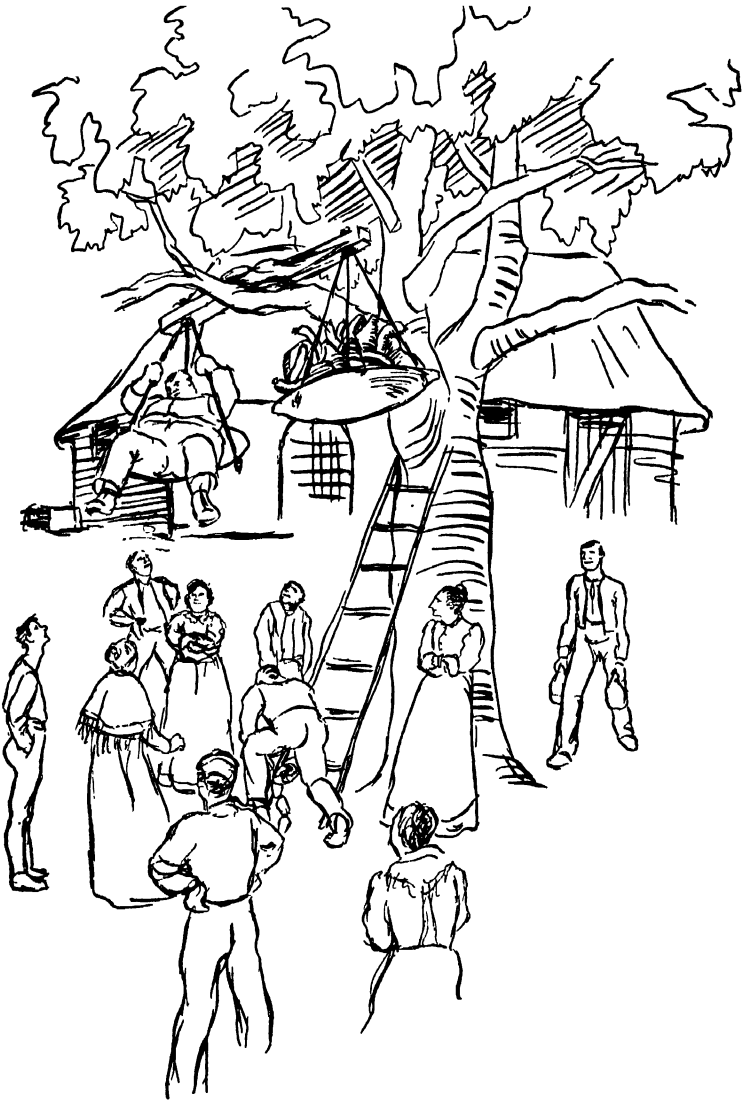

Farmer Tamm gives good measure.

An Old Heart Goes A-Journeying

Hans Fallada

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORG SALTER

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Chapter One

In which Professor Kittguss is visited by an angel, and sent to Unsadel

ONCE UPON A TIME there was an old Professor, named Gotthold Kittguss, who had neither wife nor child. Until he was fifty years old he had been a master in a large school in Berlin, where he taught the Christian Evangelical religion. He also instructed the junior classes in Latin and Greek; and with such of the seniors as intended to take orders later on he read the New Testament in the original Greek, and taught them the rudiments of Hebrew.

His twenty-five years of teaching had left him with an abiding love for the younger generation; but he was not content to teach the mere text of Holy Writ, he did his best to inculcate the spirit of the sacred writings. He had often expounded the New Testament, including the Revelation of St. John the Divine to his boys, but never ventured on any interpretation of that book, though it interested him more than all the others.

A day, however, came, as he records in his diary, when

"God caused a light to shine upon me, and the gates to the temple of Revelation were thrown open. No limit in time had indeed been prescribed for the glory of the fulfilled Kingdom of God, but perhaps a limit had been set to the tribulation that was to precede and lead the way to it. I set this presumption clearly and firmly before my mind and grew so absorbed in it that I was no longer able to pursue my teaching work. . . ."

In spite of many appeals from his colleagues and pupils, he applied for his pension, which was finally granted. And he buried himself wholly in his calculations and researches.

There was only one friend of former days, a clergyman in the Mecklenburg country, called Thürke, whom he had informed of the deeper reasons for his altered life, and to him he wrote as follows:

"I have some news that I feel I must positively tell you, though I would ask you not to mention it for the present. . . . With the Lord's aid I have discovered the Number of the Beast. This apocalyptic key is of great importance, for those born now will enter upon strange times. You must prepare yourself for these things, for wisdom will be sorely needed. . . ."

This was written in December, and it was March before Professor Kittguss received an answer from his friend Thürke:

A little daughter had been born to him and his wife and christened Rosemarie, and Gotthold Kittguss had been recorded in the register as her godfather. Might they hope that the Professor would have no objection? —They were all delighted to hear of the wonderful times that awaited the little girl. In the meantime, could

not he, Kittguss, hasten his researches and pay an early visit to the parsonage, so as to make his godchild's acquaintance? In the country, too, there were signs of good times at hand; spring had come earlier than ever before, and swallows had darted and twittered over the baby as she had been carried to church. . . .

Professor Kittguss had sat pondering over this letter for a while; a sudden radiance had lit up his dark abode. He had meant to answer the letter, but it had slipped between other papers, and the Professor was again quite absorbed in his calculations as to the nature of a half time, a καίρος and a measured eternity, an αἰών. Thus the letter remained unanswered and forgotten, for sixteen years, just as the whole world about him was forgotten and ignored.

We are to conceive of the Professor through all those years which he spent almost entirely at his writing table, as a tall, still handsome man, with a broad white face, a firm chin, thick dark eyebrows, brown, kindly, but rather abstracted eyes, and white curling hair, always very carefully brushed. He took great pains with his appearance, he was always irreproachably shaved, his collars were always immaculately starched and ironed, and his white, small plump hands, now faintly freckled by the years, never—though he passed his days among books and papers—showed the slightest trace of dust or ink.

The Professor was attended by a widow lady, Frau Müller, who went silently about her business in the kitchen regions, silently set his meals before him, laid out his clean underclothes every Saturday, and never uttered a superfluous word.

The pair had grown so accustomed to each other that

they often did not speak for weeks. On the morning of the last day in every month Professor Kittguss found his overcoat, hat, and stick set out on his study chair. He then took his savings bankbook out of a drawer, walked slowly through the streets to the nearest savings bank, waited, absorbed in thought, at the counter until someone addressed him, drew out the housekeeping money, a sum that never varied, left the rest of his pension on deposit, and walked slowly home, once more lost in meditation.

The Widow Müller was waiting for him in the hall, took coat, hat, stick, and housekeeping money without a word, and Professor Kittguss sat down for another month over his patient and abstruse calculations.

When he started his researches the Professor had thought, in the first flush of inspiration, that his goal was near at hand, but the longer he worked, the more it seemed to recede into the distance. So he sat, and pondered over every word, and the years went by. Sixteen years, though that was a figure which the Professor did not notice, and they were to him no more than a day. Nor had it ever occurred to him that he was now nearly seventy, as he sat brooding over the following verse: "And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, 'A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.' "

He sat and read and pored and pondered, and finally he wrote: "This refers to a time that was better for oil and wine than for wheat and barley. Taken as a whole the passage suggests a slight rise in prices. Wheat and barley, oil and wine are the commonest and most essen-

tial foodstuffs. The command here given is therefore very significant. In Trajan's reign a remarkable rise in prices occurred, especially in the southern provinces and Egypt, which was usually a fertile land and a granary for many nations. If the Nile did not rise high enough, if in fact the discharge was under fourteen feet, there was always a rise in prices, as is proved by Pliny, Book 5, Chapter 9. In the year 110, the thirteenth of Trajan's reign, the Nile rose only seven feet, as Harduinus proves from a contemporary coin. . . ." Professor Kittguss had reached this point in his labor on that dim October afternoon of the year 1912, when he became aware of a knock at the door, and a presence by his writing table. Slowly, and a little irritably, he looked up, and saw the face of the Widow Müller. That face expressed such varied feelings, from vexation at having to disturb him, to a certain plain disgust, that he found himself saying: "Well, Frau Müller, and what is the matter?" "A boy," whispered the Widow Müller indignantly. "Ah—a boy?" replied the Professor genially, and a memory of his teaching days flashed back into his mind. He looked at the door and could almost see his head boy, Porzig, enter the room, with his little red and white school cap in his hand. Time and again Porzig—or one of the others—had come to see him at just such a twilight hour, and asked one question or another that always culminated in the query: "If I believe, must I believe *everything?*"

The recollection of those dear familiar days stirred the old Professor to expectancy—he looked at the door, and at his housekeeper. . . .

He forgot that Porzig would be now well over thirty, that a great many years had slipped over the paper since

Never had the Professor seen such a creature.

then, and that not one boy of today would even know his name.

The old man smiled, and asked: "Well, where is the young man, Frau Müller?" Frau Müller knew her master and was familiar with his ways. "I couldn't let in the likes of him," she muttered indignantly. "Indeed, and what is the matter with him?" asked the Professor amiably. He got up, a very tall and imposing figure behind his writing table. "Let him in, Frau Müller. Our door is closed to no one." He nodded to her reassuringly and crossed the room to turn on the center light. Then he stopped and looked at the door.

The door opened slightly, and through it sidled a truly melancholy object, filthy and disreputable. He stood on the matting by the door, twisting his hat in his hand, and staring dumbly at the floor.

Never in the whole of his cloistered life had the Professor seen such a creature: but there he stood, with lanky, slouching limbs, his red and shapeless hands swollen and chapped; his face deathly pale, with a great gloomy nose, thick gaping lips and yellow horse-fang teeth, a low protuberant forehead, almost engulfing the little vacant eyes. And it struck at the Professor's heart to think that this poor oafish half-wit was also God's creature, less equipped for life than most, and therefore with a harder road to travel. . . .

Kittguss glanced toward the door, which Frau Müller had not quite shut; she was certainly on guard outside it. The Professor stretched a hand out past the youth and softly closed it. Then he went to his writing table, but not to his chair. With his back to his table and his work Kittguss surveyed his visitor.

The lad still stared dumbly at the floor as though he did not know why he had come.

"What is your name, my boy?" asked the Professor gently.

The answer came with startling promptitude, and in a startlingly deep, rasping tone: "Won't tell!"

Kittguss reflected; perhaps the youth had come to the wrong place. "My name is Kittguss," he explained.

"I knaws that," said the visitor in the same quick, harsh tone.

"Where do you come from?"

"Won't tell!" rasped the visitor once more.

For a while there was silence; the Professor glanced round his study in bewilderment. The ceiling light threw a cheerful glow on the bookshelves, bulging under their load of books; on the pile of written sheets, some of them already yellow and faded, that lay ready to hand in a cabinet; and on the green writing table where the day's work seemed to be reproachfully waiting until this interruption should come to an end.

"I must also," thought the Professor, "quote that passage in the younger Pliny where he mentions, as something quite uncommon, that in the year 98 Trajan had to help the Egyptians by sending them flour. . . ."

An idea then came into his mind. He went round the writing table to a cupboard where he kept some brown barley sugar to relieve his cough. He picked out a large piece, and after a moment's hesitation took out a smaller piece as well. The large piece he gave to his visitor, the small one he kept for himself. "Eat that, my boy," he said. "It's sugar. I eat it too."

The youth made as though to refuse, but with an ob-

vious effort. Over the poor vacant face came a flicker of life and into the blank eyes a glint of intelligence.

"You eat it," said the Professor gently. "I'm not trying to bribe you into telling me anything."

The youth ate greedily. Before he had finished he jerked his head in the direction of the writing table, and mumbled something that sounded like: "Write, do yer?"

The Professor guessed rather than understood. "Yes, I write," he replied, "most of the time."

"Sit you down then," said the youth, "an' write."

"What shall I write?"

"What you usually do. I wanna see . . . wanna see. . . ."

"What do you want to see?"

But the boy was silent. He had finished his barley sugar, and now stood rigid and staring vacantly at the coconut matting.

The Professor looked at him genially, and waited. There might be something behind all this lunacy. He turned and walked away, hesitated, looked round—there stood the boy just as before. Then he sat down at his writing table.

He read the last words he had written: "As Harduinus proves from a contemporary coin."

Very well, now for the quotation from the younger Pliny. And he said: "Take that chair, my boy; you look tired." Was the creature really still there? It was almost like a dream. If the Widow Müller hadn't brought him in. . . . Well, now for the younger Pliny. He must have said in his eulogy on Trajan in the year 100. . . .

The red and swollen hand thrust itself between his eyes and his manuscript. It vanished and there before

him on his manuscript lay a letter, a dirty, crumpled little sheet, obviously torn out of a school exercise book, but doubtless in its right place, for it was inscribed: "For Herr Professor Gotthold Kittguss." The Professor looked up; the youth had silently slipped back to his place by the door. He did not sit down, but stood with an expression that suggested he was pondering some dark problem such as the difference between a sheep and a cow.

"For Herr Professor Gotthold Kittguss," as large as life. The Professor forgot the precious manuscript beneath; he opened the letter, which was no more than a folded sheet of paper, read the opening words, started, read them again, looked toward the door (where the boy still stood), and then went on with the letter.

"Dear Godfather," it ran. "There's a saying in Unsadel that a Gau is a brute, but a Schlieker's a crook. First I was beaten by the Gaus, and now the Schliekers are trying to rob me of my inheritance. You promised my dear father that I was going to be born at a wonderful time—won't you come and look after me? Come quickly. Matthew vii, 7. Yours, Rosemarie."

A postscript: "Whether you come or not, give Philip some money for food; it will take him two days to get back."

Second postscript: "He won't give you the letter unless you are the sort of person we want."

"Good God!" cried Professor Kittguss, when he had grasped this incredible epistle, and he clapped his hands to his forehead with a truly dramatic gesture. "What on earth is all this? And what has it got to do with me?" He stared at the letter. He felt like a sleeper awakened from a pleasant dream only to find himself involved in

a worse one, and quite unaware whether he was asleep or awake.

"A Gau is a brute, but a Schlieker's a crook," he muttered. "Rosemarie—Philip—two days getting back—what is all this rigmarole? Philip, indeed!"

There was a sound near the door; he looked up, but the visitor had fled. The Professor jumped up as nimbly as a boy, ran to the door and shouted into the passage: "Frau Müller! Frau Müller!"

The door on to the staircase was open, and he thought he could hear footsteps clattering down. "That poor silly lad—I've got to give him some money!" he shouted excitedly to Frau Müller. His housekeeper eyed him in silence.

He controlled himself. "Philip!" he shouted down the stairs. "Philip! Wait till I get you some money. . . ."

The Professor blushed a little under Frau Müller's gaze. "It will take him two days to get back," he tried to explain, "and he's starving. I noticed it when he was eating my barley sugar."

"Your Bavarian maltose, Herr Professor!" said Frau Müller indignantly. "People like that," she said, with all the contempt of the poor for those poorer still, "never starve."

"Frau Müller," said the Professor, raising his voice, "do you remember what is written in the seventh verse of the seventh chapter of St. Matthew?"

She made no reply, but gradually edged the agitated old gentleman back into his room.

"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you."

He stood by his writing table, in that quiet and se-

cluded study, an old but still handsome man, at the moment a little excited.

And he said softly: "Someone has asked me: someone has sought me: and someone has knocked at my door. Frau Müller, tomorrow I leave for Unsadel."

"Unsadel?" asked Frau Müller. "And where on earth is that?"

"I don't know," said the Professor. "But the people at the railway station will know. It is their business to know a thing like that."

"The railway!" exclaimed Frau Müller, on the verge of tears. "Herr Professor, I have been with you for twenty-seven years and you have never traveled by railway."

"That is of no consequence now," said the Professor mildly. "You must not take too feminine a view of the case."

"And your work," cried Frau Müller, with a glance at the writing and now beginning to sob. "Your work, Herr Professor? I was so pleased—you were making such good progress lately."

"My work," said the Professor, rather taken aback, and followed her look toward the littered table. "Ah, yes, my work—have you been reading it? Do you think it's good?"

"Good!" cried the too feminine Frau Müller. "You wrote a whole page every day last week!"

"My work . . ." said the Professor, a little mournfully. He wavered. But there lay the letter—no amount of thinking could get rid of that. He picked it up. "Yes," he said firmly, "here we have it—Matthew vii, 7. I am called, and I must go."

"But such a rapscallion, Herr Professor!" protested Frau Müller.

"My dear Widow Müller," said Professor Gotthold Kittguss, once more his amiable and abstracted self, "it is generally recognized, and is moreover supported by many passages in Scripture, that God's messengers and angels do not always appear on earth quite as we pictured them when we were children."

And as Frau Müller was about to protest once more: "That will do, the matter is settled; I shall obey the call and start for Unsadel tomorrow morning."

Chapter Two

In which Professor Kittguss sees a fat farmer hanging from a tree, and a girl crying under a hedge

IT WAS AN AFTERNOON in early October, sunny and very still. From time to time the sound of the Professor's footsteps on the sandy road scared a bird in the branches above his head, and as it fluttered off, a shower of red and yellow leaves floated noiselessly to the ground.

The old schoolmaster went on his way slowly, deep in thought. Now and again he stopped, put down his bag, wiped the sweat of this unwonted exertion off his forehead, and looked at his watch. He had been walking for nearly two hours, and at the station they had told him that it was a bare hour to Unsadel. And whenever he looked about him for any sign of habitation, he could see nothing but hedges, and through the occasional gates, nothing but an expanse of silent autumn fields. "Dear me," sighed the Professor; but he was not ill-content. The still countryside and the remote blue heaven warmed his heart. "I certainly shan't catch the evening train now. Well, well, no doubt I shall find somewhere

to spend the night in the village. And then I shall have the whole day tomorrow to settle all these matters properly."

In what this process of "settlement" consisted, he had only the vaguest possible idea; indeed he had no idea at all—"But Rosemarie will tell me what to do. It must be something about her inheritance."

"Dear me," he sighed once again, picked up his bag and trudged on. The hedges seemed endless, and the lonely sandy road went on and on, sometimes turning to the right, and sometimes to the left. Now and again he came to a tall poplar or a willow; then the Professor would stop, observe the tree with a nod of approval, and slowly set himself in motion once more.

He had just realized that he had now been walking for two and a half hours, when a face suddenly appeared like a large round fruit through the hedge above his head, a rough red face with a shock of fair disheveled hair above it. The face glared at the Professor.

"My boy," he asked, "how far is it to Unsadel?"

"You're not to ask for Rosemarie, you're to take a room at Paul Schlieker's," whispered the boy eagerly.

"My good boy!" cried the Professor, "do please wait. . . ."

But with a crackle of twigs the face had vanished.

The boy, good or not, had gone. The Professor trotted along to the next gate, but on the common behind the hedge he could see nothing but cattle, and a woolly sheepdog, that burst into a volley of barking. Not a sign of a boy—though the Professor would have welcomed some protection against the dog.

So he went on, in dull bewilderment. "I'm not to ask for anyone, but simply to take a room at Paul Schlieker's. . . . But Schlieker's a crook . . . what slanderous rubbish, it ought not to be said even in fun. . . ."

Suddenly the hedges came to an end. The countryside stretched away into the distance, and fields and meadows sloped gently down to a green lake. The farther shore was fringed with woods, now blazing in all the varied hues of autumn, and on this side lay the village, with roofs of red tiles or blackened thatch.

The Professor stepped out more briskly.

Just inside the village stood a tall and stately windmill, with its wings at rest. Stray chickens were pecking in the roadway, oblivious of the wayfarer; a flock of geese flapped across his path, cackling frantically; a cat, crouching motionless on the top of a fence, gazed spellbound at the Professor.

But not a single human being—Professor Kittguss peered through every window and into every yard—no, not one. . . . He could hear the horses shuffling in their stalls and the rattle of the cow-chains: but on that blessed weekday afternoon, not a human being was visible in house or yard or street or village.

He soon reached a substantial sort of house, with a broad and inviting flagged pathway leading up to the door, over which was written: "Otto Beier. Inn."

With a sense of relief Professor Kittguss stepped into the dim passage, deciphered the inscription "Taproom" on one of the doors, knocked, and went in. A few tables, a counter, bottles behind it and glasses on it, a half-knitted stocking with a ball of wool on a green plush sofa—but not one human being.

Professor Kittguss waited, he walked up and down, he shuffled his feet, he cleared his throat, he called out, first gently and then in louder tones: "Er—if you please!—"

Nobody home.

He knocked at a door, he knocked again, he opened it cautiously, and peered into a large empty dance hall. Garlands of green paper, torn and dusty, hung from the ceiling, and on the stage stood a few derelict chairs—but not a single human being.

Shaking his head, the Professor knocked at a second door and entered a small gloomy room. On the bare stained wooden table stood a tureen with some dirty plates and spoons, as though they had been hurriedly laid down after a meal. Professor Kittguss looked round him, looked again, and called out; no one came. He bent over the tureen, and the smell of soup reminded him that since the early morning—since he had said good-by to Frau Müller in fact—he had eaten nothing. He was beginning to feel a little faint.

At the fourth door he knocked more briskly and went in. As he did so, an army of cockroaches scurried over the hearth and the dirty brick floor into their sheltering cracks.

One more door—and from its stone threshold the Professor surveyed a melancholy autumn garden, its grass trampled and unmown, iron tables piled together, and trees half-bare of foliage. But at the far end of it gleamed the great, green, lovely lake, with the beeches standing in golden glory and stately stillness along the farther shore. For a while the Professor looked on the scene, sighed and walked through the deserted village.

For the first time on his adventurous journey, for the first time for many, many years, a strange emotion stirred within him, a memory of his long-dead youth. At the sight of the silent countryside, with the desolate inn behind him, he had said to himself: "By what marvelous ways dost Thou lead Thy children, Lord." And he thought of the silent study which he, now on the threshold of old age, had left at the bidding of so strange an angel, to visit an uncertain world on which, he believed, he had long ago turned his back.

Suddenly, with a gasp of relief, he heard a confused sound of voices: laughter, shouts, and cries. He stepped out more briskly, came to an open gate, and turned through it into a large farmyard in which the whole village appeared to be assembled. Everyone who could walk, or even crawl, stood there laughing, chattering, or waiting in expectant silence; old farmers and young farmhands, women with their arms akimbo under their blue chintz aprons, and sturdy lads in high boots. School children kept darting through the throng, and the girls clustered in little groups, with their heads together, and whispered. And all of them were looking so intently up at an ancient spreading lime tree in the center of the field that they did not notice the approaching stranger.

He looked up too, and was astonished to observe a thick beam like a seesaw attached to one of the topmost boughs of the tree. And from the seesaw dangled two large and ponderous wooden bowls. In one of the bowls swung a vast and corpulent farmer with a ruddy, genial countenance; the other and still lighter bowl was piled high with smoked brown sausages, rich black hams and long golden-brown sides of bacon.

"There you are—it's not enough, it's still not enough," roared the fat farmer, choking and chuckling with glee. "I told you long ago, Lowising, that you'd have to clear the curing room this year." He looked about him in triumph. "Aha, my boys and girls, you said last year I couldn't get any fatter—but I have!—Lowising, run and get the ham off the five-hundred-pound sow; that'll do the trick. Maxe, my boy, you go along with her and help."

The old man's gaiety became infectious; a tall, raw-boned countrywoman and a sturdy boy dashed into the house.

"Hi! Fritzi, Gerhard, Elli, you, too, come along and hold my end steady for a bit, it's wobbling. I had jellied eel and roast potatoes for dinner, and, damn it, I feel as if the creature had come to life again inside me. . . ." He laughed. "Ah, that's better, boys. . . . Drat that eel!" he roared suddenly. "Stop wriggling, will you, what's your trouble now?"

"Excuse me," whispered Professor Kittguss to his neighbor, "what is all this?"

"Have you never heard of jolly Farmer Tamm of Unsadel?" asked the other in astonishment.

"No," said the Professor politely.

"Then you must be quite a stranger," observed the man. "Everybody hereabouts has heard of fat Tamm."

"I have not," said the Professor gently.

"This is one of his little games. Every autumn, before the first pig is killed, he gives away his weight in pork to the poor of the village. It clears out his curing room, and he enjoys the fun. There—that'll do it!"

The woman and the lad came out of the house stag-

gering under an enormous ham; and they laid it on the opposite scale. The great beam creaked, and Fritzi, Gerhard and Elli let go of the farmer's end, which gradually tilted upward. "Drat that eel!" yelled the farmer once more, as he swung into the leaves, while the other scale tipped slowly to the ground.

And all the onlookers shouted: "That's done it."

"It's more than's needed," cried the farmer's wife, trying to rescue a sausage or two.

"Never you mind, Lowising. What's in the scale, stays there. Right?" he shouted toward the stable doors, where the older folk were standing.

"Right, Tamm! Right you be!" they shouted back.

"Then get out of this yard!" roared the farmer; and as they hurried out and Maxe shut the gates behind them, the farmer was helped out of his perch, puffing and blowing. "Now, then, boys and girls, make it as hard as you can. And hurry!"

In an instant the whole farmyard was thronged with hurrying figures, carrying hams and sausages and sides of bacon, hanging them on trees and pushing them into all manner of hiding-places. Amid all this tumult the fat farmer stood immovable, shouting his orders while Professor Kittguss watched the scene from the gate.

"Barthel, what in hell do you think you're doing? Don't bury a ham in the dunghill! Hoist it up on to that woodpile, as high as you can. Maxe, give him a hand!"

By this time the farmer had noticed the Professor, and shook him by the hand. "Now you'll get a good laugh! Are you a stranger here?"

"Yes." And Professor Kittguss was about to disobey

orders and ask after Rosemarie Thürke, when the yard gate gradually swung open.

"All clear!" shouted the farmer; and in they came. Poor and old and halt and maimed, stumbling, groaning, panting; for a moment they stopped and peered about, until they saw what they were after, a sausage or a side of bacon; and they hobbled toward it, mumbling and lamenting.

"Oh dear, oh dear, there'll be nothing left for me."

"Now then! That's my sausage!"

"It's mine! I saw it first!"

"No, you didn't."

"It's mine, I tell you!"

"Let go of it, will you!"

And while two women tugged furiously at the sausage, a gaunt old man with a sly grin produced a plump ham from the very same hiding-place.

One nimble old gentleman had clambered up the lime tree after a side of bacon, and was gingerly edging along the branch from which it dangled. But from below the enemy appeared in the shape of a determined old lady with a wheelbarrow. She tipped up the barrow, climbed on to it, and just as the old man reached the bacon the woman grabbed it from below.

"Oh dear, I shan't get anything!" wailed the old man on the branch. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Gesche, you're ten years younger than I am. . . ."

He stopped abruptly; from his point of vantage he had sighted the vast ham on the woodpile. Something of the boyish spirit of sixty years ago possessed him in that moment; he slipped off his branch, hung for a moment swaying between heaven and earth, and then, with a

clutch at Gesche, dropped. Both fell; the side of bacon slipped from the woman's hands, and three others rushed up to grab the prize.

The farmyard rocked and roared with laughter.

"Now, then, go to it, Wilhelm!" shouted the spectators. But the old man, preferring the dove to the sparrow, made for the woodpile.

"Oh, God!" gasped Farmer Tamm. "I can't bear it! Slap me on the back, will you, my dear sir? . . . Harder, please . . . !"

Here on a farm in Unsadel stood that respectable gentleman, Professor Kittguss, author of a commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, clapping a choking farmer on the back.

Close beside them crouched a little old woman, with five sausages and a side of bacon in her lap. "I've got my little lot; thank you very much, Tamm. Bacon enough and to spare for the whole winter. . . . That's right, Tamm, cough as hearty as you can. A man that coughs well, lives to be old." And she chuckled with glee.

Meanwhile, the old man had made two vain attempts on the woodpile; he got halfway up, then nearly reached the top, but slipped down again. No use, he must go and get the barrow. But by the time he came back with it three others were already storming the ham citadel. One of them, who was also trying to scramble up it, was not a dangerous rival; but the two others, an aged married couple, who were working in combination, seemed near to success.

"I shan't get anything," wailed the old man, clambering on to the barrow. "I never have any luck. I never did have. My pears were always rotten."

The ancient husband now bent down, and the woman climbed on to his shoulders. From the other side, the old man on the barrow also made a grab. But alas! the forty-pound ham was more than their withered hands could hold. They dislodged it, but it slipped down like an avalanche in a snow dust of chips and splinters, knocked one aged adversary flat, and rolled into the yard.

The old husband forgot that his wife was on his back. He scuttled toward the ham on all fours like a farm dog. The little old woman screeched and fell. Five petticoats fluttered up like rose petals round a green calyx of drawers.

But her husband had flung himself on the ham; he exerted all his puny strength against the frantic assaults of old Wilhelm.

"Now, then, Wilhelm," cried the farmer's wife, "that'll do. I've got something put aside for you. You shan't go away empty. No, it's Goldner's ham, and you must let him have it. We're all good friends here."

"What a charming village!" exclaimed Professor Kittguss with enthusiasm.

"Eh?" said Tamm, obviously rather taken aback. "Well, I wouldn't go quite so far as that. If *I* wasn't here!— And I do this, just because the others don't." He turned to the Professor, and eyed him with sudden gravity. "Well, if you're making a stay, you'll see the place for yourself. Have you come for a holiday? If you aren't fixed up, I can let you a room. Stop!" he roared, swinging round toward the yard. "Now, then, line up, folks, and let's see what you've all got. We'll meet later on, sir; I must just make sure they're all satisfied."

And he walked down the line of old people, with a joke and a laugh and a word of comfort for each and all; and Professor Kittguss watched him.

Something touched his hand. He looked down, and saw a small girl, with two long plaits of fair hair. "Well, my child?" he said kindly. "What is it?"

"You must turn to the right by the fire-engineshed," she whispered tensely. "It's the last farm, with five fir trees in front of it. Don't ask for Rosemarie; remember —you don't know her." And she ran off.

"But my child—"

She had already vanished in the throng. Another messenger—and so very much in earnest!

"The children all seem to know me, and the grown-up people don't," he reflected with some surprise. "Dear me, I had almost forgotten Rosemarie."

He looked round. Some were already filing out of the farmyard. The merriment was over, the early October twilight had begun to fall. There was no time to speak to the farmer now. The Professor, therefore passed out through the farmyard gate into the village street.

He suddenly felt tired as he trudged wearily along the darkening village street. His bag weighed like lead, and he constantly changed it from one hand to the other. He was troubled by his coming interview with Rosemarie, and depressed by the thought that he had no idea where he was going to sleep that night. The unwonted gaiety of Farmer Tamm's farmyard had left him vaguely sad.

After a while he came to a long low hut. Here the road divided. This must be the engineshed; here he had to turn off to the right, and after he had passed six or

eight cottages he found himself on a narrowing path that led up a hill. From the top of the hill he saw a group of pines outlined against the fading sky, and below him a long, low, unlighted building: the house of Schlieker.

For a while he stood, surveying the scene in silence: the quiet countryside sinking into rest, the lake and woods and fields. A cow lowed in the village, he sighed. "Now for it!" he said, and walked down to the gloomy house.

Beside the path ran a stake fence, and in the garden a line of shrubs edged the shimmering waters of the lake.

He was very near his destination; his heart began to beat a little faster—then he stopped and listened; what was that? He walked on a few steps farther, stopped again, and said softly into the darkness: "Is someone crying?"

All quiet until a dog barking broke the stillness.

"Come, my dear Rosemarie," said the Professor softly. "Your Godfather Kittguss is here—your father's old friend."

There was a rustle among the bushes, a slim form appeared at the fence, he could barely see the white glimmer of the face in the darkness. He felt for her hand; it was cold.

"Why are you crying, Rosemarie?"

And a shrill, imperious little voice answered angrily: "Why have you been so long? I had a message from Hütefritz three hours ago that he had seen you. Are you one of these people who get their courage out of a bottle?"

"My dear child!" exclaimed the horrorstruck Professor. "What are you saying! I am not in the habit of getting drunk. I stopped a little while with a pleasant old gentleman called Farmer Tamm. Perhaps I was wrong to have done so—pray forgive me."

She fell silent.

"And you've been standing all these hours in the cold waiting for me?"

"Yes," she cried wrathfully. "And I'll be late for work; the Schliekers have been looking for me, they've called out several times. And when I get back, he'll curse me, and she'll pinch me and pull my hair. She always does that when she's angry with me, and she's always, always angry with me."

"No one will curse you, and no one will pull your hair," said the Professor in a soothing tone. "I shall go with you and speak to them."

"No, no," she whispered hurriedly. "You mustn't come until later, in about a quarter or half an hour. Then you must ask for a room and pretend you don't know me. Otherwise all is lost."

"But, Rosemarie, my child," said the Professor very gravely, "that would be a lie. And you know quite well from your dear father that we are not to tell lies—Surely you don't tell lies?"

"They are liars and cheats!" she cried. "We can't do anything unless we deceive them."

"It is wicked to deceive," said the Professor solemnly, "we must always tell the truth."

"Oh!" she cried in despair. "Why did I send for you? If you won't listen to me and do what I ask you'll only make things worse. The children do what I tell them,

and don't make a fuss. Perhaps I can manage without you after all. Look—that is *my* house," she cried passionately. "And it's my farm and my cattle and my land, and the Schliekers mean to rob me of it all. But I won't let them. Philip said that if the worst came to the worst, we'd better set the whole place on fire and destroy it rather than. . . ."

"Rosemarie!" exclaimed the Professor in consternation, "you don't know what you're saying, you poor unhappy child! What you must have suffered!"

She was silent after her outburst, and not a sound could be heard but her faint agonized sobbing.

"Rosemarie," he said gently, "there is a bright way and a dark way through this world. I am sure you want to see your dear mother and your good father again, don't you?"

Her sobbing grew less violent.

"I dare say," he said, "I am not a man with much experience of the world. But I am a very old man, and one thing I know—that for those who love God all things turn out for the best. Do you love God, Rosemarie?"

She was silent.

"My dear," he said, "the Schliekers and the pinching and the house and farm matter little: what matters is your own self, Rosemarie. And now show me the way to the house, and before we go into the yard, please chain up the dog. I am afraid of dogs."

Melted by his kindliness, she whispered: "Come along, then." They followed the fence, and at the gate she said: "Don't be afraid, I won't let Bello do you any harm."

Chapter Three

In which Professor Kittguss pays a call that ends in a coalshed

BELLO, A SHAGGY SHEEPDOG, was not really a very formidable animal, and he was now fawning and whimpering at Rosemarie's side. The child firmly led her godfather by the hand through an unlighted room, full of the moldy reek of potatoes and the damp odors of a sink. Then she suddenly left him alone in a small, dismal, green-painted kitchen and vanished through a door behind which children's voices raised a shrill clamor.

"Rosemarie!" cried the Professor.

"Marie, you little devil!" screamed a rasping woman's voice from the corner of the hearth—and broke off abruptly.

Catching sight of the visitor the speaker turned on him sharply. The reflection from the kitchen lamp shone upon her pale face, her large brown eyes, and prominent cheekbones. It was a young face still, but the narrow, almost lipless line of her mouth looked old and evil, and her jutting chin was hard and resolute.

"Hullo!" cried the woman in her rasping voice as she eyed the belated visitor without moving from her seat.

"God be with you!" replied the Professor, advancing a step. "I am Professor Kittguss and . . ."

"And," pursued the woman, overwhelming the Professor with a savage tirade, "if you're from the Welfare Office, you've no business to come at such a time. I won't show you the children today. The folks in the village can write to you all they like about the way we ill-treat the children, and starve them and neglect them, and you can set that sniffy old Welfare sister after me every week and every day and every hour, or you can come yourself, if you like. . . . A Professor, are you, eh? Well, you earn your keep by sitting down while I wear the flesh off my bones washing those little bastards' filthy napkins for thirty marks a month! But I won't show you the children today if you stay till midnight, now the girl's off on the loose. I'll show her the right end of the broomstick when she gets back. The folks round here are a bad lot, and they want to make everybody like themselves. You better come tomorrow morning about ten, and then you can see all the five little rascals, all neat and clean—unless one of 'em goes and makes a mess at the last moment—"

At first the Professor tried to stem the torrent, then he stood and listened patiently, feeling just as shocked and grieved as he had when Rosemarie burst out at him beside the fence. But when Frau Schlieker had finished, he went up to her, stretched out his hand, and said: "God be with you, Frau Schlieker."

She eyed the hand in bewilderment, as though it had

struck her. Then she took it, growling: "Good evening, but you must go now."

"No," he persisted, his hand still outstretched. "I said —'God be with you.' That means something else."

A few moments of silence followed. The Professor kept his frail hand still outstretched. At last she laughed, a harsh and awkward laugh. "All right, then: God be with you." And for an instant she touched the Professor's hand with chill damp fingers.

"But you must go now. I haven't got so much time as you have. I've got five brats to look after."

"And the sixth is Rosemarie," said the Professor gently. "Did you mean Rosemarie, when you talked of the girl who had gone off on the loose?"

"Oho!" snarled the woman, back in her venomous mood. "You want to know about Marie? Why did you behave as though you came from the Welfare Office, when you come from the Guardians, eh? We're not afraid of a magistrate *or* a policeman, I'll have you know! And if the brat's been writing lies to you, my husband will show her the sort of hand he writes. I dare say you know the old saying: 'Parsons' kids are as bad as millers' cows. . . .' "

She ran to the kitchen window: "Paul! Paul! Come at once. There's company!"

Then, without pausing for breath, she continued her tirade. "And whatever I called her, I stand by what I said—there's nothing much here that's hers except debts. My old man and I can work till we're dead just to provide her with her dinner, and us with five bastard brats to look after. All this to earn enough to keep my fine

young lady warm inside and outside in the winter—and not a pennyworth of thanks from anyone. Paul, here's someone from the Board of Guardians asking after Marie."

A tall red-haired man, still comparatively young, had entered the kitchen, carrying a bucket of milk. Smiling politely at the visitor, he said: "Well, Mali, now you'll have to put the milk through the separator."

"Me," cried the woman, "with all I've got to do, and the girl out on the rampage all the afternoon—and you having a nap on the sofa? Ah, Paul, if the constable could get hold of Philip, I'd give him such a welcome home!"

"Ssssst!" said Paul, so abruptly that the Professor started. "Hold your tongue and see to that milk before it's cold."

Even the Professor noticed that the tall, amiable man now looked extremely forbidding. The woman picked up the pail and slunk out of the kitchen.

Presently Herr Schlieker recovered his good humor. "This way, please. There's no fire in the parlor and you must take us as you find us. We're poor folk, but we're honest: we don't steal wood out of the forest like some people I could mention. We'd sooner freeze ourselves, so long as the children's room is warm. . . . Just wait here a minute. I'll fetch the lamp. Keep quite still. It's a bit dark, and the trapdoor to the beet cellar just behind you is open. Don't move a step or you'll fall into the hole, and the cellar's pretty deep."

The door clicked, and the old Professor was left standing in the darkness, bag in hand. For a long, long while

he stood there, not daring to lift his foot for fear of the open trap. . . . Surely there had been time to fill and trim and light twenty lamps. Moreover, kindly as the Professor was, he had not been taken in by the amiable Paul, who struck him as a two-faced rascal, and though he detested ill-natured gossip, that remark of Rosemarie's kept recurring to his mind. "And," thought the Professor, "I know from my old friend Fritz Reuter that a Schlieker's a crook. . . . Dear, dear me," the Professor exclaimed aloud in a sudden surge of disgust, "this is certainly no place for me—I must get home at once. But the child—that poor neglected child—she talked of setting the house on fire! No, I must stay and see it through. . . ."

At this point the farmer reappeared with the lamp.

"I've been quite a while, haven't I? Yes, the gentry don't like waiting, but a poor man has to run a long way before a rich man needs to get up. I had to feed the pigs: we're only countryfolk here, sir, and animals come first. And you've been standing here like an image and I didn't have the sense to remember that it's old Pastor Thürke's study, and of course there isn't a trapdoor—Well, you as a learned gentleman know what it is to be a bit absent-minded, don't you?—so I dare say you won't be too hard on a poor chap like me?"

The Professor paid little heed to the man's unctuous chatter. He had been looking about: the room was indeed a parson's study, not unlike his own, with a standing desk and a writing desk, a green plush sofa in the corner, and a mahogany table in front of it. He lowered himself slowly on to the sofa and eyed with rather gloomy eagerness the bookshelves that lined the walls.

The Professor faces Paul Schlieker down.

It went to his heart to see the books lying in confusion, dusty and neglected, with great gaps here and there, and some actually dropping out of their bindings.

But for all his weariness, he felt at home in that derelict abode of learning, and he said to his host: "Pray do not talk to me like that, Herr Schlieker. I quite understand that my presence here is unwelcome. As soon as I know what is the matter with Rosemarie and how I can help her, I will trouble you no more—I shall go away."

"Ah," said Paul, thoughtfully rubbing his chin and gazing fixedly at the Professor, "so Marie's been at it again, has she, writing to the Board about the wicked Schliekers, eh? Well, the Guardians can't have much to do if they listen to what a child says without questioning me or the magistrate."

"Not at all," replied the Professor hastily. "Your wife misunderstood me, Herr Schlieker. I do not come from the magistrate or the Board of Guardians. I am Professor Gotthold Kittguss, of Berlin."

The other went on rubbing his chin, as though he were rubbing a smile into his large and increasingly foxy countenance. "Who would have thought it?" he murmured. "So it's not an official at all." He leaned across the table and looked the Professor closely in the eyes. "But you are related to Marie, eh? You're some sort of relative?—"

The Professor did not quail before that smiling, staring face: "No, I'm an old school friend of the late Pastor Thürke, and I want to . . ."

He stopped, for the other had flung the table aside and now faced him, fists clenched and flushed with fury.

"And you come here," he shouted, his voice rising to a shriek of rage, "you come here without a shadow of right or claim. You raise a row in my house, you set the little beast against us, making her worse than she is already. Blast your professorship, I'll kick you out of this house, you old ruffian! I'll break all the bones in your body if I catch you here again, you . . . you. . . ."

Paul Schlieker really looked as though he were going to assault the Professor, and he stopped roaring only for a moment to get his breath.

Old Professor Kittguss may have feared dogs, rats, frogs, and various harmless beasts, but he had no fear of man. Slowly and with deliberation he rose from the sofa and gazed benevolently at the infuriated figure before him. Then he laid one firm gentle hand on his adversary's shoulder, and, pointing with the other to his chest, said: "You've got a pain there, Herr Schlieker, I fancy? It is the evil spirit of anger within you, giving you pain. Until you cast it out you will never be happy. And you surely want to be happy?"

The other tried to shake off the old man's grip, and for a moment he seemed about to strike his chest. But that he could not quite do, though he freed his shoulder from the old man's feeble fingers. Paul Schlieker stepped back before the large brown eyes that seemed to look right through him, straightened his jacket, and said gruffly: "You're just a silly old fool, that's what you are. . . ."

"And, Herr Schlieker," continued the Professor quite unperturbed, "that same evil spirit of anger makes you say things you don't mean. You say you'll set the dog on me, and break every bone in my body. You say that

sort of thing, but you don't mean it. And why don't you, Herr Schlieker?" asked the Professor, eying his adversary. "Because, fundamentally, you are a good man."

"Well!—" gasped Paul, utterly dumfounded. Many things had been said to him in his life—indeed, there was hardly any abuse that he had not endured—but this had never been said to him before.

"Well," he blurted out at last. "It's no use talking sense to such a man. Tell me what you really want, or I'll never get you out of the house, I can see that."

"I want to look after my friend's child, Rosemarie, Herr Schlieker," said the Professor.

"Ho!" jeered the other. "And what do you want to look after? Her bit of property—the shanty here with thirty-five acres? Well, we're looking after that, and doing a good job. I send in the accounts to the Board once a year, and they've never found anything to howl about yet."

"If you are looking after Rosemarie's earthly inheritance," said the Professor, "I have no wish to interfere, and I am quite satisfied. But what of her heavenly inheritance?"

"Well, Herr Professor," laughed Paul Schlieker, noticeably relieved. "Although my Mali and I are just simple folk, we aren't heathen, and we say our grace before dinner and supper. But Marie don't care about that sort of thing: you won't find a more obstinate and defiant little girl in the whole village."

"I don't believe you," said the Professor. "I knew my dear friend Thürke, Rosemarie's father, very well, and there couldn't have been a better or a kinder man. I knew his wife Elise too, and though it might be said

that she lived in a world of fairy tales and miracles, and knew no more of this life than a child, there's a saying that an apple doesn't fall very far from the tree. I dare say it's true enough in this case, so will you be so kind as to go fetch the child, Herr Schlieker? I have only seen her in the dark, and I should like to see my friend's daughter where it's light, and talk to her and ask her a few questions in your presence."

"She's got no time now," growled Herr Schlieker. "She's been gallivanting around the whole afternoon, and now she'll have to do her work."

"Well," said the Professor mildly, "she won't have to work all night. So I will wait. I am very tired indeed and very hungry, but I will wait, Herr Schlieker."

And the Professor lowered himself slowly and deliberately into the corner of the sofa.

Schlieker eyed this mild, patient personage half in anger, half in desperation. "If I let you see her, Herr Professor," he said, "will you go away at once?"

"Certainly," said the Professor calmly. "Why should I want to stay?"

"And you won't take long?"

"Indeed, no," said the Professor politely. "I quite understand that Rosemarie has her duties."

"All right," said Schlieker, going out. "But not longer than five minutes."

As the Professor sat alone and half starved on the corner of the sofa in his dead friend's chilly study, he felt very wretched indeed. Again he caught sight of the dirty neglected bookcases, and again his heart turned sick. He got up, in spite of his aching limbs, and took a book from one of the shelves at random. He opened

it, looked at the title page, turned the pages, and the blood rushed to his head. . . .

But when Paul Schlieker appeared with Rosemarie in tow and Frau Mali bringing up the rear, the Professor had forgotten his friend's daughter and her property and what he had come for—he was thinking only of the book in his hand. Rushing at the man in a fury, he exclaimed: "What have I here, Herr Schlieker?"

"A book," the other replied in bewilderment.

"Yes, a book! But why is it torn and why are there pages missing?"

"Rubbish and trash," Frau Schlieker interjected contemptuously. "Who's going to bother about books? We tried to sell the stuff, but no one wants it, not even the Herr Pastor at Kriwitz."

