mondmilch preserved her uncle's letters as though they were sacred relics. Some of the letters were lost and became evidence in the famous divorce trial that excited the whole country.

Maria Mondmilch was a student in the big city at a girls' high school She was not among the best students. Sometimes she used her time diligently. She was accused of having instigated all kinds of dirty tricks that took place. When it became know that the head of the institution had met her in the evening on a disreputable street, it was expected that she would be dismissed from school. In the proceedings against a teacher of literature at the high school who, in spite of being accused of having committed several sexual crimes, had to be acquitted, she was the most important witness.

The young girl preferred to spend the night in the notorious section of the city. Maria Mondmilch allowed every possible kind of riff-raff, to speak to her, but she ran away from most of the men. She was not yet fifteen years old when she permitted a peddlar, whose acquaintance

she had made one filthy evening in a foul alley on a bridge, under neglected, ancient gas lamps, to photograph her naked in indecent poses. When she was sixteen years old, she spent Christmas vacation with a handsome electrician, who was a complete stranger to her, named Hans Hampelmann, in a run-down hotel, posing as husband and wife. Given her erotic needs, it was not difficult to explain her decision to study medicine after graduating.

The hungry actor Schwertschwanz—an intelligent and worn-out looking person, who stank of cheap chocolate—moved with aimless longing through the nocturnal, glittering, noisy streets of the city in which Maria Mondlich studied medicine. He met her while she was returning sadly from a lecture on human sexual diseases and male disorders. For fun—pretty much—he spoke to her. Together they both went into a cheap saloon.

Before speaking to the student, the actor Schwertschwanz had been thinking about what could most readily explain the doubt he had had for many years: the ultimate unimportance of all events; or only the happenstance that important people often must croak because of a lack of appropriate nourishment and medicine... the inadequacy of women... The incurable nature of Tabes disease, the symptoms of which he believed he detected in himself... When Maria Mondmilch named her profession, he lit up. Syphilis and its consequences were mentioned. Miss Mondmilch told of frightening cases. Mr. Schwertschwanz listened, shocked and carried away. He was fascinated when she, coquetishly stressing that she unfortunately could maintain only professional

relationships with men, as though unintentionally revealed a well shaped but austere leg, that was encased in an exciting, ordinary, half silk stocking.

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The student did not hide her liking for the actor. His shabby appearance filled her with confidence. The area around his internally) almost rotted, true-hearted blue eyes, worn out, as she imagined, by make-up and hopelessness, by excessive whorings or masturbation, gripped her soul. His being, a mixture of smugness and unashamed aggressiveness, very much excited her. Amidst the screaming, the waiters, the beer-benches, and the vapors, under the addictive yellow gaslights, she had to call out with rapture, “I’ve never met a man like you before, Mr. Schwertschwanz,” He was so pleased, he touched her. While a troop of soldiers marching by outside whistled the well-known folk song, “Little Maria, you sweet little creature *etc*...”

Without a spoken agreement, the lovers, arm-in-arm, moved in the direction of the student’s room when they left the boozy saloon. Upstairs, Maria Mondmilch laid down, with her legs crossed, on a sleep-sofa near the bookcase. The actor sank into a soft chair, next to which a small table with an ornate bottle of cognac stood. Talking was difficult. Each wanted to sob out to the other how much he or she had suffered from childhood on. They wanted to gobble each other up, so greedy were they as the minutes went by. Something stood between them. The actor drank the cognac. The student played nervously with her hands and feet.

The actor could no longer bear his agony. He cried out gently—it was as though something had been shattered to pieces: “I shall be frank. I am syphilitic”—Some tears rolled down his cheeks. He was startled by how insincere he was. The student held her hands in front of her face. As theatrically as he. But unconsciously.

He had miscalculated. Her erotic excitement was out of control. She wriggled on her sleep-sofa. She held out her hand to him. She whispered: “Poor man, come.” He did not take her hand. With lowered eyes, in a face filled with unhappy renunciation, whose effect had been tried out

on many hysterical women, he said: “You of all people should know that contact with me might give you an infection, although in the last few years my Wasserman test was always negative.” Then she said heroically: “Frankness deserves frankness. I am a virgin.”

Instinctively she had taken vengeance. He no longer had control of his overwrought senses. Like a cat he pounced onto the girl in the middle of the sleep-sofa. Now she fought him off. Ready, with anxious eyes, to give herself to him.

As they were wrestling the student sang her theme-song: “I am Maria Mondmilch, the girl, the virgin. Open your door for me. You, I tried the surface of many men’s flesh, old men and young. I tempted them all. In all of them I sought my man. No one penetrated me deeper than my skin... I prowled around during the days. Ran during the nights. I slept in the same bed with musicians and aristocrats. I was with

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salesmen and with pimps and with students. I ran around with bicycle artists and with lawyers. I let no man pass without looking him in the eye. Whether it rained. Or was winter. Or the sun shone. No one could call me his woman. No one was my man. One shot himself. One jumped into a swamp. I am guiltless... One went mad. One kicked me. Most went away as though nothing bad had happened... You, blue-eyed sorrowful face beneath me, oh, would that you were my man, that I might bloom in you. Are you my man, in whom I blissfully sink—"

And the actor sang to the student as they wrestled: "I am the actor Schwertschwanz, the man, the lecher. In all the bodies in which I have drunk, I sought you. I have become a drinker. Out of longing. I have poisoned my blood out of love. How meaningless it would be if I—half dead—found you now. I have looked for you too long to find you yet."

Then Maria Mondmilch called out as she fell on him: "Little Schwertschwanz, do you love me—" And already intoxicated: "He does not love me."

The man fall back in utter indolence. The student spat on his collar. Rammed the hat on the head of the spineless man. Pressed a gold coin into his hand. Threw him out.

While the actor Schwertschwanz, trembling with desire, went about searching for the right whore, Maria Mondlich sat over a thick anatomy textbook. She looked at the drawing of a completely naked man, And howled like a dog at the sea.

The suicide of the pupil Mueller

A Mr. Ludwig Lenzlich was a teacher and tutor in a mental hospital for psychopathic children. He was always called "Mr. A.B.D." He was beardless, like an actor, and he spoke like one. Generally he wore a severe, sharp mask on his face.

This Mr. Lenzlicht, two days after the burial of the pupil Martin Mueller (who had hanged himself with the stockings of the teacher Nora Neumann on the window bolt of a skylight), found in a dark corner of his desk a notebook. He took it out and looked at it. On the label was written: This work Martin Mueller dedcates to the new primitives. On the first page was written: Dear Lenzlicht, you are the only one of the imbeciles in the institution whom I believe capable of half-way understanding the observations which I have written down here. But reading this will demonstrate to you that you also, poor blind man, came into only glancing contact with my personality, as if it were some empty face, without feeling its powerful sensibility. Perhaps you will get an inkling (then you could call yourself lucky). I shall kill myself on the top-hung window, alone in the realization. My work will endure. Martin Mueller.