"But do you know what book this is?" exclaimed Professor Kittguss, himself now utterly possessed by the spirit of anger. "This is Jacob Böhme's *High and Deepest Reasons for the Threefold Life of Man!*"

And he glared at the couple. "And this!" he groaned, "this is the edition of 1682, printed at Amsterdam, with a copperplate engraving. And the engraving is missing, and there are pages missing too—nearly half of them!"

"Of course they are," said Frau Schlieker insolently. "There are a lot more pages missing. What does that matter? We want to keep warm, and when we need paper to heat the stove, we take what we can find. And this is where we find it," she concluded, with a glance of satisfaction at the shelves. "We'll find more where that came from."

"Burnt! Jacob Böhme burnt to make a fire!" wailed the Professor. "Not that I approve of all he wrote, for

he often comes into plain conflict with Holy Writ, but he wrote some very fine things none the less." A fresh thought came into his mind. "You told me, Herr Schlieker, that you were looking after our Rosemarie's worldly inheritance, and I promised not to interfere. But you were not telling the truth, you have destroyed and burnt treasures—do you know that any bookseller in Berlin would have paid you twenty or even thirty marks for this little book, if it had not been damaged?"

Here was something that they did feel. "Herr Professor," said Schlieker, completely taken aback, "it can't be possible. . . ."

"For all that dusty, moth-eaten trash!" exclaimed Frau Schlieker.

And then a shrill, defiant little voice broke in. "Yes, Godpapa, and they've done the same thing everywhere. The fruit trees are dying, the fields are thick with weeds, and the horses have been thrashed till they can hardly stand. Oh, my dear Godpapa, and the poor little children that they've taken to look after. . . ."

"Will you be quiet, you little wretch!" shouted Schlieker, grabbing her wrist.

"You can twist my arm off if you like, Paul," she said boldly, and looked at him wide-eyed, "but you can't deny that your wife gives the children nothing but skim milk. . . ."

"Hold your tongue!" screamed Mali, clapping her hand over the child's mouth.

"Leave the girl alone!" thundered the Professor as he faced the pair, a tall and menacing figure flushed with anger. "Take your hand off her, woman! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves, both of you! Have you forgotten

that Our Lord Jesus said: 'What thou doest unto these children, thou doest unto me'? Oh, my poor, poor little girl!" he cried in an anguished voice. "As you stand before me now I can see the likeness to your beloved mother. Yes, I remember prophesying to your father that your lot would be cast in marvelous times. And—just as I forgot you over that book of Jacob Böhme and never saw you in the doorway—so I forgot you for many, many years. Now I am an old man, easily wearied and ignorant of the world, and maybe I cannot help you any more. Ah, Rosemarie, I wonder if I shall be any use to you at all?—"

She stood there, a strange little figure in her dirty discolored overalls, and wooden shoes. But on those narrow shoulders there was a sharp-cut little head, with a small pale mouth, delicate, arched, pensive eyebrows, softly colored, rounded cheeks. But above all, the far-off, unearthly look in her blue-gray eyes seemed to gaze right through and far beyond what they could see.

It was this look that had struck the old man. Rosemarie's mother, who had lived in a world of fairy tales and marvels, had bequeathed it to her daughter, whom fate cast in evil places. But those eyes gave the lie to the hard things that had been said of the girl, for the children of that other world recognize each other when they meet. And the old man suddenly remembered Rosemarie's messenger, poor half-witted Philip: if he loved and served her, she could be nothing less than pure of heart.

As he stood before her, his hands crossed against his chest as though pleading for forgiveness, she said in her

demure little voice: "That's all right, Godpapa. I knew those wonderful times I always dreamed of would be coming now. And you are right; there shall be no lies when they do come."

So they stood for a moment face to face, and silence fell, for the Schliekers did not move, until in a near-by room a child burst out crying. Then the silence ended and Frau Schlieker said in her rasping voice: "That's enough play-acting, Marie, we all know you can cast a spell on folk when you like, but it won't work with us, so get along and see to that brat before it howls itself sick."

Rosemarie slipped out of the room without a sound, and Frau Schlieker followed her.

So the peasant and Professor Kittguss were again left alone and Schlieker looked reflectively at the old man, who suddenly felt very weary and very wretched—nothing more.

"Look here, Professor," said Schlieker with a laugh. "I see I'm not going to get rid of you, so I'll show you a place where you can lie down and rest for a bit, and you'll see that when I look after anyone I look after them well."

So saying, he picked up the lamp, handed the Professor his bag, and guided him from behind with cries of "Left," "Right," along a passage, out of the house, across a yard, and toward a little shed.

The Professor walked ahead in a blank state of indifference, and it was not until Schlieker had opened the door of a shed and edged the Professor inside, that he exclaimed, like a man awakening from sleep: "But what is this, Herr Schlieker?"

But the door slammed behind him, a bolt rattled home, and Kittguss heard a shout—"The coalshed"—and then a burst of laughter which died away, leaving the Professor alone in the cold and darkness.

Chapter Four

In which Professor Kittguss escapes from one darkness but falls into a blacker one

MANY PEOPLE, in the Professor's situation, both men and women, would have made a disturbance. They would have kicked the coalshed door, they would have shouted, cursed or wept. But the Professor had learnt from his Bible that men, from their youth upwards, are naturally evil. Nevertheless, as a good Christian, he had always behaved as though they were naturally good. Therefore, he did none of these things. He stood stock-still behind the bolted door. He did not even put down his bag.

He was just a very old man, worn out by hunger and faintness and bewilderment. Now he hardly knew where he was, or why he had come. . . .

And when he again recalled the aim and purpose of his journey, he understood that he had slipped, all unawares, into an adventure that was quite beyond his powers.

"Dear me," he sighed. "Dear, dear me."

And then he fell silent once more. A patient man is a strong man. A night cannot last forever, and every door is opened in the end.

"Dear me," he said.

From the darkness came what sounded like an answer; something rustled, drew near. Then it slid round his legs, and two shining green eyes looked up at him. When the Professor at last discerned the companion of his captivity and as he bent down to stroke the cat, he could not think of a single one of the many pet names, such as Pussy or Tabby, that men have invented for their hearthside companion. Instead, he addressed it in correct and solemn German: "Yes, my dear little cat. . . . Yes, my good little cat. . . ."

However, the cat appeared quite pleased, brushed itself against him in the friendliest fashion, and rubbed its head more and more busily against his black trouser legs. But it made no attempt to purr; instead, it suddenly began to mew.

And the mews grew so persistent and appealing that even the Professor, who knew little about animals, grasped that it wanted something more than caresses. After prolonged reflection, he surmised that the cat was suffering just as he was—from hunger. He therefore announced more than once that he had nothing to give the creature, until he suddenly realized that he had. Frau Müller had put some lunch into his bag, a hard-boiled egg and some bread and butter.

These he unpacked, while the cat's appeals grew ever more urgent, and shared his food fraternally with the creature. Nor did the Professor devour the larger share.

Then he stood up in the darkness and waited—the

cat had crept away satisfied. Finally—he did not know whether the interval had been long or short—the door creaked and opened. Peering into the yard, which looked quite light after the impenetrable gloom of the coal-shed, he saw Schlieker standing there and saying, "Now then, come along out. That'll teach you to meddle in other folks' business."

The Professor could see Schlieker, but Schlieker could not see the Professor in the darkness of the coalshed, and because the Professor hesitated before he came out—for he did not know where to go and he had settled nothing—terror suddenly gripped Schlieker, who blurted out a curse, muttering under his breath: "I hope to God nothing's happened to the old fool. . . . I'll go and get a light. . . ."

Then the Professor emerged from the shed. He walked very slowly, swaying slightly (he felt very ill and his improvised supper had only made him feel worse), past Schlieker, as though he had not noticed him. Then he stopped, turned, and said: "And you should not forget to feed the cat."

He continued on his way, and to Schlieker his silent figure swaying across the yard looked almost uncanny. Then he stopped again to ask, with half-turned head: "Will you lend me a walking stick? I am an old man, and I may have a long way to go tonight."

"Of course I will, Herr Professor," cried Schlieker, much relieved, running into the house. This silent, uncomplaining visitor made him feel ill at ease, and for more than one reason. Moreover, since we are always glad to buy off a bad conscience for a penny, he hurried out eagerly with a stick for the Professor.

"Thank you very much," said the Professor.

"Nothing to thank me for," answered Paul Schlieker, with more truth than he suspected.

"I will send it back tomorrow morning," said the Professor.

"There's no hurry, no hurry at all," returned Schlieker, watching the tall form depart. "Good night, Herr Professor," he added. But he received no answer.

Not that the Professor intentionally failed to wish Schlieker good night. It was merely that his thoughts were already far away; he was wondering where he was going to spend the night. Recalling the inn kitchen with its scurrying cohorts of cockroaches, his cleanly soul turned sick within him. Then he thought once more of the interminable sandy path to Kriwitz railway station, and he felt so close to the end of his tether that he longed to sit on a stone by the wayside and go to sleep there.

That, however, was obviously beneath his dignity. Suddenly he bethought him of Farmer Tamm, and his heart leapt up within him at the recollection of that jolly character.

"He's the man for me," thought the Professor. "I am sure I shall not knock at his door in vain."

He came out of the cold into the warmth, out of the darkness into the light. The doorbell above his head jingled and before him, in the parlor, sat Farmer Tamm, with large countenance glistening over a platter piled mountain-high. On his right sat his wife Lowising, on his left his son Maxe.

"I'm not at home, I'm eating," bellowed Tamm, peering and blinking at the visitor in the doorway.

The visitor stood still and silent.

"Papa!" cried Frau Lowising, "it's the old Professor that went to Schlieker's about Marie. Hütefritz told us . . ."

She jumped up, took the old man by the hand, led him into the lamplight, and looked at him with anxious eyes. But as she watched him, with a smile of resignation and bewilderment on his face, she could not help smiling too. First she smiled, then she laughed, and soon the two men were laughing too. Presently the room re-echoed with "Haha!" and "Hoho!" and "Hihi!" and "Hold me! Hold me! I oughtn't to laugh like this on a full belly."

The old Professor stood there completely lost in all this laughter, and unable to help wondering whether anyone had ever laughed at him like this before.

Then he bethought him of his quiet study and the silent Frau Müller, where nothing of this sort could ever come to pass. . . .

Suddenly the farmer's wife exclaimed in a horrified tone: "My dear Professor, it's a sin and a shame for us to stand here and laugh at such a fine gentleman—silly countryfolk like us. Be quiet, Maxe! Go fetch a mirror. You've no idea what you look like, and you needn't tell us who is responsible. We all know Schlieker around here, Herr Professor. And now show the gentleman his face, Maxe."

The Professor looked into the mirror, and he saw that while stroking and feeding the cat he must have transferred a good deal of coal dust to his own person. His whole face was smeared with gray and black, but the dirt lay most thickly coated round his lips. His supper

had certainly disagreed with him, but when he saw what he had really swallowed with his bread and butter, his stomach turned positively sour.

No Professor of Divinity at the Royal Prince Joachim Grammar School on the Grünewaldstrasse in Berlin-Schöneberg had ever seen such a reflection of his own face; no wonder the good Kittguss examined it with great thoroughness, yet when he had finished his inspection, he merely observed in a mild tone: "But Herr Schlieker is not responsible for this, dear lady. It comes from feeding the cat in the coalshed."

"Oh, my God!" moaned fat Tamm from his sofa. "Just like the black king at Bethlehem. I can't bear it—hold me, please!"

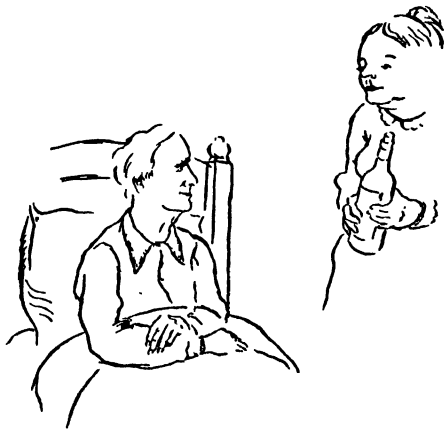
But someone else appeared to need holding rather more than fat Tamm, for the Professor suddenly announced in a plaintive voice: "I don't want to cause any inconvenience, but I think I'm going to faint."

With these words he collapsed upon Frau Lowising's buxom person, and if she had not caught him promptly, he would have crashed on to the stone floor.

Farmer Tamm had to eat his favorite dish, hashed goose and roast potatoes, by fits and starts—and they were cold into the bargain. For the farmer kept on running out to see that Professor Kittguss was comfortable in bed and that the bricks against his poor cold feet were not too hot. Later he trudged down in person to the inn, and consulted Otto Beier, the innkeeper, as to what food and drink would revive the old gentleman.

Returning with a bottle of fine old Bordeaux, he repaired to the kitchen where he and his wife concocted a sweetened negus, into which they also stirred the yolk

of an egg. They also arranged to drive the old man to the station next morning in the cart, and send him home: "He's no match for the folk here, certainly not for Schlieker, nor even for Marie. And what is he doing here anyway? So long as the Schliekers don't get themselves into trouble, it's none of our business what they do.



We don't want to cross Schlieker's path and we certainly should if the old man stopped in this house."

But when they took the mulled wine in to the Professor, he was sitting bolt upright in bed, gazing at them with large vacant eyes. They urged him to drink his draught and lie down again and get some sleep—but he gently asked for the Bible from his bag.

When they gave it to him, the book opened of itself at the Revelation of St. John, but the Professor turned to the earlier pages. He looked through the whole New Testament, and then went back farther still to the

Psalms of David. And here he came upon the tenth psalm about the insolence of the Enemy, and among much else he read:

"Why standest thou so far off, O Lord: and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble. The ungodly for his own lust doth persecute the poor. . . . His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and fraud; under his tongue is ungodliness and vanity. He sitteth lurking in the thievish corners of the streets; and privily in his lurking dens doth he murder the innocent. . . . Arise, O Lord God, and lift up thine hand: forget not the poor! . . ."

Then Professor Kittguss looked sadly at his hosts, sighed deeply, turned over on his side and closed his eyes. Whereupon the Tamms tiptoed from the room taking the lamp with them.

So Professor Kittguss lay alone in the darkness. He felt very sad, very disheartened, and very sick. He was ill at ease in this strange bed, and strange thoughts tormented him. Just eight and twenty hours had passed since that half-witted emissary entered his little prophet's chamber in Berlin, and here he lay, at the end of his physical powers, and weary, deathly weary in the spirit. . . . And tomorrow he would have to go to see Paul Schlieker again, and again contend with guile and fraud. What was he going to do? What did he mean to do? What in all the world *could* he do?—

The Professor flung himself upon his other side, but that was equally uncomfortable. He thought of writs and prosecutions and all the complications and horrors of the law—and it seemed that he was standing at his desk in his old classroom, confronted by a very singular class. He included bearded faces that seemed familiar

and yet strange; Hütefritz was there too, and the old man who climbed the woodpile after the ham. There sat fat Farmer Tamm, his wife Lowising, and their sturdy son; and sitting side by side and holding up their hands like school children were Paul Schlieker and his wife Mali.

The Professor had set out on his blackboard the equation that was to solve the chronology of the Apocalypse. He looked at it for an instant—it was correct. But the Professor called on none of those who had put up their hands, he looked anxiously at the corner by the stove. The room was rather dark there, but he thought he could distinguish a faint glimmer against the shadows, and he murmured softly: "Rosemarie!"

Slowly she walked up to the desk, and again he saw the starry radiance in her blue-gray eyes, and his heart grew sick within him.

She ignored the piece of chalk he offered her to solve the equation; she lifted the sponge from its bowl and wiped off his blackboard, figure by figure. But as the figures vanished one by one, the blackboard seemed to envelop his room, and the darkness deepened, until the old Professor could see nothing but the shimmer of a girlish form.

"Rosemarie!" he cried, "what are you doing?"

Then the shimmer vanished too. And he was alone, and very much afraid.

Again it seemed to the Professor that he was in bed: but was he dreaming or awake? He heard a faint tapping against the window, and then a soft voice whispering: "Godfather! Wake up, Godfather!"

He got out of his bed, opened the window and a

shadow in the darkness said: "Godfather, can't you help me? I've got to wash dirty clothes all night for punishment because you came, and I'm so tired that my legs are numb."

But the Professor answered irritably: "Can't you keep quiet? I'm an old man, and all I want is rest and peace. You have brought me to this detestable village among all these detestable people, and tonight you rubbed out my equation, which was all I had in life. We must all bear our own troubles, and I can give you no help."

It seemed to the Professor that the shadow wept softly and vanished into the night: a bush stood where it had been. Sadly the Professor closed the window, went back to bed, and fell to worrying because he had spoken so harshly to the shadow. Finally, he sank into a deep and dreamless sleep, and when he awoke it was light and bright October sunshine filled his room.

Beside his bed sat Frau Lowising. Regarding him with kindly eyes she said: "Well, Herr Professor, now you can have a decent breakfast, and when you feel up to it, you must dress and our Maxe will drive you to the station. No one has ever got the better of the Schliekers, and you're not likely to succeed. Rosemarie isn't a complete angel, you know, and even if she has to do a little farm work and look after those babies, it'll do her all the good in the world. But if you really want to help her, and if you've got money to spare, send a bit to the Schliekers every month; not too much, thirty marks, say—and make it a condition that they treat Marie properly. They'll do anything for money—it might even make them kind to a child."

When he awoke, the Professor still had a clear recol-

lection of his dream, and he wanted to interrupt Frau Lowising and ask her whether Rosemarie had really come to his window in the night and called for help. But as the old dame continued, the dream faded, and what she said seemed very sensible.

At first he did exclaim, rather nervously: "Do you really think so?"—but in three minutes he was convinced that she was right, and that his money would do more for Rosemarie than he could.

"True," he nodded, conscious of a growing sympathy for this kindly dame.

"Very well then, Herr Professor," said Frau Tamm with a sigh of relief, "you'd only have got yourself into all sorts of trouble here. Maxe will take you in the dog-cart. It's such a nice day, there's still a touch of summer in the air."

"Yes, indeed," said the Professor, glancing over his shoulder at the window. "The world looks very bright and cheerful today."

But they were wrong: Lowising Tamm, the farmer's wife, and Professor Gotthold Kittguss of Berlin were both wrong. It was not going to be a bright and cheerful day: Professor Kittguss of Berlin was about to be engulfed in the darkness of the darkest night.

Chapter Five

In which Professor Kittguss receives a second summons from the angel

PROFESSOR KITTGUSS sat very snug and comfortable at Maxe's side on the box seat of the dogcart, while the two brown horses trotted briskly down the sandy path that had seemed so wearisome when he trudged up it the previous afternoon. And the still, peaceful countryside, with the falling autumn leaves, should have done his heart good—but the Professor did not feel at all comfortable. Far from it.

It gave him pleasure to ponder on the labors of sixteen quiet years, and on the verse with which he would be dealing next. . . . This uneasy feeling must be due to his exertions of the day before. . . . Yes, of course . . . that must be the explanation.

After a while they came in view of a gate in the hedge. On it sat a small boy, swinging his legs and playing a mouth organ. The Professor recognized him at once as Hütefritz. The boy, too, recognized the Professor, and the song of the brier rose came to a sudden halt. The

boy's eyes widened until they were as large as the saucers in the fairy tale; he stopped swinging his legs and stared, dumfounded, at the Professor in the dogcart.

The latter looked at Hütefritz again, and began to feel so uneasy that he was on the point of asking Maxe to stop; he wanted to get out of the cart and explain to the boy that he could do nothing for the little girl by staying here—he would send some money from Berlin, and that would set everything to rights.

But the moment passed, the horses trotted on, leaving the wretched little object on the gate behind. Only Maxe snorted savagely, and said: "I'll teach that little scamp to sit tootling on a gate. His cows are always getting into our clover."

To which the Professor replied hastily: "Oh, my dear sir, I hope you will do nothing of the kind."

Then the pair fell silent until the hedges came to an end, and the land broadened out into an expanse of fields. The slate-black church tower of Kriwitz emerged over a low ridge. "We'll just catch the train," Maxe remarked.

But as he spoke he checked his horses, and stared in bewilderment at a strange procession that appeared round the corner of the street. One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . deaconesses, in black cloaks and white hoods, approaching in single file, each carrying a little bag. Nearer they came, walking with eyes downcast—and passed; but the last one, a sturdy, apple-cheeked lass, not long from the country, glanced up and said a soft "Good day."

But the leader of the procession, a truly formidable female with an embryo beard, coughed ominously,

whereupon the other dropped her eyes and hurried tremulously after the rest, swinging her little bag.

Maxe, with shoulders hunched, stared and stared until the five sisters had vanished round the next hillside. Then he turned, beaming with exultant malice, to the Professor, and observed with a hoarse chuckle: "I thought so. Paul Schlieker is in for a bad day, or I'll eat a broomstick. . . ."

"But what have the deaconesses to do with Herr Schlieker?" the Professor asked anxiously.

"They're going to fetch the children away, of course," retorted Maxe, almost losing his temper at such ignorance.

"What children?" asked the Professor, at once wishing he had held his peace.

"The foster children that are boarded out with the Schliekers. Well, those that won't listen must be treated rough. Now they'll lose the children, and a hundred and fifty marks a month into the bargain. They won't like that one little bit, the Schliekers won't."

And a knowing grin spread all over Maxe's large and genial countenance.

But the Professor's conscience gave him no rest. "Do the Schliekers really ill-treat the children?"

Maxe was a countryman's son, and as cautious as his parents. "How do I know?" he replied. "I don't go to the Schliekers' place, and one shouldn't listen to what folks say. But those five sisters are on their way there, and I'd give a thaler if I could look over the fence and see them grab those kids. . . . Giddap, Liese. We're going to miss this train."

"And Rosemarie?" asked the Professor anxiously. "The sisters will take her too, won't they?"

"The little Thürke girl, eh? Why should they? She's under the Guardians, the other five brats are under the Welfare Office—quite a different story, Herr Professor!"

"But surely the child can't be left where she is," protested the old gentleman, "if the Schliekers are such objectionable people. . . ."

"There she goes!" shouted Maxe, jerking the horses to a standstill. "We've missed it—I said we would."

At that moment a little locomotive and two little carriages emerged snorting and clattering from behind the tiny station building and rattled along the hillside until their noise faded in the silence of the forest.

"There!" said Maxe, as he watched it disappear.

Professor Kittguss stared too. "What are we to do now?" he asked anxiously of his driver.

"You must take the six o'clock train, Herr Professor," said Maxe persuasively, remembering how anxious his parents had been to get their visitor out of the village. "You can spend a couple of hours looking round Kriwitz. Stillfritz will give you a grand feed at the Archduke."

As he spoke he got out of the cart, lifted the bag on to the roadway and offered the Professor his hand.

The Professor took it mechanically. "But I feel I ought to get back to Unsadel," he said, "as the sisters are going . . ."

"Nonsense, Herr Professor," said Maxe briskly, now back on the box seat. "There's no call for you to interfere. You leave it all to the Guardians and the Welfare Office, it's their affair. Good-by, Herr Professor, and good luck. I'll give your regards to the parents."

So Professor Kittguss was left alone on the road from Unsadel to Kriwitz, watching the dogcart rapidly receding into the distance. Something was wrong, and he knew what it was, but would not admit it to himself.

Picking up his bag he made his way into Kriwitz, past the station, past rows of the nondescript little houses that cluster round a little country town, past five enormous stores. For Kriwitz is a market town, where farmers come to sell their produce and spend their money.

The Professor, plunged in meditation, was walking right through the town and out into the autumn countryside, when a voice from an imposing gateway hailed him: "Hi there! you with the bag!"

The Professor looked doubtfully at the man in the gateway whose eyes glistened with guile and good living, and whose nose was almost incredibly large and purple.

"Are you addressing me, my dear sir?" the Professor asked cautiously.

The man peered up and down the street. "Do you see any other gentleman with a bag?" said he. "I don't. No. Well, since you've got a bag, you must be a traveler. And," the man went on, rubbing his hands meditatively, "when a traveler visits our little town, he doesn't pass the Archduke, he helps old Stillfritz to keep the beer flowing. That's in everybody's interest."

"Indeed," said the Professor, noncommittally. "So you are an innkeeper?"

"Sir," exclaimed the other, "all that we are and were and may become, can be better discussed inside over a pot of beer."

"But I never drink beer," said the Professor, a remark

which came oddly from a theologian, "least of all in the morning."

"Not just a little spot?" said the landlord, blinking at him. "Come now?—"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, well—you ought to know better at your age," said the landlord regretfully. "However, all joking aside, come along in and keep me company for a bit. You can spare half an hour before you peddle round the coffee extract or whatever it is you've got in that bag. My dear sir," he went on, with something like tears in his voice, "just think what it means to look at dead beer taps morning after morning and an empty bar. It's a sight to make a landlord sick."

The Professor felt gloomy, too. He had no idea how he was going to get through the five or six hours until his train went. He looked dubiously at his strange companion. "Well, I won't drink any beer or spirits, though," he observed.

"You needn't," replied the landlord. "But come inside. My wife's got some good chicken broth on the fire, just the stuff for a gentleman like yourself. You'll enjoy it."

"I hope so," said the Professor, and sat down in the chimney corner with a sigh of relief.

"I know you will," replied the landlord with a smirk. "So that's settled, eh? Right. Well, here's your health!"

He drew himself half a glass of beer, held it gloomily up to the light, and muttered: "Cloudy, confound it," poured the liquid down his throat, and said more briskly: "In the summer, just about harvest time, we often have a lot of motorists staying here, for a country holiday,

though what on earth they see to admire in the country is more than I can say. Well, then, I'll tell them to serve you a bowl of that chicken broth. You look pale around the gills. I'll tell the sergeant major to beat up an egg in it."

He eyed his guest pensively, and flicked his napkin against his pantaloons. There was a moment's silence.

"You were going to order me some broth," observed the Professor.

"So I was," said the landlord who vanished and at once reappeared. "I never get a chance to open my mouth these days, I've almost forgotten how to talk. . . . One day this spring I was standing in the doorway, it was pelting rain outside, when a car dashed up, a smart Berlin motorcar. . . . It stopped and two women hopped out. But I planted myself in the doorway and I grabbed one and I grabbed the other, and I said very pleasantly: 'Not so fast, ladies, there's room for everybody. . . . Which of you little dears is the prettiest, we'll let her in first.' They yelled and they struggled and the rain trickled down their necks. . . ." He surveyed his guest and again rubbed his vast and luminous nose. "Do you think they saw the joke? Not they! They cursed me up and down, and never came in at all. And the man that was with them actually called me an old fool— Would you say I was an old fool?"

"Yes, I would," said the Professor emphatically. "And if you don't bring me that chicken broth, I shall go away too."

At these stern words Stillfritz retreated to the far end of the bar. "There you are," he said bitterly, looking at the Professor with a reproachful eye, "a chap takes

a bit of trouble to cheer up his visitors, and they call him a fool. Jokes aren't understood these days. And no one thinks about a landlord's feelings. It isn't just selling beer, I can keep the taps running without help—it's"—and he peered up at the ceiling—"it's something quite different. And it's the weather too. . . . You try keeping a country inn, when Sunday after Sunday it never stops raining, and you'll know how a man gets to act like I do. . . . The chicken broth will be ready in a moment, sir," he snapped out suddenly, vanished from the room, leaving the Professor alone.

Alone, in peace and quiet. A fly buzzed, a farm cart passed, from the kitchen a saucepan clinked. He heard a woman's angry voice, and the landlord's somewhat plaintive replies. One o'clock struck, the marital duet in the kitchen proceeded, the Professor's chin sank lower and lower on his chest, his head dropped forward. The stove was so pleasantly warm. . . . Professor Kittguss began to doze a little after the wear and tear of the previous day, and indeed he would have slept through all the twinges of an uneasy conscience until tomorrow, if the door had not suddenly been flung open, and two pairs of feet entered the bar. One sounded alert and peremptory, the other shambled behind it. As the Professor started rather awkwardly into consciousness, the owner of the brisk step faced him with hand raised to helmet and said in a military tone: "You permit me to bring this lad in to the bar, sir? If I leave him outside he'll escape. He's tried twice already and that's why he's in such a state. Those who won't listen must be treated rough."

With these words Constable Peter Gneis surveyed his

prisoner, adding in a stern but not brutal tone: "I think we'd better tether you to the hatrack, my lad. And if you think you can break away with a hatrack under your arm, just try it. You're quite fool enough, though you aren't such a fool as you look, and I'd catch you again pretty quick."

The Professor looked . . . and he looked . . . and he rubbed his eyes. But what he saw was undeniable; here was the secret emissary, Philip, who had brought Rosemarie's letter to his study two days before, the letter that had summoned him to Unsadel, that had almost led to a quarrel with his faithful old housekeeper, the Widow Müller. Indeed it was Philip, but how shockingly changed!

He had been a pitiable object before, but as he stood here now, the very image of an idiot, oblivious of the Professor and the world about him, gaunt and bruised and bleeding, he was hardly able to stand up. . . .

The Professor was so shocked that he exclaimed: "Good God! It can't be!—"

"Yes, he's a runaway farm hand," said Constable Peter Gneis in a stern tone. "And I shouldn't like either of us to see the sort of welcome he'll get from his masters— A glass of beer and a schnapps, Stillfritz. Yes, you may well look surprised. He ran away from Farmer Schlieker's place at Unsadel. He was found at Gransee, and passed on from constable to constable until we got him here. What in the world he was doing at Gransee we don't know, and never shall, for the fellow would die sooner than open his mouth."

"Ah, my lad," said Stillfritz, rubbing his purple proboscis, "I dare say you haven't got much of a job at Schlie-

ker's place. But you know that the Mecklenburg bylaws say that a fellow has to serve his year, well or ill. And you're going to get a very thick ear when you get home, you young fathead. However, no one shall say that Stillfritz sent you back to face it without something warm inside your belly. Have a spot to eat, eh? . . ." And he began to work his jaws and smack his lips.

Into that vacant countenance came the faintest glimmer of a smile. All his pain and privation, his torn and battered feet, had left him unmoved; but at the sight of those champing jaws, two large glistening tears rolled down over his gaunt cheeks.

"Hey, don't cry, boy! I'll get you something to eat at once— Hullo, what's all this?"

Beside the landlord stood the tall imposing figure of Professor Kittguss, his bowl of broth in his hand, saying: "It is my special duty to see that this poor lad is fed. And if anyone wants to know why and to whom he ran away, officer, you can say that he ran away to me. To Professor Kittguss in Berlin; he brought me a letter from my godchild. And if there are any expenses involved I will bear them. And if the lad is likely to get into trouble, I will go back with him and put matters straight."

"And I took you for a traveler in coffee extract," exclaimed the bewildered landlord.

"Indeed," said the constable officially, reaching for his notebook. "So you wish to make a statement. . . ."

At this point, all three of them, after the manner of men, would have promptly plunged into a little debate as to the proprieties of the case, instead of doing something practical. But the fragrance of the chicken broth

was too much for the starving Philip. He almost wrenched the bowl out of the Professor's hand, set it to his lips, and in two seconds it was empty! Philip stared dumfounded into the bowl, looking exactly like the lion in the fable who thought he was swallowing a calf and found it was a pea.

Then they understood, and inside of five minutes Philip was seated at a table. He did not find the potato spoon beyond his compass, nor did he agree with the common view that a full-grown boiled fowl is enough for two men.

He ate and ate and the others watched him, and as a hearty eater who does honor to God's good gifts always diffuses a sense of well-being, Constable Peter Gneis observed in a comparatively genial tone: "Yes, my dear Herr Professor, I like to see a gentleman kind to a poor half-wit like this, but duty's duty and not chicken broth, and a Mecklenburg bylaw doesn't just exist on paper. It is always on the point of being abolished as degrading, but until it is abolished, a runaway servant has to be taken back to his master. At his master's expense, of course. And he's certainly in for a thrashing, no doubt of that, as it drives the Schliekers plumb crazy to part with money."

"But the lad can't be taken back to people of that kind!" exclaimed the Professor, thinking not only of the lad, but also of a certain girl.

"Oh, yes he can," said the constable, "and he must. Many things have to be done that seem unpleasant to a gentleman like you. Duty's duty, there's no getting away from that. But," said he, "I had nothing to do with that black eye; he'd got that when I took him over

at Fürstenberg; I dare say it goes back to Gransee and even farther."

"But," said the Professor, "this is an intolerable state of affairs. Can you make no suggestion, officer?"

"Well—" said the constable, arresting his spoon on its way to his mouth. By now they were all eating; time had slipped past, it was midday, and Frau Stillfritz was eating with them. Her husband still stood behind the bar drinking his beer.

For a while there was silence, except for the rattle of the half-wit's plate and spoon. But when the silence threatened to become oppressive, Frau Stillfritz lifted up her voice. And what she had to say, she said in the tone of one who knew her mind.

"There you sit as though it rained chickens, and there's not one of you with any idea of what to do. Oh, yes, you can talk well enough, but you're a pack of fools when something really needs to be done. And my old man, who always talks so high and mighty, can't do anything but fill himself glass after glass. Why don't you eat something, Stillfritz, instead of swilling all that beer—you'll ruin your stomach and then you won't be able to eat."

"Ah, Auguste," said Stillfritz plaintively, shaking his beer glass.

"Oh yes—ah, Auguste—oh, Auguste—a bright sort of man you are when that's all you can say. And, Herr Professor, I dare say you're a very learned man, but you won't get anywhere by just saying: 'It can't be done.' You shouldn't shove the whole thing off on to Peter Gneis. He is a policeman, and he is responsible for the

young scamp. You don't expect him to let the lad escape, just to please you, do you?"

"I'm not suggesting it," said the Professor plaintively. "I only meant that one must. . . ."

"Aha!" interrupted Frau Stillfritz triumphantly, "there we are again. One! One—is just nobody at all, Herr Professor—excuse me for saying so, but you—*you*—you are the man for the job. *You* think it all wrong, so *you* must go along to Paul Schlieker and put it right. Don't think you can just sit around by the stove and get other folk to do your job—it's not decent."

And as she surveyed the men, one by one, with the eye of a basilisk, the good lady had no idea how the Professor quailed under that gaze.

"But I'm all ready to go!" he exclaimed.

"That's right!" she cried. "You men only need a shake-up, a good stiff one, to make you see what's what. But I'll soon have my old man in a drunkard's home, if he doesn't know what's good for him and our hotel. . . ."

"Ah, Auguste. . . ."

"Ah, Auguste, indeed—I'm sick of it. And if you do go, Herr Professor, I dare say you'll be able to fix things up very nicely. It'll cost you a bit to get the lad away from Schlieker, but Peter Gneis here will help you, he's got the law behind him, and he'll watch your pocket for you."

"So I will," said the constable. "You're quite right, Frau Stillfritz."

"Of course I'm right," said Frau Stillfritz. "If I say a soup's good, it *is* good. But even if you buy out the lad, Herr Professor, it isn't clear sailing, not by a long shot. Where's the lad to go?"

"Where indeed?" asked the Professor, quite helplessly.

"And when I look at you, Herr Professor, I can well imagine your little flat in Berlin, all spick and span, and all the corners swept every day. I don't see Philip Münzer in a place like that, and I dare say, too, you've got a real old tatar. . . ."

"Indeed, no," protested the Professor. "A very decent, neat, widow woman. . . ."

"Just as I said," cried Frau Stillfritz in high good humor, "a real old tatar. You don't need to tell me the sort of woman that looks after an old bachelor like you. . . . So he can't go to your place. Now our boots has just left us, and this lad isn't such a half-wit that he can't find his way to the station and fetch up a trunk, and he can dig the garden—and dig it right, mind you, my lad, not just scratch it. . . ."

"Sure-lee, missus," said the lad, uttering a word for the first time.

"There you are, you see, Herr Professor? He knows the right place for him already. And now you stop messing about with that beer tap, Stillfritz, and tell 'em next door that we want a cab for Unsadel. It would be too much for the old gentleman to walk the whole way after his dinner, and he'll gladly pay for a cab. There'll be room for Herr Gneis and the lad behind, so everyone will be pleased except the old nags in the shafts."

Chapter Six

In which everything goes wrong, and Professor Kittguss flees in secret

THE OLD HORSES DID NOT, however, appear to be at all out of humor; they trotted cheerfully into the country, and the occupants of the vehicle were all in good spirits, except possibly the young captive who still remained dumb. Professor Kittguss, who was now fated to traverse the road to Unsadel for the third time within twenty-four hours, surveyed the sunlit autumn landscape without any twinges of conscience; all would soon be settled to everyone's satisfaction and he would be able to return to the Apocalypse. Such was the confidence inspired in him by the presence of Constable Gneis.

The driver, who was sitting at the Professor's side, a small but comfortable property owner from Kriwitz, confined the conversation to an occasional jerk of the whip, and such observations as: "That's Hübner's land"; "Köller's clover looks pretty poor"; "Look, Neitzel has sown his wheat already."

The Professor nodded and said: "To be sure," or

"Quite so," and they jogged quietly along.

He took it quite as a matter of course that he should be driving into the country in charge of two human destinies, one of them, crouching at the back of the carriage, already sorely stricken, the other—ahead of him —in peril. It seemed quite natural that he should be looking out for a gate in the hedge, and hoping to see a boy called Hütefritz sitting on it, watching Professor Kittguss' return to Unsadel.

But there was no one on the gate. The whip pointed to the gap: "Wilhelm Gau's meadows; and a damned sight more thistle than clover and grass."

"True," replied the Professor.

Then they emerged from the narrow lane, and there lay the village of Unsadel by the lake, and the burnished autumn foliage blazed down to the waterside.

The cart rumbled on more rapidly. The first houses emerged from behind the windmill, all of them looking as still and spellbound and deserted as on the afternoon before.

"Well I never!" ejaculated Constable Gneis in high astonishment.

As they rattled past Otto Beier's inn, Professor Kittguss shuddered slightly, for he had not yet forgotten the cockroaches. But today he looked in vain into Farmer Tamm's yard; there was no fat farmer hanging from a tree, there was no scrambling for hams. All was silent and deserted.

"What's the meaning of this, Karl—where is everybody?" the constable asked the driver.

"There must be something doing in the lower village. Perhaps there's a fire."

"But we'd have seen the smoke just now when we came over the hill." The constable's face and voice had become entirely official. Something was wrong, and what it was Professor Kittguss could have explained if he had taken the trouble to think.

But he did not, and they drove to the last farm, still puzzled. Then the driver pulled up his horses and observed:

"That's where the trouble is, friends."

"What are all those people doing here?" exclaimed the Professor in astonishment.

"Paul Schlieker, of course," growled the constable and clambered down from the cart with the youth firmly linked to his wrist. "Now look here, my lad, if you try to make a getaway in the crowd and make me look a fool in front of all the people!—"

"Oh God, here's the Professor back again," cried Frau Lowising. "We don't want that old Jonah to add to all our fuss and trouble!"

"Hullo, Karl!" laughed Farmer Tamm. "When there's something doing around here, you folk from Kriwitz always turn up to have a look."

"Thank God you've come, Peter Gneis," said Gottschalk, the parish clerk, dripping with perspiration. "He won't give 'em up, and he's plumb mad with fury. He won't let anyone inside."

"Who won't give up what?" snapped the constable. "Report the matter properly, Otto. I'm magistrate for the time being." And indeed he looked very magisterial as he spoke.

Suddenly the mob that thronged Paul Schlieker's garden fence, Paul Schlieker's doorway and Paul Schlieker's

yard gave way before a marching female phalanx—the same five deaconesses whom the Professor had seen that morning, and who had made him miss his train. And they still carried their little bags in their hands and proceeded in single file led by the masculine lady with the

bristly chin while the red-cheeked country girl brought up the rear.

But now they looked quite different. Their hair was wild, their eyes glittered and their faces were white or red with anger.

The leader stopped in front of the constable while the others halted with a jerk and stood motionless except for the little bags that still dangled from their wrists.

"I am thankful you have come, Herr Gneis," she gasped. "We've been standing here for four hours begging and praying the man to let us in and hand over the foster children, as his duty is under the bylaws. We have also told him what we think of him. But there's not a sign of life. I dare say the Schliekers went away on purpose just to keep us waiting. . . ."

"Look," said the constable, pointing to the chimney, from which a wisp of smoke was rising. "Look, Sister Adelaide, babies can't stoke fires. They're at home, Sister Adelaide, laughing fit to burst, and they'll say they didn't hear you because they were asleep. Gottschalk, you should have broken down the door long ago, and had them out on the mat—this is a breach of the peace, I'll have you know. Now then, out of this yard, all of you!" shouted the constable. "You've no business on private property. Get a move on, Frieda! Stand aside, young man!"

Still linked to his prisoner, he managed to bustle and push them all out of the yard, and then shouted, "Shut the yard door, Gottschalk, and see that none of them get in again. Only the sisters and yourself—and perhaps the Professor—where on earth is the old chap? . . . Well, never mind—now I'll make a start."

Constable Gneis then hammered briskly on the door and shouted, "Police! Open in the name of the law, Herr Schlieker—or I'll kick your old door to bits!"

In the meantime, the Professor was standing alone in the Schliekers' garden. The departing wave of people had swept him out of the yard, and to avoid it he had stepped round a corner of the house. Here, in solitude, he felt at ease; again the whole affair was more than he could stand—the crowd and the shouting, the turmoil of events past and to come, in which he was so grievously involved.

He vaguely heard the hammering on the door, the policeman's lusty shouts, then he sat down heavily on a bench that stood in an arbor of jasmine, lilac, and honeysuckle, placing his black clerical hat beside him. Vacantly he stared at the few surviving wild flowers by his feet, vacantly he listened to the rising hubbub from the yard.

A sudden sound from near at hand made him start. A back door from the house into the garden had opened, and a face peered cautiously out. Professor Kittguss knew that face and was afraid.

But it did not see the Professor in his arbor—

"Off with you, Marie!" said Frau Schlieker. "There's no one here—the Schlieker family will be one too many for them yet!"

"Oh, please don't," cried an imploring voice that made the Professor listen. "The children might catch cold on the water."

"Nonsense!—they can't catch cold in half an hour! Do what I tell you for once in your life, Marie, and I'll make it up to you, truly I will. I won't have them all after us like this—the five sisters, the parish clerk, the

whole village, and now that pompous old fool of a policeman—they shan't put it over on us. Now do as I say, Marie. We'll hand over the children ourselves tomorrow, I promise, but not today, not to *these* brutes. . . ."

The girl seemed to hesitate and ponder.

"Now please, Marie," urged the woman.

"And we'll take them to the office tomorrow, for sure? You promise, Mali?"

"On my sacred word of honor, Rosemarie!"

"All right, I will. I've no use for any of them, not even the policeman, he just laughs at me. . . ."

The Professor got up.

Then followed a scurry behind the bushes, through the garden and down to the lake. He could hear suppressed voices, the clink of a chain, and the whimper of a little child.

As he stood irresolute, the woman again passed his hiding-place, and vanished into the house— What should he do—call the policeman?

The woman came back with another child on her arm. Unseeing and unhearing, she ran past him. He followed her through the garden and down to the water. Rosemarie, his godchild, sat waiting in a boat, and the children sat or sprawled in the bottom.

"Here you are, Marie," cried Frau Schlieker. "You stay hidden among the reeds till it's dark. And don't let any of the children cry. . . ."

"Rosemarie!" cried the Professor in an agonized tone.

She looked up at him, and a flush grew gradually deeper over her face. . . . "Is that you, Godfather?" she whispered.

"What are you trespassing here for?" hissed the wom-

an. "I'm sick of the sight of you—you silly old man! Get along, Marie!"

And she gave the boat a kick that made it rock.

"I'm coming with you," cried the Professor, his voice rising to something like a shriek. He jumped, bag in hand, soaring over a gap of water that looked very broad and perilous. . . . He landed somehow, staggered and fell. His body struck against something hard, and he felt a sharp twinge of pain.

"Come back! Throw the old fool out," screamed the woman on the shore, grabbing the boat hook.

"Pull away!" cried the Professor. He sat in the bottom of the boat looking sick and yellow, gasping for breath, his hand to his side.

The girl saw the approaching boat hook, and bent to the oars. The boat shot out into the lake.

"What is all this disgraceful disturbance?" exclaimed Schlieker, with an air of vast surprise, as he opened the door, which the invaders were now battering with a crowbar and a handspike. "Officer, I protest against this damage to my property."

He stood in the door, barring the way and grinning contemptuously at the infuriated throng. "Ah, Gottschalk, you old fool, you think you can stick your nose into everything because you happen to be the parish clerk. You'll pay for my door."

"That will do, Herr Schlieker," said Constable Gneis angrily. "It is your fault we have had to stand here knocking and shouting. If there's any charge to be made, it will be against you for resisting the law—and money won't put that right."

"Knocked, did you?" said Schlieker with a laugh, not budging an inch out of the doorway. "And shouted too? Well, Herr Gneis, I heard nothing whatever. I was in the cellar stopping up the old rat holes with glass and cement. You can't hear anything down there, but that's no reason for smashing a man's front door. I know that much about justice and the law."

"There!" said the constable, looking reproachfully at the sisters and the mayor. "Exactly as I thought. Exactly. But I've one thing to say to you, Schlieker my man, and I'll take my service oath on it. You're going to find this a bad day's work."

"Kindly address me as Herr Schlieker, officer," grinned Schlieker. "I quite understand you're more used to the society of criminals, such as the one handcuffed to you at present, but I must insist on your speaking to me with proper respect. Ah, Philip, my lad," he said with sudden geniality, "glad to be back again, eh? You will be gladder later on, I can promise you that, on my solemn oath."

"None of that nonsense, Herr Schlieker," said the constable angrily. "We will deal with the boy's case in due course. First, you hand over the five children at once. It's a sin and shame that the sisters should have to toil up here, when you have been officially instructed three times to give them up."

"But I have done so!" cried Schlieker in high astonishment. "My foster daughter went off with them early this morning, and they must have reached the office long ago."

"That's a lie!" said the red-cheeked sister indignantly. "I heard a child crying in the house!"

"Herr Schlieker," said the constable confidentially, "what's the use of such talk? I shall simply have to search the house—why bring all this unpleasantness on yourself? . . . Do be sensible for once, and don't run your head against a brick wall."

"I'm quite sensible. I tell you that the children started out at five this morning. If you want to look over the house, please do so, officer."

And he stepped out of the doorway.

The others whispered for a moment while he watched them with a grin on his face. Then they started searching the house and, of course, they searched in vain. Most persistent of all was the large and bearded sister who knelt down and looked under every bed and rummaged in every cupboard and every basket as though a baby might be hidden among waste paper or dirty clothes.

"Try under the sofa, Sister Adelaide," said Schlieker genially, and managed to give Philip a jab in the ribs unobserved. This he did as often as he could. The poor lad looked more and more woebegone, and his servitude to the Schlieker household seemed so terrible a prospect —especially as his friend Rosemarie was nowhere to be seen—that he mustered all the forces of his reason and whispered into the constable's ear, "The boa-at."

"What!" said the constable, who was on one side of him; from the other, Philip got a buffet that winded him for the moment.

"Try the beet-cellar, Sister Adelaide," said Paul genially, and lifted the trapdoor invitingly. They were all now convinced that there was really no one in the house, and that Schlieker had fooled them as usual; but the rosy-faced sister went down none the less, and found nothing.

"The boa-at," said the lad more insistently. Hell gaped for him, that he well knew, but those acquainted with its torments are often possessed of a courage hardly conceived of by people who live in less gruesome regions.

"The boat?—" asked the constable reflectively.

"What's that?" shouted the farmer in sudden fury. "What's that you're saying? Hold your tongue, or . . ." And the alternative was a blow that sent the lad staggering against the wall.

"None of that, Herr Schlieker," said the constable sternly. "The boat, of course. The poor silly lad has got more sense than the whole lot of us. Come on. . . ."

And they dashed off as though the lake were on fire, down to the landing stage, Peter Gneis in the lead, with the lad handcuffed to his wrist. Behind him ran the withered old clerk, muttering and cursing; and behind him, the five sisters, the old bearded one in front and the red-cheeked girl last, their little bags flying behind them as they ran. At their side ran Paul Schlieker and his wife Mali, who had suddenly appeared and whispered to her husband as she ran.

The lake lay before them, a broad green expanse under a pale blue October sky, with patches of reed and sedge standing motionless in the water.

The excited throng came to a sudden stop, and stared at water and landing stage as though there were something to see. But there was nothing, except the landing stage and the lake. God alone knew what they expected to find—possibly the babies lined up on the shore, having presumably dropped from Heaven. But there was nothing, nothing at all.

"And where is your boat, Herr Schlieker?" asked the constable, looking rather disconsolate.

"My boat? I've lent it to my cousin at Biestow. He uses it for carrying wood from Biestow."

"Well, well," said the constable resignedly. "You ought to know. However, you can depend on my going to have a look at your boat at Biestow this evening—Hullo, my lad, what have you got there?"

While he spoke, Philip had bent down as far as the handcuff chain would let him, and picked up something at the water's edge. Behold—it was a small child's shoe, of blue silk with little white dots.

"Will you kindly explain, Herr Schlieker, how a child's shoe comes to be lying on your landing stage?" asked the constable solemnly, for now he had a piece of evidence.

This time Schlieker offered no explanation, this time his wrath boiled over, and he flung the mask aside.

"I'll soon show you—damn you!" and he dashed at the wretched boy and belabored him until the lad nearly collapsed. And as Philip was linked to the constable, that functionary came in for a blow or two, whether intentionally or not will never be known.

The constable swore and prepared to retaliate. Gottschalk tried to restrain the combatants, but only made matters worse. The sisters shrieked, and the bearded dame unobtrusively set upon Frau Schlieker from behind.

Suddenly, a hand emerged from the scuffle and clawed at the constable's face. He raised an arm to ward it off and the catch of the handcuffs slipped. The moment Philip noticed this he was off like a bullet from a

gun, knocking down some of the combatants, slipping between the legs of others. In a flash he had climbed a fence, dashed through the orchard and disappeared behind some bushes, nor did he reappear until he had reached the edge of the forest some distance away.

"Well, he's off!" observed the constable, with something which almost resembled satisfaction.

"Stop him! Stop him!" roared the parish clerk.

"I'll half kill him when I get him back," bawled Schlieker, rubbing the shin which the boy had kicked as he fled, whether intentionally or not will never be known either.

"You'll pay for my dress!" screamed Mali Schlieker to Sister Adelaide.

Then they stood and eyed each other in amazement. The boy had vanished into the autumn foliage, and not one of them had stirred a step in pursuit.

"Well, we shan't see him again for a while," said the constable solemnly. "And he's taken away my evidence —the child's shoe. No one's got it, have they?"

No, no one had it.

"We will now go indoors, Herr Schlieker, and draw up a statement. It looks to me as if I should be using the handcuffs on you next."

"I shall be interested to know what you can prove against me," said the incorrigible Paul. "I sent the girl to the Welfare Office with the five little bastards, you can't complain of that, can you? As for the shoe—well, what's wrong with that? Marie Thürke is an untidy little devil!" He gazed meditatively over the lake. But he saw only the usual scene: water, reeds, a few ducks.

"Where shall we go, Godfather?" the girl asked the old gentleman. Some twenty strokes had brought the boat into a bed of reeds beyond the sight and hearing of the infuriated woman on the landing stage.

"Yes, where indeed, my child?" the Professor replied, with his hand against his aching body. "You see, Rosemarie," he went on with an effort, "I am an old man, a very old man, and need rest and a certain degree of comfort. Half an hour ago I thought that everything would be nicely settled, and now everything is upset again. I really don't know how or why. . . ."

He passed a hand over his forehead and sighed. Then he looked apprehensively at the other occupants of the boat, three of whom were crying already.

"And these children—" he sighed again. "And I don't think I have ever been in a boat before."

The girl could not help laughing at this display of helplessness. But she soon stopped, and excused herself: "I'm so sorry, Godfather, it has all been so different from what I expected. When I sent poor Philip, I thought I should get a man's help and support. Dear Papa often told me how you kept whole classes of thirty or forty boys in order—and that must be fearfully difficult."

"Not if it is done by kindness," said her godfather gently. "Every human being responds to kindness."

"Yes," said Rosemarie, and eyed him meditatively. "Mali only gave me one comforter, and all five of them are crying now. They won't need to look for us, the noise will put them on our track. Do you want them to find us?"

"No, indeed," cried the Professor in an agonized tone. "At least, not yet—I should like to get a little rest first.

They all talk so much and we must also decide how I am to help you."

"Perhaps we could come and stay with you in Berlin, Godfather?"

"Yes," said the Professor. "Yes, certainly." And a vision of his quiet study rose before his eyes, and then a vision of Philip. "No, no, that won't do," he said gloomily. "I gave my promise, I can't abandon Philip."

"Philip?— Has he come back again?"

"Yes. The policeman had him handcuffed to his wrist."

"We'll have to rescue him, Godfather!" cried Rosemarie. "So we can't go to Berlin. . . . And we couldn't anyway," she went on after a moment's thought. "I must look after the farm, and they wouldn't let me stay with you, either. They've got the law on their side."

"Yes, indeed," said the old man sadly. The thought of his quiet home in Berlin lit the surrounding darkness for a moment only to be at once extinguished.

"Godfather, dear," said the girl softly, "couldn't you become my guardian? The others don't like me a bit. I could arrange for you to be quiet and comfortable here. And tomorrow we will go and see Frau von Wanzka and old Mühlenfeldt, the grocer. They are my guardians now. Please, please, dear Godfather, it will be quite simple to fix up the whole thing."

"I don't think I should be at all a suitable person," said the old man reflectively. "I am not a man of the world."

"That doesn't matter," cried Rosemarie. "I'll always tell you what to do. Oh, please. . . ."

She had laid an arm round his neck and her head on

his chest. As she looked up at him, her starry eyes brimmed with shining tears, "I'm only sixteen, Godfather," she wailed, "and I've had five years of this dreadful life already, first with the Gaus and then with the Schliekers. I've never been able to talk freely to anyone. . . . Oh yes, I have," she recalled, sitting up and looking at him with a tearful smile, "I've been able to talk to the animals and the children. All the children take my part, Godfather, in the village and everywhere."

"Then, my child," said the old Professor, "you see that God never lays a heavier burden on us than we can bear."

She eyed him meditatively, her white teeth against her underlip. "Will you?" she asked softly.

"I will think it over, my dear child," said the Professor peaceably. "But you must first make some arrangement about these poor little children. Or shall we take them with us?"

The children were now quiet, they were listening to the lapping of the water and the rustle of the reeds against the boat.

"Ah yes, the children," said Rosemarie meditatively, "bless the little brats! You can't imagine how sweet they can be, Godfather!"

The old gentleman looked rather dubiously at the five variegated bundles.

"They shan't go back to the Schliekers. And I know where I'll take them. Can you steer?"

"No," said the Professor shaking his head gloomily. "I'm afraid I shall be very little use."

"Never mind, Godfather," she said reassuringly. "I'll fix up the whole lousy business. . . . Oh dear, oh dear!"

she cried, clapping her hand to her mouth, "I oughtn't to have said 'lousy,' but I've got so used to the Schliekers' saying it. And Godfather," she said, thrusting the boat clear of the reeds and pulling out into the falling dusk, "it's such a relief to be able to say a word like that."

"A prayer, an honest prayer, would be more of a relief, and a different one," said the Professor.

"Yes," said Rosemarie, as she bent to her oars. "You are much older than I am, Godfather."

Then they glided silently across the lake, until a black mass rose up in the gathering darkness, and Rosemarie said gleefully, "Just as I thought. Not a light anywhere. They're all still at the Schliekers'."

They tied up the boat, and the houses of Unsadel village loomed dark and deserted along the sloping shore.

"Where are you going to take the children?" asked the Professor, awaking from his meditations as Rosemarie stepped out of the boat with two of them.

"I'm going to put them in the Tamms' bedroom," whispered the girl.

"Good," said the Professor with an approving nod, "Frau Lowising Tamm is an excellent woman."

The girl ran back and forth three times.

"There," she said as she clambered into the boat and pushed off. "I've given them all a kiss and a hug. It's very hard to leave them, but they were neglected with us. They'll be much better off now. But what's going to become of them later on?"

And she rowed for a long, long while across the lake. Complete darkness had fallen.

"Where are we going?" asked the Professor. The night was getting damp and cold.

"We'll soon be there," she replied, and her voice seemed to come from far away out of the darkness.

Time passed and then they put in at the shore.

"Come along, Godfather, here's my hand. Now stay still, I'll fetch your bag."

Professor Kittguss stood with stiffened limbs and aching body, utterly exhausted in a pitch-dark wood. "What are you doing?" he asked timidly after a while.

"Pushing the boat into the current, so that it won't be found here. Otherwise they would spot us at once."

"And where are we to spend the night?" he asked nervously. "Not in this dark wood?"

"You'll soon see," she said. "There," and she took his hand. "The boat has drifted off. Walk very slowly and carefully, Godfather. We'll be there in a minute."

The path, if path it could be called, led up the beach. Dry leaves rustled under their feet. Then a sort of clearing opened out before them.

"Do you see that dark mass over there?" asked Rosemarie, pointing.

"Yes, I think so," he answered doubtfully.

"That's the old cowshed," said Rosemarie triumphantly. "We'll be quite safe there."

"Good God!" groaned the Professor.

Chapter Seven

In which Rosemarie sets up a completely illegal household

AS THEY WALKED up to the old cowshed, a low rambling structure looming out of the darkness, Rosemarie picked up something that looked like a stone. The sinister news that he was to spend the night in the shed had stirred the weary Professor to what powers of protest he still possessed, and he was just about to ask about this stone, and why Rosemarie had . . .

But Rosemarie was trying the door. Suddenly she dropped the stone, announcing in an astonished tone: "It isn't locked!"

"Rosemarie!" said the Professor sternly, "you didn't mean to open it with a stone?—"

"When I haven't got a key, a stone does quite well," Rosemarie replied. Then she added in a low, tense whisper: "Pssst! There's someone inside. Keep quiet!"

It was now dark, completely dark, a starless, moonless night. But inside the building the darkness was so impenetrable that it seemed to rise before them like a wall.

For a while they stood and listened.

"But . . ." the Professor began to protest.

"Be quiet," whispered Rosemarie, so abruptly that he recoiled. "Listen. . . ."

From the pitch-black darkness came a noise like a gurgle, a hollow gurgle; then a shuffle, then the gurgle again. Gradually it swelled into a most repellent death rattle. The pair stood hand in hand.

"In the name of God . . ." began the Professor in a low tone, raising his hand in a gesture of exorcisement.

"It's someone asleep," whispered Rosemarie sagely. "A tramp, I expect, who has taken refuge here. Have you got any matches?"

He had not.

"Then I must find some. I know my way around here in the dark. Keep quite still, Godfather, whatever happens. It may be a minute or two before I'm back."

The worthy Professor was left alone in the darkness, from which issued further snores and gurgles and death rattles. And once more he felt very ill at ease; almost as he had felt in the Schliekers' coalshed the evening before, except that matters were worse now, because his occupation of the coalshed had been legalized by the owner, whereas here. . . .

"Rosemarie—" he said softly.

"Pssst!" came a sudden hiss from by his side.

"I only wanted to ask . . ." he implored.

"Pssst!"

"But Rosemarie, I must know. . . ."

"Pssssssst!"

He was in despair—here he was, a trespasser . . . there was that death rattle again. . . . What on earth

ought he to do? Suddenly someone stumbled, the death rattle stopped, and in the ensuing silence he heard Rosemarie's voice: "Oh damn!"

A swearword. He felt he must protest, but could not. That awful choking and gurgling began again, and he was compelled to listen to it, as if spellbound.

At last, after an agonizingly long wait, he was aware of a glimmer of light. Rosemarie was coming toward him with a candle.

"Now, Godfather," she said and took him by the hand.

And they crept toward those terrifying noises from the darkness.

"If it's a tramp, he'll be more afraid of you than of me, Godfather."

It was not a tramp.

On a camp bed against the wall, asleep, with his arms over his face, as though even in sleep he were not secure from violence, lay Philip Münzer. There he was, their dark and spectral visitant, and for a few moments they stood in silence and looked down at him.

"Philip!" whispered Rosemarie. "My dear Philip."

"Philip!" whispered the Professor likewise, and the poor half-witted face with the bruised eye seemed to him lovely in that hour, for a burden had been lifted from his soul.

"Did you run away from them?"

As the candlelight shone on to the sleeper's face, he stirred, pressed one arm closer to his eyes, and suddenly awakened, like a beast of the forest that must always be ready to escape.

He was just about to jump up when Rosemarie exclaimed with assumed sternness: "Philip! How can you go to bed in your clothes! And with dirty boots! When did you wash last, Philip? Oh Philip, you filthy lad. . . ."

But the poor half-wit had flung himself at her feet, and was pressing her hands against his breast. He could hardly speak, he could only stutter out his joy and gratitude in the broadest of Baltic dialects, "My liddle lady, is that you? I did everything what you tell me. I see the gemman and he read the letter. . . ."

He did indeed forget to mention what *he* had endured and suffered. He asked her haltingly whether the Schliekers had been angry with her, whether she had been made to carry all the water, and whether the firewood had lasted. "Your hands are all rough, dearie. They've been making you do all the washing in the nasty cold lake. And when I get back, dearie, you'd gone, so I ran away too, to this old cowshed—and now you're here!"

He stood there, beaming at her, poor fool, one whom life had left stranded forever in boyhood. And yet this village idiot carried such a power of love within him—the Professor hoped it was not irreverent, but he could not help thinking of the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: "Love . . . endureth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, suffereth all things. . . ."

"My dear children," he said. All his weariness and his misgivings had vanished. Anyone so loved by so piti-

ful a creature must herself be filled with love, however roughly she might behave.

And Rosemarie?— Rosemarie gave this boy her hands and looked silently down at the misshapen head, and said in a soothing voice: "Yes, my dear, it will be all right now. You have done very well, Philip."

But as the poor heart would not be comforted, she took his head in her hands and said gravely: "Now, Philip, there's still plenty for you to do. Don't you see the Professor? He is tired and hungry, and I am tired and hungry too, and it is very cold here— You run out at once and get some wood."

She tapped him gently on the shoulder as she spoke and the lad was on his feet in an instant. He beamed at both of them and darted out.

Before ten minutes had passed the Professor was comfortably ensconced in a large leather armchair, with a woolen rug over his knees and his soft camel's-hair slippers on his weary feet. He looked with silent satisfaction at the crackling, dancing flames in the open fireplace, and glanced contentedly at the old cowshed, which was now softly lit by a hanging oil lamp.

His two charges were busily engaged, Rosemarie preparing some sort of supper out of paper bags and tins, and Philip was occupied—and not at all unhandily either —in setting the feather mattresses by the fire to dry.

The Professor felt much too comfortable after all the turmoil of the past days to notice that these tins and cupboards and trunks had not been opened in a strictly legal fashion, in other words, not with a key but with a chisel. Rosemarie, too, was careful not to make any unnecessary noise during this proceeding, but when a faint rasp-

ing sound could not be avoided, a saucepan would fall clattering to the ground, or Philip would upset a pile of logs.

Nothing disturbed the Professor's placidity. He sat in complete contentment with one finger in his beloved Revelation of St. John, until he came upon the verse:

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. . . ."

It was, however, not surprising that his old misgivings came back to him again, and he said: "I suppose we are within our rights in staying here, Rosemarie?"

She glanced up, and there was a faint ring of the old defiance in her voice: "Of course. There's no one to say we mustn't."

The old man nodded contentedly. He felt the touch of something warm and soft on his hand; he looked down, it was Rosemarie's cheek nestling against it. "Well, my child?" he said quietly.

"I want to tell you all about it, Godfather," said she, "because I often think that one oughtn't to begin a good thing with a lie."

"And does that seem difficult sometimes?" he asked.

"It certainly does," she said. "It seems so silly, when everyone else acts different."

"We mustn't think of what other people do, my child. We must think of our own hearts, and of God."

"Yes," she said softly.

"You don't feel like doing that, little one, do you?" he said. "You want to be honest for your own sake? I know,

I know. But that sort of honesty is of little value—don't you understand?"

She did not answer, and, though he paused, she did not even nod. "Well, then, tell me all about it, Rosemarie," he said indulgently. "What were you going to say?"

"All right," she said doubtfully. "I wanted to tell you about this hut. . . . Oh, Godfather," she looked full in his face, "I often think it's as if there were two worlds, and you and Papa and Mamma belong to one of them, and everybody else lives in the other one. And I've had to live in the other one for six years—and I'm only sixteen."

"Yes, but what about this hut, my child?"

As he spoke he laid a hand on her hair, and knew that a burden was lifted from her mind. Then she said briskly: "It's all quite simple, Godfather. There's no reason why we shouldn't be here, although I haven't asked permission. When I was still with the Gaus, visitors came every summer, a Berliner like you, Godfather, with his wife—perhaps you know him, Vogel is his name. . . ."

"No. Berlin is a very large place, Rosemarie, much larger than you can imagine."

"But perhaps you've heard of him. He has a factory and a motorcar, the first motorcar that I ever saw in my life. You must have heard of him, Godfather."

"No—no. I know very few people in Berlin."

"I thought you would know him," she said in a rather disappointed tone. "He's got a factory and a motorcar."

"There are getting to be too many of these motor vehicles," said the Professor disapprovingly. "One has to be careful crossing the street. I often wonder what the

authorities are thinking about. Well, go on, my child."

"Herr Vogel used to fish in the lake, but he didn't need the fish; he said he didn't eat fish, so he gave them all away to the Gaus and to the whole village. And Frau Vogel was always bathing in the lake too—what do you think of that?—and she can swim. She did it every day, and then she lay for hours in the sun—there are some odd people in the world."

She sat and pondered.

"And what about the hut?" urged the Professor.

"Oh yes," she replied, dismissing her memory of Frau Vogel's bathing dress—red, with white trimmings, and a long skirt that could be unbuttoned, but never was, for that was the year 1912. She could not make up her mind whether it was very improper or very beautiful.

"The Vogels liked Unsadel," she began once more, "but they didn't like the Gaus. So they rented this old derelict cowshed from them and had it cleaned up and a fireplace built in. . . ."

"The ro-o-of. . . ." growled Philip.

"What's that?— Oh yes, quite right, Philip, they had the roof rethatched, and some nice furniture put in. They said it was only the rubbish that was lying about in their attic— That's how the old cowshed became what it is now, and from the first of October to the first of April they never come here, so we can live quite undisturbed. . . ."

"Yes," said the Professor, "we know we can live here undisturbed, Rosemarie, but is it right that we should be living here?"

"Oh!" she replied thoughtfully, at once adding, "Yes, it's quite right. The Vogels saw how nasty the Gaus

were to me, and they often used to say: 'Frau Gau, can Rosemarie help us a bit today? We'll pay for her.' So Frau Gau would say 'Yes,' and Frau Vogel would say: 'You sit down there quietly, Rosemarie, and mend your stockings. My husband can fetch the water and chop the wood—it will do his tummy more good than it will your back.' Then he used to swear, but not really meaning it, you know. They never really quarreled, they just had a joke together. Are there really married people that don't quarrel, Godfather?"

"Of course there are, Rosemarie," said her godfather in a shocked tone. "You know that perfectly well. Think of your dear parents, of Farmer Tamm in this very village."

"Tamm?—" said Rosemarie slowly. "Why, *he* wastes all his money, and *she* has to mind every penny. And my parents. . . ."

"Rosemarie," said her godfather sternly, sitting up very stiff in his chair. "Do you remember the Fourth Commandment?"

"Yes, Godfather," she said obediently, and fell silent. Then she went on: "But it is so, Godfather, *it is so.* I remember Mamma crying when Papa gave money away or lent it because he couldn't say no. It is so."

"You are wrong, Rosemarie," said the Professor firmly. "I knew my friend Thürke. You are definitely wrong."

Rosemarie fell silent.

"And surely it is right to help other people with one's money?" continued the Professor.

"But if it doesn't help them—if it's just wasted, as it is by Stillfritz, who just drinks it. . . ."

"Oh my child, my child," exclaimed the Professor sadly. "How quick you are to judge everybody and everything, even your dear parents. Stillfritz was the only person today who remembered to get some food for poor starving Philip. . . ."

She was silent.

"Why are we here? By what right are we here?" the Professor asked once more, "I must know."

She looked at him. Though scarcely more than a child, her eyes were plaintive, defiant, and a little sad. Something stirred and thrilled his ancient heart, some feeling he had never known. . . . He also had loved children, they stood nearest to His kingdom.

His thoughts came and went, but the warmth within him stayed and thrilled his being as he laid his hand on her shoulder saying: "I am very hungry and very tired, and you must be so too. And it is very late. But far better that we should make our way to the nearest inn than stay in a place where we have no right to stay."

She too had felt that quick flush of human sympathy and understanding. "But we really have the right to be here, Godfather," she assured him softly. "Frau Vogel must have said to me twenty times over, 'If you simply can't stand it, Rosemarie, come and stay with me. I'll help you out.' And we were in a bad way, weren't we?" she said smiling a faint and roguish smile. "And after all I'm staying with her here."

"I hope it's all right," he murmured, looking dubiously at the child.

"I'm certain she wouldn't mind."

"But what about me?— And the boy?—" asked the Professor once more.

"Oh, you belong to me!" she cried, in an almost haughty tone. "And after all, Godfather, if you want to, you can pay her in Berlin later on."

He heaved a deep sigh of relief. "True," he said, "true. I never think of money. It was only today that Frau Stillfritz had to remind me about paying. You will remind me to pay for our lodging, Rosemarie, before we part?"

"Certainly," she laughed. "But I fancy we shan't part for a long, long time. Remember what you promised to think over, Godfather. You see, I want you not only to look after me, but to have me to live with you."

"God bless my soul," cried the Professor, much taken aback. "No, no, Rosemarie. We must not be hasty. We shall have to consider it all very carefully, and get proper advice. Besides, I don't know whether you would like Berlin. . . ."

"Yes, I should," she said pensively. She did not confess that she thought of him as living, not in Berlin, but on her Unsadel farm, in Schlieker's place, though it was hard to imagine.

"Supper's ready!" called Philip.

"Coming," she answered. As she looked at him sitting by the fireplace, his head sunk wearily upon his chest, she was not a sixteen-year-old girl looking at a godfather who would soon be seventy, but a mother looking at a helpless child. She watched over him at supper—and a very odd supper it was, as the food supplies were rather restricted. There was pea soup made from pea sausage, and pink pudding made from pudding powder, but the Professor bravely ate everything, though with some apprehension. It was not at all the sort of meal which the

Widow Müller provided. Meanwhile, Rosemarie prattled away, making him smile and feel that all was well.

And when the Professor was comfortably established with his Bible by the fireside as she washed up, she whispered something to Philip who disappeared noiselessly into the night.

Her work completed, she came back to the old man, sat down on a stool at his feet, and took his hand. Once he looked down from his book at her and smiled. They sat in silence side by side, the flames flickered and crackled and glowed, Professor Kittguss grew more and more tired, the book dropped into his lap, he went to sleep.

And still she sat silently by the fire, clasping the sleeper's aged hand in her young fingers. She looked into the flames and reflected that this was the first evening in a long, long time when a scolding voice had not driven her weary feet to work.

She knew that it could not and ought not to go on. Her home at Unsadel called her, it was there that she should work and win repose. Her home was in peril, she knew only too well all the dodges and devices that Paul Schlieker, with the law at his back, could bring into play. Meanwhile, what a lovely fleeting moment this was!

Her Guardians would not listen to her. They had assigned the Schliekers an allowance of a hundred marks a month, which they said was not too much for two people's work. Perhaps it was not too much, but they did not consider whether those five and thirty acres would yield a hundred marks a month or how much, or little, work was done for so much money.

The Schliekers were purposely lazy, they deliberately neglected everything. Then, at the end of the year, Paul

Schlieker would appear before the Guardians and make his usual complaint. The farm hadn't produced enough to pay the allowance. Herr Pastor Thürke may have preached very good sermons, but he knew no more about farming than a cow does about selling mustard—imagine buying such a wretched farm! A man could sweat till he dropped on such barren soil. Nothing comes of nothing, as the dog said when he ate the sausage, so he must ask for a mortgage to guarantee the allowance.

The Guardians took little interest; they agreed to the mortgage, six hundred marks the first year, eight hundred the second, and this year it would probably be a thousand. And then on top of the mortgages there was the interest mounting up, hour by hour, month by month, year by year. Rosemarie felt she was struggling against a mounting stream.

In her solitude no one tried to understand or to help her. The flames flickered, the pine logs crackled and sputtered, little coals of fire glimmered through the ashes. She stared into the flames, her eyes felt dry and feverish, and—as she had done so many times before—she told her story to Frau von Wanzka, and old Herr Mühlenfeldt.

Not only was the allowance too high, these people were brutes and crooks. What had become of that fifteen hundredweight of rye last autumn? Where were all those apples? And was it right that he should feed the five foster children on her milk and put the allowance into his pocket?

"But you must prove all this, my child," they said. "Who bought the rye and the apples? Schlieker used the money to buy coal and a new frock for you. No, get

along now, we've heard too much already. First you couldn't stand the Gaus, and now that we have handed you over to the Schliekers, you can't stand them either. No child can expect to choose its own porridge bowl."

"Bah—these grownups," thought Rosemarie, and savagely stabbed a log with the fire rake until the flames soared up the chimney.

She touched the sleeper's hand gently and looked tenderly into the aged face, still kindly in sleep. She was sure she could lead him in the way she desired, she recognized him for what he was—a kind, rather unworldly old gentleman, who liked comfort and hated to say no.

For an instant a faint sense of disquiet stirred within her as she surveyed his delicate mouth and firm chin. She remembered that there was hardly anything on which they agreed. For an instant she felt a premonition of the force behind that persistent gentleness.

But only for an instant. She was sixteen, self-confident and sturdy. She believed that she could mold the world to her desires.

Little flames crackled and danced, Rosemarie lifted up her head. The flames danced and sang a song of victory, *her* song of victory. She had achieved much that day: she was rid of the Schliekers, she had tricked them over the five babies, she had probably got them into trouble, and she was quite alone with the old Professor, in the depths of the forest, five miles from Unsadel. He was secure, alone with her, in patience and in peace.

Chapter Eight

In which a council is held by night, and a state of siege declared against the Schliekers

ROSEMARIE SUDDENLY STARTED out of her dreams and doubts and hopes, a rush of cold air swept through the doorway, something soft dashed in with a yelp and thrust a head into her lap.

"Bello, darling," she whispered joyfully. "Have you come too? Good dog—I knew you'd miss me. But be quiet, Bello, don't wake the old gentleman."

The dog's hazel eyes looked up at her devotedly through a tangle of shaggy hair as he nuzzled against her knees in an ecstasy at having found his little mistress again.

Philip appeared in the doorway and whispered: "They're here. Shall they come in, or will you come out?"

She tucked the rug over the sleeper's knees and said: "I'll come out."

Grasping the dog by the collar, she tiptoed out of the hut. "Philip, you stay here. Call me if he wakes."

A faint moon, in its last quarter, lit the clearing with a pallid glow in which Rosemarie could distinguish the faces of the little waiting group. She walked up to them and said: "Are you all there?"

It was Hütefritz who answered, "Yes, Rosemarie, all except Heini Beier. He wanted to come, but there's still a light in the inn, so I suppose he couldn't get away."

"But I can see seven of you," said Rosemarie.

"There's a new one," muttered Hütefritz rather awkwardly. "I didn't want to bring him, but the others said we oughtn't to put off anyone who wanted to help."

"Quite right," said Rosemarie quickly. "*All* the children in the village ought to stand together."

"But it's Otsche Gau," said Hütefritz doggedly.

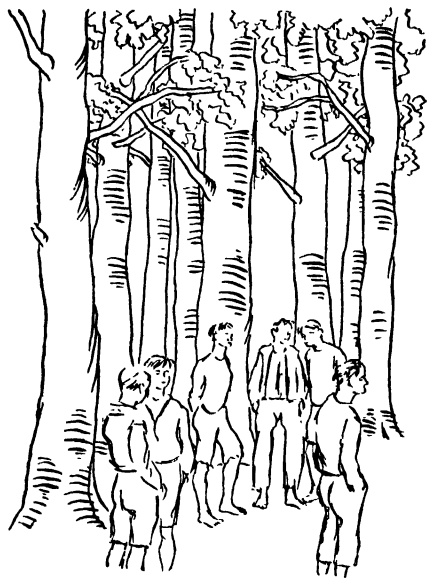
"Otsche Gau!" cried Rosemarie, and was silent.

The others too kept still. Falling back, they left the new recruit to face Rosemarie alone. The night was very still, a single gust of wind rustled through the treetops and passed.

Otsche Gau, a small, stocky, black-haired boy, had been Rosemarie's bitterest enemy for many a year. He had treated his parents' foster child in true Cinderella fashion—pinched and beaten her, bullied her, told tales on her; but now he blurted out: "I heard there was something doing against the Schliekers. I can't stand the Schliekers. So if you'll have me, Marie. . . ."

"My name's Rosemarie," she said. "If grownups don't get my name right, I don't worry. But we aren't grownups, and I'm Rosemarie to you, Otsche!"

"Oh, all right," drawled the boy. "My name's really George, but I prefer to be called Otsche. However, if



you'll let me bear a hand against the Schliekers, I'll call you Rosemarie."

"He's a bit of a fathead, Rosemarie," said Hütefritz slowly, "but he might be useful. . . ."

"Very well," Rosemarie replied in a cool tone, "I'm ready to forget the past, Otsche, though you often treated me badly."

"Now then, Rosemarie," said Otsche, "how often did you step on my toes when no one was looking?"

"Well, well, let's forget it," Rosemarie continued gently after a pause, "but if you think we're just banded together against the Schliekers, you're very much mistaken. Of course, the Schliekers must be turned out; but what we really mean to do is make the whole village a better place."

And the little audience murmured applause.

"What's wrong with the village?" mumbled Otsche Gau. "I think Unsadel's a very good sort of place."

"What's wrong with it?" cried Rosemarie. "Hadn't you better ask what's right with it?"

"Yes, but what *is* wrong with it?" asked the boy obstinately.

"Listen," said Rosemarie impressively. "You want to join us, and we'll be glad to have you, because your father is the biggest farmer hereabouts. The Schliekers come from Biestow, and when they're out of the way, Unsadel will be just what it was before they came, a poor sort of hole. We're going to make this village into the kind of village that it ought to be."

"I don't understand a word of all this talk," persisted Otsche Gau. "Our farm is good enough for us. We get bigger crops than anyone else in the village."

"We mean to change the place entirely, Otsche," said Rosemarie. "What's it like now? Everybody quarrels with everybody else. You Gaus are on bad terms all around, the Hübners don't speak to the Strohmeiers, we

all jeer at old Gottschalk, the wives of Witt and Schluck had such a row, their husbands cheat each other whenever they can. . . ."

"But it's like that everywhere," said Otsche.

"Well, it's not going to be like that here any more," Rosemarie retorted, "we are all agreed on that. We are all going to be friends together. Look at Robert Hübner and Albert Strohmeier. You know how their fathers treat each other—well, there's nothing like that among us, is there?"

"You said it!" exclaimed the two lads.

"But how long will this last?" objected Otsche. "Wait till Robert plows a bit too near the Strohmeier hedge—and see what happens!"

"But he won't," cried Rosemarie. "Will you, Robert?"

"Of course I won't," said Robert Hübner.

Otsche Gau began to look a little less self-assured and went on with less defiance, "Well, it sounds all very well, but—"

"Look here, Otsche!" cried young Witt. "What does a ladder cost? A twenty-foot ladder?"

"What does it cost?" Otsche was rather taken aback. "Twenty rungs at fifty pfennigs each. Four joints. Total about twelve marks. But—"

"That'll do, Otsche! Can you afford to lose twelve marks?"

"Of course not! What do you mean?"

"Well, take a squint behind your father's barn, and you'll see a ladder just like that. I can see it from our garden. That ladder is rotting where it stands."

Otsche Gau scratched his head. His father must have

forgotten it. "The fact is," he said apologetically, "we hardly ever go behind that barn."

"There you are! And if we hadn't had a scrap, I'd have told you about that ladder. As it is, there's twelve marks gone to pot."

"H'm," said Otsche Gau. "All this is very fine, but—"

"You're not the only one that suffers, we suffer, too. All that ground behind that barn is just choked with weeds. And in autumn thistledown blows over into our garden, and we have to keep digging it up. . . ."

"There you are, Otsche," said Rosemarie. "That's what we all think. Now, if you want to join us, you'll have to shake hands with all of us and repeat our motto: 'I for you and you for me and Unsadel eternally!' "

"All right," Otsche agreed. "I'll do it, Marie—Rosemarie, I mean. But do you think the Witts should have sawed that branch off our plum tree?"

"Don't be such a fool!" said Hütefritz savagely. "You Gaus have been howling about that silly plum tree for the last two years, and now you're starting again, when we're trying to turn the village into a decent place. . . ."

"But—" persisted Otsche, like the true son of his father.

"Give us your hand. Now then: 'I for you and you for me and Unsadel eternally!' " roared Hütefritz. "You're as big a fool as your father. Ernst Witt, will you give him another plum tree when you get the farm?"

"Surely I will," said twelve-year-old Ernst Witt. "That's nothing. You can buy a plum tree at the nurseryman's for three marks. If that'll stop the argument—"

"There—you heard what he said, Otsche? You'll get your plum tree. Speak up now—"

And the little circle chanted: "I for you and you for me and Unsadel eternally!"

"That's right, Otsche," said Rosemarie in high good humor. "Now, first I want to know whether the children have been found?"

"There you are," beamed Hütefritz, "I told you it was Rosemarie! It was you, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was. Who found them?"

"I did!" cried Hütefritz. "I'd just got back to the farm with Tamm's cows, and the Tamms came running up from the opposite direction, the farmer, his wife and Maxe—they'd stopped so long at Schlieker's because they were bursting to know whether the constable was going to pinch Paul or not. . . ."

"And did he?" asked Rosemarie eagerly.

"Wait a minute. They were hustling home to be in time for milking and I was running too because I was late with the cows. And silly old Sorrel started dancing round, and bellowed and mooed and wouldn't go into her stall. Such a racket, and I heard—I heard something!

"Suddenly Frau Tamm yelled out: 'Those are children crying. Schlieker has thrown them into the lake and they're haunting the village.' Lord, the way the old woman went on, it might have been a hen having its neck wrung, women really are the limit. . . ."

"Fritz!" cried Rosemarie angrily. "Don't say such things, you rude boy!"

"I wasn't referring to you, Rosemarie," said Fritz hastily, "but you've told us ten times how your father scared away the ghost on Kriwitz bridge, and that anyway they won't stand up to you if you speak to them—

in the name of God! So I walked straight into that dark house, and pretty scary it was, I can tell you, with the wind whistling round it. And if I said, 'In the name of God' once, I said it twenty times, but the noise didn't stop. So I thought if God's name didn't stop 'em, they couldn't be ghosts. Finally, I opened the bedroom door, and I knew what it was right away—we've all heard those babies—all of us except Otsche—when the Schliekers were out and we came to keep you company. Well, I lit a candle and there they were, squealing away, all five of 'em."

"Had any of them fallen off the bed?" interrupted Rosemarie. "I was so nervous about that. . . ."

"No," said Hütefritz. "Since there weren't any ghosts around, I got hold of the Tamms, and found out what was up."

"Well, what happened?" asked Rosemarie eagerly. "Did they go back to Schlieker's?"

"I should say not! I know Peter Gneis; I beat it down to the inn, and there he sat, down at the mouth because he had wasted his day. But he perked up as soon as he heard what I had to say, and went off to the Tamms; he'd hardly believe me at first!

"Well, and then he sent Maxe on his bicycle after the sisters. They'd started back to Kriwitz, and he told Frau Lowising to keep the children quiet. Then he beat it to Schlieker's. He didn't tell what he knew, he just asked Schlieker to come along with him to August Tamm, who had made a confession."

"August Tamm? What do you?—" asked Ernst Witt in bewilderment.

"It was just a trick, you fool," snapped Hütefritz.

"Schlieker thought this very odd, of course, and if it were light and I could see your face, I guess you'd look just as silly as he did, Ernst!"

"That will do, Fritz," said Rosemarie. "You've looked pretty silly yourself sometimes and so have all of us. Go on."

"Well, Schlieker grew curious to know what was up, so off they both went, the constable keeping mum, Schlieker cursing one minute and smiling the next—you know what he's like, Rosemarie!"

"I do," sighed Rosemarie, "or rather, I did."

"Don't speak too soon, Rosemarie," said Hütefritz in a warning tone. "Constable Gneis brought Schlieker into the parlor where Tamm was waiting. . . . Tamm pulled a long face, and Peter Gneis asked Schlieker to sit down, saying Tamm had confessed to having stolen the children.

" 'Stolen them—?' Schlieker asked. 'Tamm? But I sent the children to the Welfare Office.'

" 'No,' replied Tamm, 'I stole them from you, Paul, just as a joke.'

"And at that moment one of the kids yelled. That settled it. We opened the door, looked in, and Paul Schlieker went absolutely white with rage. Then he said: 'So that damned little toad put it over on me—if I ever catch her!' 'You're caught yourself, Herr Schlieker,' says Gneis. 'And now you'd better come along quietly.' "

"And Schlieker?—"

"He went along without a word, and now Sergeant Thode's got him in the Kriwitz lockup."

"Then I've won," said Rosemarie jubilantly. "The Guardians *must* fire him now. Hütefritz, Hütefritz!" she

cried and shook him by the shoulder. "Aren't you glad? Aren't you as glad as I am?"

"No, Rosemarie, you must wait and see what the magistrate does. As for the old Professor . . ."

Hütefritz looked round him, and the others murmured applause.

"What about the old Professor?" asked Rosemarie angrily. "He was my father's oldest friend, and he's the nicest man in the world."

"That may be, but you'd much better send him back to Berlin. We agree that he's no use here, and you can't need him either, Rosemarie. You don't know, of course, that he let the Tamms persuade him to go back to Berlin today. That half-hour in Schlieker's coalshed was more than he could stand."

"Is that true, Hütefritz?" exclaimed Rosemarie. "It can't be—he would have told me himself. He couldn't have gone off without a word."

"It *is* true, Rosemarie. Frau Tamm told me, and I saw him in Tamm's dogcart on the way to Kriwitz. That's why we're telling you to send him back, he would only be in the way. We want to be on our own."

"But why did he come back?"

"How should I know? He certainly meant to go. Get rid of him, Rosemarie. What can we do with a fellow that doesn't know his own mind?"

"Very well, Fritz," said Rosemarie. "If it's as you say, he shall go. I'll speak to him—and what had we better do now, do you think?"

Hütefritz pondered. "We must certainly wait and see what happens to Paul Schlieker. If he stays inside, it

will all be quite simple, but if he comes out . . . I told you what he said, Rosemarie, if he catches you."

"Yes," said Rosemarie, "you're right. I shall stay here for the present. Then you must dig up some food for me, there's almost nothing here. For me and Philip and Bello—and for the Professor, until further notice."

"Of course we will," said Hütefritz.

"What on earth is all this?" asked Professor Kittguss, emerging at this point from the doorway of the hut. All the elfin, rustic magic of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seemed to have descended upon that moonlit sward. "Rosemarie, my child, pray explain."

"They're my little friends from the village, Godfather," said Rosemarie innocently.

"But what are they doing here in the middle of the night? It is nearly eleven o'clock. You should have been in bed long ago, my child."

"They're just going, Godfather."

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Professor helplessly.

"I for you and you for me and Unsadel eternally," the assembled company intoned.

"Away with you," cried Rosemarie. "You can talk as long as you're in the wood, but you must be absolutely quiet in the village. Good night!"

"Good night, Rosemarie," they cried, oblivious of the Professor.

"That's our motto, Godfather," explained Rosemarie. " 'I for you and you for me and Unsadel eternally.' Do you like it?"

"I think, Rosemarie," said the Professor, "you're a very big girl already."

He stood and pondered. "I for you and you for me . . ."

Then he shrugged his shoulders. "But big or small, you must go to bed now. Philip went to sleep a long while ago. Come."

They went into the hut, and neither of them said another word.

Chapter Nine

In which the accused becomes the accuser, and Paul Schlieker makes a catch

IT IS NOT RECORDED how Paul Schlieker slept in the cell at Kriwitz police station. Sergeant Thode did not inquire, but merely remarked gruffly: "Come along."

The prisoner stepped obediently into the passage and the warder followed, growling under his breath. They went through a grated door, along a dusty passage lined with cupboards full of papers. Then Thode knocked at a door, opened it, and said in an official voice: "Paul Schlieker from Unsadel, taken into custody yesterday, sir."

"Excellent!" chirped Schulz the magistrate. "You will remain, sergeant."

"Very good, sir," said Thode, more surly than ever at the thought of his neglected garden.

The magistrate surveyed his prisoner, but the prisoner did not return the gaze. He was familiar with Herr Schulz, for that worthy was a very well-known personality in the Kriwitz district. People called him the

Roarer, owing to his capacity for shouting down the most obstinate opponent in any argument. What he lacked in stature (and he lacked a good deal), he more than made up by his voice. No tramp or poacher, no trespasser or sneak thief, who had once heard that voice, ever tried to contend with it a second time. It was worth no one's while.

Magistrate Schulz was not merely a little man: he was actually so short that he had to have the curule chair in his office, and his chair at Stillfritz' bar, made a foot higher than any other chair in Kriwitz.

He made no secret of this, and complacently referred to himself as "little but good." He ruled his little district as a father rules his family, instructing, warning, reprimanding, and punishing, as occasion required.

His beady eyes glanced up from Constable Gneis' report to Paul Schlieker, who stood demurely before him. The judge stroked his black and silky beard of which he was not a little proud and finally observed in genial tones: "Good morning, Herr Schlieker."

"Good morning, sir," said Schlieker quietly, not raising his eyes.

"Sit down, Herr Schlieker," said the magistrate in a still more genial tone. "Thode, give Herr Schlieker a chair."

"Thank you, sir," said Schlieker, and sat down.

"We are already acquainted," said the magistrate, with unflagging geniality. "We have met here on more than one occasion."

"We have, sir."

"And I trust you are not going to give any trouble, Herr Schlieker," said the magistrate in a rather louder tone.

"Certainly not," said Schlieker.

"Then you are not going to be obstinate or defiant, eh, Herr Schlieker?" asked the magistrate—there was a ring of menace in his voice.

"No, sir."

"You are not going to lie, or try to defeat the ends of justice, Schlieker?" he exclaimed, louder still.

"No, sir."

"Don't be so sulky," roared Schulz at the top of his voice. "Get up, sir, and look at me!"

Schlieker obeyed, and looked down quite amiably at the little magistrate.

"Why didn't you hand over those children, Schlieker? You have been ordered to do so three times by the Welfare Office."

"My cart was out of commission, sir."

"Why didn't you borrow another cart in the village?"

"Because no one would lend me one."

"Because you are an unfriendly, quarrelsome, and offensive fellow, Schlieker, that's what you mean."

"No, because I come from Biestow. Anyone who doesn't come from Unsadel doesn't count in Unsadel," Schlieker replied, quite unruffled.

"Why didn't you send word to the Office, Schlieker?"

"Because I meant to hand over the children yesterday."

"So the cart was all right yesterday?"

"It was, sir."

"What was the matter with the cart?"

"The left front wheel was damaged."

"Rim or spokes?"

"Both, sir."

"Then you had to send it to the wheelwright as well as the blacksmith, eh?"

"Yes."

"To whom did you send it?"

"Gleiss the blacksmith, and Stark the wheelwright, at Biestow."

"We'll verify that," said the magistrate, briskly. "We'll verify it point by point. And why didn't you open the door, Schlieker, when the sisters knocked?"

"Because I was in the cellar, stopping rat holes. You can't hear anything there."

"And where was your wife all this time?"

"In the cellar, too."

"Also stopping rat holes?"

"No, sorting apples."

"Have you many rats in the house, Schlieker?"

"A fair number, sir."

"You must have a good many if you were stopping rat holes for three hours—they were knocking at least that long," observed the magistrate.

"Well, yes, there are a good many," Schlieker admitted dubiously. He smelt the trap, but did not see it.

"And you keep apples in the cellar!" shouted the magistrate. "You're lying, Schlieker. The rats wouldn't leave you a single apple."

"Rats don't eat apples," said Schlieker in an effort to retrieve himself.

"You expect a country magistrate to believe that, you oaf?" yelled Schulz. "Thode, do rats eat apples?"

"Mine do, sir," growled Thode. "Just as many as they can get, sir."

"There!" cried the magistrate triumphantly. "We've caught you, Schlieker. Your wife wasn't sorting apples, so you must have heard the knocking!"