Mr. Lenzlicht was surprised when he read the sentences. Then he thought about the dimensions of childrens' imaginations. He was neither happy nor sad, but he seemed dark. Thinking was for him no passion, therefore he soon continued reading.

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On the next page some essays were written about the value of art, about its future, about the interrelationship of individual arts, about the architecture of literary style, about the new primitives who, according to Mueller, would bring about a victorious revolution in the life of art. The essays almost filled the notebook. Mr. Lenzlicht read it without taking an active interest, and he often skipped pages.

The last essay in the notebook seemed to interest him more. His eyes widened, and they fastened themselves to the letters. He held the paper like someone who was near-sighted, and with both hands. Sometimes he said something vague. Or he laughed without knowing it. Or he laughed, (the way someone would say “damn"). Or he let his tongue hang out of his mouth. In the notebook was written:

I sit at the desk and dream, which would seem suspicious to the good Lenzlicht: The young should not dream. Lenzlicht has already noticed that the skin around my eyes has become ashen. He often asks, with special emphasis, whether I slept badly saying that I look so funny. Once I became angry, and said: “You too, Mr. Candidate.” Smiling embarassedly, he beat me until I bled.

I had to interrupt my writing, because Miss Neumann had come in. Today she has colored legs with patent-leather shoes—I find that exciting. I had promised myself to watch her no longer... lately she shown herself to be such a prude... in the afternoon she went into the city. She came back late. I met her on the staircase. But she broke away and said, excitedly, “Go to bed.” And she went into her room. In the following days I did not see her. The servant Hermann said she must be taking care of her room. I asked why. He said she had become engaged. He smirked.

For me the erotic discussions had gradually become detestable. I always try to free myself. I am seldom successful. I know that an understanding woman might free me. This one wouldn’t: Miss Neumann is a silly young thing, eighteen years old. The cook is an immature bitch.

The housemaid Minna is arrogant; she is unapprochable, unjustifiably. Perhaps the head of the institution, Dr. Mondmilch, is a possibility, but when I try to make my valleys and peaks comprehensible to her, looking with longing into her eyes, give myself to her —she is distant, takes notes, has secret talks with Lenzlicht, prescribes tranquilizers. She is very brutal, I sometimes believe that she loves me secretly. She seems to be unhappy; I like her.-Yesterday I had to interrupt my writing, because the fat idiot Backberg called me to the table. I sit next to the Russian Recha. She likes to pinch my leg; she says I’m too fat. She kisses tall Lehkind, because he looks like a skeleton. Anyway, I can’t stand the vermin that have been assembled here. There’s trouble every day. In particular, the very small seven-year old Max Mechenmal—an

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unusually insignificant person—causes me unusual trouble. He does not like me, because he is conscious of my superiority. He tries in every way to make me look ridiculous. He is deceitful and cowardly. No one finds him nice. He likes nothing better than to provoke us against each other, to spread angry gossip, and to do as much damage as possible. He knows how to stay in the background, to disappear at the right moment. -Once I was writing, suspecting nothing bad, in our spacious bath and w.c. (here I was safe from surprises) a longer work on the “Hoax of Genius”. I explained that genius is a title, not a quality. That fact is often overlooked, and engenders great confusion. The name is accidental, generally suspicious. Whoever is called a genius is therefore not a brilliant person. Brilliant people usually do not attain the title, which is awarded by the crowd. The most brilliant people of all time flowered in madhouses and prisons. Someone who is understood by thousands of

every-day people, is loved... is worthless to me.-At that point I was startled by the slow, soulful screams of blind little Kohn, with whom I had established a friendship, in spite of my anti-semitic principles. I leaped up, hurried out. I saw how Max Mechenmal was running back and forth, pinching Kohn in the legs or doing other nasty things, while calling out: “Catch me.” The little Kohn was pale. In his helplessness. He pressed his back against a wall. His thin, suffering hands groped in the air... I have never seen such concentrated pain as lay in the dead eyes of little Kohn. Without giving myself time to put my clothes in order, I hurried to Mechenmal, to beat him for his brutal behavior. My trousers were damaged by a nail which was sticking out of the wall. Mechenmal used the delay to slip by me, run into the w.c., which he locked behind him. I beat on the door. He said: “Occupied!” I was very angry. It occured to me that in my haste I had forgotten to take with me the paper on which the work on the hoax of genius was written. I called to him to pass it out. He did not answer. Later I heard how loudly he giggled. And I knew: I would never see the manuscript which I had intended to send to the new newspaper, “The Other A.” Sadly I went away-Ah, little Kohn unfortunately is now dead. He has died of his ghosts, as he had often predicted to me. The blind little Kohn had seen his ghosts. Sometimes in stark daylight. At such times he was found trembling, pale, in a corner. He had drawn up his legs so far that his thigh was pressed against his sunken chest. His head lay between his knees. The tiny, frightened fingers clutched the tops of his shoes. If someone touched him, he shrieked. The shriek was so piercingly frightening that one instinctively let him go, as though one had been shoved. Each time it happened one was as as helpless as the first time. Doctor Mondmilch was called. She stroked him a bit. His rigidity dissolved in sobs. He received drops, was put to bed, slept badly. Mechenmal called out, so that it echoed in the street, “Kohn is mad again.”

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Towards the end, the attacks had become more frequent, especially at night. His fainting attacks lasted longer, and the exhaustion that followed was disheartening. One evening, when Doctor Mondmilch had accepted an invitation of the veterinarian and neurologist Dr. Bruno

Bibelbauer, and had gone away for an extended time, the catastrophe happened. Little Kohn lay in bed, nearly dead. Mechenmal said: “Now, at least, he will no longer disturb anyone who he wants to sleep.” The fat idiot Backberg had a good time at the burial. The cook howled; so did the housemaid Minna. Nora Neumann shut herself up in a room; I think she wrote poetry. The Russian Recha disappeared; Lenzlich later found her in the dead man’s room. She sat on the bed, held Kohn’s hand ecstatically to her heart, and moved the lid of his right eye back and forth with her right hand. I heard how she cried and said: that was so interesting. Lenzlicht complained wistfully.

Mechenmal still says, when he speaks about little Kohn, “he was certainly crazy.” I disagree. Every person who is not stupid has experiences now and then that cannot be brought into harmony with traditional visions available to everyone. Sometimes one is more sensitive than at other times and than other people. When one is alone, familiar things are more peaceful... perhaps, in the evening, when the lamp is half-lit... in the twilight, in lonely rooms... on nights which bring no sleep. At those times sounds arise from the stillness which I have never heard, which I cannot explain. I am startled, alarmed, want, in this burning enlightenment to be with many happy people—do not want to hear... hear more finely. Stillness is shattered. Everything yawns and has sound. Objects begin to move. Evil shadows generate fear. All forms lose their familiarity. I wait for... a horrible, incorporeal wonder.

I am a firm enemy of ghosts and specters and such things. I find these appearances are not sensible or funny; I want to have nothing to do with them. And yet I could prevent the fact that, shortly before noon, the form of an ancient woman, with austere facial features, appeared to me. I was unpleasantly moved by it. Even more so, when it later occurred to me that it had possibly been my mother.

It is not less unreasonable to deny ghosts than it is unreasonable to acknowledge wonders. If ghosts were an everyday occurrence, philosophers would construct natural laws, by means of which one could derive them. And without fuss overlook them.

I shall avoid further musing on these confusing things, by taking my life. People will be shocked. Deny me the right to have control over myself. They will offer the explanation that I was at the breaking point. Supplying medical reasons. To calm themselves down; for if everyone thought so, then there would soon be a universal protest against living. Life would be boycotted. That must not happen. If you ask: why not?—you will be condemned as a sophist. People don’t like to die; the term is called life-energy. They have recourse to Gods and a more cheerful outlook on life. If misery becomes too severe, you can always go to a better insane asylum.

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I decided to free myself from myself a long time ago. The most important motive for the action was: I really don't like myself. I happen to be unable to bear the idea of living with myself for an entire life. I have often complained that I cannot get rid of myself. I feel myself as a terrible burden. I would like to be in a courageous, honorable, pure young man. My person is untrue, unaesthetic, clumsy. I know that death will destroy me entirely; the thought for me is the cause for keen despair; I can't bear this thought for long. I have lost the ability to breathe. I feel as though a monster is pressing me from within. My brain's activity seems to have stopped. My hands are clenched in animal fear. I weep dry tears. The institution of death is probably not fitting for many men; one should be able to find means and ways to circumvent death. But dying is a trifle. The man who is preparing for death must not think of death.

Mieze Maier

I'm still attending high school, but am more interested in theater and literature. I read Wedekind, Rilke, and others. Goethe also. I don't like Schiller and George.

My friend's name is Mieze Maier. She lives, with her companions, in an elegant four-room apartment, since her father, Markus Maier, left her a lot of money. Her mother died ten years ago as a result of an operation on her stomach. Her mother must have been beautiful.

Mieze Maier just became sixteen. She had a big birthday celebration. Many beautiful and wicked girls and a number of young men were invited. Everyone was very silly. People whispered in each other's ears that Mieze was already sixteen. Then they laughed...

Mieze Maier is beautiful. Also smart. Also talented. Very flirtatious. Graceful and slyly charming. Sometimes unhappy. She knows how to make many men sick, so that sorrow fills their eyes when they are awake, and they have smiles on their lips when they sleep. And their hands are held tightly, close to their bodies...

She always had her favorites. They are like dolls with whom she plays, until, one day, she becomes tired of them and casts them aside carelessly. I know seven. No one has remained in her favor as long as six weeks. I am the eighth.

I know that my days are also numbered. I too will be cast aside by this sixteen-year old thing—still half child. When I think about it, I am already ashamed and tormented within. And yet...

We have not said to each other that we are in love, but we are very gentle with each other. It happens like this:

We met once. It was by chance. The day was grey with weariness. Twilight lay over all things. Yellow and red light came from a few houses.

We walked together. Her eyes had a brilliance. Sometimes she half covered them with her lids. And she caught the looks of men in her eyes. That must be a fine lust.

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We did not speak; but once she said that I had red lips. And once I said that she was superficial, for I wanted to make her angry.

The next day we met again. That was not by chance. We walked in the meadows. She put her hand on my shoulder and was good to me. I thought of the kick that I would once day receive from her.

... Yesterday I hurt her, because I called her superficial. There was something like crying in her voice when she said:

“I’m really not as superficial as you believe, Olaf. Twice I have been in love unhappily and once it bloomed happily.”

It seemed to me that her hand on my shoulder had become heavier...

We walked slowly. We saw no people. Wind came across the meadows. In the sky there were clouds everywhere, threatening rain.

She looked at me. Her look was naked and spoke of passion.

That was neat, how I suddenly seized her and threw her into the grass with me and half-intoxicated whispered to her: “You, my”—and how she lay there weary and sobbed: “Olaf"-Afterwards I performed my school work badly. I probably won’t be promoted.

Kuno Kohn

For six months I have been living in the house. None of the inhabitants has noticed anything. I am careful.

The white suit brings me luck. I earn enough. And I have begun to save; for I feel that one’s powers decline. I am tired frequently; sometimes I have pain. I shall also become fat and old. I don’t like to put make-up on-I am no longer being supervised. Kuno Kohn has made me free. I am thankful to him.

Kuno Kohn is repugnant; he has a hunchback. His hair is the color of brass, his face is beardless, and worn with furrows. His eyes seem old, encircled with shadows. A scar, like a stream of rain, runs from his nose. One of his legs is swollen. Kuno Kohn said once that he has an abscess in the bone.

The first meeting had been strange:

It was raining. The streets were wet and dirty. I stood under a street lamp and looked at my wet clothes. When the wind blew, I was chilled. My feet ached in my shoes.

Few people were on the street. Most of them on the other side. Protected by the trees. With their coat collars up. With the hat crooked over the forehead. No one was watching me; I was standing there, sad. The gravel crunched beneath me. Hard and sudden, so that I cried out. A

policeman came by, hands behind his back. He moved slowly. He looked at me suspiciously, proud of his authority. With a stark look, he felt that he was master. He moved further on. I laughed scornfully; he did not look back. The policeman despised me.

I yawned: it had become late.—Along came a man who was small and deformed. He stopped when he saw me. He had unhappy eyes; on his lips was an embarrassed smile. He hid part of his face behind scrawny fingers. And he rubbed his right eye-lid, like someone ashamed of himself. And he coughed slightly... I went up close to him, so that he felt me. He said: “Well—: I said: “Come, little one.” He said: “I’m actually homosexual.”

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And he took my hand. And kissed with cold lips.

Mabel Meier

It was late. I heard the sounds of trucks passing frequently. In the distance I saw people. On a corner two people were standing who... felt ashamed as I drew near.

Girls came, who were late. A few, who wanted to earn money. I saw the tall whore, who worked this area every night. I recognized her by her slip.

A detective was watching me. In front of me a woman was walking, who stood still often and wailing.

I did not think about it. I looked up at the stars and found nothing to wish for. I looked at myself with indifference, like a foreign object. I shook my head, that the old man was walking alone so late... and murmured to the stars.. and it's so strange.

I met a woman who said: "Ah—" I said: "may I accompany you?" The woman said: "Please." It was quite dark.

We went along together; the woman said that her name was Meier; but her first name was Mieze. She lived with relatives; they employed a doorman. In addition, she sang in a chorus.

The woman was neither beautiful nor young, but she seemed approachable. I had no reason to be shy.

In front of the house in which the woman lived we stopped.

I suggested that we look for a hotel. The woman was not averse; she said: "No-" I said: "Why?" The woman said: "Papa" I said: "The you don't want—" A smile came over the woman's face. She looked at a street lamp—

Siegmund Simon

Nine doctors claim that Samuel Simon is suffering from delusions. I am of the same opinion.