"Yes, sir," said Schlieker calmly.

"Eh?" said the magistrate, in bewilderment. "Why didn't you open the door, then?"

"Because we were ashamed."

"Ashamed? Whatever for?"

"Because the whole village of Unsadel was looking on, and we come from Biestow."

"Indeed," observed the magistrate. "By the way, Schlieker, which of the back wheels on your cart had been broken?"

"It was the left front wheel, sir. But it wasn't broken; the cart was all right."

"All right! Then that was a lie too?"

"Yes, sir. But I won't tell any more lies now, sir. I see you're one too many for me."

"Didn't I tell you not to try any of your dodges on me, Schlieker?" yelled the little magistrate. "How dare you address me in that fashion! Now I suppose you're going to tell me another pack of lies? . . ."

"No, sir, I'm going to tell the truth now."

"Then you didn't mean to hand over the children?"

"Yes, I did, sir," said Paul, with a very blue glitter in his eyes. "I really meant to give up the children yesterday, but that little toad Rosemarie fooled me and I couldn't."

"Ha," said Schulz in high good humor. "That's more like it. Lying is more in your line than confessing. Well, then, what steps did you take to hand them over?"

"At five A.M. I put the Thürke girl and the children into the boat. . . ."

"Oh, so your cousin at Biestow didn't have the boat?"

"No, sir, that's only what I told Herr Gneis."

"Only! You two-faced liar! Go on: why into the boat?"

"Because I wanted them to go by water. . . ."

"That's another lie, Schlieker!" roared Schulz. "Thode, can you get to the Welfare Office from Unsadel by boat?"

"Only during Noah's flood, sir."

"There you are, Schlieker."

"I'm telling the truth, sir. I arranged with the brat to meet me on the road to Kriwitz, where the three silver birches stand by the lake."

"But it would have been much simpler to go through the village."

"We couldn't face it, sir, my wife and I. We didn't want the village folk to know we had to give up the children. That's why I sent them with Rosemarie across the lake to the other end of the village, and I was going to meet her there and put them on the cart."

"You couldn't face what? You mean you didn't want the people to gloat over you, eh?"

"Just that, sir. But when I got to the place there wasn't a sign of the children. That little brute Rosemarie! I waited and waited—she never came. At last I went home, and my wife and I searched the shore for hours, but, of course, it was no use. And that's why I didn't open the door, sir, when they knocked. I just didn't know what to say. They wouldn't have believed my story, and I couldn't produce the children."

The magistrate had listened to all this with dispassionate attention. Then he picked up Constable Gneis' report, glanced at it, and put it away with an air of deep resolve.

"Did anyone see you drive through the village, Schlieker?" he asked.

"Maybe, maybe not, sir. On the way out it was still quite dark, and on the way home I was too busy wondering where the children had got to and the girl too."

"Ah," said the magistrate, "ah." He stroked his beard meditatively, and looked steadily at Paul. But Paul stood unmoved; he had learnt how to wait.

"Now listen to me," began the magistrate with great deliberation. "Have you had any quarrel lately with Rosemarie Thürke, such as might induce her to treat you in this way? I had thought you were getting on better: she has not appeared here for some time."

"That is easy to understand," said Schlieker. Then he aimed his poisoned arrow, drew the bow, and let fly. "She doesn't bother about you or the Guardians since she's been going around with that nasty old man of hers."

"With whom?" yelled the magistrate, springing from the high chair as though the arrow had struck him. "What do you mean?"

"Just this, sir," pursued Schlieker coolly. "Yesterday evening an old codger turned up at my place and started talking through his nose about the soul and its salvation. He must be pretty near seventy. Said he was a friend of the late Pastor Thürke and wanted to see how Rosemarie was getting on."

Schlieker cleared his throat scornfully.

"He wouldn't go away, but kept saying he must see Rosemarie and speak to her. He kissed her, too—the girl's hardly sixteen—so I locked him in my coalshed, while I had a word with Gottschalk. But in the morning he had gone, and I have an idea who let him out, for Marie disappeared with the children just afterwards. The old man put her up to it, sir, or I'll eat a pound of arsenic. . . ."

But the magistrate slumped back bewildered in his chair and groaned. "Either you've gone mad, Schlieker, to tell me such a story, or . . . no, I know a thing or two about Rosemarie Thürke. That child and an old man? It's out of the question!"

"But I dare say the child herself is quite innocent, sir," said Schlieker, in an insinuating tone. "Of course he acts like a kind and fatherly old gentleman, but he's an old rascal at heart. He's taken my runaway boy, Philip Münzer, along too."

"That's enough out of you, Schlieker," exclaimed the magistrate angrily. "What on earth has your half-witted boy got to do with it?"

"Just this: he's the only person that knows the old fellow's Berlin address. He's been to see him there—ask Herr Gneis."

"There must be something in all this," muttered the magistrate. "No one could have invented it. Sergeant, get Constable Gneis at once. Then go to Herr Mühlenfeldt and ask him whether he has seen anything of his ward, Thürke, in the company of an old man. And then bicycle over to Frau von Wanzka and ask her the same question. Of course, if you see the girl or the old fellow, bring them along at once."

"Very good, sir."

The door slammed and Sergeant Thode departed.

"And now listen to me, Schlieker," said the magistrate, addressing his prisoner in quite a different tone, "we both know you're a bad lot, but we won't talk about that now. . . ."

"Sir . . ." began Schlieker indignantly.

"Silence!" roared the magistrate. "Whether you exonerate yourself of this business over the children, I don't yet know. What you have told me may be true, or it may not—we'll soon get to the bottom of that. But as for this story about the old man, you must tell me the truth and nothing but the truth, or you'll get to know me, Schlieker, as you have never known me before."

"Yes, sir," replied Schlieker gravely.

"I let a lot of things slide in my district. I've freed a young hoodlum who pulled a knife in a dance hall, but I won't have an old man playing about with a girl who is hardly more than a child, understand?"

"Certainly not, sir! If only she hadn't let him out of

my coalshed. Perhaps she's not a child any more by now?—"

"What did the man look like, Schlieker? Describe him exactly."

Three hours later, exactly at noon, as the village sat down to its dinner, Paul Schlieker from Biestow came back to his home in Unsadel. He was in high good humor; his story had all but knocked that conceited little fellow off his perch.

It certainly looked like a case of abduction below the age of consent; that was what had infuriated little Schulz. For the magistrate was an austere little man, and very severe on any offenses against morals. And now, without having even seen the old gentleman, he had taken a violent dislike to him, and whatever doubts Constable Gneis might cast on Schlieker's veracity, the magistrate would believe the story. There was enough evidence in its favor, from the runaway boy to the complete disappearance of the child.

Paul Schlieker had become an important, indeed, a commendable person. He had kept his eyes wider open than Constable Gneis, and there were no grounds for holding him in jail.

Thus it came to pass that Paul Schlieker entered Unsadel in fine feather. He was not going to creep back like a released criminal. The Unsadelers, who had all been so eager to watch his departure in charge of the constable, should now have the pleasure of witnessing his return.

By a stroke of luck, on the way from Kriwitz to Unsadel, he had fallen in with old Lau, who tramped

about the countryside buying hides. By a little persuasion and the promise of a calfskin gratis (moth-eaten, but he didn't mention that to Lau), he managed to borrow a flute that lured the villagers from their doorways.

In this fashion Paul Schlieker made his way to Unsadel, and just as he passed the windmill and entered the village, he set the flute to his lips and burst into one of old Lau's insinuating cadences.

The Unsadelers promptly jumped up from their dinner tables, and Pa said to Ma: "Silly old goat, why on earth does he come at dinnertime? Ma, you hold on to him while I fetch the cowhide down from the loft, and aren't there three rabbitskins behind the stove in Grandpa's room?"

But when they came out, they beheld, not the old cringing Lau, but their fellow villager Paul Schlieker. Sweeping off his hat he grinned malignantly at the villagers who stood in their doorways laden with hides and pelts. He rejoiced in their abuse, every curse they flung at him warmed his heart; and when they merely stood, pale with fury, and spat at him, he made an extra bow.

Thus he made his way through the village, bobbing and grimacing and piping on his flute, the very image of hatred and malignity. Outside the fire-engine shed he gave a final flourish, and found himself wishing that his Mali had been there to enjoy the scene.

But as he turned the corner of the last house—it was now only fifty paces along the garden fence to his own yard gate—he stopped abruptly. He had seen a rather tall schoolboy half-concealed behind a gate post and a bush, peering into the Schlieker garden and watching Frau Schlieker, who was digging.

Schlieker stood and looked. The boy remained motionless, watching with remarkable patience. Schlieker stepped off the road on to the edge of the grass and walked softly along until he recognized the boy, then stopped again. The boy was the son of Farmer Gau, and Schlieker's first idea that this young rascal must be after Marie (she had no lack of admirers) was obviously wrong. For he knew that since Marie had lived with the Gaus, she loathed them and everything about them.

However, here was one of the Gau boys hanging around the Schlieker garden at midday dinnertime; that certainly meant something, probably trouble. Although Schlieker was at odds with everybody in the village, the Gaus were his archenemies. The feud dated back to the time when he had got Marie away from them, and shortly afterwards one of the Schlieker cows had died of flatulence from eating clover. To that day Schlieker was convinced that the Gaus had deliberately fed the animal with damp clover—though when he charged them before the magistrate, the case was dismissed with that official's usual contumely.

Schlieker hurriedly stepped behind a hawthorn bush while the boy glided softly along the fence to the yard door, staring at the woman in the garden. She did not look up, and the only sound was the clink of the spade as it struck a stone.

The boy slipped along the fence, Schlieker slipped along the hedge, the woman went on digging in the garden. At the yard gate the boy stopped and looked cautiously about him. "Aha, my lad," thought Schlieker. "Now for Bello."

But Bello did not bark, and Otsche Gau glided on.

His orders had been merely to keep guard, but he had since received a message from the old cowshed to the effect that, if the coast were clear, he was to try to get some clothes and shoes for Rosemarie.

Well, for the last quarter of an hour the woman had been outside, and she seemed to have started on a long-ish job in the garden. No one could be in the yard, because, or so the youth imagined, Paul Schlieker was safely in the lockup. Otsche therefore thought he might risk a daring coup.

Crossing the yard the boy gently opened the back door and found himself in a kitchen buzzing with flies. He remembered the house from the time when Rosemarie had lived with them and he knew that he had to go through the door beside the cooking stove.

This he did, and found himself in what had been the babies' room. He looked through the window into the garden. There beneath him, not six paces away, stood Frau Schlieker, still digging. Only a window separated them, and it never occurred to her to look up; in any case from where she stood in the daylight she could not have seen him against his dark background. Nevertheless, his heart began to hammer in his chest. He kept reminding himself that he was doing nothing wrong, that the clothes belonged to Rosemarie, but his heart still throbbed and his whole body poured sweat.

It was quite a while before the boy could pluck up courage to open the farther door, but he did. Here was Rosemarie's little room and the cupboard in which she kept her things. The key was in the lock, and the more he hesitated, the more his heart throbbed. He listened—not a sound. Then he shook himself, stepped briskly

up to the cupboard, opened it. All Marie's clothes and linens lay there in neat little piles; but what should he take? Otsche had sisters, but he had no notion what girls wore. Stockings—well, stockings must be right, and he grabbed four or five pairs. One dropped, he bent down to pick it up, and saw—not half a yard away—the sinister and grinning countenance of Paul Schlieker.

His heart stood still.

"Nice of you to come and look us up, Otsche Gau," grinned Paul Schlieker from behind the half-opened door. But the next instant his mockery turned to anger. Schlieker gripped the trembling boy with both hands and flung him against the cupboard, seized him and flung him back again, again, and yet again.

"You filthy little brute! Thief and son of a thief! I'll knock your brains out!" he raged, thinking of his poisoned cow.

As Schlieker buffeted the lad's head back and forth, it clung to one thought: "I won't be afraid. . . . I won't be afraid of Schlieker. . . . I won't. . . . I won't. . . ."

Chapter Ten

In which Rosemarie comes into possession of a large sum of money, and Otsche runs for his life

THE THREE PEOPLE in the shed passed this fateful day in peace and quiet sunshine, little knowing what had been said of them or how their fates had been decided.

The Professor was still calmly asleep when Heini Beier marched up with a basket, and unpacked such provisions as he had hurriedly been able to collect during the night: eggs and lard, butter and salt, bread, bacon and sausage, coffee and a thick slice of ham. A can of milk had not been forgotten, but the container had to go back at once or the Strohmeiers would miss it, Albert had said.

He took it back, and with it the fatal message about Rosemarie's clothes.

So when the Professor awoke the reassuring smell of eggs and bacon greeted him. He welcomed his busy little friend with great good humor, actually kissing her on the forehead, and saying: "Good morning, child. I slept well, and I feel quite strong and fresh. And you?"

"Yes, thank you. We'll be having breakfast in a minute."

It did not occur to the Professor to ask how a breakfast had been conjured up in that secluded shed, and they sat down to a leisurely meal, Philip a little apart on a chopping block outside. The Professor proposed to go and consult the Guardians after breakfast and set everything straight with God and the authorities.

Rosemarie objected. It was three hours' journey there and three hours back, and Godfather surely deserved one day of rest. Tomorrow, perhaps tomorrow.

She did not mention her resolve to wait and see what happened to Schlieker, nor Hütefritz' news that the Professor had proposed to depart and leave her in the lurch. By moonlight it had seemed quite possible to ask the old man for an explanation, but in the daylight all was different. Many who swear allegiance to the truth fail to keep their word.

She did not say where the eggs had come from, nor that she knew of the Professor's flight; she did not mention Paul Schlieker's arrest, or her own plans and purposes.

She and Philip carried an armchair out into the sun for her godfather, and tucked him up comfortably in a warm rug. She gave him his Bible, and then set herself to clean the shed thoroughly. Meanwhile, she glanced at the old man from time to time—something else was on her mind, but even so simple a question seemed hard to ask now.

The Professor sat contentedly in the warm sunshine reading the Revelation of St. John, which seemed as fresh and noble as it always had from the very first. Now and then he dropped the book to gaze meditatively at the beech forest—not, of course, that he recognized the trees as beeches, he only knew that what he saw was a forest. He

could have dilated on cedars of Lebanon, he could even have described them—he knew them from pictures and books—but of the trees in a German forest he knew nothing.

Sometimes he realized how far outside the world he lived, as, for instance, when Rosemarie—after an hour's hesitation—said: "Can you give me a little money, Godfather?"

"Yes, indeed," her godfather replied, laying his Bible carefully on his knees as he slipped both hands under his rug and into his pockets. "How much do you want?"

"Say three marks," said Rosemarie awkwardly. "I want to send Philip out to buy some food." She added rapidly, "And we want oil for the lamps."

Her godfather produced a pocketbook stuffed with paper money and a purse full of silver, nickel and coppers. These he placed on his Bible.

Then he eyed the little pile rather helplessly. "Rosemarie," he said slowly, "it is so long since I have had anything to do with money that I have forgotten all about it. What is this coin, for instance?"

"A thaler, Godfather."

"Good. I see you know a great deal more than I do, and I never remember to pay. How would it be if you took charge of my money affairs for me?"

He swept it all up and held it out to her in both hands.

A faint flush came into Rosemarie's cheeks. "Oh, Godfather," she exclaimed, "you don't mean to trust me with all that money?"

"I'm quite sure you're well able to look after it."

"All right," cried Rosemarie. "I'll count it all up and give you a receipt."

She stood before him with his money in her hand, very happy and grateful. This would have been the moment to speak out, but it passed. He nodded to her, picked up his Bible, and she walked away.

Sitting down at the wooden table in the shed, she counted the little hoard, and when she had finished once more broke into the old gentleman's meditations. "It comes to two hundred and seventeen marks and eighty-three pfennigs, Godfather. Here is a receipt. And may I buy some blacking?—there isn't any here."

"Pray do, my dear," he said absently, slipping the receipt between the pages of his Bible.

Her heart throbbed as she sat contemplating the little pile. The largest sum of money she had ever possessed was fifty pfennigs. Herr Vogel had given it her on her birthday, but Frau Gau had promptly impounded it.

She sat and pondered. To him, money was a matter of indifference, indeed he was glad to be rid of it; to her, it meant so much. She fingered the notes and thrilled to hear them crackle.

Then she laid five marks on the table, and hid the remaining treasure in her bed. Philip was summoned and received his instructions; then she provided him with money, a written message and an oilcan. He was not to go to Unsadel or to Kriwitz, but across the forest to the Prussian village of Lüttenhagen. And even there he must look out, as he was as likely to be locked up in Prussia as in Mecklenburg.

Then Rosemarie went down to the lakeside, and looked across at the path which ran along the edge of the forest to Unsadel. No one came; it was dreadful to sit here in idleness with her farm and her future at

stake. Later she prepared lunch—eggs, this time with ham, and bread and coffee. Afterward the Professor lay down to sleep for an hour, as was his custom.

But he could not have slept long when he heard a soft voice calling. He opened his eyes; it was Rosemarie.

"I must hurry away now, Godfather, but don't worry, Philip will be here in an hour, and I shall be back before it's dark."

He saw she was excited, and tried to question her as best he could in his half-awakened state, but she hurriedly cut him short, "No, Godfather, I must go now. I'll tell you all about it later." And she slipped out, closing the door on Bello who whined to be allowed to come too.

There was no more hope of sleep for the Professor; he lay on his bed for a while, then got up and walked up and down the shed, thinking. And the more he reflected the more fantastic it all seemed. How he came to have taken refuge in the Vogels' summer place still remained a mystery.

It was rather dark in the shed, but outside the sun was shining brightly. The Professor opened the door and stepped out into the sunshine. Bello dashed out after him, darted to and fro across the grass with his nose against the ground, and then with a volley of joyous barks vanished along a narrow forest path.

The Professor watched him, shook his head, and fell to pacing up and down again, but the sunlight threw no more light on the situation. Presently Philip reappeared with his supplies and seemed surprised and disturbed to find that Rosemarie had gone. He tried to question the Professor, but as the Professor did not know where she

had gone, and could barely understand Philip's broad Low German, the lad's anxiety remained.

However, he moved the Professor's chair back into the shed and kindled a fire, after which he seemed to make up his mind and plunged into the forest at a brisk trot exactly where Bello had vanished.

The Professor called after him, he even walked a little way along the path, but there was no sign of the boy, and twilight was descending quickly. Professor Kittguss made his way slowly back, and sat down in his chair by the fire to await the truants.

Hours passed, the fire collapsed, and the Professor, absorbed in his troubled meditations, forgot to put on any fresh wood, forgot to light the lamp, forgot to get himself any food. He pondered and began to feel very old and useless and desolate. He could depend on no one now. In the early hours of morning he fell asleep.

Rosemarie and Ernst Witt ran at top speed along the path to Unsadel. As soon as she heard that Paul Schlieker was back and Otsche Gau had vanished, she thought of that unlucky message about the clothes, and knew exactly what had happened. And so they ran, silent and heavy-hearted, along the forest path to Unsadel.

Because Rosemarie could not, of course, appear in Unsadel, the rendezvous of the league consisted of a little sand pit about three hundred yards from the Schliekers' farm, from which they could see the yard gates and the house.

There her retainers met her, even including Hütefritz—at such a crisis he had actually deserted his cattle. There was also one newcomer, the eldest Gau girl, Evi,

two years younger than Rosemarie—they knew each other very well.

"She won't blab," said Hütefritz. "I sent for her so that we can know what went on at the Gaus'."

The two girls shook hands coolly, with a "Hullo, Evi" and "Hullo, Marie"—that was all.

Otsche Gau had kept watch from twelve till two. He missed his dinner by picking a quarrel with his choleric father, who had promptly kicked him out of the parlor and locked him into the woodshed. However, with the aid of Evi, who was in on the secret, he had escaped two minutes later. The Gau parents did not know this yet, and even if they did find out they wouldn't start fussing at once. "But," Evi went on, "if Father knew he was shut up in the Schliekers' house because he went to fetch your clothes, I don't know what he'd do to you and Schlieker and old Mali too."

No one answered, they all stared at the silent farm.

"Since two o'clock, when I was to relieve Otsche, there hasn't been a sign of life," put in Hübner eagerly. "They'll have to feed the cattle some time."

"It's nearly five now," Evi Gau burst out, sobbing. "And they've had him in there for four hours at least, torturing him for all we know. Perhaps they're beating him to death!"

"The Schliekers are capable of anything," said Hübner sagely.

"Shut up, fathead," snapped Hütefritz.

"Well, we shan't get him out by standing here and staring at the farm," cried Evi. "Look here, Rosemarie. It's your fault he got caught; I dare say the Schliekers think he was trying to steal something."

Rosemarie's heart was heavy, but she said with an effort: "I had better go and say I sent him. Then they're bound to let him go."

"And they'll hold on to you instead!" cried Hütefritz.

"I dare say I shall manage to escape," said Rosemarie, rather gloomily."

"Not you!" said Fritz scornfully. "After what you did to the Schliekers they'd sooner bury you under the dung-heap than let you go again."

They all eyed Rosemarie in silence.

"Oh dear!" she said dolefully, for she was really afraid. She turned to go but stopped. "You're quite right, Evi, I can't let him down. I'll go to the farm at once, and if Otsche isn't out in half an hour, you run along to your father and tell him everything. And you, Hütefritz, and the others, see that Philip keeps out of the way for the next few days. And there's the Professor too. . . . Oh, dear, oh, dear, Hütefritz, he gave me his money to look after, there's two hundred and twelve marks and eighty-three pfennigs left. It's under my pillow in the cowshed, see that you give it to him. And tell him he can't help me, and he'd much better go home. . . ."

"Look here," said Hütefritz earnestly, "listen, Evi, it's for you to decide now. We'll all see to that, Rosemarie. But before you go into Schlieker's house we must first be quite certain that Otsche's inside it. Otherwise there's no sense in what you suggest."

"But where else could he be?" asked Hübner.

"How do I know? Very likely Schlieker went straight from here to his people at Biestow, and Otsche has followed him. No, I'm going to nose around a bit first,

and when we're quite sure Otsche's inside, then you can go, Rosemarie. What about it, Evi?"

"All right," she said doubtfully, "if you aren't more than half an hour."

"But if there's any nosing around to be done," said Rosemarie, "I'm going to do it."

"Rubbish!" said Hütefritz scornfully. "Anyone could spot that red dress of yours five miles away."

"I'm the smallest," chirped Albert Strohmeier. "And I can run the fastest—I'll go."

"It was my idea," insisted Hütefritz. "I'll go."

"No," said Rosemarie decisively. "Strohmeier shall go. If the Schliekers see him, they'll just think he's being inquisitive. But if they catch sight of you, Fritz, they'll know that I'm somewhere around."

"He's sure to make a mess of it," growled Hütefritz peevishly.

"You must crawl on your fingertips like a Red Indian, Albert, so that Schlieker won't spot your tracks."

"Fathead!" said Strohmeier contemptuously. "As if he'd look for trails! No, I'll go in my socks. Bare feet squelch and boots creak."

They all looked at him. The atmosphere had changed, Otsche's captivity and Rosemarie's heroism were forgotten. . . .

"Good luck, Albert!" they cried.

"So long," he replied and dived into the bushes.

"You fool! Where are you going?" shouted Hütefritz in a fury.

"Don't you understand?" said Rosemarie eagerly. "He's quite right, he's not going by the path. He's go-

ing down to the lake, and then along the shore to the garden— Hullo, what's that?"

There was a rustle in the bushes at the edge of the sand pit, and with a yelp of joy Bello leapt at Rosemarie.

"Bello!" she cried. "The Professor must have let him out. There, there, old fellow. Quiet now, quiet. Lie down, lie down, sir."

The dog crouched at her feet and looked up at her.

"He's got as far as the garden," said Hübner.

"He'll be out of sight now," said Hütefritz, "we must just wait."

They waited.

Minutes passed, minutes that seemed endless.

"Where can he be now?" murmured one.

"He ought to have been here long ago."

"Perhaps Schlieker's caught him."

"If he doesn't come back soon, I shall go after him," said Hütefritz grimly.

"You stay where you are!" commanded Rosemarie. "If anyone goes, I shall."

"There he is!" cried Witt. "By the lake!"

"So he is!"

"Well, Albert!" said Rosemarie expectantly.

"Is he there?" asked Hütefritz eagerly.

"Who—Schlieker?" asked Albert Strohmeier, fully conscious of his temporary importance. "Let me put on my boots first. My feet are frozen, and my socks are in rags. Mother will raise Cain when she sees them."

"Is he there?" bellowed Hütefritz.

"Who?" asked Strohmeier, triumphantly eying his oppressor. "Yes, Herr Paul Schlieker is at home."

"Fathead!" roared Hütefritz.

"Albert!" said Rosemarie. "Albert Strohmeier, is Otsche in that house?"

"He certainly is!" said Strohmeier, with a large smile. "He's shut up in the little cellar under your room, Rosemarie. . . ."

"There!" said Rosemarie.

"Poor boy!" wailed Evi. "I'll tell Father right away, if you don't go at once, Rosemarie. . . ."

"I'll go now. . . ." said Rosemarie decisively.

"Poor boy?" asked Strohmeier, grinning all over his little freckled countenance. "Poor Schliekers, you mean! Do you think Otsche's taking it lying down? He's roaring and swearing and making such a row that Schlieker's stuffing straw in the air holes so they can't hear it in the village."

"He must be rescued," said Rosemarie. "I'll go along now."

"Stop!" cried Strohmeier, gripping her. "Wait a moment. You'll see something in a minute."

"I *must* go," cried Rosemarie, eying Evi's pale distracted face. "I got him into this, and I must get him out again."

"Wait, Rosemarie," said Strohmeier mysteriously. "I saw something."

"Well?" said Rosemarie eagerly.

"Well . . ." whispered Strohmeier. "Paul is putting on his blue jacket with the horn buttons."

For a moment there was a deep and thoughtful silence.

"Then," said Rosemarie decisively, "he's going into town."

"Perhaps he's going to the police."

"Oh, poor Otsche!" wailed Evi.

"Silly," said Strohmeier contemptuously. "If Paul goes in to town the old woman will have to see to the cattle. And as soon as she's inside the cowshed, we'll lock the door and get Otsche out of the cellar."

"Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"And Schlieker can go to blazes!"

"Let's hope he'll start soon."

"Well, if he's got his blue jacket on already . . ."

"But it's getting dark."

This time they had not long to wait. Schlieker came out of the front door wheeling his bicycle.

"There he is—off to Kriwitz."

"I'll run after him," said Hütefritz. "I must get back to my cows anyway. If he doesn't go to Kriwitz, I'll send a message."

And he started off at once just as Paul Schlieker disappeared behind the first house in the village.

"Get along—all of you!" cried Rosemarie. "We'll hide behind the yard wall. But Bello— Oh dear, is that you, Philip?—what a fright you gave me! Have you left the Professor all by himself? Quick—can't tell you all about it now."

Three minutes later they were crouching behind the farmyard wall. Rosemarie was peering through one gate hinge and Strohmeier through the other. The yard lay silent and deserted in the gathering darkness. Then a door slammed and they heard a clink of metal.

"The milk pails," whispered Rosemarie.

Albert Strohmeier nodded.

Mali Schlieker emerged from the house carrying two milk pails. She stood two paces away from the children

on the other side of the wall, and seemed to be listening. Rosemarie pressed the dog's head close to her side, and looked at him imploringly, her heart throbbing.

But Mali went on unsuspecting, across to the stables; a bolt rattled.

"Now!" whispered Rosemarie excitedly.

Slowly and with infinite caution Strohmeier raised the latch of the yard gate. They peered through the gap, the other children thronging at their backs.

"The stable door is open," whispered Albert.

"That's so she can see," explained Rosemarie, and to the others: "Now you stay here—remember, you're not to move! Albert and I will go alone. Philip, hold Bello. Shoes off, Albert!"

They kicked off their shoes and crept in single file first along the wall and then along the stable. Before them yawned the stable doorway, black and still.

Albert stopped. "Wait till she starts milking," he whispered. "She can't get out so quick from under the cow."

They stood flattened against the wall, only a foot or two from the doorway on the opposite side from the door. Albert would have to slip across the gap and shut the door from the other side. From inside the stable came a faint rustle of straw.

Suddenly a dog at the gate of the yard yelped, then all was silent.

If Frau Schlieker came at that moment she could not fail to see them.

For Albert Strohmeier it was only an escapade: if it failed, he could run back to his home and his parents. But Rosemarie's very destiny was at stake. That woman in the stable was viler than any witch in a fairy tale

and Rosemarie was at her mercy. She felt helpless, she knew she could never run away, Mali had bewitched her. Her limbs trembled, her lips quivered.

"O God," she prayed, "don't let her hear, please let her go on milking. I can't bear it any more!"

She waited, breathless—then came the silvery tinkle of the milk jet spurting into the pail.

"Now!" whispered Albert.

His little gray shadow slipped across the opening, the door swung to with a crash, the bolt rattled home, and Rosemarie, still trembling, dropped the linchpin into place.

A scream from within as the woman flung herself against the door, yelling: "Let me come out, you little brute!"

"The door's all right," whispered Albert, "but hurry!"

While Mali Schlieker dashed the milk stools against the door and shrieked, while the cows bellowed and the horses stamped, they ran into the house, through the dark kitchen and the dark nursery into Rosemarie's room.

"Otsche!" cried Rosemarie.

"You beast!" came the reply.

"Otsche, Otsche, you silly boy, it's me, Rosemarie. And Albert Strohmeier.

"Wait, I'll have the door up in a minute—he's tied it down. Have you got your knife? Hurry! Just a moment, Otsche. Did you have a very bad time? We must hurry, he might come back. There!—now climb up. Oh, he's taken away the ladder! Here, take my hand, and Albert's. So!

"Oh, Otsche!" she cried, and flung her arms round her ancient enemy. "Thank God, we've rescued you. Did he knock you about very much?"

"I'd like to have seen him try!" said Otsche Gau haughtily. "I told Schlieker what I thought of him. They're both of them hopping mad."

"Come on!" urged Albert. "Don't let's hang around here. . . ."

"You might at least take your underclothes," said Otsche, unperturbed. "I should be sorry to have let myself in for all this for nothing. I dare say *you* can find them in the dark, *I* don't know where you keep your beastly drawers and things."

"Otsche," piped a new and shrill little voice, "run home quick. Paul Schlieker's gone to see Father!"

"Christa!" cried Otsche.

"Christa Gau!" cried Albert Strohmeier and Rosemarie.

"Paul Schlieker's with Father now. Run, Otsche!"

And Otsche ran, as though his life depended on it.

From the stable window Mali Schlieker shrieked: "Paul—let me out! P-a-u-l! The boy's got away!"

Otsche ran and ran.

Chapter Eleven

In which Gau shows himself a stern father, and Schlieker as something worse than a crook

IF ANYONE FROM UNSADEL and the district, including the town of Kriwitz, had learnt of Otsche Gau's mysterious theft of underclothes—had the case come before Gottschalk, the Parish Clerk, or the Tamms, or Constable Peter Gneis, or even Schulz the magistrate, they would all have wagged their heads in utter mystification.

But the Schliekers guessed in five minutes what was up. As for the little wretch himself, they cuffed him and they shook him, but they could not make him tell; indeed, after he had recovered from the first shock, he became so abusive that they had to shut him in the beet-cellar until they could decide what to do.

In point of fact they did not need his evidence; the Schliekers were quite able to make sense, and good sense, out of what had happened without any help from Otsche Gau.

Item: yesterday, in broad daylight, a raid had been made on the babies in the Schliekers' care.

Item: Marie had bolted, and though Schlieker knew no details, it was perfectly clear that she had been lured away.

Item: Schlieker had been quietly arrested, but his arrest was generally known.

Item: exactly two and three-quarter years ago the Schliekers had maneuvered Rosemarie Thürke away from the Gaus.

The conclusion was clear: the Gaus thought that their luck with Rosemarie Thürke was in again, and that the Schliekers had lost the game.

They had got at Rosemarie, indeed, they had probably put her up to the whole scheme. And now, believing Schlieker safe in jail, they had hoped to get hold of the girl's belongings as well as the girl, and had sent their villainous offspring, Otsche, for that purpose.

All this was clear as daylight to the Schliekers—what a blessed chance that Schlieker had been let out of jail in time to catch the boy red-handed and clap him in the cellar, where he could shout himself hoarse!

There were two alternatives: he could go to the magistrate and have the matter out in public with all the ensuing scandal and inquiries by the police. And the Schliekers certainly liked the prospect of the arch-enemy's public humiliation.

But the other alternative, being more lucrative, was perhaps to be preferred. Schlieker would treat with Gau direct, and not merely exchange the boy for the treacherous Marie (how she would be made to writhe!), but extract a nice little sum in compensation for overlooking the theft—something that would help to pay

for the deceased cow. Gau was at Schlieker's mercy—that was clear.

The sole objection to the second alternative was that it involved a personal interview with Wilhelm Gau. Everyone knew what he was like—indeed, he was the subject of a popular proverb.

Paul Schlieker was not a man of many parts, but he was well supplied with impudence. When Mali wailed, "He'll kill you, Paul!" he merely laughed, and said, "I'll kill him back."

"No, get that parcel ready, and I'll take the bicycle. If he won't come to terms, or if he tries to fool me, I'll go straight to the police at Kriwitz. Then they'll search his house this very evening, and we'll be rid of this little ruffian, and with the law behind us."

"Oh, Paul," she wailed, "he's a dreadful man!"

"Oh, Mali!" he jeered. "I can be dreadful if I like. Keep the house locked up, and don't let anyone take the boy away—or you'll see a very dreadful fellow, and that will be me!"

He soon departed, arrayed in his blue Sunday jacket, not for Gau's benefit, but in case he had to go on to town. He wheeled his bicycle with one hand, and carried the parcel in the other.

Had anyone suggested that his heart was beating a little faster at the prospect of this encounter with his ancient hereditary enemy, the ogre of Unsadel, Schlieker would have laughed. But it *was* beating faster, not indeed from fear, but at the prospect of triumph.

Farmer Wilhelm Gau was sitting at the table in the parlor. In the yard the cattle were still being fed and

milked. He was never a man to stand and watch, but when the work was done, he would go out and inspect it and woe to any man who had skimped his work—for Gau missed nothing.

Woe, indeed, to everyone and everything, woman, child, man, maid, and beast that thwarted Farmer Gau. He was the largest farmer in the district—not merely large as a landowner, he was also very large in person. Over six feet tall and weighing over two hundred and twenty-five pounds, he sat at the table in the darkening parlor, motionless, and blinking darkly into space.

Two deep lines furrowed his forehead just above his nose, marking him as a man of moods and evil humor, a man who hated life and his fellow beings. The lines were deep as scars and seemed to have been with him since childhood. They had. This huge and formidable man had never had his way. He had had to marry—for the sake of the farm—a vapid little creature instead of the woman he loved. Again for the sake of the farm he had been balked of his heart's desire, which was to be a sailor.

When he had to say no to a cattle dealer, his wife, the innkeeper, or his children, he never merely said no; he said, "The whole lousy show isn't worth the trouble. . . ." By which he really meant that to him the whole lousy show had never been worth the trouble all his life. He never forgot that, not for a single minute. He worked, and he worked well, but when his work was done, he sat as he was sitting then, staring darkly into space.

This was the man upon whom the door opened, and a foxy little rascal called Paul Schlieker appeared with a parcel under his arm.

Schlieker peered into the twilit room, not quite sure whether the farmer was there or not, but the latter growled: "Not at home, get out."

"I've brought along the washing," grinned Paul Schlieker, and put the parcel on the farmer's table.

The other listened; without lifting his head he recognized the visitor by his voice. "Right," he said indifferently. "You can go." Paul and Mali had imagined a pleasant scene when Gau was presented with the underclothes he had sent his son to steal. But the joke seemed to have failed, and Paul said in a more menacing tone: "You're not going to get away with it, Wilhelm. Theft is theft."

"Sure," growled the looming shadow from the darkness. "You can bet on that, Paul."

And Schlieker went on, as though he had heard nothing. "Folks will begin to talk a bit, Wilhelm, when they know that Gau steals children, and his son steals their underclothes. . . ."

"You've come to the wrong shop," said Gau, motionless in the darkness. "You'd better go to Tamm's."

"And if we can't come to some friendly agreement, Wilhelm, I shall go to the police and get a search warrant. . . ."

"Then go," said the vast shadow.

Paul felt rather baffled, but he persevered. "Perhaps you haven't heard, Wilhelm, that I caught your Otsche stealing on my farm, and I've got him under lock and key."

"Good for you," said the farmer, still immovable.

"But if you'll hand over Marie Thürke, and—say—

three hundred marks for that cow, I'll give up Otsche and I and Mali won't say a word."

"Liar!" said the farmer.

"Oh, no, we won't, Wilhelm," protested Schlieker. "We'll hold our tongues; besides, it would be against our interest to talk."

"Hey!" roared Gau; Schlieker recoiled, and swallowed his remaining comments. "Hey! Wife!"

The door opened.

"Yes, Father?" said the farmer's wife.

"Send the boy in—at once!"

The door closed.

"We'll have to wait quite a while," jeered Schlieker. "I've got him locked up at home."

"Take that rubbish off my table," said the farmer. "You'll soon find yourself and your rubbish, too, in the street! Take it away!" he roared, as the other hesitated.

Schlieker picked up the parcel. "There's no reason to talk like that, Wilhelm," he muttered. Then the door opened.

"Yes, Father?" said Otsche, struggling with his gasps.

"Blast that woman. . . ." began Paul Schlieker; but he got no further. . . .

The table tipped over with a crash as the gigantic farmer leapt at his enemy. Schlieker, too, was handy with his fists, but he was helpless against such an onslaught. He staggered under a tornado of blows, he was kicked in the shins, jabbed in the stomach, buffeted in the face. He swayed, he choked, the blood gushed from his nose. Gau gripped him and Schlieker tried to speak, protest, explain. But he was dragged like a sawdust doll from

Farmer Gau shows Paul Schlieker the door.

the parlor to the kitchen, and with a last terrific heave, hurled into the road, where he lay half stunned.

The farmer returned to the parlor.

"Pick up the table, Otsche," he said. "And light a lamp."

Otsche obeyed in silence, and his father sat down again on his wooden bench. He drew his son toward him until he held him between his knees, and eyed him darkly. The boy looked unblinking into his father's face.

For a while they said nothing. Not a sound could be heard but the agitated whispers of the women in the kitchen. After a while Gau sighed, laid his large hands on his son's shoulders and said: "You weren't in the woodshed just now?"

"No, Father."

"Who let you out?"

The son looked at his father.

"Well?— How about it?— Who let you out?— Be careful!"

The boy's look was his only answer.

The farmer's eyes darkened, he gripped the boy's arm until the lad cried out.

"Well, who let you out?—" asked his father inexorably.

Otsche paled, but did not utter a sound.

"I'll break your arm," said his father.

The boy dropped his eyelids, his pale lips quivered, but he said no word.

The farmer pondered, then he slackened his grip on the boy's arm and said: "You were in Schlieker's house?"

"Yes," whispered the son.

"Had you gone there to steal?"

Otsche reflected. The great inexorable hands tightened their grip, and the son said hastily: "Do Rosemarie's things belong to her or to the Schliekers?"

"What sort of things?"

"Clothes, underclothes, shoes. . . ."

"To Marie."

"Then I wasn't stealing."

"Did Marie ask you to get them?" asked the farmer slowly.

Otsche reflected for a moment, and then said, "Yes."

Wilhelm Gau pondered once more. "Where is Marie?" he asked.

The son reflected. "Now?"

"Yes, now."

"I don't know, Father," he said hurriedly.

"That's a lie!" And the hands tightened.

"It's not a lie, Father!" cried Otsche. "Let go my arm, Father, it's not a lie."

The hands did not release him but their grip slackened. "Is Marie in this house?"

"No, Father," exclaimed Otsche. "What an idea!"

"Have you had her in this house?"

"No, Father."

"Did you mean to bring her to this house?"

"No, Father."

"How did you come to be doing what Marie tells you?"

"I've made up with her again."

"So," said the farmer ominously. "Made up, have you—with the little brat who left us for the Schliekers? And now you want to rescue her from them."

"She's got away from them already."

"Where is she?"

"I won't tell."

The hands now gripped so savagely that the boy quivered and vomited. With a last effort he blurted out: "I'll drown myself, Father, if you force me to tell you. I've given my word. . . ."

Farmer Wilhelm Gau laughed, he was really amused to see himself defied by this little urchin. "Where is Marie?" he asked and the hands gripped harder and yet harder.

The son looked desperately at the father with half-closed eyes. He knew he could not bear this agony a moment longer and would betray his trust. Suddenly he bent down and bit one of those torturing hands so hard that the farmer bellowed with pain and let him go.

Otsche staggered back to the farther end of the room, and would have fled, but his father was between him and the door.

Gau looked incredulously at his bleeding hand, and muttered: "He bit me . . . bit his own father?"

The farmer looked up, and stared quizzically at his small son, who, still pale and trembling but undaunted, defied him still.

"Come here, Otsche," he said.

Otsche eyed his father doubtfully. But something reassured him—the ring of his father's voice, or the look in his father's eyes, and he came.

"You bit your father. . . ." said Wilhelm Gau.

The boy looked at him.

"And what's to be done now?" said his father, raising his undamaged fist.

The boy did not blink, something in his father's voice had changed.

"What would your master say if he knew one of his pupils had bitten his father?" asked the farmer mockingly, and lowered his fist.

"He'd thrash me," said the boy, but there was a faint glitter in his eye.

"And what would the boy's father do?"

"Thrash me too."

"And you bit me all the same?"

The farmer stared at the hand, from which blood was dripping on to the table.

"Get a handkerchief out of the chest of drawers," said he, "and bind my hand up— What do you want to be, by the way?"

"A farmer," said Otsche, rummaging in the drawer.

"Why? Because you like farming? Or because you're the only boy on the farm?"

"Because I like farming," said the son, twisting the handkerchief round his father's hand.

"Tighter!" said his father. "So you won't do everything I bid you?"

"N-no."

"You won't say who let you out of the woodshed, and where Marie is now?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you don't really mean me to."

"So," laughed the farmer grimly. "Does it look as if I didn't? And why don't I mean you to?"

"Because you don't mean me to give away my friends."

The father eyed his son thoughtfully. Then he walked slowly to the table, lowered himself on to the bench, propped his head on his hands, and said: "Go into the kitchen and ask your mother for a glass of schnapps. A tumblerful."

The boy went into the kitchen leaving the door ajar, and his father listened. The farmer's wife whispered some hurried questions which the son barely answered. His father nodded.

The son closed the door behind him and set the glass before his father. The farmer took a deep draught, and held the glass out to the boy: "Have a drop."

The boy shook his head, "No, thank you."

"Why not? Schnapps is good stuff."

"No, I won't drink any schnapps."

"None at all?"

"None at all."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to sit driveling in a public house."

"Does your father sit driveling in a public house?" asked the farmer sharply.

"No. But the others do."

"And you think you might later on, eh? Who put that into your head? Was it Marie?"

"No. That's just how I feel."

Wilhelm Gau eyed his son once more. "So," he said, partly to himself. "He's got a will of his own. I didn't start till later."

Then he added: "Otsche, Schlieker won't forget this day in a hurry."

"No, he won't."

"You won't do anything that would get us in wrong with the Schliekers?"

"No, Father."

"Promise?"

"Yes, Father."

The father gripped his son's hand hard, but this time he did not flinch.

"And keep your eyes peeled, Otsche. I can't be everywhere. Something might happen to the cattle, a rick might catch fire, or the farm buildings."

"I will," said Otsche.

"And remember—you're on your own in all this: don't bring your sisters into it," said the farmer. "Who opened that woodshed—Christa, or Evi, or your mother?"

The boy grinned and was silent.

"Get along, you young rascal!"

And the boy tripped out of the room.

On the farther side of the road, opposite the Gau farm buildings, among clumps of lilacs and elder bushes, stood an old abandoned bakehouse; here the children were hidden and had witnessed Schlieker's downfall.

It looked awful, and it was awful, but not one of those children stirred a step to help the victim. They whispered excitedly together while the man lay moaning on the ground.

"What are we to do now? What ought we to do? We can't leave him lying there—suppose he dies!"

"No, it's the Gaus' business to look after him."

Then a farm hand came down the street and stopped at the sight of the prostrate figure.

"That's our horse boy, Will," said Hübner. "He'll help him up."

But the two men appeared to be quarreling. The children heard Schlieker snarl: "Go to hell, you fool! Can't I lie down in the road if I choose?"

"Lie where you damn well like," said the man with equal surliness and passed on.

"He doesn't want any help, he'll spit at anyone who comes near him," whispered Strohmeier.

The farm hand had vanished in the darkness and the prostrate figure sat up with a groan. Then he crawled to the nearest tree, pulled himself up by the trunk, and stood erect.

Schlieker stood motionless for a while in unbroken silence while the children looked on with throbbing hearts. Then the shadow moved away from the tree and hobbled along to the Gaus' house.

"He's going back!"

"The fool! He's left his bicycle."

The man stood, a dumb shadow figure, outside the front door. He seemed to be losing his balance, and clutching at the air, actually he was shaking his clenched fists at the door. And they could hear his muttered imprecations. "Damn them—damn them to hell!"

Then Schlieker took his bicycle, and half leaning on it and half pushing it, he staggered through the village, cursing as he went.

"And what are *we* to do?" said the children.

"You go and get some supper first," said Rosemarie decisively. "Then all who can please come back to the sand pit. But first ask Otsche how he got on with his father."

"Yes," they agreed, "and what about you and Philip?"

"We'll trail Paul Schlieker. We'll need to watch him now. He might do anything."

"He won't do anything tonight. He'll go to bed."

"I'm not so sure," said Rosemarie reflectively. "Anyway, we're going to follow him."

For she feared him when she could not see him, and she feared him also when she could.

Chapter Twelve

Which contains an account of the youth, the rise, and the vicissitudes of the Schliekers

IT WAS NOW almost completely dark, and the village street was empty. And if anyone hurrying from house to stable caught sight of a shadowy figure staggering homewards with a bicycle, it would merely have looked like someone from the lower village who had stayed too long at the inn.

"He's got a pretty good load on board," would have been the natural remark.

Yes, the staggering figure had indeed got a load on board; but what burdened him was not drink or aching bones; it was rage—blind, devouring rage. At first it was directed against the people he had left, but the Gaus would not run away, he could deal with them in his own good time. The road dipped, and the man's thoughts now went before him: he was going home—to the woman who had brought about his downfall, and his wrath veered. The Gaus could wait, indeed he could

not settle his score with them yet; but that idiot wife of his. . . .