For 29 years I have been in the mental institute. They are friendly to me. I can do what I want. When it's warm, I go into the garden and listen to the hours die. When it is cold, I sit at the window and let my mind drift towards the sky. Often I watch the people, when they call or work or are sad... I am glad that I am far away. I do not miss life. I am glad if no one does anything to me or wants anything from me. I don't envy people.

Nine times a year my pale wife brings me flowers. My son Siegmund never comes. The last time I saw him was when I was buried. On my 49th birthday-I lay in a plain wooden coffin. I was placed on a wagon-like catafalque. Nine pall-bearers dressed in black walked beside me. Behind me was the pastor, Leopold Lehmann, and at his side my wife Frieda and my nineteen-year-old son Siegmund. Behind them were a few relatives, who were contented, and were speaking about the plague of caterpillars.

The sun cast warm light. Wind blew from time to time. It crawled over the gravel, tickling the women's breasts and calves. We stopped before the open grave. The coffin was lowered, and a few formalities and

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prayers were taken care of. Then the pastor, Leopold Lehmann, began, at the behest and at the expense of my wife, to deliver a memorial speech. He said:

“Dear sisters and brothers! Once again a kindly fate has robbed us of the life of a dear person. In grief we stand at the grave of the departed and remember him sadly.”

My son Siegmund bit his lips. The pastor said:

“The earth, which has singled out the body so that it might lead its own life for a short while, has taken it back into the bosom of the mother. A noble man has gone home—”

A fit of laughter overcame my son Siegmund. His face became red and serious... He laughed until he was gasping.

My wife shrieked.

A pall-bearer dropped a bottle of whiskey, which broke on the coffin.
The pall-bearer regretfully cast his eyes down.

The relatives were outraged. They were ashamed of my son Siegmund.
Some women cried into genuine lace handkerchiefs.

I was completely still.

The pastor said:

“If one does not how to behave, he should not come to a burial—Amen.”

He threw some sand over the broken bottle of whisky. And left.
Proud. Offended. The pastor. Leopold Lehmann.

My son Siegmund cleaned his fingernails.

The Friend

I love the dead days. They have no glow; they are colorless and filled with yearning. The houses stand like scenery before the grey clouds; the people move as though in a film: in the evening they move no differently from the way they moved in the morning. All things are more ponderous. And my room seems as though someone has died in it.

Whenever these days occur, a mindless desire to work grows irresistibly in me. I carry out my daily tasks as though as I were performing a mass. And I lose myself while doing so. Almost the way dreamers have lost themselves. But sometimes I notice that I have become motionless and inwardly rigid.

Then I become very alert, and I can no longer do tasks. I go to the window, where I have wonderful thoughts. But usually they occured only at night.

I feel out of place in all matters. They press upon me as though they don't know me: the streets and the people and the doors to the houses and the thousand movements. Wherever I look I become confused.

My little death torments me; there were many, greater deaths. And that I am alone. And that everywhere something inconceivable is threatening. And that I do not find my way.. And all the remaining sadnesses, for which there is no doctor, and which should not be revealed. Each must submit to them alone, and in his own way. Talking about them is ridiculous, but many die of them. I am afraid that I am so at odds with myself and so powerless. Until memories come. Unbidden. But kind. From somewhere. They numb me.

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I smile when I find a child crying or the mother's death, which was hideous and is unspeakable, or the other bloody delights, dear things. I smile when the eyes of my friend suddenly come to life in the silky shadows, that they shine as though out of a haze, and they reveal their most inner secrets. No one has said it to me, and you will call me a fool... but I know that his death has always been in the eyes, the way for someone else it is in the lungs or in the spinal cord...

His eyes were miserable and lost and painfully hopeless, so that people laughed when he looked at them. He was ashamed of his eyes, as if they betrayed sinful adventures, and he hid them under yellowed lids. But he felt how he was stared at when he entered someplace where he was not expected. Or he sat down where his presence needed no explanation. He watched in an exaggerated manner, like a petitioner. Coughed and held his hand in front of his mouth, drew his cheeks in and pushed one of them outward with his tongue. Was embarrassed. Unhappy. Would have preferred to have been alone... in the dark.

Children bent their heads when his gaze caught their eyes. And turned red. And grinned shyly and silently. Women giggled, and looked innocuous, and slapped each other on the thigh or on the bare shoulders and kissed their ravaged men. In the night they lay awake and their thoughts were white hot. But the young girls avoided him.

Konrad Krause

Not once during the night do I have rest here. Often a hand or a word tears me from sleep. Because everything is dark, I often do not know in the morning who was with me.

I must get up early, to clean the clothes and polish the boots. My legs are heavy, and my eyes are still very weary. But the young masters are hard when I neglect something, and cruel. But at night they are friendly and caress me as though I were a grand lady.

Only old Mr. Konrad Krause is good during the day as well. When he wants something, he speaks without humiliating me; and something in the sound of his voice makes me happy. He does not permit anything nasty to be said about me in his presence. I like him very much.

Recently I had a laugh over him. I was awoken by noise coming from the corridor outside my room. It was a conversation. I detected two voices: I missed much of what one said, for it whispered; what I caught was young and rough. One I caught without trying; clear as if it were a body. I felt that it was too fat and had wrinkles.

From the rough voice I heard: "Do you also want to go to her, father?"

From the fat voice I heard, "Go first, my son—"

When Mr. Heinz came into the room, he made a frightened sound, because I was laughing so much. And then he had to sneeze...

But I will soon forget this. I can no longer even remember when the old Mr. Konrad Krause said he liked me. That was still nicer.

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I only remember that the writing-table at which he sat was already dark when I brought the tea. He asked who was in the house; I said: “No one”—and wanted to pour the tea.. But he pointed to his thigh and said: “sit down”—I said: “If I may”—and I sat down. He said: “Put the teapot on the writing-table.” I did that. And then we looked at each other ardently, but I was very bashful. Suddenly he took my hand and pressed it to his stomach. He said: “Beloved.”

We trembled violently.

The Family

The family all come together once every month. The women with the children meet in the afternoon.

Coffee is drunk. The children are sent away. The should play. They must not hear everything.

But the women whisper. Their faces show concern. They are speaking of someone who is very sick.

At twilight they tell stories about ghosts and miraculous cures. They become frightened. They call the children. They press the children to their breasts.

Then fruit is eaten.

The men come. Conversations about hair styles, about business. And so on. The conversation moves haltingly. Suddenly stops, like a defective clock. Fear that it will stop entirely. A young girl blushes-But at one point everything is still. It feels suffocating. It feels unsafe, like in a swing, helpless, like in a slide... it feels ridiculous. One hears something like the wind sweeping across the roofs. Rain beats against the grey windows.

Still silence.

There-Is it really so bad... with him—how should it turn out...
People avoid each other’s eyes.

Leopold Lehmann

I am an employee of a bank. Because I have no patron, and I am not especially hard-working, I am not getting ahead. For more than 30 years I have been shifting the same kind of papers around in the same department. For this reason I am considered conscientious.

For the last six months I have had a new assistant. His name is Leopold Lehmann. He knows everything better than I. He is the nephew of the deputy director. He calls himself a trainee. He likes to hear himself talk. Most of all he likes to talk about himself. As a result, I know the story of his life.

Leopold Lehmann, as he emphasizes, was drawn in a clumsy manner from the womb with a forceps. His head is misshapen, like a noodle. His nose also. He has gone through the usual illnesses. He enjoys a complicated form of syphillis. It has eaten holes the size of fists in Lehmann's body.

Leopold Lehmann wishes to give up his duties in the bank, to study theology. I believe that he has already given notice.

Lehmann associates exclusively with theologians and with me. And with the deputy director.

He has sclerosis of the spinal cord.

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Conversation about Legs

When I was sitting in the coupé, the gentleman opposite me said:

“Nobody can step on your toes.”

I said: “How so?”

The gentleman said: “You have no legs.”

I said: “Is it noticeable?”

The gentleman said: “Of course.”

I took my legs out of my backpack. I had wrapped them in tissue paper. And taken them with me as a memento.

The gentleman said: “What is that?”

I said: “my legs.”

The gentleman said: “You have a leg up and yet get nowhere.”

I said: “Unfortunately.”

After a pause the gentleman said: “What do you think you□re really going to do without legs?”

I said: “I haven□t racked my brain much about that yet.”

The gentleman said: “Without legs even committing suicide is difficult.”

I said: “Yet that□s a bad joke.”

The gentleman said: “Not at all. If you want to hang yourself, first you□ve got to get up on the window sill. And who will open the gas jet for you if you want to poison yourself? You could only buy a revolver secretly through a servant. But suppose the shot misses? To drown yourself you□ve got to take an automobile and have yourself carried down to the river on a stretcher by two attendants who have to haul you to the far bank.”

I said: “That□s for me to worry about.”

The gentleman said: “You□re wrong, I□ve been thinking since you□ve been siting here how one might get rid of you. Do you think that a man without legs makes a

sympathetic picture? Has the right to live? On the contrary, you create a terrible disturbance for the aesthetic feelings of your fellow human beings."

I said: "I am a full professor of ethics and aesthetics at the university. May I introduce myself?"

The gentleman said: "How are you going to do that? Clearly you cannot imagine how impossible you are, in your condition."

I looked sadly at my stumps.

II

Soon the lady opposite me said:

"To have no legs must be a very odd feeling."

I said: "Yes."

The lady said: "I would not like to touch a man who had no legs."

I said: "I am very clean."

The lady said: "I must overcome a great erotic disgust to speak with you, not to mention looking at you."

I said: "Really..."

The lady said: "I don□t believe that you are a criminal. You might be a wise and, in your original condition, nice person. But I could not, with the best will in the world, have relations with you, because you have no legs."

I said: "One gets used to everything."

The lady said: "That a man has no legs causes a naturally sensitive woman to feel an inexplicable, profound terror. As though you had committed a disgusting sin."

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I said: “But I am innocent. I lost one leg in the excitement of assuming my professorial chair for the first time, the other I lost when, sunk in thought, I found that important aesthetic law which led to basic changes in our discipline.”

The lady said: “What is the name of that law?”

I said: “The law says: everything depends on the structure of the soul and the mind. If soul and mind are noble, a body must be considered beautiful, no matter how humped and misshapen it may be.”

The lady ostentatiously lifted her dress and revealed, right up to the top of her thigh, sheathed sumptuously in silk, wonderful legs, that towered, like branches, from her ripe body.

At the same time the lady finally said: “You may be right, although one might as easily argue the opposite. In any case, a person with legs is totally different from one without them.”

Then, striding proudly away, she left me sitting there.

Savior of the theater

Theaters should stop competing with the cinema. By doing so, they are thereby achieving —rejoice, friends of the theater the opposite of what they want: they are perishing.

The best way for these theaters to maintain themselves is to make concessions to the cinema; they make neither concessions in the selection of plays, nor in scope. This can be explained. What movies giving in to the instincts of the crowd offer can never be produced in the same dimensions and amount by theater, bound as it is by its limits. Shaking its head, the public notices the helpless effort. And runs to the movies. For what should bind the public most to the theater: art, is for the most part shamefully neglected. (As when makers of felt hats had the idea, when straw hats were worn by everyone, to bring to the market felt hats shaped and colored like straw hats.)

Before movies came along, the many second-class theaters were by far a much greater danger to the theater. Characteristically organizations of this kind are threatened most by movies. Some will remain for a while, because of the skill of their directors or through other accidents. Second-class theater undoubtedly will die out in a short time. The public, which found this sort of thing to their taste, has, in the movies, a much more luxurious substitute: death and homicide in abundance. Comedy until you burst. Juicy melodrama. And the movie actor with his heavy-handed emphases for example, in a tragic, many-colored story of adultery (in period costumes) surpasses the hammy Hamlet in heart-gripping effect.

Theaters that want to survive are compelled to think again about what they are doing. Directors must cultivate the pure art of theater. Actors in contrast to “filmers”, or better still “ciners” or “cinekers” to maintain their reputations, must abandon all tricks and gimmicks. The public that goes to the theater in spite of movies is discriminating and can t be taken in.

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There cannot be too many movies. As a member of the cultural police I would order that half a dozen be opened on every street.

The more people rush into the movies, the more a part of the fraud will become tiresome. Of the hundred thousands who throng the movies, a few hundred every year will return once more to the theater.

The number of theaters in the future will be smaller, but their average quality will be disproportionately better. The incompetent directors, dramatists, and other squabblers, who until now were parasites on the theater, will find in movie-making a place more suited to their capabilities. The many mediocre and bad actors who now help keep prices down and block the way will become wonderful cinikers. A talented shoemaker in the future will not go to theater schools but to film schools. Lispers, cripples, hunchbacks, mutes, and similar handicapped mimes will be able, more easily and more happily, to find relief in the movies.

(The cinema of boundless possibilities□)

But the theater, thanks to the movies free of hindering ballast and harmful influences, will have to return to the sacred dramatic art.

CHAPTER FROM A FRAGMENTARY NOVEL translated by Harry Radford

Doctor Bryller did become a senior teacher after all. A furious enemy of his had predicted such a destiny years ago, in the out-of-date periodical “The Other A”. At that time he was deeply distressed about this insight of his enemy, the truth of which, after thinking intensely about it, he could not deny. He wrote an intemperate article which was not accepted for publication anywhere. And one evening he got a little drunk on French sparkling wine, to kill the innate fear which prevented him from beating up his enemy. But his cowardice did not leave him, even in drunkenness. Unspeakably unhappy, he gave up the idea of taking revenge.