He stopped, shifted the bicycle from his right hand to his left, and tried his free right arm—yes, he could swing it. And he would swing it to some purpose. On and on he trudged, along the thorny way of wrath and cruelty and hatred. Such, alas, was the song that had been sung at Paul Schlieker's cradle, on the very day when he was born; though it was not in fact a cradle, but the foot of a straw mattress in a servant's bedroom at Biestow. The bastard baby of one Erna Schlieker, spinster, who never changed her name. Father unknown.

Unknown?— As he tottered home he could well remember the man who strode across the farmyard at Biestow and launched a genial kick at the little crawling creature: "Get out of my way, you little bastard."

Robert Tode was a sly old fox; he did not acknowledge bastards, and when he handed the farm over to his son-in-law, his only daughter's husband, he was careful only to lease it to his heirs. Robert Tode meant to die the master of his farm, flattered by all and sundry, much respected, and a member of the Parish Council.

His bastard son, without rights or heritage, had all his father's foxy qualities, but none of those that would ever make him master of anything at all. As a child he had learnt that it was useless to cry when he was kicked; his mother merely came out and slapped him when he did. He had learnt to listen for the tread of danger and to hide. He, the bastard, grew up on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, the bleaker and more

perilous side, but he had watched his fellow beings from his lair.

He was not a shrinking creature like his mother Erna, who endured in silence, let herself be used for a year or two, only to be flung away to die in a ditch. He had something of his father's obstinate energy. He would hide—he would bide his time, but he would snarl and bully and lie and cheat. What does a bastard know of shame? Not a boy in the village school would share a bench with him.

And as he could only make his way by guile and impudence, he despised everybody and everything, himself included. He could even borrow Lau's flute, and tootle his way, triumphant in his shame, through the village as it sat at dinner.

But that time was not yet; before he became the butt of village jokers, he had a long way to travel. He had to wriggle and twist and outwit his fellow citizens of Biestow. They refused to let him learn a trade, but when he was fourteen they packed him out of the poorhouse and put him to work for a farmer. "Now," they said, "see what you can do. You have been a burden on us long enough."

And he had not done so badly, for he was capable as well as cunning. Moreover, he knew nothing of property, which safeguards and secures a man; he stood for himself alone. He soon learned to manage horses and cows, and he picked up all the work of a farm. He doctored the cattle when they were sick, and though the villagers feared the lank foxy lad, they asked his advice. He could plane a beam or thatch a roof, split stones and lay bricks. And when no builder was to be had, he could

put up a wall using a water level and a plummet, all as neat as could be—and plaster it as well.

Competent, industrious and handy, he worked his fingers to the bone for every penny—and when Frau von Wanzka offered him a post as gardener, he promptly accepted. A permanent job as gardener on the Tischendorf estate meant another step up for the bastard from the maid's bed in Biestow.

Did success bring oblivion, or soften his temper? No, his fellow servants took care of that. When he tried to kiss the pretty pantry maid, she reminded him who he was and who she was. And when he saw boys stealing apples and ran after them, they yelled: "Biestow bastard! Workhouse boy!"

His schoolmates at Biestow had accomplished little; the farmers' sons became farmers or farm hands, the cottagers' sons became day laborers or less, while he was gardener on an estate. He had saved nearly a thousand marks. But the stain of his birth clung to him as gardener at Tischendorf as it had when he was the maid's son at Biestow.

He set his teeth, labored and persevered; soon he had saved four thousand marks.

And then he fell in with the fifth of the six daughters of the rich master baker Sass, at Kriwitz. True, she was far from a beauty with her peaked, birdlike face, but the Biestow bastard would hardly have been considered eligible, had she not been a damaged article.

People said the fat baker drank too much—though his other five daughters seemed healthy enough. God seemed to have viewed just one with disfavor and afflicted her

alone with the falling sickness or epilepsy, as old Doctor Faulmann called it.

From time to time she was very bad and would fall down and foam at the mouth several times a day. Her parents and sisters were sick of her. They longed to get her out of the house.

As a crowning insult they regarded Paul Schlieker as the obvious match for the poor wretch.

But Schlieker's invariable luck did not desert him; from the day Amalie Sass married, she was cured. He had a healthy wife, with a complete trousseau, and three thousand marks as dowry—could a wastrel from the Biestow poorhouse ask for more?

More? A great deal!

He got the right companion, cut to his measure, poison blended with poison and hate joined to hate. No pair could have been better suited.

Yes, the years had left their mark on Amalie Sass, now Mali Schlieker. Shut in a back room as the disgrace of the family, she was never allowed to show herself. Meanwhile, her sisters went about the house laughing and singing and having their love affairs, though they made faces and fell silent when they caught sight of Sister Mali. She never forgot.

Mali had toiled and schemed like Paul, she had not known the triumphs of successful guile, she had always had to live her life in a bleak back room—until he came and set her free!

The man was a rascal and a blackguard, ruthless and cunning which was all to the good because their enemies deserved no mercy! They walked hand in hand, comrades

through thick and thin—one voice, one hatred, and two minds that thought as one.

Then, one day, they bethought them of Frau von Wanzka's ward, Pastor Thürke's daughter who had been pestering Frau von Wanzka for a long while. Her guardians had put her in charge of Farmer Gau, but she beset the good lady two or three times a week with complaints of ill-treatment, overwork and starvation.

But these were the least of her grievances: what distressed her most was the state of her father's little farm.

Farmer Gau had closed the house and stables, he hardly worked the land at all—he had enough of his own already. The place was a wilderness of weeds, the fruit trees were decaying, the fences were falling down and the plaster was moldering off the walls of the unaired rooms.

Rosemarie's appeals and grievances never ceased—Frau von Wanzka was a widow, and owned eight thousand acres—but the thirty-eight acres of the Thürke farm gave her far more trouble.

The Schliekers heard all this, and they laid their plan accordingly; one of them met the girl by accident, and talked to her kindly—as she thought, poor thing. She was a mere child of thirteen or fourteen in those days, a very helpless and a very trusting child—and she trusted the Schliekers.

Rosemarie herself suggested to Frau von Wanzka that Schlieker should be put in charge of her father's farm and appointed to look after her. Frau von Wanzka sent for her gardener and asked him what he thought.

He did not entirely agree. At Tischendorf there were

eight or ten hours' work a day depending on the season, but at Unsadel he would have to work twelve or fourteen hours a day, including Sundays. Moreover, here his wife had only the housework to do—if she worked in the garden she was paid extra. In Unsadel, on the other hand, she would have to work in the fields as well. If he undertook a job of that kind, he expected to be better off, not worse. No, it couldn't be done under a hundred marks a month; in fact he really ought to get a hundred and fifty. But he wouldn't insist.

Frau von Wanzka listened and then consulted the magistrate and her fellow guardian. Perhaps she was not sorry to see the last of her gardener. Not that he was inefficient, far from it, she never had a better gardener, but people generally detested him. They said his vegetables filled them with wind, and that his fruit was always maggoty. His flowers made their heads ache and he was a little too keen on the main chance.

In the end Frau von Wanzka let Rosemarie have her way, but expressed the hope that there would be no more complaints.

Here was the Schliekers' chance to strike roots and acquire possessions of their own.

Their plans were ready: they never meant to let that farm out of their hands, and they could, of course, contrive that until Marie came of age the farm should be theirs and not hers.

And so they toiled and plotted, mismanaging the farm in a fashion that really went to Schlieker's heart, while they slowly worked their will. The end was inevitable—what could Rosemarie do? She had no friend, no one

to speak for her, no relations who might for very shame have given the child some help.

At which point that confounded old fool had walked into the Schlieker kitchen and threatened to wreck all their precious schemes.

The morning after the Professor first appeared in Unsadel Schlieker thought that he could still salvage everything; even in the evening, when he set out to make his bargain with the Gaus, he thought he would win out.

But in that decisive hour, his fellow schemer, Mali, the only human being he trusted, had ruined everything by letting the boy escape.

Dark night covered him, dimly lit by the fires of hatred and of fury. Could those two young creatures, who crept behind the stumbling figure, have seen into his heart, they would never have dared to look upon his face again.

But they followed him, and as he disappeared into the dark farmyard they sat down by the roadside and wondered what to do next.

The man looked up at the house, and across the stables —everything was plunged in darkness. Muttering a curse, he leaned his bicycle against the fence and went into the pitch-dark entrance hall. "Mali!" he called, first softly and then louder. Then he shouted into the yard. No answer.

Suddenly his anger vanished and he almost forgot his aches and pains—he knew that something was wrong. Not only had the boy escaped, something else had happened.

He stepped back into the house, groped his way to the

fireplace, felt for the matches, struck one, found the lamp, lit it, and again called "Mali!"

Not a sound.

He picked up the lamp, and headed toward Marie's room, but hesitated. He seemed to be evading some decision, for he went into his and Mali's bedroom first.

He lifted the lamp—the room looked precisely as it had when he left the house an hour before. This seemed to him somehow ominous. Suddenly feeling faint, he sat down on the edge of the bed and stared into space, still grasping the guttering oil lamp. All the foxiness had vanished from his face, it merely looked dark and terrible. The sly smiling eyes were dull and dead. Then he pulled himself together, got up, went to the cupboard, and took out a bottle of schnapps. He took a heavy swig, shook himself, and put the bottle back.

For a moment he pondered, then the alcohol began to work, warming him and stiffening his will. He picked up the lamp and went into Marie's room.

The trapdoor lay open, a square of yawning blackness; he knelt beside it, and picked up the cord with which he had tied the hasp. It had been cut!

Then he began to understand: Mali would never have cut the cord—she was far more economical than he—she would have untied it, if it had taken her an hour. It was not she who had let the Gau boy out, she had not been outwitted. Perhaps she had been overpowered? Where could the woman be?

As he crouched by the open trapdoor, with the lamp beside him on the floor, he eyed the severed cord as though it were something more significant than the remains of a calf's halter. And it was. It was the symbol

of a misplayed card and with it his schemes and hopes were severed.

And Mali?—

In a sudden impulse, he bent over the trapdoor and flashed his lamp into the cellar. No, no Mali, only swedes and beet roots.

He stood up and wavered. He was seldom at a loss, but the savage throbbing in his temples, since his encounter with Wilhelm Gau, seemed to drain all power of thought. The alcohol had numbed his aches and pains for the moment, but he was now in agony once more. He must lie down—but he must try to find the wretched Mali first.

Racked with uncertainty, he stood in the doorway, not knowing where to go. He looked helplessly about him—then caught sight of the open door of the cupboard. He hurried toward it—the cupboard was empty. So her clothes had gone too.

Then, tormented as he was, his anger blazed up again, and he cursed the brute who had robbed him of Marie and her possessions, and then had flung him into the street.

He had begun to doubt whether Gau had really been behind all this, but now his doubt fled. He was furious, he forgot his injuries, he forgot his wife. He would mount his bicycle at once and dash off to Kriwitz.

He hurried into the kitchen, and then stopped. The smell he had already noticed he recognized now: the pigs' potatoes on the stove had been left to burn.

He pushed the saucepan to one side and turned to go, when suddenly it occurred to him that burnt potatoes meant unfed pigs. And had the cows been milked? There

was no skim milk to be seen, but the pails were missing.

He stumbled across the yard, swung open the stable door, and called into the pitch-darkness: "Mali!"

Not a sound.

Then a cow chain rattled, a cow mooed hungrily. It must be Star.

Returning to the house, he found the stable lantern, lit it, hurried back, and stepped into the stable.

The two cows turned toward him, lowing softly, the two ponies whinnied. On one of the cow stalls, beside an upturned milking stool, a milk pail lay on its side.

The cow was half out of the stall, as far back as the chain could reach. He called to her, but she would not move. She was afraid, and as he held the lantern above her head, he saw the figure of his wife under the window, lying across the manger. He stood motionless, with quivering lips; he knew the meaning of those slavering lips, congested cheeks and rasping breath. He had seen these symptoms two or three times before they were married. She had had a fit.

When she married, the plague had left her, but now it had returned.

Inch by inch, step by step, rung by rung, down, down, back into the mire. His schemes wrecked by a girl of sixteen and an old half-witted Professor. Inch by inch, step by step, rung by rung, down, down, down.

There comes a moment in the life of every man when he feels that the stone beneath his foot, his native earth, his very world, is giving way.

That was how Paul Schlieker felt that moment—darkness encompassed him, there was no help anywhere, all his toil had been in vain.

After a while, he tethered Star to the back wall and lifted his wife out of the manger into the straw. The effort was almost beyond him; he gasped for breath—the stabs of pain in his side were agonizing. She must be got into the house and to bed—but where could he find help? In that whole village of three hundred souls there was not one whom he could ask. He must leave her where she was until the fit passed.

The cows were mooing, the pigs were grunting—he must see to the animals. He could barely walk, but he had to do his best. He crouched under a cow and began to milk, but did it so unskillfully that he hurt the cow who kicked the milk pail and upset it. The milk trickled away into the straw. The tip of her tail struck him sharply in the face. He leapt up in a fury, and dashed the pail against the cow, who stamped and tugged at her chain.

Pale and stricken with pain, he stopped, aghast at what he still had to face that evening.

Suddenly Mali appeared before him, an altered woman, wild and malignant, surveying his outburst with mocking eyes: "You're a fine sight, I must say. Gau seems to have fixed you properly. That's what comes of being too clever—I suppose you left him for dead. Why don't you go to the police, as I told you. Pah!—I'll milk that cow!"

She sat down and set to work.

He did not answer. He knew from the days before their marriage that she was always irritable after an attack and that it was best to say nothing.

He sat down on the fodder bin, and tried to rest, but as she milked she went on scornfully: "The boy arrived

just in the nick of time, eh? I wish I'd been there to see your face. You always thought yourself so clever, and you always put your foot in it."

That she, of all people, should taunt him! "How did he get away?" he asked, mastering himself with an effort.

"Yes—you'd like to know, wouldn't you? Hurry up, harness the horses, we'll have to clear out at once— I suppose they'll take us in at the Biestow workhouse, won't they?"

He leapt up with a curse, flung back the lid of the fodder bin, mixed some oats and chaff, and fed the horses.

But the devil was in her, she would not let him be— never had she spoken to him so: "Where's the money for the cow? You might give me a share. You did well on that, didn't you?"

He controlled himself and held his tongue, silently going to fetch the potatoes for the pigs. The yard lay still and dark, but he thought he saw a shadow moving by the dog kennel. He crept toward it, and whatever it was cowered to the ground. He put out a hand and found himself holding Bello by the collar!

The dog whined and struggled, but Schlieker made him fast to the chain. This was something to the good, the faintest indication of a change of wind. Something might be done. He made sure that the dog was secure and then hurried into the house after two steel traps. These he carefully set in such a way that anyone who approached the dog would be caught.

That was a deed well done.

Then he carried the pig food into the stable.

"Bello's come back," he announced. "I've put him on the chain."

"Oh," she growled from beneath the second cow, "another mouth to feed."

"Don't go near him," he warned. "I've set the traps by his kennel."

She stopped milking, looked at her husband sharply with malignant, birdlike eyes, nodded with an air of returning satisfaction: "Yes, they might be fools enough." Soon the pair had put the milk through the separator, fed the animals and locked the stable.

Schlieker sat stripped to the waist, feeling his chest. It was swollen and bruised. "There, Mali, right there." He guided her finger. "Can't you feel anything?"

She looked at him. "Do you think the bone's broken?"

"And there," he pointed, "on this side—can't you feel? Two ribs smashed on the right side, and one on the left."

"The brute," she burst out savagely, "we'll make him pay!"

"Yes," said Paul, "we will—and in cash. Damages and doctor's fees."

"Yes," she said. "But we'll have to get a doctor's certificate."

"And we must have his house searched this very night. Marie's there."

"I don't believe so," she answered. "She's gone off with the old fellow to Berlin."

"But the clothes? The cupboard's empty."

"What!" she cried, snatched up the lamp, and ran into Marie's room.

He remained seated in the darkness. This was the woman for him, and he had got her back again. She returned in a fury: "Yes, she must still be somewhere around. But she didn't come herself. There were two dresses of mine, she wouldn't have taken those."

"Ha!—burglary too," grinned Paul. "There'll be plenty on that bill. How did the boy get out?"

"I don't know," she snapped with a return of ill-temper. "I had just gone to milk the cows, and the stable door slammed. I thought it was the wind, but when I heard the bolt rattle, I knew what had happened."

"And you didn't see or hear anything?"

"Nothing."

"It must have been Marie."

"No," insisted Frau Schlieker, "she wouldn't have taken my dresses."

"Perhaps she was in a hurry and didn't notice. What did you do then?"

"I shouted for you out the window. But the window

overlooks the lake, and anyone who heard would only have jeered. Then I felt I was going to have a fit. I tried to get out of the stall, but I didn't have time."

"Yes," he said darkly, "and now I suppose you're going to have fits again."

"Paul!" she cried imploringly. "That was the very first. I shan't have another, I'm sure, if only we can get Marie back. It was just because I got so excited over her."

"Can you drive?" he asked. "I couldn't hold the horses, my arms feel as if they were dropping off."

"Of course," she exclaimed. "Shall we start now?"

"It's after seven. We must go to the doctor and get a certificate, and then to the police and maybe to the magistrate. We must start at once."

"I'll hitch the horses," she said. "You keep quiet and have another glass of schnapps. Don't you worry—Listen! What was that?"

"Stop!" cried Schlieker, who had also heard a cry, and leapt to his feet. "There's someone in the trap—come on!"

Both ran. The dog was barking frantically and a voice cried out in pain.

"Take a stick," cried Mali, "there are several of them, Paul."

The dog cleared the wall with a leap. Two shadows dragged a third through the yard gates.

"Stop!" yelled Schlieker, brandishing his stick, "stop —or I'll shoot."

The shadows vanished.

"Run, Mali!" he cried. "I can't. Catch 'em. They're only children. Marie was there!"

But it was too late. They had disappeared in the darkness. Not a sound, not a cry.

"No good?" he asked as she came back breathless.

"No!"

"A trap's gone; it was Philip that was caught, from the sound of the scream."

"Yes," she said savagely, "and we'd have got Marie too. She'd never have left him in the trap."

"Hang it all!" he cried in a fury. "Everything goes

wrong at once. Here—here are your dresses. They were lying in the yard. The kids must have let the dog loose when they brought them back. However, that little beggar won't run much farther for a long time, his leg's surely broken."

"Oh, if we'd only been a minute sooner."

"My God, yes—" and he ground his teeth. "Hitch the horses, we don't want to waste any more time."

Ten minutes later they drove into the night.

Chapter Thirteen

In which Dr. George Kimmknirsch acquires some patience and becomes involved in a conspiracy

THERE WERE TWO doctors in Kriwitz: old Dr. Faulmann, medical officer for the district, familiarly known as Doc, and Dr. George Kimmknirsch, who could hardly be said to be known at all.

In point of fact, Kriwitz, with eighteen hundred extremely robust inhabitants, set in a countryside that was even healthier still, did not offer very promising prospects for a doctor. Old Faulmann had, in fact, a good deal more time on his hands than he wanted, and had certainly not made a fortune out of his practice. However, he managed to support himself and his family, though he had often earned their dinners by his willingness to accept payment in kind: ducks' eggs, a couple of honeycombs, a hare, a basket of raspberries, and on one occasion—from a patient who suffered from an obstinate reluctance to pay cash—a fat calf, whose antics in the doctor's carriage on the way home nearly led to an accident.

Everyone was accordingly much taken aback one day when a white enamel plate appeared outside Frau Postmistress Bimm's house, bearing the legend:

DR. GEORGE KIMMKNIRSCH
PHYSICIAN AND OBSTETRICIAN
CONSULTING HOURS: 6-11 AND 4-6

What could it mean? The Kriwitzers, inside and out the town, shrugged their shoulders and grinned.

Consulting hours twice a day—as busy as all that, eh? And a real porcelain button connected with a real electric bell, when all Kriwitz was used to tapping on old Faulmann's second ground-floor window on the left. This young man would not last long.

But Dr. Kimmknirsch did last. No matter how few patients he had, no matter what his feelings might be —and the Kriwitzers had no illusions on this score—a bronzed and rather freckled young man, grave but not unkindly, appeared every morning, mounted a very malodorous motorcycle, and honked and clattered out of the town, usually taking the road along which the senior resident had ambled on his brown mare an hour or two before.

Kriwitz laughed. "He can't fool us that way!" they said.

Perhaps he did not want to fool them. Perhaps Dr. Kimmknirsch merely wanted to get out into the fresh air away from his impeccable surgery at Frau Postmistress Bimm's for a few hours, where six cane chairs stood and gaped at him in a row. Which was natural enough, for as the son of Sheepmaster Kimmknirsch from Upper

Pomerania, near Belgard on the Persante, he had been used to a great deal of fresh air from his boyhood.

He rode over the green or brown or yellow countryside, leaned his motorcycle against a tree, flung off his clothes and went for a swim in a lonely pool, or searched a hedge for hazel nuts and cracked them between two stones (he had so far submitted to civilization that he no longer cracked them with his teeth). He even climbed a tree in his smart check suit, and fetched down a crow's nest. Thus he passed his days, not at all ill-content—the son of a shepherd with three thousand sheep to mind can well afford to wait for a few patients.

But what was more important, he could afford to wait, because, though the Kriwitzers did not know it, he enjoyed a blessing that had never been vouched old Faulmann all his long life. Though he had no patients, he had a very comfortable allowance as the son of Kimmknirsch the sheepmaster.

Old Kimmknirsch was a well-known personage in Upper Pomerania. His fame as a healer whom men themselves might consult in a crisis reached far beyond the boundaries of that land, and indeed he did very well out of many thousand patients. But though he had prospered exceedingly, one burden weighed on his mind; his colleagues of the Faculty of Medicine, which alone administered salvation, called him a quack and a cow-doctor.

He was just as careful and conscientious as they were, but like all men in his position he wanted recognition just where it was beyond all sense and reason to expect it.

It was his heart's desire to make his boy George a real doctor, and he had therefore thrown caution to the winds, spending his money without stint.

So Dr. George Kimmknirsch strolled through the streets and alleys of Kriwitz, paid his rent, to everyone's surprise, punctually on the first of every month, ate his lunch at the Archduke, passed the time of day with Herr or Frau Stillfritz from whom he picked up all manner of useful information about the place and the people, and placidly submitted to a great deal of good-natured chaff when he dined there in the evening.

His one trouble was lack of work; however, he was well supplied with large tomes on medicine, and on that quiet October evening he was sitting over his books imagining, no doubt, that his life would proceed in this fashion until the next influenza epidemic.

But Dr. Kimmknirsch did not need to wait so long for his first patient, who was just clambering out of a cart, while Mali was saying in an encouraging tone: "Bear up—it'll soon be over, Paul."

To which he replied savagely: "Bear up!— Nonsense! I've borne a good deal or I wouldn't be going to a sawbones. He can't do me much good, I'll bet my shirt on that; but perhaps he won't ask so many questions as old Faulmann."

But the Schliekers had no luck. Postmistress Bimm, who opened the door to them, was much more inquisitive than Faulmann. She eyed the pair very dubiously, and in her reluctant announcement described them as "two people," with an air that clearly indicated they were very doubtful people indeed.

But the Herr Doctor told her to show them up. He switched on the ceiling light, so as to get a good view the moment they entered.

The man came in first with his black eye, swollen nose, and torn lip. He looked so alarming that the young doctor exclaimed: "Hullo—hullo! You've been knocked about a bit, haven't you?"

"Will you put that in writing?" returned his visitor promptly.

"What?—that you've been fighting?"

"That I've been assaulted, young man!" said Paul savagely.

"I should have to examine you first," retorted the doctor coolly. "And, by the way, I'm not a young man —I'm Herr Doctor Kimmknirsch."

"And a very nice name, too," said Paul, determined that this starveling medico should not look down on him, "almost as nice as mine. My name is Schlieker."

"Schlieker?" said the young doctor, recalling what he had heard that day from Frau Stillfritz at the Archduke. "Schlieker from Unsadel?"

"That's me," nodded Schlieker. "So you've heard of me already? Then you'll know I'm not the man to stand this sort of thing, so kindly examine me carefully, and give me a certificate; I'm going to make that rascal pay."

"You must see the magistrate about that," said Kimmknirsch. "I'll examine you and give you a certificate— but I must attend to the young woman first." And he turned to Mali: "You've had a fit today, haven't you?"

"Well, I never!" shouted Schlieker, utterly dumfounded. "How did you know that?"

However, he said no more and let the other two talk,

more and more impressed not merely by the spotless consulting room with its white walls and shining instrument cases and glittering equipment, but also by the young doctor's calm, kind face and steady eyes.

"Good—now swallow that," said Kimmknirsch at length, and handed Frau Schlieker a glass. "You'd better stay in bed for a week."

"Herr Doctor!" broke in Schlieker. "How can she do that? She has to help look after the cattle, and do the cooking, and . . ."

"Herr Schlieker," interrupted Kimmknirsch, "I prescribe what I think fit—that is my business. And you obey such of my prescriptions as you think fit—that is your business. And now take off your coat and shirt; your wife says you have broken a couple of ribs."

"He broke them for me, the rascal," Schlieker exclaimed.

But the doctor merely replied: "Keep quiet, please, while I examine you," and Schlieker said no more.

"No further damage," observed Doctor Kimmknirsch, when he had finished, and laid some long strips of sticking plaster like roof-tiles across Schlieker's chest. "It will heal up in three weeks. Three ribs broken and two cracked. You'd better stay in bed, too, for a few days. And, of course, you mustn't carry any heavy weights, like sacks."

"I've got a farm, Herr Doctor, and I must look after the cattle," pleaded Schlieker, now completely mollified.

"I've already told you, Herr Schlieker, that I prescribe, and you do as you think fit. Surely there's someone in the village who would give you a hand for a few days. . . ."

"In the village? In Unsadel," said Schlieker in a scornful voice, "no one would come near me!"

"No one?" said the young doctor, looking meditatively at his patient.

"No one, Herr Doctor," answered Paul, with a grin of something like satisfaction.

"You don't know what the people are like," said the woman venomously, and her pale, pinched face grew bitter.

"Indeed," said Dr. Kimmknirsch, "indeed. Well, I will write you your certificate. You want it for the magistrate?"

"I'll say I do! I'm going straight to him now, and I'll get that blackguard's house searched this very day. Do you suppose I'm going to let him keep the Thürke girl?"

"The Thürke girl?" asked the doctor in astonishment, recalling his midday conversation at the Archduke. "I heard she had run off to Berlin with the old man."

"To Berlin?—" said Schlieker contemptuously, his mystification of the morning now quite dispelled. "That girl is hidden in Gau's house—Gau is the fellow that knocked me about like this—and this evening she stole two dresses from my wife."

"But—" Frau Schlieker began.

"Hold your tongue!" Schlieker shouted.

"Not so loud, please," said the doctor. "And you must not shout at your wife for the next few days—if you must do so at all. Here is your certificate."

"Thank you, Herr Doctor. How much will that be?"

"Three marks," said the young doctor, rather regret-

ting to have opened his practice with such a fee. "But the magistrate won't be at home now."

"I know that, Herr Doctor. I know Kriwitz. He'll be at the Archduke; and that's where we're going now. Good evening, Herr Doctor."

"Good evening," said the doctor, and switched off the ceiling light as his first patients departed.

It was now time to go and get his dinner at the Archduke. For a brief moment Dr. Kimmknirsch felt inclined to ring for Frau Bimm and ask her for some tea and bread and butter, and ponder in the quiet of the evening on this objectionable patient of his, and his wretched but equally objectionable consort.

However, he decided to go out. What did it matter whether he met that detestable pair again at the Archduke or not? After all, Schulz would not deal with the case in the dining room.

So he put on his overcoat, and called across the passage: "Back in half an hour, Frau Bimm," and went out into the street.

It was a dank and rather misty autumn evening. The doctor strolled through the dark streets toward his destination, thoughtfully humming a popular tune.

But just as he was crossing the road near the inn, a shadow darted out at him from the darkness and the mist. Kimmknirsch tried to jump aside, as did the shadow. "Stop!" yelled Kimmknirsch, but too late; something struck him violently in the stomach and the chest, and he fell backward on to the pavement.

He heard a grinding clatter close beside him, a dull crash, two faint shrieks—and the old street lamps be-

gan to dance before Kimmknirsch's eyes in the most alarming fashion.

After a while he was conscious of a young, feminine and rather shrill voice saying something to him. "Quite all right," he murmured, still half-bemused. "Thank you —thank you very much."

"Oh dear, oh dear," he heard the young voice say, and it grew rather more distinct, "have I hurt you very badly?"

"You have indeed," said Kimmknirsch emphatically, sitting up on the cobbled roadway of the town of Kriwitz. "I've been knocked down by something that must weigh at least a ton and goes forty miles an hour."

He noticed a bicycle nearby, apparently in ruins, and, two yards away, another shadow sat up and groaned. In front of him stood a slender shape that looked like a girl, though he could get no clear view of her by the somewhat parsimonious lamplight of the town of Kriwitz.

"I am so sorry!" she said, folding her hands most pathetically across her breast. "You see, I had the boy in front of me on the bicycle. He's ill, I was taking him to the doctor. It's downhill here, and the road is so slippery tonight."

"And you had no light," said the doctor, with emphasis, "don't forget you had no light." And he added briskly: "You didn't ring your bell either!"

But the girl—it was certainly a girl—evaded his reproaches and began whispering to the prostrate figure in the roadway. Kimmknirsch felt his own body and chest with professional fingers; first he jerked one leg, then the other, and cautiously swung his arms. All his limbs were functioning, he could not be seriously dam-

aged—though his head was humming like a hive at swarming time.

The girl came back. "The boy says he can wait a bit. May I take you somewhere in the meantime. Either home or to a doctor? One lives quite near."

"Indeed?" said Kimmknirsch grimly. "So you are prepared to take me to a doctor?"

"He's only a young doctor," said the girl apologetically, "and I dare say he doesn't know very much. But it's such a long way to the old doctor from here. And it won't cost you anything," she said suddenly, peering at his face in the darkness. "I've just got some money."

"Have you indeed?" said Kimmknirsch, still sitting on the damp pavement. "What is the matter with the boy?"

"He," she began, and then faltered, "he's . . . ill. But please don't ask questions, come along now and let me take you to the doctor."

"We'll see if we can't take him with us," said the doctor, rising heavily. "I can still manage to hobble along. You'd better go and fetch someone," he said, bending over the prostrate figure. "I think he's fainted."

"No, no—don't get anyone else!" cried the girl in a tone of such alarm that the doctor was startled. "I'll carry him myself. Please don't ask any questions, but we can't have any more people here."

"All right," said Kimmknirsch, after brief reflection, "but we'll have to leave the bicycle."

"Oh—the bicycle," she cried, "we'll leave that! If I can only get the boy to the doctor—and you too, of course," she added hurriedly.

"Come on then," said the doctor. "Take hold."

It was indeed a doleful procession that made its way very slowly through Kriwitz. Fortunately the streets were completely deserted at such an hour on an autumn evening, or it would have caused a most remarkable sensation. However, step by step, after many a pause for rest, they finally reached their destination. As the white plate came in view the girl gasped out: "There it is at last! That's where the doctor lives."

"I know," panted Kimmknirsch, "I'm the doctor."

"Goodness gracious!" cried the girl, too overcome to say more.

"Now hoist him on to my back," said the doctor, by way of relieving her alarm. "I can carry him upstairs better by myself. Here are the keys—open the door. Gently, Fräulein, gently. Frau Bimm, the postmistress, is a shocking gossip, and if you don't want anyone to know. . . . The white door on the right, the switch is on the left. That's right. Hold his head, I'll put him on the sofa. So. Now shut the door. Well, we've done it!"

He stood up panting. Had the folk of Kriwitz seen him, with the mud of their streets on his overcoat, trousers, and face they would have grinned and said: "We told you so."

For a moment he stood panting and pondering. He flung only a brief glance at the girl, who was leaning with bent head against the doorway—as exhausted as himself. Then he went up to the unconscious lad, felt his pulse, and saw for the first time that poor half-witted face, now blue from loss of blood.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked over his shoulder.

"A wound," she whispered, "in his right foot."

The doctor did not answer; he merely listened, bent over the lad and counted.

Then he swung round. "I can't do anything while I'm in this filthy state. Sit down at the table and wait. You ought to wash too, anyway—look, over there."

The doctor's voice was no longer kind, it was very grave and stern. So Rosemarie obediently said "Yes," and slipped into a chair beside the table. Not until he was going out did she dare to say plaintively: "Is Philip very bad, Doctor?"

"I must wash before I can tell you," said the doctor, and departed.

She did as she was told, but she could not sit quiet at the little table, and kept on running over to Philip. She was terrified—and she had been terrified since the moment when the trap had closed on Philip's foot and he had screamed—such a scream!

When she got him to the sand pit, he whimpered softly and muttered now and again: "It's nothing, dearie, it'll soon be all right."

But it was far from all right. The blood flowed and flowed, and she could not stanch it. By the brief flare of matches that promptly went out, she loosened the trap and tried to make a bandage from her underclothes while the half-starved, maltreated creature grew steadily weaker.

Terror had taken hold of her—terror of what had been set in motion by an innocent little letter. And now that terror grew and spread like a fire, bursting out in unsuspected places, and she lacked the power to stem it or extinguish it.

Then that awful journey on Hütefritz' old bicycle,

with Philip's dead weight on the handle-bars, along the sandy road to Kriwitz, while she pedaled and steered and found her way in the mist, terrified all the while that he might die.

A black and misty October night, without a star, and a sad and sinking heart.

She recalled the young doctor's face, as she had seen it in the street, his kindly eyes and friendly voice. And now he spoke to her: "I told you to sit at the table," he said from behind her. He was wearing his white jacket now. "Come back at once."

She obeyed, and sat with downcast eyes.

Was there no place in the world, she wondered in a flush of desperation, to which she could escape? Was there no support for people when they didn't know which way to turn?

Her childhood and her dead parents and now Professor Kittguss should have taught her where to look, but youth refers always to this world and its denizens, and seldom turns its eyes to God.

When the doctor at last saw the foot he cried out.

"How did this happen?" he asked sharply over his shoulder.

"He stepped in a trap," Rosemarie replied nervously.

"Oh," said the doctor. "And what idiot put these filthy rags round it, with the wound not even washed and all full of sand and dirt?"

"We . . . I hadn't anything else. And I couldn't see."

She felt defenseless against this cold and cutting speech.

"Fraülein," said Herr Doctor George Kimmknirsch, surveying her with angry eyes, "you have had a little

rest, and you are warm again, are you not? Now listen to me. Put on your coat and run away. I won't ask any questions, as you don't want me to, but you must go."

She looked at him helplessly. Her lips quivered, and tears welled up in her great shining eyes. But she seemed unmoved by his sternness and asked anxiously: "How is Philip?"

The doctor answered in a gentler tone: "The metatarsal bone is broken, and probably splintered too. There must be an operation, and I can't do that here. He must go into the district hospital."

"Oh, not into the hospital!" begged Rosemarie. "He'll think he's back in the asylum. He's been there once, Herr Doctor, and he's so terrified of it."

Doctor Kimmknirsch eyed her thoughtfully: "But you can't look after him," he said. "No bandages, no light, no water and, I dare say, no money." His face grew stern once more. "We can't always have things as we like, Fraülein."

"And then there's the police!" she whispered still more fearfully. "He'll have to be reported if he goes into hospital. He's a runaway farm hand."

"At last!" said the doctor angrily, "now we're beginning to talk. And you told me not to ask questions." He pondered a bit. "Can't he go back to his employer? Who was it? Surely the man isn't as bad as all that."

"Schlieker of Unsadel," she whispered.

"Indeed," said the doctor, "indeed." His voice softened, as he thought for a moment. Then he added: "And did Herr Schlieker set the trap?"

"Yes," whispered the child.

"Not to catch an animal?"

"No," she said softly, "to catch me."

"Now be careful what you say," cautioned the doctor. "Are you sure he didn't set it to catch thieves—who came to steal clothes?"

He eyed her sharply.

She blushed, then added with a defiant toss of her fair young head, "Yes, for thieves, who came to steal clothes."

"I'll see what I can do," said the doctor slowly. "I'll fetch my colleague, Dr. Faulmann. The boy won't wake up before I'm back, I've given him an injection. Now you are to swallow this tablet, and lie down on the sofa here in my bedroom and go to sleep at once. Remember —you're not to get up until I let you. You're to sleep."

"Oh, Herr Doctor!" cried Rosemarie.

"Not another word!" he exclaimed. "You've got to sleep, not talk. And I'm not at all sure yet, Fräulein Thürke, whether I shan't take you back to the Schliekers. Quick—here's a blanket. Cover yourself well. Good night."

The doctor looked at her and pondered. She felt as though his gaze were burning into her, but she did not mind—indeed she longed to have those eyes see into her very soul. She had a sudden sense that now she had found that support for which her heart had just yearned —and she almost smiled.

Chapter Fourteen

In which many people go in search of many things and the wrong people find the wrong things

WHEN DR. GEORGE KIMMKNIRSCH stepped out to the dark street on his way to the Archduke for a second time that evening a voice called to him from a cart that was clattering past, "Good evening, Herr Doctor!"

"Good evening," replied Kimmknirsch, absorbed in his thoughts. For a moment he did not notice it was his first patient, Herr Paul Schlieker of Unsadel, who had hailed him so politely.

Whatever the doctor's opinion of this patient may have been, he called out in reply, "Hi! Herr Schlieker!"

Mali pulled up, and Dr. Kimmknirsch walked slowly toward the cart and said, "Well, how are you feeling?" (Idiot that he was to ask the question!—what did he care how the fellow felt?)

"All right," said Schlieker curtly, giving the doctor a fixed and searching look.

"All alone?" inquired the other. "How about that search warrant? Didn't you find the magistrate?"

"Ye-e-es," Schlieker replied slowly, after a long pause, and said no more.

Kimmknirsch, increasingly annoyed with his own silly persistence, went on, "Did you find anything?" and he pointed to the back of the cart.

Schlieker again eyed the doctor with the same baleful fixity, but this time made no reply.

The doctor could have sworn that the shattered and twisted machine in the back of the cart was the one that had run him down an hour ago. "That bicycle," he said grimly, "when did you find that?"

And the two men glared at each other.

Schlieker's sinister eyes gazed fixedly into those of the doctor. Kimmknirsch was not one to quail before any man, nor did he now; but that evening he had made a blunder—indeed, he had made several. He should not have taken charge of the girl, or the boy either. He had entered into an affair, which might prove most troublesome, and he was feeling very out of humor. And now, he was doing a little private detective work for Rosemarie—as this Schlieker fellow might well suspect.

Against his will, the doctor blinked and, to his intense annoyance, dropped his eyes.

Schlieker burst into a roar of laughter. "Well, good evening, Herr Doctor," he said. "Mali, drive on."

The cart rumbled off into the night, leaving the sage and self-assured young doctor on worse terms with himself than ever.

Why hadn't he told the rascal that the two youngsters were in his charge? What had he got to conceal? Was he afraid that Schlieker would take them away by force? Never in his life had he lent himself to such silly decep-

tion. It really looked as if he had become infected by the romantic whimsies of that silly brat! He would go straight to the Archduke and have a talk with Faulmann and the magistrate, and whatever else he did he would make certain of getting on the right side of justice and the law. How revolting to have exposed himself, quite innocently, to that disgusting brute's ridicule!

Doctor Kimmknirsch swung round, and strode through the squelching mud to the Archduke.

As the cart clattered over the cobblestones of Kriwitz, every bit of metal in it clinked and rattled and clashed, and all the timber creaked and groaned. In the scattered, quiet houses lights were still burning—white, where the upstart electricity had made its way, and yellow where the agelong oil lamps still reigned.

Then, with a last deafening clatter, the cart crossed the track of the little railway at the outskirts of the town, and passed, with sudden noiselessness, on to the sandy Kriwitz road. Only the leather of the harness still creaked faintly.

"That was queer," observed Paul to the surrounding silence.

"Yes, he was queer," Frau Mali agreed.

"Snooty sort of fellow on the surface, but he wouldn't stand up to much, I'll bet you."

"Why did he ask about the bicycle?" asked Mali.

"I wonder. He knew something about it."

"But he couldn't have recognized Tamm's bicycle?"

"It's the bicycle that Hütefritz usually uses."

"But he wouldn't leave it lying on the road like that."

"No, he certainly wouldn't. Someone else had been riding it."

"Of course. But who? And where to?"

"Yes, why does anyone ride from Unsadel to Kriwitz at night?"

The horses had been trotting, but the sand here was so deep that for a while they dropped to a walk.

"Very well!" said Paul, in a sudden burst of anger. "Whether there's a light in Tamm's place or not, I shall rouse him up tonight and find out what's been going on."

"Do wait until tomorrow, Paul," she begged. "Tomorrow the constable will be here too. . . ."

"The constable! Do you think he'll be any help? He don't want to find anything out and he won't. I'll have to keep my own eyes open."

"Do let us sleep in peace tonight, Paul," she urged. "Don't worry about the bicycle till the morning."

"Why are you afraid all of a sudden?"

"Oh, Paul, I'm so tired and done in. And then these fits. . . ."

"Fits— But you said you didn't have them any more."

"Yes, of course," she stopped. "But I've felt so strange since the doctor looked at me like that, Paul, so disheartened."

"You mean you're going to start 'em again, eh? Then you were lying this afternoon!"

"I did think I shouldn't have any more, Paul. But it was the way that doctor looked at me! Paul, perhaps I'm not strong enough now. Can't we get out of it all? We've saved a nice bit of money, we could rent a place. Let's have a little rest, just for a while. . . ."

"Give me the reins," he shouted. "Damn these whining women!"

Seizing the reins and the whip, he lashed the horses into something like a gallop.

"Hang it all!—it's no good trusting anyone, they always let you down. Shut your mouth, will you!" he roared. "Not another word. If you hadn't let the boy escape, we could have fixed the whole thing."

He stared before him silently into the darkness while they drove on and on, darkness before them, around them and behind them.

And as they drive to Unsadel, we can at last spare a moment for our old friend Professor Kittguss. He is still sitting in the darkness, asleep and dreaming, by a cold hearth and beneath an unlit lamp. But it is no pleasant dream that has come to visit our old commentator on the Revelation of St. John: he stirs, his lips quiver, he thrusts out his hands as though in self-defense against something from which he shrinks.

It is not a pleasant night, this misty October night which has sown discord and mistrust between the Schliekers; which has wafted a girl into the room of a young man who does not know what to do with himself, or her; which has carried the Professor back into his far-off, forgotten early childhood, when he watched, with the fear of nearly sixty years ago, Louise, the cooper's pretty daughter from the Bergstrasse, three houses away, coming up to him.

"Please, please," he says, "dear Louise, let me keep it just this once."

He is only seven or eight years old; but for that reason his mother had sent him out to buy butter and cheese

from the grocer, and sausage from the butcher, for supper: "He must learn," she says, "to handle money."

But the tall dark, fourteen-year-old girl, with long shining plaits of hair, does not heed his pitiful appeal; she stands quite close to him, but does not touch him. She says softly in her dark and velvety voice: "Darling, please, just this once more."

The boy steps back a pace, looks at her desperately and whispers: "I had the stuff put down to our account yesterday and the day before, Louise. If this is found out —if my parents get to know about it—oh, please, not today."

But the girl does not seem to hear him, though he speaks as clearly as he can—she flashes her eyes at him and says: "Darling, please."

The seven-year-old Professor cannot resist that voice and those eyes. Very slowly, and against his will, he stretches out his small white hand until it is above her small brown one, he opens it, and drops into hers—a shining silver thaler.

"Thank you very much, dear silly darling, thank you very much," she cries. "I'll come again tomorrow."

And she is gone.

But the boy stands trembling as he watches her disappear. Over his head the trees in the castle garden are rustling in the last breeze of evening. In his dream he can smell that garden. The birds are twittering sleepily, the sky grows gradually paler and translucent.

And the boy wonders whether he shall go back home and tell his mother all about it, or whether he shall lie and say he has lost the money. Then he finds himself in the grocer's and the butcher's shops, asking nervously

for what he has been sent to get, and asking that it may be charged. And they look at him so oddly, and seem so dubious as they cut the piece of cheese and take the butter out of the ice chest, and the sausage off the hook—

This dreadful thing happened only four or five times, for Lawyer Kittguss never charged anything, so it was not long before Frau Schwarzloh, the butcher's wife, dropped a hint to the lawyer's lady.

But in his dream it seemed that he had suffered it many, many times, that the torment of that small boyish heart had burdened him for many, many years.

There was his mother with tears in her eyes, and his father asking sternly: "Gotthold, what have you done with the housekeeping money?"

But only the voice was stern; the boy felt all the kindness it concealed, and mother did not need to whisper: "Darling boy, please tell us all about it."

The little heart so longed to shed its burden, and in a torrent of sobs he poured out the fantastic story of the cooper's daughter, Louise Runge. . . .

"But is that really true, darling?" asked his mother, who had herself begun to sob. "My dear boy, if you have spent the money, tell us, it doesn't matter all that much."

Father cleared his throat and Mother said hurriedly: "We'll forgive and forget, but the Runges are respectable people. . . ."

However, he stuck by his story, and from the dreamer's throat there came, almost sixty years later, a memory of those wild tears—and the old office messenger was sent to ask whether Herr or Frau Runge would be so good as to step across for a moment, and bring Louise.

The door opened, and the pretty, silent, dark girl came in with her dumpy mother—and in all his misery, little Gotthold Kittguss thrilled at the sight of her. Then his father spoke and suddenly all eyes were fixed on that small boy.

The girl stood in front of him, shaking him by the shoulders and crying: "How can you say such things of me, you wicked, deceitful boy! You spend the money, and then accuse me of taking it. You're a liar and a thief, that's what you are!"

"That will do, Louise," said his father. "Let the boy alone."

He pushed the girl back, looked his son in the eyes, and said: "Gotthold, look at me—which of you is telling the truth?"

And the boy tried to look at his father and tried to speak, but there stood his lovely enemy. . . .

Then his father struck him for the first and only time, and a steely voice, like the voice of justice, said: "Go to your room, Gotthold!"