Now in earnest he began to live a solitary and transfigured life. He let this be known in an in flammatory manner, just as he had so often done when announcing the agenda of a new trend in art. And with the profoundest solemnity, as though he were at an important funeral. He even exploited his failure in order to feel superior. In point of fact, he lived hardly differently than before. The only change was that he had actually become more hopeless in an emotional sense. Now he had to calm himself with the thought: Even if I could achieve what I wanted to, I would achieve nothing. While previously his line of thinking ran: Unfortunately it is indeed true that I can achieve nothing, but what I can achieve is rather good.

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Practically minded as Berthold Bryller was in certain ways, he was able to cast his weaknesses in common human terms, so that the despair, which at first had revealed itself in hysterical attacks of a special kind, soon gave way—except in rare conditions—-to a feeling of lofty indifference. He still wrote his impudent and careless letters, which did him considerable harm; he published particularly clever, slightly demented essays in the few journals with whose editors he didn't happen to be quarreling with; he founded both clubs which then expelled him, and periodicals in which he was attacked. Everywhere, and in other ways, he continued to make himself impossible even by his very presence. The uninitiated might interpret his absence from the Café Klößchen as a sign of his inward transformation, if it were not for a poster fixed to the door of the Cafe:

No admittance to Bryller!

which suggested that an argument with the manager was the reason for his absence.

But gradually the hopelessness of his literary existence became inescapable to Doctor Bryller, who was certainly no idiot. In addition, his funds for the foreseeable future were exhausted. So, incapable of killing himself if it were to become necessary, he had to focus his energy on working to earn a living. His writing activity was financially unsuccessful. He would not have the heart to take a permanent literary job—something like an editorship—aside from the fact that no one would take him. What other option did he have but to use the rest of his money to continue his interrupted university training, take the necessary state examinations, and then find himself a secure and pleasant position as a senior teacher. In point of fact, this profession seemed thoroughly comfortable to him. Convinced of the incorrigibility of human imperfection, which he had experienced first hand, and utterly convinced of the complete uselessness of physical and intellectual striving, he gladly gave free rein to any and all base impulse. He could satisfy his cravings for power, his other ambitions, even his erotic needs, most readily as a senior teacher.

Despite his moodiness and frequent peculiar behaviour, Doctor Bryller was one of the most popular teachers at the Horror High School. The small pupils idolized him, the bigger ones clung to him passionately. Of course there also were pupils who didn't like him. For example, the second-year pupil Max Mechenmal whose face he had slapped a few times without obvious reason. This could have had the most unpleasant consequences for Doctor Berthold Bryller. On the occasion of the teacher meeting called by director Rudolf Richter after the highly indignant complaint of the pupil, a large majority of the colleagues, unlike the pupils, turned out to have unfriendly feelings for the Doctor. When he, questioned about why he had pupil, smilingly replied that Mechenmal displeased him, they wanted to recommend to the authorities,

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following the suggestion of the respected colleague Lothar Laaks, that he be removed for a considerable time for the purpose of mental recovery in a sanatorium. Only the happenstance that the aggrieved pupil Mechenmal was hated equally by teachers and pupils, because of his overfriendly awkwardness and his malicious secret rabble-rousing, impeded such a decision. Although colleague Laaks—the only one who found words of appreciation for Mechenmal—advocated it heatedly with the use of much dirty dialectic. The colleagues were content to warn Doktor Bryller of the inappropriateness of his behavior.

One day, about a half year before the final incarceration of Berthold Bryller for life, in an insane asylum subsidized by the state, a yelling arose in the schoolyard of the Horror High School. A crowd of mostly smaller pupils surged behind a dwarfish, care-worn, lop-sided boy whose back showed the slight beginnings of a hump. They teased him cheerfully and spitefully—the words were unintelligible because of the noise but surely malicious. He was pushed so that he stumbled. Many older high school pupils looked on, amused at the lively rough-housing. Even senior teacher Laaks, who was supervising, failed to suppress an amused smile. In a window was the motionless face of Doctor Bryller.

The malformed boy continued walking without defending himself. With bent head. Often he had to wipe his eyes with his hand. Only once, when one of most impudent youths □ who else but the second-year pupil Mechenmal—spat into his face while the others raucously clapped approval, did he throw himself sobbing deeply against the attacker, who immediately ran away. Through the middle of the shrieking crowd, which blocked his way in all directions, the crying humpback pursued his schoolmate. Perhaps he would have reached Mechenmal if the perennial fourth-year pupil Spinoza Spass hadn’t suddenly grasped his hump as if with a hook. Spinoza Spass grinned comfortably and maliciously into the monkey-shaped, longingly apathetic face, as he propelled the little despairing Kohn like a weight slowly through the sunny spring air. By this heroic deed he became one of the most famous fourth-year pupils of the Horror High School.

Some sympathetic older high school pupils put an early end to the strange spectacle. The gaunt, pale senior Paulus snatched the tiny unfortunate boy from the venemously peering Spass and threatened to beat up anyone who annoyed the lop-sided little Kohn further. For fear of Paulus and some other like-minded boys, they left the flushed humpback in peace—at least for the time being. He walked along, pressing himself against the gray walls. And would have most happily sunk into the ground. When the school bell rang, he was glad to disappear into the classrooms.

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The senior Peter Paulus was already walking along the somewhat dark corridor to the spacious room in which the parish priest Leopold Lehmann gave Hebrew lessons to the pupils in the upper classes, when the senior teacher Laaks caught up with him, called to him, and engaged him in a mysterious, very excited conversation. Laaks was apparently reprimanding Paulus. It was strange, however, that he didn't look like a teacher chastising a pupil, but rather like a mistrustful relative who believes himself taken advantage of in an inheritance matter. The behavior of the senior was also by no means the behavior of a subordinate...

The discussion between the two must have lasted a very long time. For when Peter Paulus entered more pale than usual and explained that his late arrival was caused by an official conversation, the priest Lehmann had long since concluded the topic of that day□s curriculum. He was engaged in a religious discussion which, following the modern trend, he linked regularly to the Hebrew lesson. They were speaking at the moment about God and the nature of student life, but came, after a few unimportant discussions, to the main topic: abortion and the inner life, which gave them pause. The discussion was triggered by a report in an art journal that someone had cut out and brought for the purpose of discussion. The priest read out loud:

Collapse of the famous dancer Lola Lalà

A correspondent has wired us that the famed variety dancer Lola Lalà, who also appears under the name Lo Lálalà and whose maiden name is Leni Levi, had to be taken to a lunatic asylum, which caused a tremendous sensation. The pitiful woman had been found toward morning in a wheat field, stark naked in her birthday suit, crying bitterly and smoking a large cigar. Mr Gottschalk Schulz, a poet of sensitivity, has published a moving poem about this in the "Newspaper for Enlightened Citizens". It has a piquant attraction because—so it is rumored and probably correctly—the poet maintained quite warm relations with the poor and charming dancer. Therefore this beautiful poem will not be withheld from our readers:-The poem had the heading: Smoke on the Field. The priest didn't read it out, however, because it was too smutty. Also it was not relevant. Instead he read:

As I learn further from a special, authentic source in the late evening, the cause of the mental collapse of the dancer is said to have been a fright caused by a burglary that happened after an abortion that was carried out successfully. A court-ordered investigation is underway.

After this the priest started to talk about abortion by saying: "Human knowledge reaches its pinnacle in the realization that he is the most highly developed earthly being. No one can deny this." He didn't notice the deliberately exaggerated and suppressed laughter of a few boys. And he slowly continued. He condemned abortion as disagreeable to God from a religious and socio-political point of view. In conclusion,

he said: “We are modern. We don’t shrink from treating offensive questions with moral seriousness.”

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The only one who contradicted him was Peter Paulus. He fell—outwardly calm—into such a rage that he said: “If I were a doctor, Father, I myself would—“. In reply the priest said heatedly: “Do you believe in God, Paulus?” And Peter Paulus said only: “No”. A few minutes before the end of the class, he was expelled from the Hebrew lesson because of social democratic leanings and godlessness.

He left defiantly. Slammed the door.

When the widowed prison chaplain Christian Kohn had to give his only child, who was mentally ill and had heart disease, to an institution, he adopted—nobody knows why—a little cripple. There was much gossip. The most obstinate rumor was that the cripple, Kuno, was a natural son of the chaplain. The mother was said to be the popular Trude, who had been convicted of manslaughter after shooting her disloyal pimp. Trude had been pardoned, with the rejoicing approval of the whole village, because it had turned out that she was pregnant. It was claimed that the sympathetic chaplain had caused Trude’s pregnancy. But this was not proved.

Kuno Kohn spent the half-awake first part of his youth in the dreary stone rooms and yards of the penitentiary. His adoptive father had little concern for the boy. He was absent for weeks at a time. Left in the care of a morose servant, whose main occupation was to manage the miserable financial affairs of the chaplain, and lacking sufficient care, lacking playmates, lacking stimulation and love, the crippled child could not develop. Remained always dwarfish. He slunk around, pale and dreamy. Intimidated and timorous. Toward evening, bold shadows and horrific noises teemed on the twisty stairs with their grated windows, and in the great gloomy halls and passages. A more robust boy would have ignored such peripheral things, if he had noticed them at all. But on Kuno Kohn the most insignificant thing left a deep impression, the most minor thing had meaning, and horrified him. Everywhere and from everything he feared disaster. Nothing was familiar to him. The eternal fear made him into a little darting ghost himself, and gave his consumptive eyes a phosphorescent glow. If he was sent out late at night, perhaps to get milk or kerosene, he would pray in feverish fervor to dear God. He would come back breathless and white as chalk.

More than anything, Kuno Kohn was afraid of the thousand-fold darkness before falling asleep. In the past, a tiny lamp had been put into the room for him; the reddish melancholy glow calmed him a little. On the soft wall the strangest grimaces and battles appeared, but also tin soldiers marching and a delightful jumble of fairies and cake plates and queens, until sleep came. After a time, the chaplain decided not to allow any more such mollycoddling of the soul of his son. Kuno would have to live in the dark. Gone was the tiny bit of visibility. The innumerable incomprehensible events of chaos rolled about the

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little boy. More of the world pressed into the small bedroom of the humpback than the entire day had contained. Kuno Kohn had lost the body that was supposed to lie in the bed: only fright and helplessness and longing were left. The worst was when the desolate indistinctness took on the shape of visions or touches. The Kohn boy then cried out despairingly. Either the cry was not heard by anyone or it carried no clear meaning. In prisons there are always yells in the night from somewhere. Kuno often lay for a long time, until the unfathomable hole, which had so many incomprehensible contents, admitted the lively pictures that brought dreams and sleep: burglars, or perhaps a hackney cab journey in the sun, a visit to his little ill brother, a game with street children, the dear, sad angel eyes of Maria Müller, for whom he would gladly die.

The prisoners were Kuno Kohn's good acquaintances. Not the guards; these were indeed quite friendly to him but there was an instinctive suspicion underneath. On the other hand, the ruffians and gamblers, sex killers and robbers, the most famous burglars, and most of the other distinguished old-established residents welcomed the little humpback warmly, by a slight nod of the head or almost imperceptible grin, whenever he came to watch with wide-open dreamy eyes the silent gray work. Only the fences, profiteers, confidence men, defrauders, swindlers, most of the bankrupts and some of the pimps, remained indifferent. In the course of the year, Kuno Kohn had made friends particularly with the youthful burglar Benjamin. The two often sat for hours together. If the guards looked the other way... Benjamin spoke enthusiastically to the humpback. Of sun. And freedom. And of the redemption of mankind. Kuno Kohn arranged Benjamin's secret traffic with the outside world and did various favors for his friend; he provided him with cigarettes, books, small tools. When once a volume of Goethe and a little cigarette ash were found in Benjamin's cell, Kohn was suspected. After the escape of the burglar, which happened shortly afterwards, which could have happened only with outside help, a message was sent to the clergyman. He forbade his son the company of the prisoners. The guards were not allowed to let him in any more.

The great problems that tormented Kuno Kohn constantly, as soon as he was able to get his thoughts together to some degree, were mainly death and God. At the age of four or five he did not believe in death, at least not in his own. And he prayed to the dear God daily before he lay down to sleep. "I am small, my heart is pure, no one shall live there but God alone". But if he had done something during the day that seemed sinful to him—and that almost always happened—he would add (sitting in bed or standing if it was particularly bad) long and remorseful monologues until he fell asleep, overfatigued, with fingers still folded and tears in his eyes. If darkness and fear came, he always prayed. Gradually his doubts increased, to the point where he had to believe in his own death and abandon his faith in God. When he started school, there began the fullness of suffering which some children find there.

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NOTES ABOUT THE NOVEL

Lunatic asylum: Bryller, Lola.

Drowning in the sea: Kohn, Maria.

Suicide: Schulz, Paulus.

Surviving: Spinoza Spass, Laaks, Mechenmal.

I. Appearance in the schoolyard. Peter Paulus for Kohn, Laaks against him (Kohn had filled his pants, Max Mechenmal). Later, Kohn joining Paulus against Laaks. Jealousy scenes. Because of Laaks' intrigues, Paulus fails the College Board Exam and shoots himself dead. Farewell letters (touching for Kohn, official funeral, Kohn runs away from it).

Senior teacher Dr. Bryller takes no action, even encourages Paulus, his favorite pupil, to kill himself: Kill yourself before it is too late (as long as you are still capable of it). It doesn't have any purpose, of course, but will give you something like satisfaction. (God is a temporal phenomenon.)

The corpse was carried well-packed in a box to the graveyard, where it was buried for eternity under a cloakroom marker.