But the blow was not the worst thing he had to bear, neither that nor his outlawry, nor his parents' chill aloofness in the months that followed, nor the other children's scorn. His own disillusionment, that was worst. How could the birds twitter so softly before they went to sleep, how could the dark girl be so lovely? It was all so unfair.

The sleeper stirred in his dream and moaned.

Many, many years, more than half a century, have passed. Where is the lovely, silent, dark Louise? Long since dead and forgotten? But even now the old man cannot manage money, he hates going into a shop to

buy anything, he always forgets to pay, and he is still alone.

And here he is, alone once more, sitting in the dark, cold shed. Youth has left him and forgotten him again.

His head sinks deeper on his chest, his hands reach for the blanket and pull it over his chilly knees—sleep on, old sleeper, tomorrow is another day—while there is life, there is hope. Sleep!

Unsadel village was dark and still as the Schlieker cart clattered down the street, and the Tamm house was also dark and still. But Paul stopped.

"Here, take the reins," he said to Mali, and put them in her hands.

These were the first words he had spoken to her since their quarrel. Stiffly he clambered out of the cart, stiffly he mounted the steps to the door, and hammered on it with his fist.

"Hi! August, open the door!"

This made a little dog inside the house yap frantically; another and a larger dog in the yard burst into a volley of barks. Then Schlieker heard yet a third dog. In the attic, rather indistinct, but—

He turned to his wife with a quick movement of surprise: "Did you hear that?"

Again he listened, began a fresh assault on the door and shouted, but the savage yapping of the little dog on the ground floor drowned the barking of the other two. Yet he could have sworn—

"Who's there?" asked a grim and angry voice from near his left shoulder. "Is there a house on fire?"

"No," laughed Paul. "You can go right to sleep again, August. I only wanted to bring you something from Kriwitz."

"Oh, it's Schlieker," said the thick voice through the half-opened window. "Why didn't you wait till tomorrow? Is it something from the grocer? Well, give it here —I'll catch a cold at the open window."

"I don't see how I can put it through the window, August," snapped Schlieker. "It's your bicycle. I found it in a street in Kriwitz."

"Bicycle? What bicycle? Are you trying to pick a fight with me, Paul?"

"A fight? I'm not a man for fights unless I'm provoked. And you're a good fellow, I know that, August. You wouldn't hurt a fly, unless it settled on your dinner."

"I want to go to sleep," said Tamm peevishly. "Stop beating about the bush and tell me what you really want."

"I've told you, August. I found your bicycle in the street in Kriwitz; your bicycle—do you hear?"

"I haven't got a bicycle, Paul, as you very well know. Do you suppose I'd risk my three hundred pounds on a bicycle?"

"Well, then, Hütefritz' bicycle!" shouted Schlieker, whose patience was also giving way.

"Hütefritz? He's up in the attic asleep. How could his bicycle have been in Kriwitz?"

"That's just what I'd like to know, August. What does Hütefritz do at night, August?"

"Go to bed!" came a high voice from the attic window and, at the same moment, a dog barked.

"There you are . . ." began August Tamm peevishly.

But Schlieker cried out in high excitement: "There! There he is again! What's my Bello doing in his room? I know the bark of my own dog. What's my dog doing in your house, Tamm?"

"Look here, I'm sick of this," growled Tamm. "You start a row wherever you go—and in the middle of the night too. What do I care for your lousy hound? As for the bicycle—go jump up and down. You can get away with this sort of thing in Biestow, where they're used to you, but here in Unsadel . . ."

"But it *is* your bicycle! . . ."

Too late; the window came down with a crash, and though he hammered on the panes and shouted, nothing stirred within the house. He had to give it up. As he stalked down the steps again, a clear boyish voice called after him from the attic window: "Good night, Paul! Sleep well, Paul!"

And then, as though the dog's muzzle had been suddenly removed, his own Bello, the silly brute, barked savagely at him as if he were a burglar or a tramp.

What was the matter? Why had they lost their fear of him? There he stood, a match for them all, and tomorrow the house of his archenemy Gau would be searched by the police: he had laid his charge of assault. Marie would be returned, there was nothing against him, and yet his power had passed. Why?

He had stabled the horse. Long since his wife had called to him from her bed: "Come along, Paul, you're doing yourself no good." But he still strode up and down, brooding. Sometimes flames of fury shot up within him, and he burned to dash forth and destroy his enemies.

Then the flames died down, and a voice whispered: "Gently does it, Paul, that's how you've made your way in the world."

Thus he brooded, pacing up and down. His wife was silent, she seemed to have quieted down. Was she asleep?

Yes, she had closed her eyes — "Gently does it, Paul, not another word, not even to her!"

"An excellent bit of work, my dear colleague," said old Dr. Faulmann. "It was truly a pleasure to assist you. Oh, youth—youth! We oldsters think that there's never any progress; there is, only we don't see it."

Young Dr. Kimmknirsch smiled at his older colleague and then looked down with a satisfied air at the boy lying on the sofa. He was still unconscious, but neatly bandaged; his wound was stitched and all the splinters of bone removed.

"Yes," he said, "I think it will be all right. There won't be any aftereffects. He won't be lame—he's got enough to contend with without that, poor devil!"

"True enough," said the other heartily; and after a pause he asked tentatively, "What are you going to do now? You don't propose to turn your lodgings into a hospital? From what I know of Postmistress Bimm, she won't be likely to fall in with that very kindly."

And he coughed rather quizzically.

"I propose to take him along to Frau Stillfritz tomorrow morning," said the young doctor. "She's got plenty of vacant beds."

"But the expense—" said the old gentleman dubiously, "who is going to pay?"

"That can be managed somehow," said the young doctor curtly.

"I imagine," said the other with a smile, "that means you will pay out of your own pocket in the end, my dear young friend."

Kimmknirsch shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, well," said the older man hastily, "I dare say that won't worry you. But the main point is—what will our good magistrate Schulz say? I have promised to hold my tongue, but you better not suppose you can keep all this dark in the village of Kriwitz."

"I shall of course report it the first thing tomorrow," said the young doctor decisively. "Whatever the circumstances, it's a disgraceful thing to set traps for children."

"Certainly, certainly," nodded the doctor, "you are perfectly right. But the place had been entered and robbed, I am told."

"I have only seen this young lady for a few minutes," said Doctor Kimmknirsch, "but having seen her, I don't believe a word of that story."

"I have no doubt you are right," exclaimed the old gentleman. "No doubt it's all nonsense. Mere gossip! But this old fellow who appeared so mysteriously and has now entirely vanished. . . . I should be disposed," he went on in a whisper, with a glance at the door, "to get rid of the young lady as soon as possible."

"I shall of course have a talk with her the first thing tomorrow morning," said the young doctor with more determination than he felt—for at that moment he saw before him the image of the girl, her hands crossed on her breast, her pale face and anguished eyes. "Either she goes back to her foster parents of her own free will, or she goes with me to Herr Schulz."

"Excellent!" said Dr. Faulmann heartily. "That will clear you of all responsibility. A most commendable course of action— And now you must excuse me, my dear colleague, or my wife will think I am spending a little too much time over my evening glass. A thousand thanks and good night. No, please don't trouble. I know my way perfectly. I have known the house since it was built. Well, good-by, thank you, yes."

The young doctor was once more alone in his room. His face wore an anxious look, as though he were dissatisfied with himself.

He drew a chair up to the patient, mechanically felt his pulse, took a book from the shelf, and prepared himself to sit up through the night.

But he did not open the book, he listened—and not to his patient. The look of anxiety deepened.

At last he got up, softly opened the door into the bedroom and went in. As he stood listening in the darkness, the girl breathed quietly and regularly. He stepped across the room and switched on the reading lamp by the bedside. She lay fast asleep, huddled beneath the blanket like a child and looked very pale and small and pitiful.

He could hear the old gentleman saying: "That will clear you of all responsibility." No doubt it was meant in commendation, but he was far from taking it that way.

He bent lower over the sleeper's face, as though to trace the marks of the misdeeds of which she had been accused.

But sleep had closed her shining eyes, those mirrors of the soul, and what he saw was merely a pale, undernourished, probably anemic child. And he found himself thinking that she might be better for a diet of cod-liver oil.

Chapter Fifteen

In which Professor Kittguss sets out in search of his godchild and what he encountered on the way

IT WAS ALREADY DAYLIGHT in the old stable when Professor Kittguss awoke. Still befuddled with sleep, he looked about him and up at the gray windows through which the morning sunshine was now streaming. "Rosemarie!" he called softly and again, "Rosemarie!" Then: "Philip!" And then "Hi—dog!" (He could not bring himself to call animals by their names, even such a harmless beast as Bello.) But all was still.

The night was past, but the children had not returned and he was still alone.

The Professor stood up, went to the door and opened it; outside there was nothing but the stretch of dew-drenched sward, and the twittering of many birds.

As he turned back out of the sunlight, the old shed seemed more gray and cold than ever without the children or the fire and only a few hours ago it had been so warm and comfortable and cheerful.

Why not make a fire? There was plenty of wood, and

he discovered some matches too—and while he was busy at the fireplace, he actually thought of coffee—surely it was not beyond his powers to make coffee? How pleased the children would be to find a warm drink when they got back.

But the rough logs, which he tried to kindle from a match without the aid of chips or pine cones, proved recalcitrant, and when his fingers had warned him more than once that though matches could not set fire to logs, they could burn human flesh, he abandoned his efforts and sat looking vacantly round the room.

He did not notice that there was quite enough bread and butter and sausage on the little table for a simple breakfast, much more than enough to satisfy the inner qualms of which he was now acutely conscious. But as he had failed over the fire, and could make no coffee, he decided to abandon the idea of breakfast and fell into the very common human error of rejecting half a loaf in favor of no bread.

The Professor then decided to meet the children, even if he had to walk as far as Unsadel. It was not merely the fire and his breakfast that he missed. Had he been warm and fed, he would still have found it difficult to settle down to work. The place was too quiet without the children, he would have gone to meet them anyhow.

So the Professor made a careful toilet, put on his large soft clerical hat, slipped on his loose black cloak, and glanced doubtfully at his bag—however, he was only going a little way to meet the children. But he slipped his Bible into a pocket, from that he would in no circumstances be parted. A last look round the room—and he walked out into the sunshine.

The sun shone more brightly and the birds sang louder as the Professor appeared. The great bronzed beeches looked down on him benevolently as he passed, and since he knew the way to Unsadel, he set out at a brisk pace.

The cheerful little path wound in and out and up and down through a thick undergrowth of blackberries, raspberries, and brambles. The earth beneath his feet was soft and springy and the Professor's heart rejoiced. "This," he said to himself, "this is very good. . . ."

He looked about him as he walked. Sometimes he caught a glimpse of the lake, and sometimes of a squirrel, which stopped hunting for beech nuts and looked down at him from a lower branch with beady, curious eyes. Professor Kittguss was in the best of humor, he felt like bursting into song! The missing breakfast was forgotten, and his uncomfortable dream had vanished from his mind.

"They are nice kind children," he thought, "but they should not have stayed out overnight," another voice within him objected. "Ah, well, they may be used to it," said the first voice reassuringly. "Children are allowed more freedom in the country."

He walked on and on, not feeling at all tired. He expected the children to appear at any moment with the dog, and he was eager to see them all again.

The Professor was feeling so pleased with himself and was so busy looking about him, that he quite forgot to watch the path beneath his feet. It had started as a self-respecting little forest path, but after passing a certain gigantic beech, formed of several intertwined stems, at which the Professor gazed open-mouthed, it dwindled

into a mossy track covered with rustling leaves. For quite a while he had caught no glimpse of the lake, and the path wound here and there, up hill and down dale, sometimes dropping into thickly wooded dingles where it was almost dark.

But—as has been said—the Professor was in too good a humor to notice such matters. He strolled on sedately, quite unwearied. When the forest twilight began to lift, he rejoiced to think he would soon be at Unsadel and with the children. And when it proved not to be Unsadel, but a patch of woodland where the trees grew thinner, he still rejoiced.

And so, for the time being, all went well until he was suddenly confronted by a six-foot fence, which ran as far as the eye could reach, up and down across that richly colored, whispering, autumn solitude. For the first time the Professor hesitated and wondered whether he might not have missed his way.

And then, as though his senses had expected some such hint, he suddenly felt both hungry and tired, and the second voice within him pompously declared: "They had no business to stay away from home overnight. Then you would have no need to wander about in a forest."

The Professor looked from side to side and all about but the fence rose before him like a wall, and if he meant to get anywhere he must go one way or the other.

The Professor turned to the right, and after a hundred paces or so he observed that there was a means of surmounting the fence, a narrow stairway that ran rather steeply up and over and down the other side. A rather primitive and rustic stairway, of course, for the use of

the foresters, a sort of chicken ladder, made of rough pine logs.

The Professor eyed the ladder doubtfully; he was glad to have found it but he did not like the look of it.

What was to be done? The path beside the fence looked so unsympathetic that he was sure it must be wrong. Well—he must climb the fence.

So the Professor began to climb.

It is something of an ordeal for an old man, who has walked all his life upon the solid earth, to rise up toward heaven in a material sense; and the familiar earth grows very strange and far away. The Professor had not mounted four rungs before he began to feel faint. The ladder was cracking ominously, and the fence, of which the posts were plainly rotten, creaked and swayed. . . .

"I'm going to fall," the Professor said to himself and closed his eyes. But he went on, feeling his way carefully with each foot.

At last he had to open his eyes, for there were no more rungs. His legs had to be transferred to the top rung on the other side.

This he did slowly and with great deliberation against the brilliant foliage of the beeches. The birds darted very near him and the sunlit blue of Heaven seemed close above his head. With one leg planted on the other side, Professor Kittguss halted. The fence dipped and swayed beneath him, just as the autumn leaves dipped and swayed in the breeze.

And from his point of vantage the Professor could see far over the countryside, over woodland and meadow.

He felt as though he were standing in a pulpit, and though in the distant callow days of youth he had had

great difficulty with texts for his sermons, he at once thought of St. Francis; and he who had spent his life in a gray cavernous stone city stood and listened to the canticles of Sister Stream and Brother Wind and all the community of living things. And though that song of praise was new to him, he could have joined in it with a full heart.

He looked about him. At the far end of a woodland path, he caught a glimpse of red roofs grouped about a church, and thinking that this at last must be Unsadel, he looked on it with something like indifference. Far below the grass shivered, while the splendid panorama of the falling year ringed him around.

"Dear children," he thought. "Rosemarie was right. I must take charge of them, not in Berlin, but in the quiet of the country. They, too, are touched with the gentle radiance that shines in forest and sky—even Philip—and when in days to come children's laughter fills my house, perhaps that light will shine upon my work as well."

Then the scene changed: he was standing at his classroom desk in the Royal Prince Joachim Gymnasium at Berlin-Schöneberg, on the Grünewaldstrasse, faced by an array of eager, youthful faces, and he did his quiet best to make those lads understand the message of the Bible, and practice what they learned. That was a way in which he walked no more. And now, under the shining canopy of autumn, that placid study in the Akazienstrasse seemed to have dwindled to a dismal abode of selfishness and futility.

To every man there comes an hour when he breathes a purer air, when the world seems crystal clear, its prob-

lems and anxieties vanish, and the breast expands with heightened life and power.

The Professor climbed down from the fence, but in spirit he remained atop. He could still feel its swaying beneath him as he walked up the path toward the village.

It was some little while before he emerged from the forest, and saw the village standing in some open fields. And then he realized that the place was neither Unsadel nor Kriwitz; there was no lake and no railway station. But the Professor was in such high good humor that he did not care.

Just outside the village stood a notice board, which bore the legend: "Lüttenhagen village; Parish of Prenzlau; Military Depot—Prenzlau: Kingdom of Prussia."

The Professor nodded amiably, and marched into the village. He was delighted with all he saw: hens and ducks, a barking dog on a chain and a small, fat, tow-haired child with one finger in its mouth, half-laughing and half-crying, that looked at him with large round eyes.

The village street soon broadened into a little open square, edged with plane trees. That house with a yellow and blue veranda was clearly the inn, the house on the right, overgrown with ivy and honeysuckle, was clearly the parsonage. And the long gray building to the left, with the lower windows whitewashed, must be the school.

Now that he could have his breakfast any time he liked, he felt less hungry; he walked across to the schoolhouse, and stood under the windows listening. Someone was playing a fiddle inside, and suddenly a burst of shrill childish song greeted him. "Ye hills and valleys broad, ye green and lovely woods."

The old Professor smiled blissfully and beat time with one foot as he too began to hum: "Thou holy refuge of my griefs and joys. Without, the false and busy world doth rage."

He craned his neck to get a view of the fiddler through an unwhitewashed window and saw a gray-haired old gentleman, with the violin under his chin. He noticed the listener outside, who had now joined in the chorus, and he nodded and smiled, briskly beating time with his foot. The Professor, too, was beating time, and he returned the old man's greeting with a wave of his hand.

The song died away with a gay and lovely cadence: "And so my heart shall never grow old"—which the children, the fiddler, and the old man under the window had all sung in chorus. And like a man in a blissful dream, the Professor walked across the square to the inn where he ordered coffee and eggs from a young and buxom landlady. Yes, bread and butter, True, some marmalade would be very nice. And he refused to sit in the dark dining room, but established himself on the veranda in the sun.

As he sat in the warm sunshine, the song of the children sounded faint and indistinct like the distant twittering of birds. A gust of wind blew a red vine leaf on to his table where it lay for a moment, quivering like a butterfly. Another gust picked it up and whirled it across the blue and yellow balustrade, to join its fellows dancing across the square.

The landlady brought out a gay checkered cloth, clipped it to the table, and then came coffee, eggs, cream and sugar, butter and bread, marmalade and salt.

The Professor watched their appetizing approach with

gusto, and said genially to the landlady: "A lovely day, madam."

"We need rain," said the landlady peevishly. "It's too dry. But you don't come from the country, do you?"

The Professor tapped an egg, answered, "No," adding that as a matter of fact he came from Berlin.

"From Berlin? Think of that, now! Two summers ago some people from Berlin came to Lüttenhagen; they saw the Kaiser every day from where they lived. Do you know the Kaiser?"

"No," smiled the Professor. He drank his first sip of coffee and ate his first mouthful of bread with the utmost enjoyment. "I have never even seen the Kaiser."

"You come from Berlin and you haven't even seen him!—but that isn't possible." A puzzled look came over the landlady's face. "Then you don't really come from Berlin?"

"Indeed I do," the Professor reassured her, "but Berlin is much bigger than you perhaps can imagine."

But the landlady was not to be enlightened; the visitors of two years ago had seen him every day and they hadn't been people of any particular importance. She eyed her guest appraisingly and did not like the looks of the old gentleman as much as she had at first. Surely there was something not quite straightforward in his expression?

The Professor did not notice that the landlady was disgusted with him owing to his want of acquaintance with the Kaiser. He went on to ask politely how far it was to Unsadel.

"To Unsadel? What do you want to go there for? It's just a little village."

"I want to see my godchild," said the Professor.

"Think of that now! And you've come from Berlin through Lüttenhagen to get to Unsadel. Some folks are very odd."

She sniffed with incredulous scorn, but finally informed him that it was about nine miles through the forest and fifteen by the Kriwitz road. So saying, she departed to the dining room and left the Professor to his breakfast.

The old gentleman felt very much at ease. He ate slowly and with a most unusual appetite, gazing out on the little village square. The prospect of the long journey ahead did not depress him in the least.

When he had finished he sat for a little while before the empty plates feeling as though there were something he still had to do. However, he would ask his way to Unsadel or find a signpost. He then walked slowly down the steps from the veranda, crossed the market square, and was just about to turn down the next street when he was suddenly pulled up short by an outburst of shouting and abuse.

He turned, and saw the landlady rush out of the inn cursing volubly, followed by an old woman and a man with a mustache, brandishing a birch broom. A little white terrier yapped at their heels as they dashed toward him.

The Professor looked about him; the square and the inn seemed just as peaceful as before. But the three yelling, hurrying figures were almost on him, and to his utter surprise he observed that he, Professor Gotthold Kittguss, was the object of all this disturbance.

"Hi! Hi!" screamed the landlady breathlessly, and

grabbed him by the sleeve, though he had not made the slightest attempt to run away. "Hi!" she panted. "What about the money?"

"Money? What money?"

"Listen to him!" she screamed dramatically, with the result that people began to stroll up from various directions. "What money, indeed! The money for the breakfast! Or do you get your breakfast free in Berlin, eh?"

"Look here, sir," said the mustachioed personage, with a menacing flourish of his broom. "You'll find you can't cheat Lüttenhagen folks."

But now that the Professor understood what was the matter, his newly acquired enjoyment of this world revived. "Why, of course!" he said genially. "The money for the breakfast. It had quite gone out of my mind. Pray forgive me," he said with a smile to the gathering crowd. "I am so absent-minded sometimes. . . ."

"Absent-minded, indeed!" sneered the landlady.

Just as belligerent powers never negotiate directly with the enemy, she continued to address the Professor as "he." "I wonder if he's ever so absent-minded as to pay for his breakfast and not eat it!"

The bystanders muttered a menacing approval.

"And may I ask the amount of the bill?" the Professor asked mildly.

"Very high and mighty gentleman, isn't he?" cried the young woman, who seemed to be enjoying the scene. "Seventy-five pfennigs. But as he's given us all this trouble, he ought to pay a mark, I think."

This suggestion was obviously approved by the audience.

"But if you want any money, my dear lady," said the Professor, "you will have to let go my arm."

"Dear lady, indeed!— Lay off that stuff!" And she snatched away her hand as though she had picked up a frog.

Up to now the Professor had been sublimely unembarrassed; after all, this was a trifling misunderstanding that could be at once removed. But he felt in one pocket after another and found them all empty.

The Professor stood on the square at Lüttenhagen, confronting a steadily increasing and hostile crowd. He had gone through all the sixteen pockets of his suit and overcoat and had found nothing.

"I can't understand it," he said, looking confusedly at the throng around him.

The faces eyed him in malignant silence and the landlady snorted like an overheated locomotive. And the Professor began his search all over again with even greater agitation than before.

"Now then, old fellow," said the man with the mustache, brandishing the birch broom, "we don't stand for cheating in Lüttenhagen."

At this point the explanation flashed into the Professor's mind.

Letting his hands drop, he abandoned the search and gazed with relief into the landlady's contorted countenance.

"But, of course—I remember. I gave my money to my goddaughter at Unsadel. So naturally I haven't got any with me!"

"Wha-at!" screamed the landlady, and the other faces

grew grimmer still. "He's given it to his goddaughter at Unsadel," she yelled, in a voice that rose into a shriek, "and it's not ten minutes since he asked the way to Unsadel. He's a crook, that's what he is."

"Now, my dear friends," began the Professor.

But he could not prevail against the storm. They had given him his chance, and now they wanted theirs. "Put him in the enginehouse!" yelled the landlady. "Put him in the enginehouse!" yelled the crowd. The man with the birch broom gave him the first push. "We in Lüttenhagen—"

Several clutching hands seized him.

The Professor felt dizzy for a moment, and then everything suddenly went black.

"Shove him in the enginehouse!" yelled his persecutors.

"Crook!" screeched a shrill female voice.

"What is all this?" a deep bass voice demanded, rising above the crowd.

A deathly silence fell, the clutching hands dropped away. The Professor opened his eyes.

On a tall brown horse sat a lady in a black riding habit. She had a large, red, formidable face, with bushy gray eyebrows, and carried a thick black cigar between her set and resolute lips.

"Frau von Wanzka," they muttered.

The landlady curtsied. "My lady," she said, in a voice that was suddenly as smooth as honey, "he had his breakfast at the inn and went away without paying his bill. And now we've caught him. He's got no money, but he says he's given it to his goddaughter at Unsadel. And—"

"Sssst!" hissed the lady on the horse. "Well?"

All eyes turned toward the Professor.

He stood, half-dazed and then he said: "What she says is quite true. But, of course, I can get the money at once. I am Professor Gotthold Kittguss of Berlin and . . ."

"Sssst!" hissed the lady, puffing out a great cloud of smoke. She took the cigar out of her mouth and looked intently at the Professor. Then she bent forward: "And what have you done with the child, you old lecher?"

The Professor smiled blankly and said nothing: this passed his comprehension.

"Hold that man!" cried Frau von Wanzka. "He is wanted by the police. Take him to the station at Kriwitz. I'll go with you, of course."

The Professor smiled once more, a faraway and gentle smile.

Chapter Sixteen

In which Rosemarie does not choose to obey Magistrate Schulz, but Dr. Kimmknirsch does his best

THE CURTAINS OVER THE WINDOWS looked very warm and cozy, for Frau Postmistress Bimm had crimped them as every good housewife did in the year 1912. The girl eyed them sleepily from the sofa, stretched herself and sighed. Then she lay still and looked with wide eyes at the ceiling, on which a patch of sunlight flickered to and fro. The house was still; Rosemarie listened intently—not a sound from the next room, not a sound from the passage. How late was it? What time did people get up in this house? Must she get up at once?

It was glorious to lie like this, with the sun shining outside, and no harsh voice to drive her out to work, but—

Suddenly it all returned, all that her deep and dreamless sleep had wiped out of her mind. She sat up and listened, fully awake now. Not a sound, not a footstep.

Unable to wait longer, she jumped off the sofa, walked gingerly toward the intervening door, and tapped. Not a

sound. She listened—again no response. She lifted the latch, opened the door inch by inch, and peered in.

The doctor's room looked very white and very clean, flooded in the light of a sunny October morning, but the sofa on which Philip had lain was empty.

She stared incredulously, but empty it remained: Philip had gone! "To the hospital," she thought, with a surge of regret. "To the hospital, while I was asleep."

A noise made her start. In the farther wall was another door, a door just like hers, and the latch of that door began to lift without a sound. Rosemarie held her breath and watched. The door was moving, it creaked, it stopped, it moved again and creaked more loudly. Rosemarie was so absorbed watching for what might appear that she quite forgot that she herself was visible. Then, through the aperture, something black and frilled emerged, covered with jet beads and black embroidery. First came a head of neatly brushed gray hair, then a forehead, a cheek, a nose and a mouth, then the whole head of Frau Postmistress Bimm peering, just like Rosemarie, round the door into the consulting room.

Two dark, chilly eyes glanced at the window, the writing table and the sofa, and finally, via the instrument chest, met Rosemarie's.

"Ah?" the intruder fluted, without a quiver of surprise. "A lady visitor? A girl in the Herr Doctor's bedroom? I must apologize for the intrusion, Fräulein."

Her face was one large, honeyed smile and her little black beaded widow's cap sparkled and glittered like the eyes of a malignant basilisk. Rosemarie stared at her, spellbound, barely conscious of what she said.

"But I'm afraid I cannot allow that kind of thing in my house, Fräulein, even though I'm not a clergyman's daughter as you are. Dear me, no."

The smile had faded and she eyed the girl with cold and unconcealed malice. "I suppose you have disposed of the old gentleman. I hear the warrant is to be published in this evening's newspaper."

"Now what is all this?" said a brisk masculine voice from the third door, the one into the passage, and the two women started.

Dr. Kimmknirsch marched into the room, looking very fresh and cheerful, and very bright of eye. "Good morning, Frau Bimm. Good morning, Fräulein Thürke. Frau Bimm, the Herr Magistrate Schulz will be here to breakfast with Fräulein Thürke and myself in about twenty minutes. So let us have some of your best coffee and anything else you can manage. Fräulein Thürke, here is something for you. By the way, Philip thinks he's in the seventh heaven at Frau Stillfritz', and he'll soon be set to rights again. So far as I can understand what he says, he sends you his regards. Here's a new toothbrush. You'll find all you want over there. We all face this world better after a good wash and you are going to have a rather difficult day. As I said, the magistrate will be here in twenty minutes—or, to be exact, in eighteen minutes. Everything will be quite friendly and between ourselves, but—you understand!" He slipped the brush into Rosemarie's hand, and edged her through the door. As she stood looking down at the toothbrush with tears in her eyes, life looked good to her once more in spite of the desolation and despair of a moment ago. Philip was at Frau Stillfritz' place and the doctor had presented her

with a toothbrush. She eyed the neat white bristles and smiled.

In the next room voices rose and fell: Frau Postmistress' honeyed accents and the doctor's curt and angry tone. "Rubbish!" she heard him say, "you have a filthy mind."

Frau Bimm shrieked faintly, and gabbled in protest. "I can pull out poison fangs," the doctor exclaimed, "but I won't guarantee that it'll be painless."

Rosemarie dropped to the sofa, writhing with silent laughter. Then she ran to the washstand. How beautifully the sun was shining and the toothbrush was so nice and crisp and new.

"That's the style!" said the doctor. "Now you look like something human again."

She gave him her hand with rather a nervous smile. "Good morning, Herr Doctor, and many thanks for the toothbrush."

"Not at all, it was essential. Never neglect your teeth. Do you brush them regularly twice a day? Open your mouth!"

She did so eagerly.

"Good," said he. "Now shut it again. Nothing the matter there. And, as I said, Münzer is as cheerful as anyone can be after a dose of anesthetic. The foot will certainly heal. No thanks to you though, none at all."

"No," she said, looking at him in a way that embarrassed him faintly, "I know who deserves the thanks."

"You mean me? Nonsense. Dr. Faulmann was with me. You've forgotten all that happened last night, haven't you?— Come in!"

And Magistrate Schulz appeared stroking his black

beard. "Good morning again, Kimmknirsch! Good morning, Rosemarie!— You young scamp! You may think yourself lucky that I'm meeting you here instead of in jail."

"Yes," said Rosemarie, "I know whom I've got to thank for that."

"That will do, Fräulein Thürke!" exclaimed Kimmknirsch. "She seems to imagine I'm responsible for everything, including this fine morning, Schulz. You must thank the Herr Magistrate, my dear, I beg your pardon —Fräulein Thürke, I mean."

The magistrate exploded: "Look here, Kimmknirsch; you're not going to treat this child as if she were a grown-up woman after all the trouble she's given us! In that case she ought to be in jail. But where is the coffee, Doctor? I must be in court by ten, and I've a long day ahead of me."

"I'll see about it at once," muttered the doctor. "I dare say Frau Bimm is feeling rather put upon. It has been rather an eventful night for Kriwitz."

He hurried out—and the room seemed to grow chilly with his departure.

The magistrate sat down in a chair, his legs dangling a few inches off the floor. Rosemarie stood in the doorway. Her smile had faded.

"Rosemarie," said the magistrate sternly, "Rosemarie, come here."

She walked slowly toward him.

"Look at me, Rosemarie."

She did so.

"No, bend down. I know I'm short, but I won't have you looking down on me."

Rosemarie obeyed.

"Rosemarie, have you done anything wrong?"

She looked at the odd little magistrate, whose face was now so set and grave.

"Something wrong?" she said. She reflected. "I sent Philip to Berlin, and I let out Otsche Gau. And I got my clothes away from the Schliekers, and I told the boys to bring me food."

"Nonsense! Rosemarie," he exclaimed impatiently. "I didn't ask you if you had done anything silly, but if you had done anything wrong."

"Wrong? I don't know of anything else."

"Think, Rosemarie. What about the old gentleman from Berlin?"

"The Professor?" she said in bewilderment. And suddenly she laughed. "Why, Professor Kittguss makes me feel quite grown-up and experienced! He's exactly like a child."

"But there are wicked children, Rosemarie."

She shook her head energetically. "The Herr Professor is always good. He's the best man in the world!"

"Well, well!"

"He's so good that he doesn't understand how bad the Schliekers really are. He thinks they mean well, but don't know any better."

The magistrate looked intently at the girl. "Tell me some more about him, Rosemarie."

"All right— When I first met him I was absolutely desperate. I wanted to do the Schliekers all the harm I could—but he said that nothing good ever could come of telling lies."

"And—"

"And then I saw that he was right. So I just ran away from the Schliekers. I won't try to injure them. They'll come to a bad end without my help."

"The Schliekers are in a bad way already," said the magistrate gravely. "Frau Schlieker is having fits again and Schlieker has been badly beaten up by Farmer Gau."

"I saw it," she whispered, and closed her eyes with a shudder.

She was silent, and then the magistrate laid a slender hand on her shoulder. "The Schliekers are both ill, Rosemarie. Who is going to look after their cattle?"

She eyed him doubtfully.

"Who will cook their food? And make the beds? And nurse them?"

Her eyes grew rounder and they filled with fear.

"I suppose no one from the village will go near them, Rosemarie?"

"No," she whispered, very faintly.

"Listen, Rosemarie," said the magistrate, and drew her toward him.

"Two or three years ago you came and told me I must take you away from the Gaus and put you in charge of the Schliekers—do you remember?"

"I didn't know what they were like," she whispered.

"So you do remember? The Schliekers gave up a good position on your account."

"For money," she whispered, "not for me."

"Very well. But you were mistaken on that occasion and who is to bear the consequences of your mistake? You, or other people?—"

"No!— No!" she cried in an agonized voice, but this was not in answer to the little magistrate's question.

There was something else in her mind, as he well understood.

"Remember what the old gentleman said about the truth, Rosemarie. Is it truthful to run away and hide?—"

She was silent, but her eyes strayed round the room with something of a hunted look.

"Rosemarie!" he said sternly, giving her a little shake. "I've been saying all this for your own good. You don't believe me—very well then, now listen. We can't just turn the Schliekers out. They haven't done anything to deserve that, whatever they may be like—and I know them very well. They are a hard and heartless pair, but until now they have not really overworked you. Life isn't all sugar and spice, and there are a great many children in the world who are a thousand times worse off than you are. Pull yourself together, my girl, and face it!"

She shook her head with a plaintive smile, and once more she whispered faintly: "No."

"We entered into an agreement with them," he went on patiently, "and guaranteed them a hundred marks a month—you knew all about it, Rosemarie. It is silly to abuse them now because they want their money."

"They're stealing," said Rosemarie defiantly.

"Rubbish!" said the magistrate angrily. "Don't come to a magistrate with that sort of wild talk. What are they stealing? And what are they doing with it?"

"I can't give you any names," she whispered.

"There you are, Rosemarie. That's slander—and you should be ashamed of yourself. I suppose you make up these stories in bed and then believe them, eh?" He laughed. "No, really, Rosemarie, you know what the Schliekers are like. What would become of them if we

bundled them out of the village? I couldn't do such a thing, but supposing I did, what would become of them?"

No answer.

"You won't say, but you know. They would come to grief altogether, and that would be your fault and my fault. You don't really want to ruin them, do you? Show some spirit, my girl, and pull yourself together. It's bad business to go wandering about the countryside and let a poor idiot lame himself for life."

She shivered and he went on:

"But it's true, Rosemarie. No, do your duty for once in a way: go back to the Schliekers, and be a brave girl until all this has blown over. Then we will see whether we can't take you away from them decently and in good order. What about it, Rosemarie?"

No. She heard the woman's harsh and angry voice, and the man's smooth and oily tones. "I can't," she whispered. "They're much, much worse than any of you think."

The magistrate let her go so suddenly that she almost fell. He was pale with anger. "Well, Doctor!" he exclaimed irritably. "She won't. She's a coward. Hang it all, I've no patience with her!"

She was horrified to realize that the doctor had been in the room—how long she could not tell. Her pale face flushed, and she looked down at the floor.

"I think we had better have some breakfast," said the doctor quietly. "That will do us all good. And then we will take Fräulein Thürke to call on the poor invalid Schliekers, and see what happens. And if you won't stay, Fräulein Thürke, I promise I won't try to persuade you.

And now will you please pour out the coffee for us? I, for one, shall be very glad of a cup."

The magistrate was glad of one, too, for he was neither old enough nor young enough to let his temper interfere with his appetite.

Meanwhile, Rosemarie sat disconsolately over her breakfast, not enjoying such luxuries as herring and cold meat nearly as much as she ought to have. She barely listened to the two men's conversation, though they were discussing the various forms of eccentricity exemplified by Stillfritz, Philip, and the old Professor.

Of the Professor, Magistrate Schulz had heard a good deal, through Constable Gneis and Paul Schlieker, from the Stillfritzes and Gottschalk, and also from Rosemarie; but, as Rosemarie realized, he had taken quite a false view of the old gentleman.

In the end, therefore, she had to interrupt and tell the whole story from the start: how Philip, in defiance of the bylaws of Mecklenburg, had borne her message to Berlin; how the Professor's visit ended in the coalshed; how he had finally taken refuge in the Vogels' shed.

"And there he still is, Rosemarie, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Rosemarie, with rather a shamefaced air. "So much happened last night that I quite forgot about him. And I'm sure he's freezing and he won't get any coffee and he'll be worrying about me and Philip."

"There, Rosemarie," said the magistrate, adopting his stern voice once more. "You see what comes of your behavior. You wicked young woman!"

She hung her head; she felt the young doctor's bright clear eyes upon her, and was ashamed. But a voice within her said: "I can't and I won't!"

"How would this do?" said Dr. Kimmknirsch suddenly. "Tangelmann, the brewer's agent, has a car. I'll borrow it, and drive Fräulein Thürke to the Schliekers first, and then fetch the old gentleman—"

After all, Rosemarie, a country girl of only sixteen, could hardly fail to thrill at the prospect of driving with the young doctor in a real car.

The magistrate wagged his head: "Very kind of you, Herr Doctor. But I don't see why you should take all this trouble. It really isn't any concern of yours."

"Indeed, it is," said the doctor gravely, with a faint quiver at the corners of his mouth. "They are all my patients."

He said this with such a sidelong glance at Rosemarie that she had to dive under the table for her napkin.

Chapter Seventeen

In which a runaway child goes home, but does not stay there

THIS AUTUMN DAY, that had begun so brightly and cheerfully for the Professor and his godchild, broke very gray and gloomy for the Schliekers. It was not merely that they had to get up early to feed the cattle in the gray October mist before the sun was fairly up; they had also lain awake almost all night in pain and anxiety. Mali could no longer face her destiny and Paul was tortured by suspicion—indeed, they were no longer on speaking terms. And so, after feeding the cattle, they ate a hurried breakfast in the kitchen, and Paul Schlieker put on his cap and went out of the house. Mali called after him, "Where are you going, Paul?" adding with a sneer, "You'll only do something foolish again, and get us into a worse mess than before." But he made no answer, and was already out of earshot when he muttered, "Damned old fool!" He then hurried to the upper village as fast as his aching limbs would carry him.

It was still twilight as he made his way into the bushes

by the bakehouse opposite the Gaus' farmyard—which was fortunate, as he did not want anyone to see him watching. He had not seen a bicycle outside the inn, or outside the Gaus' farm: evidently Constable Gneis had not arrived. But he would turn up at any minute, as Schlieker had impressed on the magistrate the evening before that the house must be searched early, if this girl were to be caught in bed. And she would not get away from him a second time, for all his broken ribs.

The chill darkness lifted, day dawned, but no one came. The teams set out for the fields, the Gaus' gate opened and the first dung cart creaked into the road. Two plow horses followed with Strohmeier sitting on one of them barebacked, and then came the cows. Yes, there was Hütefritz whistling behind them, the insolent little rascal who had yelled at him from the attic. Schlieker eyed him grimly: two dogs were trotting at his side. The second was Bello—so it *was* Bello that Schlieker had heard barking that night.

He had meant to watch the proceedings unobserved, but this was more than he could stand: he put three fingers in his mouth and whistled.

Bello threw up his head and listened. So did Hütefritz, and glanced at the old bakehouse, toward which the dog had darted, and gave a knowing nod. As Hütefritz passed on, Bello slipped whimpering and yelping into the bushes to where his master stood concealed.

Then came a whistle from the road—Hütefritz. The dog turned. Schlieker whistled. The dog stopped, whining distractedly. Hütefritz whistled again, and the dog leapt out into the road.

"Bello!" shouted Schlieker savagely. The dog barked,

wagged its tail frantically, and looked back and forth from the cows to the bakehouse.

"Come here, Bello!" shouted Schlieker.

At that moment Farmer Wilhelm Gau appeared at his yard gate, pitchfork in hand. Schlieker was silent. Hütefritz whistled again, the dog gave one last look at the now voiceless bushes, and with a yelp of relief dashed after the cows into the open light of day.

Schlieker peered silently through the elder twigs as his enemy's tall form, pitchfork in hand, strolled ponderously across the street toward the bakehouse. Had he acted quickly, he could have slipped round by the garden more or less under cover, but his powers of decision seemed to have failed him. He stood staring like a man spellbound, and a far from characteristic thought passed through his mind. The bakehouse was on community land. He had a perfect right to be where he was. Farmer Gau made his way through the bushes and glared at the spy, who blinked, trying to pass the situation off with his old contemptuous smile—but this time it seemed to fail of its effect.

For a while they were silent, while Gau seemed to be pondering, as though the sight of the other's face had shaken his resolve.

"The whole dirty business isn't worth the trouble!" he observed. "I'm sick of you and of the Thürke girl, too."

Schlieker eyed him scornfully—did the man suspect that his house was to be searched?—and licked his dry lips.

"She's hiding in my old cowshed," said the farmer and looked through Schlieker as though he could not see him and were talking to himself.

Schlieker muttered a curse. Of course—fool that he was for never thinking of it! She had run off into the forest and taken that old scarecrow with her.

"The Professor?" he asked, almost stuttering in his excitement. "Is the Professor there, too?"

"So you know all about it now?" said the other. "And you've got what was coming to you."

The farmer's eyes glittered ominously as he spoke. But Schlieker was past all constraint, "Yes, you're going to pay through the nose for that, Wilhelm!" he said venomously.

"It doesn't worry me," replied Wilhelm Gau, shouldering his pitchfork as though he had finished pitching dung and going his way.

Schlieker waited until the massive form had disappeared through the opposite gate and then he, too, departed. This was the third theory regarding Marie's whereabouts, and he believed it as firmly as he had the other two.

The only question was: how soon, in his battered condition, could he reach the old cowshed? It was impossible to drive through the forest and his boat was gone. He might take one of the numerous other craft lying on the shore, but he doubted that he could row. He went through the motions but his chest began to feel as if the broken ribs were stabbing his lung.

Mali, of course, could row, but he did not want Mali with him. He had lost faith in her, she had grown furtive and hostile after her last attack. Since then, everything had changed. He had been conscious of it that evening and all through the night. The young doctor and his medicine had made matters worse and now she

thought of her own condition first of all. She was afraid of these attacks, she wanted him to consider her health before he acted—as if that were the most important thing in the world.

First, Marie's affair must be cleared up. Then, when they were firmly in the saddle again, Mali might begin to care for her health. Did he care for his own?—not in the very least! Since five o'clock that morning he had been out and about with broken ribs and an aching head —and now he faced a long walk to the cowshed! But he meant to get there.

He wished he could have started at once and avoided the sight of his wife, but he needed a stick to help him on his way, and—

Mali sat motionless in the kitchen, with a strangely vacant face, and did not look up as he entered. He took his stick from the sitting room, and as he went out he asked mechanically: "Is anything the matter?"

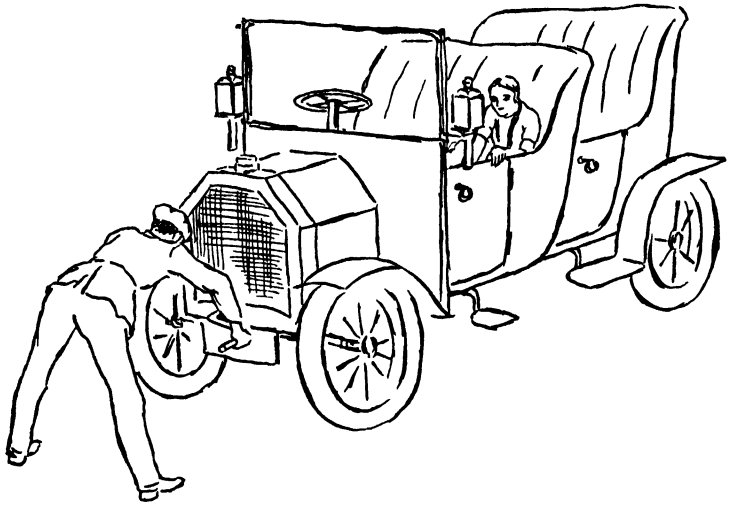
She lifted her head with what appeared to be an effort, and in a voice that seemed to come from far away she answered: "What should be the matter?"

"What, indeed!" he shouted, furious with his futile helpmate. "We've neither of us time to be ill! Get busy, and don't be always thinking of yourself."

He thought for a moment, and then added: "I may as well tell you I'm going to fetch Marie. We shall be back about two o'clock." But his words had no effect; she was looking down at her lap with the same vacant expression as before.

Muttering a curse he slammed the door and started on his long and weary tramp.

"Get in, Fräulein Thürke," said Dr. Kimmknirsch, and the girl jumped into the car. Not merely Frau Bimm, but heads from a dozen other windows looked down—at her, at him, and at Herr Tangelmann's car, a 1908 model.



The doctor struggled with the crank, ran round to the dashboard, adjusted the levers, and then swung the crank again.

Rosemarie was acutely conscious of the faces peering out from behind windows and curtains, and prayed that the engine might start at once, before the expression in those faces turned to scorn.

But Dr. Kimmknirsch had to adjust the ignition several times, and he grew more flushed with his exertions before the engine leapt into life. "At last!" he said, still in high good humor. "These things have their little tricks, you know."

He released the brake, blew the horn and the car chugged off. It ran smoothly up the street to the railway station. "Easy does it!" said the doctor, as it bumped gently over the local railway line and made for the open country.

"Is this your first trip in a motorcar?" asked the young doctor.

Rosemarie, for some mysterious reason, longed to say "Yes," but truth compelled her to confess that this was her second ride in a car. "But the other one wasn't up to much."

"Why not?"

"It was raining."

"Oh," said Dr. Kimmknirsch, and his voice sounded rather annoyed. From then on both kept silent.

They had soon passed the Kriwitz allotments, and were driving between hedges. Rosemarie was disgusted to realize that in ten minutes they would be at Schlieker's, and then good-by to freedom, friends, and motorcars! Nothing but work, abuse, and misery.

The journey, which five minutes ago she had prayed might start at once, was so near its end that she shut her eyes and began to whimper softly.

For the moment, the doctor did not notice. He jammed on his brakes, exclaiming, "Damn those dogs."

A volley of barks and yelps followed.

"Bello!" cried Rosemarie. "Doctor—doctor! It's my Bello—please don't hurt him—"

"He's much more likely to hurt us!" cried the doctor, and drove straight at the hedge to avoid the infuriated dog, sounding his horn like a steamer in a fog. The bram-

bles in the hedge scratched the car, which stopped with a jerk.