II. Scene Kohn, Laaks in bathtub.

Laaks made an attack on Max's femininity.—Laaks and Kohn meet. Kohn greets him, Laaks catches up. Invites him to visit. "No, Mr Laaks". Kohn trembles—"Would you like to take a bath?"—"I have already bathed."—Moonlight shines on the two in the bathtub. In hairy nakedness—his hairy legs, like a woman's—a man's man.

III. Scene in homosexual bar.

(You see, my boy, that's life—he pinched him tenderly on the bottom.)

IV. Abortion scene.

The variety dancer Lola Lalà: The clever woman said jokingly: When women break down, they remain standing for a long time.—Farewell, young lady. Lola Lalà, alias Lene Levi, runs as though insane.

V. Burglary scene at Lola's: —The professional burglar Benjamin, lying under the bed, didn't know what to think. His head shook and his skull hit a senseless bedpost, which

gave off a fixed tone. Benjamin was frightened. The lamp fell over. The curtains ignited immediately.

Suddenly she (Lola Lalà) also became frightened. Everything slurped up by licking fire. Ran out. Shut the door. Locked it. Twice. Senseless. Suddenly, pitiful masculine shouts from behind the door: Help, help. She screamed: Murderer, murderer, murderer. Ran. Onto the street in the peace of the evening: People coming out of houses. Helpless. She ran by all of them. Murderer, murderer... A crazy woman came up behind her. A dog catcher was able to grasp her. Murderer, murderer. Took her in an open hackney cab and through the town. Murderer, murderer. Windows go up, cars stop. Running about. Into lunatic section of the hospital.

In the meantime, burning room. Burglar Benjamin thrashing at the window: Help. Forbidden action. Help. One shouldn□t become a social democrat that way. Wailing: a police trap, to let decent people burn in a fire. Help, help. Fire department comes. Help. Water sprays him. From the frying pan into the fire. He can even jump right now into the river. Drowns.

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When the half-decayed corpse was pulled from the water, the doctor, still drunk, began to make bad jokes. Dr. Bryller vomited.

All talking, thinking, writing is useless; a corpse pulled from the water, lying dead in front of you, ruins everything written with its terrible distortion. See how the face and the hands are rigid as though clamped in iron! As though they are screaming to get out of themselves!

VI. Lunatic asylum scene: the insane red-haired sister of Martin Müller (Maria).

“The earth is getting dark”, said Maria, the insane red-haired sister of Martin Müller. (She loves her brother). She strokes little Kohn, but says: “I can love only saints”. All around were the melodies of the evening, which conceal everything as with a silk veil: the green trees, the longing earth, the bench with the red-haired girl and the little humpback.

In the lunatic asylum: one inmate, a lady with hair already rather gray, said: “If one stops here too long, one stays.”—A modern writer who imagines he is there only to study the milieu, but who has, in reality, a softening of the brain, *etc*.

VII. Kohn’s first lover (on Laaks’ order): Hysterical person, the bugs really crept around in the kitchen.

VIII. The end of Dr. Bryller.

IX. Schulz the writer and Kitty the cocotte.

(Kitty said “Not so loud” as Schulz was telling her about God.)

X. Lecture of the scholar Neumann:

Sensation: A barely sixteen year old scholar named Neumann speaks about maternity regulations and the bringing up of children—it doesn’t seem to him the place to talk about fallen girls—women have understood that it is right and proper to stay where they belong—the misery of prostitution—posed gestures. Voice. Raise the eyebrows. I must express myself in extremes. I must decidedly condemn zionism as a special variety of prostitution. Maternity regulations: The mother must be protected against her children (new sensational concept), a lady said.—She, a German specialist, contributed to the debate: “In the place where you have left your faith, there you must fetch it”.

XI. Kohn□s second lover: Teenager (in one hand she had an illustrated astronomy text).

He loved her in this way: He frequently made a note if she said something funny to use it later (literarily). But in a cafe on a pond—everywhere it was already evening, and

haze hung like veil on the trees and tables and waiters—he took out his notebook from the torn inside pocket of his overcoat and read to her quietly... She laughed and he laughed—more quietly and sadly. Each thought: This isn't the right thing... she thought further: he isn't thoughtful... he thought further: the poor thing, how distant she is from me... then they went rowing.

XII. Bar scene in Nuremberg: Kunstmayer.

They are all blissfully drunk and can hardly speak clearly anymore. Slurring, someone says: "Dede do dadä". □ What are these brutish sleepers worth?—"See how the gaze of this worker is turned inward like an ox's eye ", said Paulus.

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“The upper-crust ten thousand rule the world”, grumbled the waiter bitterly; then he played a wild variation of “Sweetie, You Are the Apple of My Eye” on a mouth organ. From time to time, he beat against the edge of a table. He rubbed his hand clean on his sleeve or trouser leg.

Karl Kunstmayer, a revue performer down on his luck: I like to tell dirty jokes... a great guy, philosophically tip-top, but is too ideal-They were in a melancholy mood. Kunstmayer sang quietly: “The girls like this so much”.

XIII. Drowning in the sea.

I am afraid that the girl has also drowned. My rival had an accident at sea (drowned). “It is vulgar that you can at most only make a poem about this, or suddenly find the ending for a story”, yelled the dead Kohn. While they walked along, they found white newspaper flyers about the event everywhere.—“That is a brutality”, said another. “This is the correct expression".—“Finally!” sighed another, relieved. Kohn yelled: “But I don’t want to have an ending for a story. That is vulgar. I’m losing my mind. I want to inflame you. I want to torment you, not satisfy you. You must moan and wail. You must dissolve in pain.” The dead Kohn was not noticed.

Detective Daniel

A thunderstorm was making a racket. The detective Daniel woke with a start from his sleep. He said: “Damned disturbance of the peace”. There was an agitated knock on the door. The dancer Lola Lalà came in.

“There are much too few burglars”, detective Daniel said. “There are fewer murderers than you think”, Daniel said, calming the anxious woman.

Max Mechenmal

He took the young thing, after he had first inquired about her age, having in mind only erotic things, planning to speak words of love to her and privately making fun of it; in other words, he is a downright bad fellow. Somewhat proud of knowing just how bad a character he was, he calmed himself down and decided to rape the girl.

Berthold Bryller

“Kuno Kohn is the same in green as pupil Else Lasker is in blue”, Bryller said.

If he wanted to get rid of a girl, he told her in a wonderfully touching way about his syphilis, presenting himself as a martyr who is making a sacrifice for the sake of her

health. Most girls, crying, took him for an important and very noble man. Only one asked impudently one time why he didn’t say that before.

Contrast between the devil-may-care skillful nihilism of Bryller and the pure despair of Paulus.

Senior teacher Laaks

I have longing, love and who knows what else for her.—Funny things could happen.

Lola Lalà

She boasted about her now-and-then and piece-wise virginity.

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She said: as already mentioned, I am visibly frightened.—I find this silly, with good reason.—These really short lines.—He loves me only erotically.—In fact, I always lie.—-He was very fond of me.—As is well known, every dancer has a friend.—

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