"Bello! Bello!" cried Rosemarie, struggling with the door. "We haven't hurt you, have we?"

The dogs of 1912 loathed cars more than they loathed postmen. Bello could not understand how his beloved mistress could be inside such a horrible contrivance. With flashing eyes and bristling hair he barked frantically at the car and its occupants.

But Rosemarie finally wrenched the door open and jumped out in front of the dog, whose frantic rage suddenly gave way to frantic joy.

"Darling Bello," said Rosemarie, in a soothing voice. "It's all right now. Look, the car doesn't do me any harm." She stroked both dog and car in turn. "Good car —good dog."

"Not so very good," remarked the doctor dryly. "We almost had an accident. He jumped right in front of the wheels, and after all, the hedge couldn't move. How did your dog get here?"

"He must have come to help Hütefritz."

"And who is Hütefritz?" asked the doctor, with a ring of professional interest in his voice. "Does he tend sheep?"

"No, cows. He's Tamm's cowman. He's almost as old as I am, and my best friend."

"Indeed." The doctor's interest vanished. "Well, tell him to watch your dog better; he nearly got run over."

"I have to tend the cows first," said a voice from the hedge. The doctor and Rosemarie looked up. A face with a tousled thatch of fair hair peered out from among the

brambles, and Rosemarie cried, "Fritz, Philip is all right again!"

"Not quite," said the doctor, "but he'll get all right again."

"Rosemarie," said the lad, with a barefaced wink at the doctor. "Rosemarie."

"You can say what you like," she said quickly. "The doctor knows about everything."

This time the doctor did not protest against the exaggeration.

Hütefritz eyed the young doctor from his point of vantage behind the hedge. "I hope he isn't like your Professor," he observed.

"Hütefritz!" cried Rosemarie angrily.

"Oh, well," he growled, "you can never tell. I like to know the worst. All right, Rosemarie," he said, giving himself a shake. "Otsche was here just now. His father has told Paul where you've taken your Professor, and Paul's on his way there now."

"Oh!" said Rosemarie.

"I can't leave the cows again. They all got into Gottschalk's fields yesterday and there's been trouble with Schoolmaster Schlitz over cutting school—so there was no one I could send."

"How long has he been gone?" asked Rosemarie.

"An hour, perhaps less. And he's so shaky on his legs, he can't make it in under three hours."

"Whistle to Bello, Hütefritz, and see that he doesn't get away," said Rosemarie briskly and Dr. Kimmknirsch was astonished to observe quite a different girl, no longer the pale nervous creature of the night before. "Herr Doc-

tor, please drive me as quickly as you can to the hut. I know a way to get quite near it. I must warn my godfather that Paul is coming to see him."

"But your godfather is a grown man," objected the doctor. "Surely he can manage Herr Schlieker without your help."

"No!" she cried, "you don't know what Schlieker can be like, none of you know."

"Oh, yes, I do; I can very well imagine."

"And the Professor is so very old, he trusts everyone; Schlieker might very well—"

"Well—what might he do?" asked the doctor, with a superior smile. "Murder him? My dear Fräulein Thürke, you appear to live in a very odd world. We are on the earth, in Mecklenburg—and the worst thing that can happen to anyone hereabouts is to be locked into a coal-shed . . ."

He could not help laughing; but neither girl nor boy joined him.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she said crossly. "The Schliekers are brutes who ill-treat and torment little children. And you want me to go back to them just because you can't imagine what they're like. No grown-up person can. And I thought *you* would."

She stopped and struggled with her rising tears.

"What did you think I would do?" he asked.

But the moment passed.

"Very well," said Rosemarie. "I promised I would go with you to the Schliekers. And I will—Fritz, hold on to Bello. I'll see what I can do. But I didn't promise I would stay."

"Right," said the doctor firmly. "Then we won't drive to the hut, we'll drive to Schlieker's."

"Yes," she said and got into the car.

The engine seemed to understand that everything was settled and started with the first turn of the crank. Bello howled—but after the first turn in the road they heard his lamentations no more.

They said nothing until the car drew up outside Schlieker's and Rosemarie may not have been the only one who was looking forward to that drive.

"So this is your farm," said Dr. Kimmknirsch, gazing rather doubtfully at the little house and stables. The autumn, which had stripped the green from the leaves and the leaves from the branches, had laid bare all the defects in the buildings. The plaster had peeled off, the windows were dirty and warped, the fences were in decay.

"It has ceased to be my farm," said Rosemarie sadly. "People call it Schlieker's farm now, and so do I—it doesn't belong to me any more. There's a room in it that was Father's, but since the Professor found those torn books, it isn't Father's room at all."

"Cheer up!" exclaimed the young doctor, laying a hand on her shoulder. "Things may look pretty black, but we'll all keep an eye on you, remember that."

"You know," she declared firmly, "I haven't promised to stay here."

"Come along," said the doctor.

They went into the house, and Rosemarie crossed the threshold that she had never intended to cross as long as the Schliekers inhabited that house. The stale moldy smell of the passage seemed to paralyze her senses. What if the sun were shining, what if she had escaped and

found friends like the Professor and the doctor?—that nauseous gloom chilled the very blood in her veins. The leaves had fallen, and the cold dead winter had her in its grip.

"Just what I expected!" said the young doctor's voice from the kitchen.

Aroused from her numb despair, Rosemarie saw Mali lying on the kitchen floor, with closed eyes, deathly pale, her hands clenched, and her lower lip bitten and blood-stained.

She looked down at her enemy, but her heart remained untouched. The house and her life within it merely seemed darker and more dismal than before.

"She's unconscious," said the young doctor, "it's some time since she had the attack; it will pass over into sleep. Where is her bed? Good—take hold of her and we'll carry her to it. Pick her up properly," he said in a sharper tone. "There's nothing to be afraid of. She may be a bad lot; but she's ill, and that *isn't* her fault."

The girl did as she was told, she helped to undress the sick woman, put the icy body into bed, and arranged the pillows, but the doctor felt her disgust. In a sudden burst of irritation with this obstinate and defiant child, he commanded her curtly, "Go find her husband. Unwilling help is no help at all."

"He's at the forest hut with the Professor and he's up to no good," the girl replied in a low voice.

"Ah, yes. Well, make sure he has really gone. He might be in the stable. He's been so badly knocked about that I don't know how he's going to get so far."

The girl walked silently out of the room. The doctor sat and watched beside the sick woman. Her unconscious-

ness had turned into a sleep of utter exhaustion in which she barely breathed.

He looked about him. He had had to clear his chair of various odds and ends before he could sit down, and the whole room was in the same filthy, untidy state. Dim light came through greasy windows, and the whole scene was indescribably dank and dismal. Perhaps he ought not to leave a young creature in such surroundings. "Thousands have to grow up in much worse ones," said an inner voice. "Yes, but when one can prevent it, one should." "Sick people cannot be left untended." "That is another matter, Kimmknirsch." "I shall speak to Schulz, this is not a house, it's a hovel." "Well, you brought her here, so you are partly responsible."

The doctor got up impatiently. Where was she?

He went through the kitchen and the passage into the yard, across the stable, into the garden, and he called her name. Then he hurried back into the house; the sick woman was sleeping as before, but Rosemarie had vanished. She had mentioned her father's room—was that where she had taken refuge?

He had soon searched the little house, but the father's room was empty, too. Once more the doctor called to her outside, but he knew it was no use. She had run away, perhaps to the old Professor, perhaps altogether.

"Disobedient, defiant little wretch," thought the doctor wrathfully. "I shan't trouble about her any more. Scared—scared of life. Bah! Nothing can be done with a coward. But the woman can't be left, so I shall have to wait until the husband comes back. Imagine deserting a woman in that state—disgraceful! She ought to be ashamed of herself."

Chapter Eighteen

In which both Professor Kittguss and Rosemarie each on his own account runs away

IT IS AMAZING how many inquisitive idlers can assemble in so small a place as Lüttenhagen. In any case, the Professor found it so and, after the first shock was over, he began to take some interest in his situation. The Lüttenhagers, large and small, thronged about him, talked and exchanged comments with the utmost unconcern. And these grew more and more outrageous and fantastic, as the resolute lady on the horse, after her first devastating query, vouchsafed no further information. She curtly ordered a couple of bystanders to fall in and march the prisoner to Kriwitz.

The little Thürke girl—"You know, the fair-haired brat that does the housemaid's job at Schlieker's"—had not merely been raped, but lay dead and buried under a heap of leaves in the Lüttenhagen-Tischendorf-Unsadel-Kriwitz forest. "Think of that! The old lecher."

It was fortunate that the Professor's Biblical studies had accustomed him to such strong language. He walked

on imperturbably between his two guards: early that morning on a fence in the forest he had grasped the purport of life, and to it he held fast. This incident must be part of his new life, and in some way connected with Rosemarie.

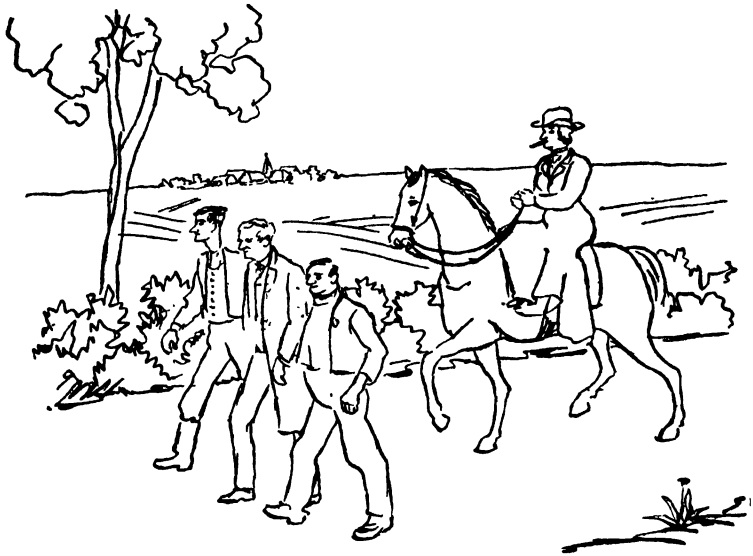
Only the lady, who rode immediately behind him, upset his smiling composure a little. Or, to be more exact, it was not so much the lady as the horse, whose nose almost touched his shoulders and blew its warm breath most unpleasantly down his neck.

They were now outside the village, and the mob of onlookers, except for a few abnormally persistent souls, had departed to their saucepans and their cowsheds. The Professor turned, and said gently to the formidable figure on the horse: "Madam, your horse keeps on blowing down my neck."

Upon which she blew out a scornful cloud of cigar smoke, and said curtly: "What do you think Magistrate Schulz will have to say to you, eh?"

"Are you taking me to him?" said the Professor politely.

"Ssssst!" said the great lady. "I refuse to converse with you." But she now rode at his side along the sandy road. The Professor smiled. He was convinced that everything had happened for the best, and that he could do Rosemarie no better service than to appear before the Board of Guardians in such company. It would mean a long and toilsome walk, for which the quadruped set far too quick a pace, but a short interview would set everything to rights. The Widow Müller would see that his belongings were duly sent from Berlin to Unsadel and it would be a real delight to put the Thürke bookcases in



order and fill the ugly gaps with his own venerable tomes.

Frau von Wanzka had now every opportunity to survey her captive. She did so, pulling energetically at her Brazilian cigar, and looked and pondered. Only the day before she had heard about this villainous Berliner who had abducted the Thürke girl, and now the old gentleman had fallen into her hands.

The fact was that he did not look in the least like a villain. It is an article of faith with most of us—in so far as we are not professionally concerned—that a criminal and a potential ravisher and murderer must wear the mark of Cain upon his forehead. But, though Frau von Wanzka eyed him narrowly, she could see no more than a very amiable old gentleman in whose candid countenance she could detect no hint of criminality.

"Now, then, pack off home, you lazy rascals!" she said to the remaining stragglers. "You're not wanted here."

The great lady, now left alone with the prisoner and his two guards, remained irresolute. She knew her own weakness far too well: a certain angry impatience led her to make mistakes, rather than hold her hand. Had she been hasty? No, she had acted at the instance of the magistrate; besides, the man had left the inn without paying his bill, and had obviously lied about his arrival in Lüttenhagen.

And yet, and yet. . . . His face and the cheerful way he marched along between his guards—

"Not so fast there," she said. "Can't you see he's all out of breath?"

"I am much obliged," said the old gentleman. He stopped, pulled out a large yellow silk handkerchief, and wiped his face.

At this the great lady's heart softened still more. At home in a cupboard was a pile of big yellow handkerchiefs just like this that had belonged to her father. Mentally she traversed the eight miles to Kriwitz, and

mildly reflected that it would be much more comfortable to go to her house at Tischendorf, which was only two miles away, and there get a carriage.

If he was a criminal, she thought—and, of course, he must be—he was an extremely clever one. However, it was Schulz' job to deal with him, not hers, so she might as well take him in the carriage. "We'll turn off to the right, Pagel," she said, "to Tischendorf."

"Very good, ma'am," said Pagel and they turned down the road to Tischendorf.

The little procession now marched in this order: first the great lady, then squat red-faced Pagel, then the prisoner, and finally Jansen, tall, thin, and lanky. Frau von Wanzka was consequently the first to catch sight of the forest clearing called the Old Tar-Oven, and what she saw there made her raise a warning finger, and come to a halt. The others stopped softly beside her horse, and on the sunlit clearing, not fifty yards away, saw a buck driving a doe before him. It was a lovely, peaceful picture. They all looked at it in silence, and even Pagel smiled.

"It's the six-pointer," whispered Frau von Wanzka. "That fool of a forester kept on telling me it had shifted to Kriwitz. I'll go this very evening. . . ."

But what she meant to do that very evening remained undisclosed. A shot rang out, the buck bounded into the air and collapsed, while the doe darted into the forest. "Well, I'll be damned!" roared Frau von Wanzka. "It's a dirty poacher—he must be somewhere over there. Come on, men!"

She was off at a gallop. The men dashed after her, leaving the Professor alone and forgotten at the end of the clearing.

"Well, that's that," exclaimed Frau von Wanzka peevishly half an hour later, as she emerged into the clearing with Pagel and Jansen after a futile hunt for the poacher. "Ah, I might have expected it. He's gone, and we shan't catch that amiable old ruffian again in a hurry. Go along to the house, men, and see that the Lüttenhagen folk keep quiet about this business. We haven't exactly distinguished ourselves today. Yes, that's right, Pagel, sling the beast across the saddle in front of me: let's be thankful that's not gone, anyway. It makes me sick to think of my grand six-pointer shot by that rascal under my very nose. Stop, Jansen. You can tell the landlady that I'll pay up the old man's seventy-five pfennigs. She shan't lose because I'm a fool."

Whereupon Frau von Wanzka rode away in rather a disconsolate mood with the buck across her saddlebows. It had just dawned upon her that she had had no business to leave an abductor of children and a potential murderer alone in the forest, while she was trying to catch a poacher. In the words of the old saying, it was like killing a louse on an adder.

"You old fathead," she said to herself, stopping to light another cigar. "Well, when I think of the old villain's face and his yellow silk handkerchief, I almost hope I shall see him standing on the steps in front of my little home. But that's just my childlike faith, which has got me into trouble more than once."

On that point she proved right; the Professor was not standing on the steps, and he had not been seen.

He must have slipped across into Prussia and now nothing could be done but telephone Schulz, who was likely to be a very angry man. But she wouldn't be

shouted down and for the time being it was not he who shouted, but she: at Sergeant Thode.

"An important case, eh? Rubbish, Thode. A couple of tramps, I dare say. They can wait. You call him at once, Thode, or I'll—" And fortunately for her, Thode did call him at once.

But she was really out of luck that day. Schulz did not shout, he was very polite and on the spot and much interested. Yes, Rosemarie had come back long ago. She was with the Schliekers again, and the old man was a harmless scholar. Berlin had been questioned and his reputation was found to be excellent.

"My dear Magistrate!" protested the great lady, as she recalled that exodus from Lüttenhagen.

"Yes, such things happen now and then: there was good ground for suspecting the man yesterday, but the charges have proved quite unfounded."

"Schulz!" said the great lady in an agonized tone, and shuddered to recall how she had addressed the old man before the whole village.

"Of course, I don't blame you in the least."

"Really!—"

"You acted with perfect propriety."

"Indeed?—"

"It is fortunate that the affair more or less settled itself, without serious damage to any of the parties."

"But what about my six-point buck!" cried Frau von Wanzka, really furious now.

But Schulz had hung up the receiver, for he was in a hurry with half the infuriated population of a village waiting for him in his office, all buzzing like hornets, and a pile of writs for slander on his desk. Before he had been

called to the telephone, he had almost persuaded them, or rather shouted them, into a settlement. But now the rising hum of voices from his office warned him that there would be a fresh and flourishing crop of charges when he returned.

Frau von Wanzka shouted into the telephone—but in vain; Magistrate Schulz did not reply, and no further answer came.

Meanwhile Rosemarie ran lightly through the forest.

When she went out to look for Paul Schlieker, she had not intended to run away from young Doctor Kimmknirsch in this somewhat shabby fashion. But she had gone into the barn where she found the little dogcart, with Hütefritz' bent and broken bicycle on which she had ridden into Kriwitz with Philip tied behind it. There could have been no more vivid reminder of the Schliekers' villainy. And the mystery as to how it could have found its way into the Schliekers' hands and into the Schliekers' barn only deepened her terror of their dark designs.

And to fill the measure of her fear to overflowing she found the second trap in the yard beside the empty dog kennel. Its open jaws with their sharp iron fangs looked so malignant that she fetched a log of wood and thrust it between them. The teeth closed with a crash, and holding the trap by the log, she flung it over the wall into a patch of weeds. For a moment she stood panting, but she knew only too well that even more evil fangs were menacing one who belonged to her and whom she loved.

So she promptly darted into the forest and ran in the direction of the old cowshed. Being light and a good runner, she could keep up a brisk trot without getting out of

breath. But it was a long way, and even the best runner could not have trotted the whole distance.

While running she kept her eyes on the ground, lest she might stumble over a root or stone; but when she dropped to a walk, she peered at the trees and the edges of the path, as though in search of something. Rosemarie's eyes were not city eyes like those of the Professor, which looked at the forest but saw nothing. Rosemarie noticed the tiny punctures made by Schlieker's stick, and in a clayey patch she recognized the impression of Schlieker's shoes, which she had so often cleaned. It was quite clear that he had made for the shed, and she, for all her craven fear, ran after him. Herr Schulz and his friend, Herr Doctor Kimmknirsch, might scorn her terror—and they were right, she was indeed afraid. Nevertheless, she was running in pursuit of Schlieker.

But something inside her mastered that terror. Even three years of Schlieker tutelage had not turned her into a fawning creature like Bello. She acted in fear—but she acted.

Did she know Schlieker's mood as he made his way along that forest path? Was he marching like a conqueror, gloating at the prospect of bringing back his prisoner to jail? No, the trail he left behind him ruled out any such idea; ferrule holes would be missing for a space during which Paul had clearly laid about him with his stick. There were patches of weeds where the stick had worked havoc with the lush autumn herbage; a beech branch ruthlessly smashed; a young and sturdy spruce, with its lovely, tapering, needled point lopped off forever by a stroke of Schlieker's stick.

Rosemarie trotted on. At last she approached the shed

in the forest. Here, where the trees were older, there was little undergrowth, and she had to walk more warily; the enemy might be right ahead of her. She glided from trunk to trunk, holding one hand against her throbbing heart; then the forest dimness lifted and she saw the little clearing, the old gray low-roofed shed, bathed in yellow sunlight. The half-open door creaked faintly in the breeze.

From behind a silver birch she looked and listened, listened and looked. The sun and wind, the silence and peace could not deceive her; the enemy was at hand, and being quiet he was doubly dangerous. She longed to hear a word, a cry, even the sound of a struggle—that would have made it easier to muster up courage and go in. From far off a jay screeched, like a burst of scornful laughter, and then all was still. Cautiously she crept round the clearing, and when she was opposite the blank rear wall of the old shed, she darted resolutely out of the shadow of the trees, ran across the clearing, and flattened herself against the wall.

Not a sound: she pressed her ear against the bricks—not a sound. And in that deep, mysterious, agonizing silence she could hear the heavy thudding of her heart; slow at first, as though gathering strength to face what lay before her, then quicker, until her limbs throbbed and her ears rang, as though she were in the church tower at Kriwitz while the bells were ringing. Then a mist settled upon her eyes, slowly dissolving into the frightful vision of an old man lying on the floor. An evil foxy face bent over him, with glittering eyes and bared yellow teeth.

Then the visions faded, her heart beat more lightly and her eyes cleared—a dry cough came from within the stable: Schlieker.

So he was alone. She recognized that dry cough, he always coughed like that when he was alone and thinking.

She edged round the corner of the shed, and slunk very softly along the wall keeping her eyes on the ground, watching for every pebble and every twig.

Under the window, she stopped and listened, but it was shut and she heard nothing. She crept on, not relaxing her caution for one instant. Noiselessly she approached the next corner, and glided round it. Right in front of her, not two yards away, the door stood half open. If Schlieker came out, he could not fail to see her.

But she went on. Her mood had changed strangely. The silence and the cough had convinced her that Schlieker was alone in the hut, there was no Professor in need of help, and she could run away. But she did nothing of the kind. She crept on, for her curiosity outweighed her fear.

Now she had reached the door. Slipping behind it, she could see into the shed through the gap between the wall.

She could take in barely more than a corner of the room, including the wooden chair and the head and middle of her bed. The rest of that part of the room was empty, but she could hear Schlieker moving where she could not see.

If she had moved to the farther side of the doorway, she could have seen him: but then she would no longer be covered by the door, and her shadow would fall across the threshold. No, she was better where she was.

She noticed, too, that the chair by the bed was not empty—on it lay the provisions the children had brought: bread and eggs, some paper bags and a sausage. Then—and her heart began to throb once more—a

shadow stepped into her field of vision! It was Schlieker. She caught a brief glimpse of a ravaged face, a blackened eye, a split and battered lip. Then the man turned his back and a bony hand laid some more paper bags and a slice of ham on the chair.

Rosemarie realized that even though Schlieker had found neither the Professor nor herself, he did not mean to have the journey in vain. His greed never flagged and all this food might come in useful. As he stood up, his face twitched, he clapped a hand to his chest and muttered a curse—he was clearly in pain. For a moment he lingered, looking toward the doorway out into the clearing. Then he stepped on to the threshold.

He was now so near that but for the door between them, he could have touched her. Yet she could see only the blue stripes on his jacket. She was terror-stricken—surely he must feel her eyes upon him. She shut her eyes tight, but at once she realized with horror that she could no longer tell what he was doing. He might discover her at any moment, seize her, and beat her. A shriek rose into her throat, she could hardly hold it back. Would he never move?

At last she heard a sound. The footsteps moved away. Slowly, but still weak with fear, she opened her eyes. Before her she saw the gray blistered timber of the door and she stared at it with parted lips. Gradually she realized that the danger was past, and again she peered through her gap.

She was thankful to notice that the corner was clear, he was occupied somewhere out of sight. She turned her head, and looked gratefully at the sunlit clearing, the rich foliage, and gradually grew calm once more.

After a while Schlieker came back into view, with the Professor's bag in his hand. Again she was afraid, and this time it was no mere flush of panic. Perhaps the Professor had gone for a walk and might be back at any moment. Again she glanced out at the clearing: it was empty. She turned, and looked back at the man. He was now emptying out the bag on to the floor. He eyed the little heap—spotless white shirts, socks, underwear, and a spectacle case. Rosemarie had an excellent view of Schlieker's face; it was grinning. This was the Schlieker of her dreams and fears, this was the Schlieker known to her alone, a devil who worked evil, not because it brought him gain, but because he loved it.

Schlieker raised a leg, and trampled on a spotless shirt-front, until Rosemarie heard the rip of tearing linen. She felt she must have shrieked aloud, but the man had clearly heard nothing. He stamped and kicked at the Professor's belongings, flinging them about in a kind of ecstatic fury—this was a world of ruin that he understood. His face was flushed, his teeth glittered, and as his antics grew still wilder, a fit of dry, sharp coughing seized him. He stopped and leaned against a chair back. When the attack had passed, he looked with a vacant and abstracted air at the wreckage beneath his feet. Then he began to repack the bag.

It was time for her to go. Soon he would be finished and the risk of discovery increased with every minute. But she did not leave for, well as she knew the man, she was baffled. Surely he would not take the bag with him? The food was no proof against him, it could not be identified; the torn linen might be ascribed to a passing tramp;

but the bag? She knew him—for all his greed he never let it make him reckless.

As though their thoughts had met, he suddenly looked up from his packing, glanced at the door, pursed his lips into a whistle, and pondered.

It is dreadful to look at such a man when he believes himself alone. All that has been so carefully concealed comes suddenly to light; the mask slips off. She saw into his very brain and heart, and shuddered.

The man took the things out of the bag again, flung them to the ground and looked about him, apparently in search of something. Then he went to Rosemarie's bed and picked up the pillow. She realized at once that he was going to stuff the things into the pillowcase, and she was terrified: he could hardly fail to see it now!

He had already begun to unbutton the pillowcase when he happened to glance at the bed, dropped the pillowcase and stretched out a hand.

He had seen the hidden money!

Rosemarie was wild with rage—she ached to leap upon the thief: but she did nothing. She stared at him—at that evil and triumphant smile, those narrow lips, those greedy, hard, and glittering eyes. She watched him count the money, first with greedy haste, then slowly and with relish. The pocketbook vanished inside his coat, and then, with a clink of silver, the purse vanished too.

The man looked round with quite a different expression, a sly, quick, furtive glance that yet was full of menace. Rosemarie shivered. And she knew that a murderer looked like this when he has resolved upon his deed.

But Schlieker thought himself alone. Then, in sudden

haste, he began to bundle the things into the pillowcase.

Rosemarie, too, had no time to lose. Slowly and softly at first, and then more quickly, she slipped out of her hiding-place, crept round the corner of the house, past the window and ran at top speed into the forest. She kept out of sight among the trees until she had almost reached the path to Unsadel, where she stood and waited until she saw Paul Schlieker pass her, carrying the pillowcase. He limped as he went, but it was not merely the bundle that made him do so. And he coughed continually.

Then she dashed off, keeping well away from Schlieker, and running as fast as she could so as to get to Unsadel, to the sick woman, and to the doctor before he could arrive.

She had Schlieker in the hollow of her hand, she thought triumphantly.

Chapter Nineteen

In which the Professor travels with empty pockets to Berlin to see about some money

THREE HOURS OF PATIENT INVESTIGATION in the village of Porstel, interspersed with a good deal of shouting on the part of the magistrate, had been needed to illuminate the local gossip. Finally the Widow Radefeldt had to admit that her observations on Frau Tamm's antecedents, marriage, character and capacity had no foundation in fact. And, as a result, eighteen distinct slanders by other villagers collapsed.

Magistrate Schulz, enthroned behind his desk, had had to threaten and implore, cajole and warn, use all the resources of guile and bluff. Above all, he shouted as he never had before, until he had fairly cowed the assemblage into subjection. And now he could glimpse the prospect of a compromise, which is so much more of a triumph for a magistrate than a dozen actions for slander.

He wiped his forehead, his voice grew soft and unctuous, as the scapegoat—if she can be so described—the

Widow Radefeldt, fought a final rearguard action over the signature of the statement for the local newspaper, recording her fine and her apology.

At that moment the door opened gently and Sergeant Thode, with only the faintest clink of his saber, tiptoed up to the judge's desk.

"Thode!" muttered Schulz reproachfully, and renewed his efforts to mollify the Widow Radefeldt.

"There's a gentleman outside," muttered Thode mysteriously.

The magistrate listened and looked. Frau Eichberg, the innkeeper's fat wife, was bending across Frau Radefeldt, injecting her with fresh poison. . . . The statement was still unsigned, everything remained unsettled.

"I don't care if it's the Minister of Justice, Thode!" groaned Schulz.

"It's the old gentleman who went off with the little Thürke girl. You know."

"Yes, yes," groaned the magistrate. He saw Frau Tamm trying to get into communication with her young Cousin Maxe, whose part in this affair was still obscure.

"Bring him in, Thode, and put him in a corner. Don't let him go away. I'll be ready for him in a quarter of an hour, please God." And, raising his voice, he went on: "We will proceed. Frau Radefeldt, you were saying—"

"Sir," said the old lady, raising her gaunt and bony person to its full height, "I've reconsidered it all, and I insist on the case going for trial."

"O God!" groaned the magistrate inwardly, "more trouble! Damn that old Professor—he always brings bad luck."

But what he said was, "Do as you please, Frau Radefeldt. But if I've told you once, I've told you ten times that if the case comes to trial you probably won't get off with a fine."

The door opened, and all faces turned from Schulz to the Professor. He entered, a tall, imposing figure, with his genial face and his fine white hair. In one hand he was carrying his wide-brimmed felt hat, and in the other a large and brilliant bunch of wild flowers. Professor Kittguss thanked Sergeant Thode with genial affability, and to the magistrate's amazement, that forbidding officer actually smiled. Then the old gentleman bowed courteously to the assemblage and the judge. "A very good morning to you all," he said, and sat down in a corner.

"Well," thought the magistrate, completely taken aback, "I'd never have imagined that Frau von Wanzka could be such a fool. Schlieker was such a rascal himself that it was quite natural he should believe the worst of that nice old gentleman, but Frau von Wanzka—incredible! What on earth is he doing now? Smelling forget-me-nots! Since when have forget-me-nots had any smell? Well—there may be noses that can find a fragrance in forget-me-nots, and can't smell the Schliekers. . . ."

"Very well, then," he said, "I will proceed to read the statement. Perhaps, my dear Frau Radefeldt, you will think over for the eleventh time what you have just said. Just imagine what a triumph it would be if you all went off arm in arm to Porstel and the nasty old gossips had their trouble for nothing."

This appeal to the archgossip in person was technically rather questionable. But whether it had some effect

on the malignant old lady, or whether she was influenced by his warning of the probable outcome of the case, or even by the presence of the amiable old gentleman with his absurd nosegay, Frau Radefeldt murmured something unintelligible about not reading it so loud, and sat down again.

So the magistrate went on reading the statement, and he read it as he had never read such a document before —gabbling through it, in a mechanical voice, and mumbling over all the awkward places.

"There," he said with a sigh of relief, "which of you will be brave enough to sign first?"

They all crowded round the table, and snatched the pen from each other's hands. Then they thanked the little judge with the utmost politeness. He nodded at them kindly as a schoolmaster might nod to children who misbehave themselves now and again, but are not really wicked.

But as they trooped out, they all nodded, as the magistrate particularly noticed, to the old gentleman in the corner. He nodded amiably in response, waving his bunch of flowers—for all the world like a kindly old school inspector. And only half an hour before the office had been a regular pandemonium.

The magistrate introduced himself to his dignified visitor and looked up at him; he reached about to the fifth button on the Professor's waistcoat.

"I am Professor Kittguss from Berlin," said the Professor. "What a pleasant lot of people those were—such nice kind faces. Was it a wedding? I couldn't quite follow. Surely you don't perform weddings?"

"I do not," said the magistrate slowly, "but it was something in the same line; it was a reconciliation."

"Ah, yes," the Professor replied. "How you must enjoy your admirable profession!"

And he looked round the musty, official room, as though he were looking for some sign of that enjoyment.

"You wanted to see me, Professor?" the judge inquired briskly.

"Yes. No. I thought you would—the fact is I was more or less arrested a few hours ago. It was rather a painful matter over some money. And my goddaughter, Rosemarie, was apparently in trouble. I am, by the way, Rosemarie Thürke's godfather."

"I know, I know," said the magistrate hastily.

"Yes—well, then, I was left alone in the forest—by a very energetic lady, who seemed rather prejudiced against me. She called me an old lecher." He smiled, a rather apologetic smile. "Well, I dare say it will all be cleared up. She did not come back. I waited for a while, and then I walked on and found myself in Kriwitz. . . ."

The magistrate stroked his beard. "The fact is it has been cleared up. We imagined you were rather different."

"But I was different," said the Professor with sudden gravity. "I was quite different until early this morning. I was a selfish old fellow."

"No, no," protested the magistrate in a shocked tone.

"I was indeed," said the old man gravely. "I was a dried-up old creature who thought of no one but himself. But after I had seen the children, not only Rosemarie,

but all the rest of them . . . and today I climbed over a fence—and now everything is altered."

"Over a fence!" said the magistrate eying him with quizzical astonishment.

"Yes," the Professor nodded. "He fulfills his purposes in many ways."

For a moment they looked at each other in silence. The brisk little magistrate was quite embarrassed.

"We must have a talk about all this, Professor," he said briefly, "especially as to how you propose to help your goddaughter. You know, perhaps, that I have the appointment of her guardians."

"Help?— Yes, at first I thought *she* needed help, but now I rather doubt it. Perhaps *I* need her help. I thought I would go and live in her house. I like my late friend Thürke's study very much. We could set up house together. I don't know, perhaps that's asking too much."

"No, no," said the magistrate briskly, "not at all. But there are these Schliekers. They have certain rights. I'm afraid they may make difficulties. . . ."

"The Schliekers? Oh yes! But can't they stay where they are? My friend Thürke's study is not in use—I would give no trouble."

"I wasn't thinking so much of the trouble," said the magistrate slowly, "as of the influence of the Schliekers."

"Ah yes, poor folk—poor in spiritual resources, I mean. They don't know what they do. But Farmer Tamm told me they were accessible to money. I know," the Professor added hastily, "one should not approach them in that way. One ought not to buy kindness."

"Ah—money," said the magistrate very cheerfully. "Now we have firm ground under our feet. But why are

we standing? Let us sit down. We shall soon have everything straight. No, not this chair, please—try that one. I have had to have mine made higher, as I am rather short. Not that I complain—on the contrary, it is a distinct advantage. Well then—you are prepared to spend some money on this business? I don't want to be indiscreet, Professor, but I am a man of facts, so I ask you straight out—how much?"

"How much?— How much what? I don't quite understand."

"Money," chuckled the magistrate. "Money, my dear Professor. How much money are you willing to spend on rescuing your goddaughter?"

"Oh," said the Professor in astonishment, "you think it's as important as all that? Everything I have, of course."

"And how much might that be, my dear sir?" asked the magistrate, in a truly siren voice.

"I cannot exactly say," said the Professor awkwardly. "You see, I haven't had much to do with money until now. Frau Müller looks after my expenses."

"Who is Frau Müller?" asked the magistrate rather sharply. Recalling the unpaid bill at Lüttenhagen, he could see little behind all this palaver but an empty purse.

"My housekeeper in Berlin," said the Professor mildly.

"But you must know how much money you have, my dear Professor," exclaimed the magistrate in desperation. "Do you get a pension? How much pension do you draw?"

"Three hundred and eighty marks," said the Professor submissively.

"And does Frau Müller get all that?"

"No, no, only a hundred and eighty."

"And where does the rest go?"

"Into the savings bank account."

"Oh, so you have an account at the savings bank?"

"A book, only a book," corrected the Professor.

"Very well, a book then—and two hundred marks go into it every month?"

"I sometimes buy books," confessed the Professor nervously.

"But you don't spend two hundred marks a month on books!" cried the magistrate. "Say fifty—or a hundred?"

"No, not so much."

"How much?"

"I really don't know. We might ask my bookseller."

The magistrate waved an impatient hand as though he were shaking off a fly. "So there would certainly be a hundred marks over every month?"

"I think so," said the Professor anxiously.

"And for how long? How long is it since you have been drawing your pension?"

"Sixteen years."

"But my good man," exclaimed the magistrate, and then corrected himself, "my dear Herr Professor, excuse my agitation. I have never met a man like you before. You must have nearly twenty thousand marks in the bank!—"

"Indeed?" said the Professor nervously. "Is it possible?" And in an effort to make a clean breast of every-

thing he added, "And then there is what my dear parents left me."

"Oh, indeed—and how much may that have been?"

"I don't quite know, papers of some sort. . . ."

"Mortgages, stocks, shares?— What was your father?"

"A lawyer."

"Ah, then they would be sound securities," said the magistrate decisively. "Do you draw the interest?"

"Yes, I think so. It is always written down in my book. I've never paid much attention to it, I fear."

"How much interest?" asked the magistrate inexorably.

"Would it be three thousand marks?" said the Professor dreamily. "Yes, I think it's something over three thousand marks a year."

"But then you're a wealthy man!" exclaimed the magistrate, drumming his fingers on the writing table. "All our difficulties are removed. You can buy up the Schliekers and the whole Thürke farm and three more farms as well!"

"Indeed?" said the Professor. "I did not know."

"No, you didn't know," said the magistrate with sudden irritation. "And now tell me, Herr Professor, how it comes about that so substantial a man can't pay for his breakfast."

The Professor told the story, and the magistrate listened attentively.

"No, Herr Professor," he said. "It won't do. You can't give the child all that money and go about the world without a penny in your pocket. Besides, it's not fair to her. First of all we must get your finances into order. I

shall have to attend to them, I can see that. Herr Professor, where do you keep your money?"

"I told you—Rosemarie has it," said the Professor guiltily.

"No, no, I don't mean *that* money at the moment, I mean your Berlin money."

"In the savings bank."

"No—no—no!" exclaimed the magistrate in desperation. "Where do you keep your savings bankbook?"

"In my writing table in Berlin."

"And the control slip?"

"In the book."

"Just as I thought!" exclaimed the magistrate. "But the control slip ought to be kept separate, Herr Professor!"

"Yes, I used to," said the Professor ruefully, "but then I never could remember where I had put it, and once we had no money for ten days because it could not be found."

"Yes, yes," said the magistrate, who could well imagine the state of affairs. "And I expect your writing table has only an ordinary lock, and as often as not you forget to lock it?"

"Sometimes I do."

"Of course. And anyone can get into your flat. My dear Professor, it is just one o'clock."

"Yes, it is getting late, I must be going along to see my goddaughter. . . ."

"No, you will not see your goddaughter today, you will go to Berlin."

"My dear sir," pleaded the old gentleman, "Rose-

marie is sure to be worried about me, and I am anxious to see her."

"We will let her know you are all right. She is in good hands and well looked after. I'll tell you all that's happened over some lunch at the Archduke—the main thing at the moment is the money. My dear Herr Professor, this money of yours solves everything. It will make Rosemarie happy, provide her with a good education, and pay off the debts on the farm—and there it all is, as good as lying in the street. If any crook hears of it. . . ." The little magistrate closed his eyes at such a painful thought.

"Crook?—" asked the Professor.

"Oh, just an expression we use nowadays—a burglar, I mean, Herr Professor. I will myself go and see your godchild today, and tell her everything. But you must take the next train to Berlin, go round to the bank the first thing tomorrow morning and draw out some money —say two thousand marks—and then come back here with the money and the bankbook."

"Two thousand marks," said the Professor. "I must make a note of that."

"Do so at once. Here is a sheet of paper and a pen. But, my dear Professor, pray promise me to be careful. Don't let anyone see your bank book. . . ."

"But at the bank? . . ."

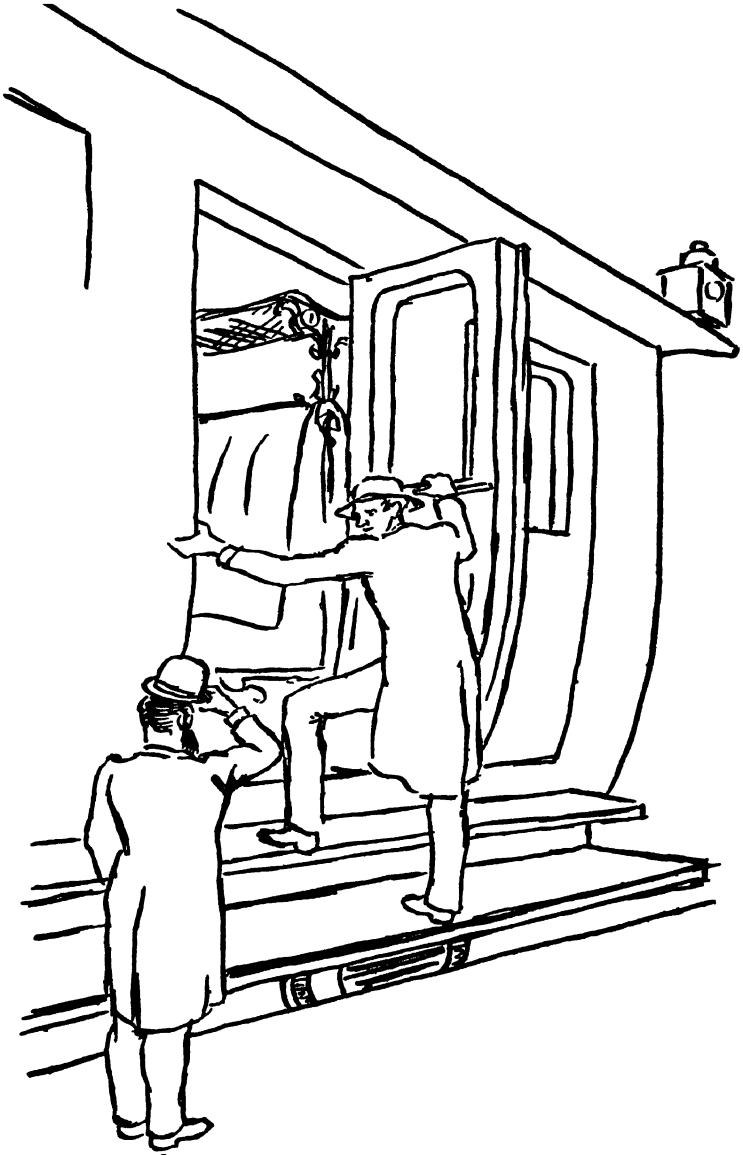
"Well, certainly, they must see it at the bank, of course. Excuse me just a moment, but have you any holes in your pockets?"

Until half-past four in the afternoon, when the train left, the magistrate did not let the old gentleman out of his sight. Professor Kittguss had to listen to more talk

about money than he had ever heard in his life—the way in which money should be kept, the way in which it may be lost, and the way in which a man may be defrauded of it. And yet—in spite of all this earnest instruction—it fell to Magistrate Schulz to observe his white-haired pupil ask gravely at Kriwitz station for a ticket to Berlin, and then depart to the platform without any attempt to pay for it. And when the clerk yelled at him, and he felt in his pockets for money, there was none —neither teacher nor pupil had remembered that there could be none, since Rosemarie—

The little magistrate came to the rescue, while the Professor, imperturbable as ever, got into the train which had already been waiting three minutes for him and was carried off to Berlin.

"Well," said the magistrate to himself, "I have two people to look after now; and I know which is going to give me the most trouble."



The Professor entrains for Berlin.

Chapter Twenty

In which Rosemarie loses all her friends

WE MUST PUT BACK OUR CLOCK: in Unsadel it is still early afternoon. But it has seemed a very long time to Dr. Kimmknirsch since that cowardly little creature, Rosemarie Thürke, ran away. It was so easy, thought the young doctor, to trust a person and so hard to sacrifice that trust. However, he had lost his trust in Rosemarie forever. There could be no excuse; it *was* shameful to abandon a sick woman, it *was* shameful and it *was* cowardly, and no rain could ever wash that off. He was finished with her once and for all, and that was that.

The sick woman stirred and muttered something; he felt her pulse, which, as he expected, was normal. Her trouble lay elsewhere—in her head, in her brain, and the trouble was fear. Her spirit was straying in search of refuge from a life that seemed past all bearing. He did not need to understand, he knew what lay upon her mind, and some of her mutterings he understood only too well. Kimmknirsch would have something to say to the husband when he came back. Bromide and luminol,

by all means, but what she needed was a quiet careful life in the shelter of the wind. And he thought of her husband as he looked round at that filthy room.

Dr. Kimmknirsch sat at the bedside of his first patient, and the limits of a doctor's powers were brought home to him already. Luminol and bromide, rest and temporary oblivion, but a word from the husband carried more weight than all Dr. Kimmknirsch's knowledge and youthful enthusiasm.

He heard a door slam, a quick footstep, and Rosemarie stood in the room, flushed and breathless.

He looked up at her, then checked himself and glanced at his watch. "Ah, back again, are you? I suppose you've thought better of it. Will you relieve me for a bit?"

At these curt words her face changed as though she had been struck. She grew pale, her lips parted and her eyes widened. "I—" she began in a whisper.

"Someone must be with her all the time; when she wakes she very likely won't be quite conscious, and she might do anything and in any case she must not be let out of bed. If she gets very restless, give her these tablets toward evening. Not before." He got up and eyed her coldly.

"Herr Doctor," she said imploringly, "I was so frightened about the Professor. I *had* to see what had happened to him."

"As far as I can gather, the Professor is in perfect health and this is a very sick woman," said the young doctor coldly. "I will come round the first thing tomorrow morning."

He thought for a moment, but he felt so bitter that he would not spare her the hardest stroke of all. "May I

count on your being here still, or will you have run away again?" He almost glared at her as he spoke.

She quivered under the blow, but recovered in an instant; she was not weak or feeble, she could stand up when she was struck. "I can't say definitely, Herr Doctor," she answered in a low but level voice. "In any case, thank you for all your kindness."

She looked at him steadily—and turned away.

Dr. Kimmknirsch—who was twenty-six years old—stood silent for a moment and then hurried from the room.

She stood motionless, her pale face bowed. A long, long time passed, hope came back into her heart, she began to think he could not have gone forever, he was waiting outside for a word from her.

Then she heard the car start with a roar, the rasp of the gears and then the hum of the engine fading into the distance. She was alone.

She picked up her cloak, went into her room and hung it up in the cupboard. When she saw the empty shelves, she thought for an instant of the parcel of underclothes hidden in the sand pit. She would have to fetch it some time that day, as she was going to take up her abode here again. But she had one trump in her hand; at last she could prove to the incredulous magistrate that Schlieker was a thief, and she would be rid of his authority—but what then? The Professor?—yes, there was the Professor. He had vanished, but he would turn up again, and perhaps he might even be prepared to settle down on the farm. But all her radiant dream of yesterday had faded.

"Yes, and what then?" It was the first time Rosemarie had asked this question of herself. She wanted more than

quiet and security and friends and a farm restored to prosperity—but what was it?

She shut the cupboard door and went into the kitchen. Schlieker could not arrive before at least another half hour. She had far outstripped his halting progress, but she still had a great deal to do. Sad and disconsolate, she set to work.

She made a fire, put on the potatoes for the pigs, and also peeled some potatoes for their own meal. She prepared everything for a bacon stew which would serve for dinner. Now and again she walked to the window and looked out for Schlieker. She wanted him to walk unsuspecting into the kitchen, with his pillowcase on his back, and find her there; his evil conscience might make him easier to unmask. The contents of the pillowcase, the food, would be something of a weapon in her hand.

The more formidable weapon, the stolen money, she could not use just yet. She had thought it all over with great care. If she mentioned it then and there, he would say that the money was lying in an open stable and that he had merely taken charge of it to return it to its lawful owner. But in three or four days he could no longer tell that story. She must be wily; the trap was set and her task now was to get the fox inside.

Her thoughts turned involuntarily to Schlieker's trap by the dog kennel into which Philip had stepped. Once again she saw the blood-stained foot. There was something sinister about a trap—but she did not falter. It depended on who set the trap.

He would soon arrive. Once again she glanced out the window, poured some hot water into a basin, and began to wash.

Now and again she ran in to look at the invalid. Mali's face had changed, her nose had grown peaked and prominent, the flesh about her mouth had sagged, her closed eyes had sunk in darkened sockets. She tossed her head from side to side, and muttered something. Rosemarie had to bend down close to hear.

"Let us go—let us go—let us go," moaned the sick woman.

Rosemarie took the restless head between her hands. It lay still, and the lips were silent. But no sooner would she take her hands away than the restless muttering would begin again.

She went back into the kitchen to go on with her washing. Bitter as she felt, she could not help being moved by the transformation of her cruel adversary into this pitiful and helpless creature.

Rosemarie had a plate in her hand when Schlieker suddenly appeared in the kitchen without a word or a greeting and looked at her. She gripped the plate so tight that her fingers quivered—or were they quivering for another reason? He was no longer carrying the bundle.

Paul stood still and looked at her, gloating over her terror. "Didn't the doctor tell you that you were to stay with Mali?— Go back to her at once! Look here, Marie," he said softly, and walked right up to her, "don't you think you'll fool me because you've got some fine friends. I'm your master, and don't you forget it!"

He stood so near her that his contorted face was barely an inch or two away. One eye glared at her, the other, almost closed, peered out of its slit. She could not meet his eyes, and as she looked away she caught sight of the

corner of the pocketbook in the breast pocket of his jacket. So he had the money on him! She hurriedly turned away in order not to betray herself.

"That young fellow can say what he likes," he went on, "I know you're up to something. You came back for some reason. Look at me."

She looked at him—the baleful eye blazed.

"Now mark this, Marie: if I'm in for it, then you're in for it too. And you can bet on that." He lifted his hands, crooked his fingers into claws, and laid them round her neck. "I've got you and I'll keep you."

His two thumbs pressed against her larynx, softly first and then gradually harder. Rosemarie stared at him. "I mustn't scream," she thought, "I simply mustn't scream—he's only trying to frighten me."

Outside, the hum of a motor approached and passed. The doctor must have met him and told him everything, she thought. She had not one friend left. The pressure was almost more than she could bear, the breath began to rattle in her throat. Had he told him that she had been in the hut? If so, she was done for!

"So now you know," said Schlieker, gloating over her terror and suddenly releasing her. "Go in to Mali. Dinner? There won't be any dinner today."

She crept softly to the invalid's bedside and sat down. Mali lay quite still, she seemed asleep. Rosemarie sat beside her, and time went on so slowly that it seemed an age before the sun gleamed in the corner of the window. And then, slowly, very slowly, the radiance slid across the floor. . . .

Schlieker busied himself about the house, in her room and at her windows. Very gently, in stockinged feet,

Rosemarie crept occasionally to the door, looked and listened. If only she could find out where he had put the money, the police would have an easier task. But he had hung up his jacket, and was working in his shirtsleeves. The money might be anywhere.

She soon discovered what he was about; indeed, he took little trouble to conceal it. He was fixing a bolt outside her door. He then proceeded to nail up the window sashes. He meant to imprison her. Well, only two or three days more, and she would be out of his clutches and beyond his threats. Then she would tell the magistrate about the money.

When she came back, the sick woman was watching her with open eyes. "What is he doing?" she asked softly.

"He's nailing up my window," answered Rosemarie.

The sick woman closed her eyes for a moment. Then she looked malignantly at Rosemarie. "You must go away. You always bring us bad luck."

Rosemarie did not answer.

"Tell him to come in," said Mali. "I want to speak to him. Then you can get away."

Rosemarie shook her head.

"But you must! You must! If you go, everything will come right again." She broke off, and looked at Rosemarie with angry eyes. "Nothing but bad luck," she whispered. "Fetch him now."

Rosemarie went.

"Well, I've made a good job of it," jeered Schlieker. "You needn't think you'll get away again—hey? What does she want? She'll have to wait. Damn all women."

But Mali was now screaming so loud that he had to go.

"Well, what is it? Haven't you learnt patience yet? Send her to milk the cows?—why, she'd only run away again, you fool. Ill, are you? I know all about that. And I've seen that young fool of a doctor." He stroked his beard and looked savagely from the woman to the girl. "What are you staring at, you little fool?" he roared. "Didn't you hear you were to go and milk the cows? Get along out with you!"

He let her go in front of him and for a moment, while she was putting on her clogs in the passage, she was alone. There, on a nail beside her milking apron, hung the jacket—she could not help herself, she grabbed at the pocket: the pocketbook was gone.

At that instant Schlieker appeared. "Ha! what's this!" And he caught sight of her hand and the dangling jacket. "Oho!" he said very slowly. That was all, but she realized that she had given herself away. Then he added curtly, "Now milk the cows."

They crossed the yard, he dogging her heels like a prison warder. She went into the stable, he stopped in the doorway. As she reached for the milking stool she heard him say: "You needn't let us know when you've finished milking, Marie. We're not in a hurry—I'll fetch you." He turned to go and added: "You may like to know that I am now going to burn the pocketbook and the purse. No one can trace the money then, you silly little fool!"

He laughed contemptuously and slammed the door. She heard the rattle of the bolt, she was a prisoner. She leaned against the cornbin, motionless, tearless— It was useless, quite useless. He was right, she had no weapon against him now, he was more than a match for her. She was a prisoner, and would always remain so. Perhaps, in

the distant future, these people would realize that Schlieker was not fit to be in charge of her—but then it would be too late. It was already too late. This was defeat.

Of all those with whom she had spent those last four days, the clearest figure was that of the old Professor—the clearest and the most significant. That innocent, helpless and absurd old man had been perfectly right, he alone. Truth was the finest weapon. If she had not foolishly tried to outwit Schlieker, to catch the fox in the stolen money-trap—she would never have come back, she would be free. But the trap had closed, and it was she who was caught.

For a long, long while she stood by the cornbin, as twilight slowly fell. There was no hurry about the milking, she knew he would not fetch her for a long while. First one cow and then another turned its head and lowed. "I'm coming, Olsch," she said, but did not come. Next morning the young doctor would appear, but she would not be allowed to see him—Schlieker would take care of that. The Professor would ask after her, and would be sent off on a false scent. There were the children, but she shook her head. One mishap—the injury to Philip—was enough. She could not let them take any more risks: on that point the little magistrate had been quite right.

The horses whinnied and stamped. Mechanically she opened the cornbin, shook out some chaff and oats into a sieve and fed them. Then she sat down under a cow and began to milk. A long, long time passed, the milk stood in two pails near the door, but no one came. No, she would not call out, though it was now quite dark.

She stepped under the window, from which Mali had screamed out over the lake, before having her fit. That too had been partly Rosemarie's fault. In that despondent hour she was inclined to take all the guilt upon herself. She had been stupid, wicked, and silly.

Beneath the window she heard a rustle, then a faint yelp. She knew at once what it was. "Bello!" she cried softly, and then, "Hütefritz!"

"Are you there, Rosemarie?" he whispered. "Has he locked you in?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Why did you come back?" asked the boy savagely. "I suppose it was that stuck-up chap with the car that made you. And now he's beat it—and here you are!"

"Oh, Fritz," she said weakly.

"And that old Professor of yours, he's no better. Maxe has just brought the news from the station. He's gone off to Berlin. . . ."

"The Professor, Fritz?"

"Nobody else. Little Schulz himself put him into the train. And the old man hadn't even got the money for his fare—I don't think much of your friends!"

"My dear Fritz," she almost wailed. "I'm so sad already, and now the Professor's gone."

It was more than she could bear. Her eyes filled with tears and she began to cry.

"Well, I had to tell you, Rosemarie," he said apologetically. "Do stop blubbering. I'll get you out all right. I'll slip round across the yard."

"Listen, Fritz," she said hurriedly and swallowed her tears. "Don't do it—please don't. Leave me here."

"Leave you shut up!" he exclaimed in amazement.

"Fritz," she said imploringly, "please don't. He'll set more traps. Or he'll shoot. He's got a gun."

"I'd like to see him try!" growled Hütefritz. "He'll go to jail if he does."

"That won't worry him, Fritz. But it isn't only that. I don't *want* to come out. I'm not going to run away again. I'm going to stay here."

"You're going to stay here—with the Schliekers?"

"Yes, Fritz, it's the best thing to do, believe me." She tried frantically to think of a lie that would convince him, for he would never understand the truth. "It's a scheme of the magistrate's—if I stay here, they'll be able to catch Schlieker more easily."

"The magistrate was here just now," said Hütefritz doubtfully, "but he went away again."

"There you are!" said Rosemarie, though the news filled her with despair. The magistrate had not even asked to see her.

"Funny sort of scheme," said the lad gloomily. "You seem to be out of luck anyway. Look here, Rosemarie, you must let me help you. Say, you should see your window, it's barred like a prison cell."

"I know, I know," said Rosemarie eagerly, "that's part of the scheme. Fritz, my dear Fritz, please do what I ask you for once. Stay away for three or four days—that's the best thing you can do. Perhaps he's behind you at this minute. Remember Philip."

Her warning seemed to have summoned the enemy; the lad gave a shout, the dog barked and Schlieker's voice called: "Stand, or I'll shoot!"

A crackle of twigs, rustling footsteps, then silence.

Rosemarie stood by the window, holding her breath.

No, he did not shoot. Indeed he had no gun with him—it was only a threat. Two minutes later the bolt shot back, and Schlieker stood in the doorway. "Come on out!"

Silently she picked up the pails, silently she walked across the yard, silently he followed. Not a word about the visitor who had fled.

Frau Schlieker was moving about in the kitchen, fully dressed, but waxen-pale. She kept her eyes fixed on the ground and did not speak a word. There was something to eat after all, the dinner that Rosemarie had prepared, potatoes and a bacon stew. All three sat down at the dirty kitchen table to a plateful of the sodden greasy pulp. Now and then Mali shot a furtive, angry look at her husband from under her bent brows.

He laid down his fork: "Muck!" he said. "Marie's fault, of course; always Marie's fault. By the way," he went on, so enjoying her hangdog look that he could not resist tormenting her, "little Schulz came to see you. He sent you his regards."

She did not answer.

"Well, what have you got to say?" he roared in a sudden access of anger. "I said he sent you his regards!"

"Thank you," whispered Rosemarie.

Schlieker grinned. "You can't put it over on me, my girl. As a matter of fact he didn't send you any regards. He's as sick as hell of you. I told him you'd run away again."

Rosemarie raised her eyes and looked at the man.

"Oh, yes, I did," laughed Schlieker. "I told him you'd gone off to the hut in the morning to that fatheaded old friend of yours—wasn't I right, Marie? Always tells the

truth, old Paul does, hey?" He grinned at her provocatively. "And I told him you hadn't come back yet," he went on in high good humor. "The little man wasn't at all surprised, he always thinks he's up to everything. 'But the Professor has gone to Berlin,' says he, 'she can't be with him now.'

" 'Oh well, she's on the prowl somewhere,' I says. 'Marie is a regular little vagabond. You know, sir—parsons' kids and millers' cattle never come to any good, as the saying goes.'

" 'But the money!' he yells. 'She's looking after the Professor's money!'— He was in a stew, I can tell you.

" 'Money?' says I. 'Had she got any money, sir? Well, she's very fond of money, and I don't think we shall see her back again in a hurry.'

"And he believed it, Marie, he believed it at once.

" 'That girl's an incessant nuisance,' he growls, and off he goes."

He eyed her scornfully. But she had ceased to mind his jeers; two great tears stole down her cheeks, nor did she attempt to conceal them.

"Cheer up, Marie," he sneered. "Pity about that money—they're on your trail, and Paul's got it all the time! Shall I show it to you again and let you smell it, eh?—God damn my eyes!—"

He dodged too late. A fork, hurled across the table, hit him in the shoulder and stuck there, quivering.

"What!" he said softly, so utterly taken aback that he forgot to be angry. "What are you doing?— Mali?— You?—"

He looked at his wife in bewilderment, and then glanced down at the fork in his left shoulder. His wife

stood behind the table, pale and trembling with rage. "You swine," she hissed, "if you work yourself up over that girl again, I'll throw another fork at you. Now I know you for what you are!"

He laughed; but not his usual venomous laugh, it sounded almost embarrassed. "You wouldn't throw things at your husband, Mali?"

"Yes, and I won't stop at that!" she cried. "You seem to think I'll stand anything. Oh, send her away, Paul," she suddenly implored, "send her away. Give her the money, and let her go, this very minute. She brings us bad luck."

She stood there panting, and stared at her husband and the girl.

"Mali—" he began.

"No, no!" she cried, "let us get away. Now—now, this very minute. The house brings us bad luck too. The roof is coming down on us, the beams are creaking and there are noises behind the walls— Paul! Paul! Do let us go!"

He jerked the fork out of his shoulder, and stepped quickly up to his wife. "It's another fit," he whispered. "See that she doesn't fall, Marie."

But there was no need for him to whisper. She no longer heard anything or knew where she was. "He won't go," she wailed. "He won't—he won't get rid of her."

Marie blushed violently and suddenly felt damp and hot all over.

"The roof is falling, and it's getting so dark. Ah!" cried Mali with a sudden shriek of ecstasy. "It's on fire. Look at the flames, Paul!" And with a last wild cry—

"Paul, it's on fire! Our bad luck's on fire." And she swayed.

"Catch her!" cried Schlieker.

They caught her—her body was rigid and her hands were clenched. . . .

"Lay her on the floor—no, nothing under her head, put a towel over her chest. There, that's right—it's a fit, the second today."

He stiffened. He was quite another Schlieker. "And what a scene! How she went on—I didn't know she had it in her!" He looked nervously about him. "I really did think for a moment that the place was on fire. It isn't, is it, Marie?"

"No," she said wearily in a low tone, "it's not on fire."

"It really seems," he said, looking across the prostrate figure at the girl, "as though she were jealous. Silly old fool—it's just her state of mind. I'd murder you sooner than I'd touch you."

He looked at her, and in that look the old Schlieker returned: his fear was past.

"If you think, Marie," he said, "that I'm going to give way over a scene like that, you're a fool. I'm here and I'm going to stay here. Mali can scream the place down. And you'll stay here too. That's that. Catch hold —we'll put her on her bed. I'll undress her later on. You'd better give me the doctor's tablets. They're no good, of course, but the little rascal will send in his bill just the same. There, you'd better go to bed. You'll see how nicely I've fixed up your room. No one is going to take you away from me this time."

The girl walked past him into her room without a word.

"Don't you want a light? Well, I wouldn't have given you one, anyway."

He shot the bolt outside her door and shuffled off, coughing and chuckling. Rosemarie was left alone in the darkness.

Chapter Twenty-One

In which everything goes wrong and Dr. Kimmknirsch takes to drink

THE TROUBLES OF THE YOUNG do not upset their sleep. As Rosemarie stood by her bed, she felt so utterly wretched that she never expected to close an eye. But no sooner did she lie down and warm the bedclothes with her body than a gentle hand passed over the scrawled slate and blotted out everything in a deep, warm, soft oblivion.

With her head nestling in the crook of her arm, Rosemarie slept a sound, untroubled sleep—and she would have slept into the following morning, until the detested Schlieker yelled to her to get up, if a strange noise had not awakened her.

As she gradually gained consciousness, the hum of voices in the next room seemed more calculated to put her to sleep again, but she heard another tap on the window.

Rosemarie sat up. In the next room the two Schliekers were talking in the silence of the night. She could not

hear what they were saying, but the woman's voice was shrill and tearful, while Paul was speaking in an undertone and trying to soothe her.

She was about to lie down again, when there was a rattle on the window like a gust of hail, and Rosemarie was out of bed in one jump. "The boys," she thought gleefully. "My boys—they haven't deserted me."

Outside, there was still moonlight enough for her to make out two shadowy forms. But they could not see her in the darkened window, and another handful of gravel rattled against the panes. Although the Schliekers were talking, and the window of their room was round the corner of the house, they were sure to hear the noise at last.

Rosemarie hurriedly wrenched at the window catch, but the window did not stir. She pulled until the window-frames cracked, but the windows remained rigid. A fresh shower of gravel pattered against the glass, and Rosemarie could only listen in agony to the voices in the next room. In his fury, Paul Schlieker had nailed up the window as securely as could be.

But the boys must be made to stop their noise at any price, or they would get into trouble. She snatched the pillow from the bed, held it against one side of the window, pressed her face to the other side and, cautiously listening for any sound from the next room, she rapped out a signal with her fingers. The voices in the next room continued, but the rattle on the window was not repeated. The boys had heard her signal.

Rosemarie had to be quick, or her friends outside might grow impatient once more. Her sleep, however long it had lasted, had refreshed her. Her gloom and

despondency had passed. Hurriedly she opened the hatch into the beet cellar, and climbed down into it just as she was, in her nightgown. There were some vents in the walls, scarcely as large as her head, to keep out rats and other vermin, but she moved the ladder so that she could reach one of the holes, and whispered eagerly: "Hütefritz! Here—come to the hole. . . ."

The hole darkened. "Yes?" said a voice. "Why don't you open your window?"

"It's nailed up, Fritz."

"We're all here," he whispered. "We've brought some saws with us, we can saw through these bars as soon as the Schliekers' light goes out."

"Nonsense, Fritz— I mean, it's very nice of you, but it can't be done. Do you think Schlieker won't hear you sawing? He sleeps like a hare, with one eye and one ear."

"But—" protested Hütefritz.

"Besides, it isn't necessary, Fritz," she whispered. "Believe me, if I want to, I can get away. But I don't want to, just yet."

"Oh yes, it's your grand friends' scheme, eh?" he said in an offended tone. "Rosemarie, it'll only get you into a mess."

"No, it won't, Fritz," she said, "but I would be very grateful if you would do one thing for me. . . ."

"Well . . ." he said, half mollified. "What's that?"

"But you must do it yourself, Fritz," whispered the daughter of Eve. "Then I shall be sure it's properly done."

"Tell me what it is then," he urged. "Shall I pinch Schlieker's horses? Or shall I smash the yard pump so he can't get any water?"

"No, Fritz, nothing like that. No, but can you spare three or four hours tomorrow?"

Hütefritz, who had sounded so resolute, seemed dubious. "Tomorrow is Saturday," he said slowly, "it isn't easy. The cattle, you see. I've had trouble with the Tamms lately because I've been away a few times, but in the evening, perhaps?"

"Then I'll have to wait a little longer, but never mind," she said reassuringly. "Will you go to the magistrate and say: 'Rosemarie hasn't run away, she is with the Schliekers, and Schlieker has taken the money away from her. . . .' "

"Oh, Rosemarie!" whispered Hütefritz gloomily into the vent. "You weren't telling me the truth. You hadn't got any scheme. I knew it. When everything is all right, you just order me to do this or that. But when it isn't, you ask in that appealing sort of way."

She was silent for a moment, the children's queen of Unsadel was silent and abashed. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Fritz," she explained, "I was just afraid for you. Schlieker is more of a beast than ever. I don't think he's quite right in his head."

"You needn't be afraid for me; if I'm not afraid, then you needn't be. We agreed we would always tell each other everything."

"I did mean to tell you everything, but it all happened so quickly, and then I was afraid."

"But you shouldn't be."

"And look here, Fritz, I'm quite certain it will work out all right. When you threw that gravel against the window I was so glad. I'm sure I shall manage it, and

you'll be able to leave that old souse Tamm and come to us and look after the horses."

"Rosemarie!—" he said, quite overwhelmed, almost falling over backwards at the prospect. "How about Schlieker? And Philip?"

"I'll tell you soon how I mean to fix things. Oh, Fritz, we must stop now, the others will be getting cross—and I'm standing here in my nightgown, and freezing like a log in the forest. . . . You'll go to Schulz, won't you?"

"Of course, Rosemarie, but not till the evening."

"And you'll tell him that Schlieker's got the money, and that he's shut me up here, and Schulz is to come along as soon as possible?"

"I won't forget—he's to come at once."

"I hope he will. But the main thing is that he should understand I haven't run away again. And now tell the others to come and say good night to me, and you get along to bed. Oh, Fritz, you can't have had any sleep the last few nights."

"I sleep in the daytime, out in the fields; it's still nice and warm in the sunshine," he reassured her. "Good night then, Rosemarie, I'll be sure and see Schulz."

Then the others came, and one childish hand after another slipped through the grating. Heini Beier, Robert Hübner, Albert Strohmeier, Ernst Witt, and last of all, Otsche Gau.

"Otsche, is that really you?"

"Of course, I'm one of you now. Am I to say anything to Father? He is quite changed, he actually asked after you. I think he's sorry he got you into trouble with Schlieker."

"No, don't say anything to your father, Otsche. Hütefritz will tell you all about it—by tomorrow or the next day everything will be all right. Good night, Otsche."

"Good night, Rosemarie!"

"Good night—good night—good night." A nice warm bed to snuggle down in—good night—good night. They were still talking in the next room, they had heard nothing. She ought to have asked Otsche what time it was, and then she would have known how long she had to sleep.

And then she slept.

Good night. The slim moon vanishes, the southwest wind blows up the clouds and dims its radiance. Good night. The wind is spattering rain against the house. The lovely autumn days are over, storms are at hand, the damp season has come, and the leaves are whirling down. Good night, and if we knew which would be the last night in our own bed, we should not sleep so softly and so sound. Good night.

The day to which Paul Schlieker's voice awakened Rosemarie broke gray and dark and rainy. And the voice that sent her forth to milk and feed the cattle was harsh and angry. He made her do all the work, standing in the stable door, glaring at her and coughing. She had to rub down the horses and the cows, wash out the stable and lay fresh straw.

It was light, but the day was dark. Great clouds drifted across the sky, a shower fell from time to time, and it was very cold.

"Fill the water tub!" And she pumped and carried two days' water supply into the house. She peeled potatoes and prepared everything for the day.

"So," said he. "And now get along to your room. And remember to keep quiet, see?"

It was not without reason that he had said that, for presently she heard the chug of a car—no, it was the motorcycle—then the young doctor's voice in the passage.

She longed to call to him, but he had left her in anger, and she was ashamed to ask his help again.

The doctor stayed a long time. Now and then his voice seemed to grow insistent, perhaps he was asking after her. But alas!—these people did not know Schlieker, he was more than a match for them. No, the doctor certainly hadn't asked after her. Indeed, it would have been little use. Schlieker would merely have lied.

But she liked to think that he had asked. And that evening the little magistrate would know everything and the whole story would be out. What on earth did Schlieker mean by imprisoning her like this—did he think he could keep her under lock and key for weeks and months? In that case he could not stir outside his house, he could not look after his land or move his horses, he was the prisoner of his own captive.

But perhaps he ignored the future, perhaps he was merely the victim of a senseless rage. It was just the same with the babies. He did not care what happened provided he did not have to obey any orders.

The doctor talked and Schlieker talked, and on one occasion the voices grew so loud that there was one breath-taking second when she was sure he was going to insist on seeing her. But the crisis passed, the voices receded, and once more she heard the chug of the motorcycle. He was gone.

The bolt shot back. Schlieker stood in the doorway glaring at her and said: "Go and cut the chaff."

As she walked in front of him across the yard, the sound of the motorcycle had died away. All she could do now was to await the evening and the arrival of the little magistrate.

Meanwhile, young Dr. Kimmknirsch clattered slowly and thoughtfully through the village of Unsadel. Yes, he had had a long, and at times a rather heated interview with Paul Schlieker. The man, like so many husbands, had not been willing to admit that his wife was really ill, seriously ill.

"It's just a touch of cramps," he said contemptuously. "She ought to pull herself together, as I have to do."

That he certainly had done, as Kimmknirsch could not but agree. "You ought to be in bed," he advised. "You are not well, and I don't like the sound of that cough of yours."

"Nonsense," laughed Schlieker.

"And you had much better send your wife into an institution for a couple of weeks, a hospital if you like. She is suffering from what we call 'absences,' she is often not in her right mind, and she might do anything then."

"Well, and what could she do—smash a saucepan or two, eh?—well, that's cheaper than sending her to a hospital. It's all very well for you to talk about a couple of weeks in a hospital, but it's my money that's going to pay the bill, not yours, Herr Doctor."

"It's your wife that's ill, not mine," the young doctor replied, still quite unruffled.

Then they lost their tempers. Schlieker grew more and

more violent, he could not endure to be contradicted. The world had to wag as he wanted, and if the doctor said his wife was as ill as all that, she should get up at once and do a job of work—and they would both have a good laugh.

However, they calmed down after a while and agreed that Frau Schlieker should not go into a hospital but should stay in bed. It then appeared that Schlieker himself wanted to consult the doctor.

He bared his left shoulder, and the doctor shook his head as he looked at the four small deep punctures, which were already inflamed.

"Who is throwing forks around in this house?" asked Kimmknirsch finally, and Schlieker was furious that he had guessed.

"That poisonous little toad Rosemarie, of course! She threw the fork at me and ran away. Just like a parson's daughter!"

"Oh, indeed," Dr. Kimmknirsch answered, and Rosemarie Thürke was not mentioned by either of them again. They both seemed averse to offer any further explanation.

But Dr. Kimmknirsch was now riding slowly through the damp and windy October day, pondering deeply as he went. Had Schlieker told him the truth? And if not, then what was the truth?

On the previous evening he had, as usual, dined at the round table at Stillfritz' in the company of the little magistrate. Schulz expressed himself rather irritably on the sudden appearance of Professor Kittguss, who had proved to be a person of substance. He then went on to talk of the girl's second escape. She had clearly got quite out of

hand and if she did not turn up within twenty-four hours she could expect no further mercy or consideration. There were reform schools for girls of that sort.

Kimmknirsch had not replied to this dark threat, nor indeed did he say much on the subject. He too had been bitterly disappointed in Rosemarie Thürke, and found it hard to forgive her. But perhaps he ought to have made some further inquiries. It appeared from what Schulz said that by Schlieker's account Rosemarie had run away in the afternoon—but in that case when had she thrown the fork? Before she ran away? Schlieker had not reported such an outrage to the magistrate. That sounded very improbable! But if she had not thrown it till evening, after the magistrate's visit, then Schlieker had lied to Schulz, and she had been in the house while Schulz was there. But in that case why had she not appeared?

Something was wrong, that was obvious enough, and Kimmknirsch made up his mind to have a talk with the magistrate as soon as he reached Kriwitz.

But in the meantime he had another interview before him, for which, indeed, he had just reached the appointed place, though this was the open road between Unsadel and Kriwitz and there was neither hut nor house nor man nor woman in view. But there was a gate in the hedge where the dog had attacked the car on the previous day.

Kimmknirsch leaned his motorcycle against the gate and climbed over it. After all, she had called Hütefritz her friend, and he might well know a few things of which the magistrate and the doctor were still ignorant.

Hütefritz watched Rosemarie's grand friend stalking across the damp stubble. This was clearly an excellent op-

portunity to convey Rosemarie's message, and save himself a long walk that evening. But it was also clear that this opportunity would not be used. This conceited puppy with a car and motorcycle, who had sat so familiarly beside Rosemarie on their journey to the farm, should learn nothing from him. Far better walk all those miles to see the judge!

Hütefritz considered the situation; he might pretend to be half-witted, but it would be better to keep out of the way. He called to the dogs (Bello was very efficiently helping him mind the cattle), and promptly drove the cows into Gau's clover. There they would stand and eat, and whether he was there or not, they would not stray.

The doctor watched the enemy's retreat. He did not pursue, but merely called out, "Hi—boy!"

Now Dr. Kimmknirsch ought to have known better. He had been born on a sheep run, he had lived ten or twelve years in the country, and he should have known that one does not address a lad of fourteen as "Hi—boy!" These were town manners. He had heard the boy's name, and could have remembered it if he had tried. Hütefritz, or Fritz, would have been more effective.

The cows plunged with enthusiasm into the forbidden clover, the boy vanished behind a hedge. Dr. Kimmknirsch began to run, but as he dived behind the hedge, he saw the boy disappear round the farther end of it. He dashed back with a curse—he had hardly taken a doctor's degree to play tag with village lads!

He had almost caught the boy, but Fritz knew a hole in the hedge and eluded him and Dr. Kimmknirsch could not bring himself to crawl through the hedge on all fours. So he shouted. The dogs who were guarding the cows

broke into a volley of barks. The doctor shouted again and darted round the end of the hedge. Just as he did so, he saw a jacket vanishing round the other end.

Then, to add to his discomfiture, a gust of wind flung a pattering shower into his face. Damn that boy—how on earth was he to catch him? The doctor dropped savagely on all fours and crawled through sloe bushes and briers and hazels.

There was the boy—a couple of paces away, but before the doctor could get up, the wretch was off. Kimmknirsch ran behind him over a fallow field, yelling "Hi! You're wanted—to help—Rosemarie—against Schlieker!"

He might more easily have made an impression on a boy who was paralyzed and deaf and dumb; Fritz dived into a dripping wilderness of shrubbery, into which the doctor did not intend to follow him.

He turned, and walked back to his motorcycle in a towering rage. His shoes were squelching with moisture and caked with clay. His knees ached from crawling and his hands were filthy. If he could have got hold of Hütefritz, he would have given the lad a sound Upper Pomeranian thrashing. But that was just the trouble, he couldn't get hold of the boy; he could neither question him nor thrash him. There seemed to be something fatal about this Rosemarie Thürke affair; whatever he attempted went wrong.

Hardly had he started the motorcycle than the boy leapt up from behind a hedge fifty yards away and gesticulated a scornful farewell. And as the doctor approached, he vanished like the little coward that he was!

There was no sense in trying again. The doctor rattled off in a fury, scattering mud and water as he went. He

reflected whether he should first change his clothes and then go to see the magistrate, or vice versa. He decided to change his clothes first.

But on that day Dr. George Kimmknirsch was completely out of luck. When he got to the magistrate's house, he was told that Herr Schulz had gone off to hold a session at Krüselin. It was not known when he would return, probably not before evening. And when he reached home, completely disgusted, and resolved to wash his hands of the whole affair, he found that no patient had appeared, but that the little magistrate had called and left a letter for him.

"Dear Doctor: Will you kindly meet Professor Kittguss at the two o'clock train? He will be carrying a large sum of money. Look after the old chap, and expect me about seven at the Archduke. You take an interest in the R. T. case; otherwise I would not bother you. Yours, etc."

And so, at five minutes to two, Dr. George Kimmknirsch stood on the platform and awaited Herr Professor Kittguss whom he did not know.

The train ran into the station, twenty minutes late as usual, and from it emerged four women and Lau, the old peddler of skins, but no one else.

Everything seemed to go wrong in this Thürke affair. Until the next train at seven o'clock, Dr. Kimmknirsch had nothing to do but wonder what had happened to the old gentleman and curse the magistrate who had subjected him to this further annoyance.

He was not much soothed by a professional visit to his patient, Philip Münzer, who was now really getting on quite well. The boy had turned his bed and sickroom into

a carpenter's shop and was busily carving wooden spoons for Stillfritz and for Kimmknirsch. The lad was happy—indeed, he was radiant; and the sight of him did in fact cheer the doctor up a little; all he wanted was to see his little friend and mistress again—just for a minute, couldn't he, Herr Doctor?

"Tomorrow, Philip, tomorrow for certain," lied the doctor against all his principles, and fled before the lad's anguished questions as to Rosemarie's welfare—questions to which he did not himself know any very satisfactory reply.

The rain came down in torrents, the wind whistled in the eaves and howled in the dining-room stove at the Archduke. The doctor had no other means of passing the time until the arrival of the seven o'clock train and the magistrate's return than by chatting to the toping old landlord, Stillfritz.

"Oh, stop it, Stillfritz," said the doctor at last, "I feel bad enough already. Get me a grog."

"There you are," said the astute landlord triumphantly, "I told you so. Everybody takes to drink—you will too."

Chapter Twenty-Two

In which Professor Kittguss makes Frau Müller anxious and the horizon reddens

IT SEEMED QUITE UNREAL to Professor Kittguss to be standing in his quiet study at No. 19 Akazienstrasse, as though he had returned to some far-distant epoch. And Frau Müller's greeting sounded equally unreal: "Thank God you are back again, Herr Professor! I began to think you were never coming back. But look at your collar—and your necktie! Your clothes are filthy and you've got thinner. Where is your bag? Yesterday morning someone came from the police to make inquiries about you. I was so frightened. Shall I get your dinner now or turn on your bath first? I suppose you will be settling down to work again now?"

An unfamiliar flow of words in that familiar room. But was it really so familiar? The Professor looked at the books, the papers on the writing table and the shelves, he smelt the air he knew so well, and drew a deep breath: "Could we have the window open, Frau Müller?"

"The window?" she said, and eyed him as though he

were some strange impersonation of Professor Kittguss. "But, Herr Professor, we only used to open the window in the bedroom. It is very stormy outside, and the papers might get blown about."

"We will have a window open all the same," said the Professor gently but firmly. "We must pack up the papers anyhow."

"Pack up the papers?" Full of evil forebodings, Frau Müller opened the window. A gust of wind blew in, the curtains bulged, the papers stirred and rustled as though they had come to life. "There you are," she said peevishly.

"We are probably going to move from here," said the Professor. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to make the necessary preparations during my absence, Frau Müller? I have to go away again tomorrow morning."

"Go away?—" asked Frau Müller with a bewildered air. "You are going to move?" she muttered. "Herr Professor," she went on with an effort, "is it something to do with that dreadful boy?"

"Yes," nodded the Professor, "the boy will be there. But he is a very good boy, Frau Müller."

"But your clothes are so dirty, Herr Professor," she wailed. "And what about your work?"

"Well," said the Professor genially, "I dare say I shall be able to get to work again there. But—I don't know yet; I have come to think rather differently about my work. We are going to live on a nice little farm. Frau Müller," he said, trying to console the disconsolate creature, "with horses and cows and pigs."

"Pigs!" she cried. "That horrible boy—I knew it, the

moment I saw him standing in the doorway. And the police have been making inquiries about you."

"My dear Frau Müller," said the Professor, "you are upset. I quite understand—so sudden a change in our way of life. It seemed strange to me at first. But when I was climbing over the fence in the forest—"

She stared at him and backed to the door. "Climbing over the fence," she repeated tonelessly.

"Well, well," said the Professor kindly, "I see we must have a good talk about all this later on. I shall be going off early tomorrow morning. And now I should like something to eat. And by the way, Frau Müller, I have been trying to remember all the way home where I left my keys."

"Your keys?—"

"Yes, I see the drawer where I keep my savings bank-book is locked, so my keys must be somewhere."

"Yes," she said slowly, and looked at him.

"Don't you know either? We must have a look for them. I want to draw out some money. I made a note of the amount. Here it is—yes, two thousand marks. I must get it the first thing tomorrow morning."

"For that boy?—"

"But, Frau Müller, it isn't just the boy—though he will of course be there. I have to think of my goddaughter, and some arrangement will have to be made with the Schliekers. And then I must pay back the money the magistrate lent me for my fare."

"I don't know anything about your keys," said the Widow Müller with sudden brusqueness. "I'll get your supper now, Herr Professor. And then you had better have a bath and a good sleep."

She eyed him doubtfully and departed. The Professor watched her go, pulled the handle of the drawer, which remained shut, and looked vaguely round the room. His gaze fell on what he had written last. He read: "In the year 110, the thirteenth year of Trajan's reign, the Nile rose only seven feet, as Harduinus proves from a contemporary coin. . . ."

It was four days since he had written those words, but it seemed more like four years. He shook his head and looked round him once again. How in the world would he spend his time in that dreary, lifeless room until the next morning? He gave another tug at the drawer. Locked. Still locked.

Neither the Professor nor his housekeeper slept well that night. Away in the country, at Unsadel, in the old cowshed, and on the top of the forest fence, the Professor's decision had seemed quite natural to him. But the expression on the Widow Müller's face made plain that it was nothing of the kind. There would be fresh conflicts and fresh difficulties.

But above all, where were the keys—that was the first and most important matter, where were they? The Professor would have to be at the bank by nine sharp, if he were to catch his train—and where were the keys? Did Frau Müller really know nothing about them? Her demeanor had been strange—very strange, she had been quite unlike her normal self.

He was well aware that there were persons called locksmiths, whose profession it was to open locks, but how was such a person to be found without Frau Müller's help? The Professor decided to have a serious talk with Frau Müller in the morning—the keys must be somewhere.

While the Professor was meditating in his study, Frau Müller was meditating in her kitchen. She did not, in fact, know where the keys were. But she did not need to know, for the object that the keys were to produce for Professor Kittguss—the bankbook—was in her possession! She had not had it long, only three hours, for she had taken it from the Professor's clothes in the bathroom.

The little magistrate had been very indignant with the Professor for his carelessness in leaving the book in his Berlin flat, whereas all the time it had been quietly reposing in his breast pocket.

It could hardly have been anywhere else. Four days before, the Professor had taken it out of his writing table and with the book in one hand and his black bag in the other, he had made his way to the savings bank. There he had drawn out two hundred and fifty marks, the money had found its way into his pocketbook, the pocketbook into his right breast pocket, and the bankbook into the left one. Then the Professor went off to the railway station to encounter all those adventures we have narrated here.

The bankbook was forgotten, and Frau Müller was sitting up over it in bed, with the light still on, fascinated by the sum total recorded there. It was really a fantastic figure for a savings bankbook that was so cavalierly treated. And all this was to be handed over to those robbers, and to that abominable boy. Never—the Professor deserved better than that. The Widow Müller switched off the light and went to sleep, with the book clutched in her hand, firmly resolved that such a thing should never happen.

The Professor awoke early, soon after seven, but Frau

Müller must have awakened earlier still, for the breakfast was already laid. The coffee stood under a glass ball, two eggs lay in a basket under a warm woolly cover, and there were real Berlin rolls, fresh butter, marmalade—all just as the Professor liked it.

Notwithstanding the wind and rain outside, the Professor breakfasted with satisfaction and an excellent appetite. Then he got up and called for Frau Müller, but she did not come. Perhaps she had gone out for a moment on some household affairs; the Professor decided to wait, though it was already half-past eight.

He paced impatiently up and down. He ought to have started long ago, for his train would not wait and he must catch it, but she did not come. It was strange how quickly the time passed, and stranger still how angry the Professor became with his faithful old housekeeper. It almost seemed as though the woman had purposely kept out of the way in order to avoid an explanation about the keys.

About twenty minutes past nine the Professor decided to wait no longer. He had not a minute to spare. Indeed, he would very likely miss the train.

The Professor closed the door of his flat. The simplest way is always the best way. He would go to the savings bank, the clerk would recognize him, the money after all was his and he could get it. It was the fate of savings bankbooks to get mislaid; his case would not be unique.

It was in a mood of rather angry resolve, for he had been a good deal ruffled by his housekeeper's tiresome behavior, that he marched up to the counter and said curtly: "I am Professor Kittguss of 19 Akazienstrasse. I have mislaid my bankbook. Would you please give me two thousand marks? I will give you a receipt for it."

The clerk behind the counter peered at him through shining spectacles, and pursed his lips, as though about to whistle.

"Quick, please," said the Professor gravely, "I have to catch a train in half an hour."

"Certainly! Certainly!" said the clerk hastily, assuming an obvious mask of affability that struck even the Professor. "This gentleman deals with lost bankbooks—would you be so kind as to follow him?"

He looked at the Professor with rather a nervous smile.

"Pardon me, Herr Professor," said an older and imposing personage in a morning coat, who had suddenly appeared, "may I lead the way?"

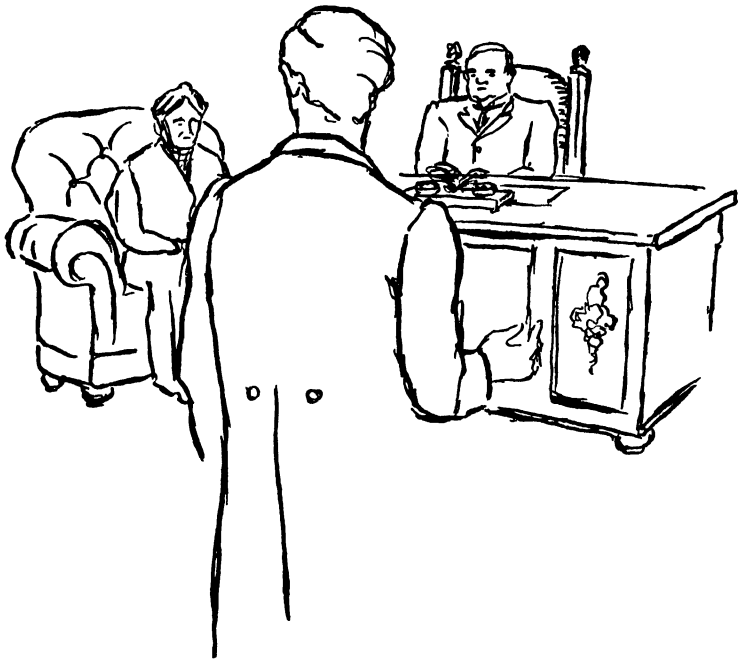
"But you must be quick," said the Professor abruptly.

"We shall not keep you two minutes, Herr Professor," said the other gravely, and piloted the Professor out of the front office into a passage. Two other gentlemen followed the Professor. The leader knocked at a door. "Herr Director Kunze," he said in a low tone as he entered, "here is the customer in question."

The Professor stepped into the room. Behind a writing table sat a fat red-faced man with a bald head, who looked up at him expectantly. And beside this complete stranger, in a chair, sat—the Professor could not believe his eyes—the Widow Müller! Müller, for whom he had been waiting all this time, her face wet with tears!

"Herr Professor," she sobbed, and started from her chair, "do forgive me, I had to do it. I've been with you twenty years, and we've saved such a nice lot of money, and now you're going to give it away to these ruffians! Herr Professor, you must please not mind, but I've told these gentlemen all about it, and they agree."

"Stop!" said the director, raising his hand. "We have, of course, formed no opinion. What this woman, your housekeeper, has told us, is a little confused. However! Pray, Professor, take a seat, and explain how your savings bankbook got into your housekeeper's hands."



"Woman," said the Professor reproachfully, "you are going to make me lose my train. And Herr Schulz, the magistrate, will be expecting me with the money."

"Magistrate," whispered the two men, as though he had spoken a magic word, and Frau Müller dried her tears.

Then followed a long debate, a telephone call to Kri-

witz, which was transferred to Krüselin, while Frau Müller wept intermittently.

The Professor got his money and an apology as well—but he did not catch his train. There was nothing to do but wait for the next one.

At the station under the solitary gas lamp, two gentlemen, Herr Schulz and Dr. Kimmknirsch awaited him. "The Professor at last! What have you been up to all this time?"

The three men walked side by side in the darkness down the main street in Kriwitz to the Archduke. It was twenty minutes past seven, just the right time for supper. The Professor was telling his story, and as he talked Dr. George Kimmknirsch caught sight of someone. The Professor saw nothing, the magistrate did not know who it could be—but there, at the corner of the station, was the lad with the tousled hair with whom he had most reluctantly played a game of tag that morning.

Hütefritz made up his mind to follow the three men. He wanted to get hold of the magistrate, since Rosemarie's message concerned him alone. The boy detested the sight of the young doctor who had driven Rosemarie in the car—and now here was this old scarecrow again who always turned up when he wasn't wanted. Would the three of them never separate?

He followed them as far as the Archduke, into which they disappeared. He did not feel like going into a crowded dining room to deliver his message—he would wait by the outside door.

The two younger men were delighted with the Professor's story.

"I thought something was up, my dear Herr Professor,

when I got that telephone call from Berlin, but I hadn't imagined all this. Well, here's to the Widow Müller! Just think, Herr Professor, if she had been thievishly inclined—"

"But why should she be?" asked the Professor in a puzzled tone. "She has been with me for more than twenty years."

"That's just why," said the magistrate, as he looked almost gloomily at the total in the bankbook. "This is a sum of money that might put a strain on the most tender conscience. Stillfritz, ink and pen and paper. My dear Herr Professor, I never did believe in overtaxing one's guardian angel. Allow me to unburden him a little. Now give me your bankbook. There—I see you have drawn out two thousand, two hundred and fifty marks today—here are fifty marks; no, twenty marks are quite enough for you, aren't they, Doctor?"

"Quite," said Dr. Kimmknirsch.

"Very well then, I will give you a receipt on the spot, Herr Professor."

"That is not at all necessary, I am so grateful to you."

"It is most necessary. Well, Stillfritz?"

"There's a boy outside, sir—that wants to speak to you urgently."

"Confound it," said the magistrate resignedly, "another murder, I suppose." He got up and left.

The doctor and the Professor eyed each other and smiled a little awkwardly.

"Have you known my godchild for long?"

"No, I only met her a few days ago."

"So did I," said the Professor. "Are you a doctor?"

"Yes," said the young doctor, "a doctor without a practice."

"That will come. It will all come," said the Professor encouragingly. "You did not make my godchild's acquaintance in your capacity as doctor?"

"Partly," said Dr. Kimmknirsch.

"Oh—" said the Professor in alarm.

But before he could say any more the magistrate hurried back.

"Doctor, there's nothing else to do, you must get Tangelmann's car at once. We must go out to Unsadel immediately."

"Indeed?" asked the doctor and jumped up.

"Is it?—" began the Professor.

"Yes, a message from Rosemarie Thürke. Schlieker was lying; she hadn't run away. It's a nasty story if it's true. He's keeping her shut up, and he's stolen your money, Herr Professor. Come along, I will fetch Constable Gneis and put this money under lock and key. We'll meet here. Stillfritz, let the boy sit by the stove and give him something to eat. Now, Doctor, be as quick as you can. I feel very uneasy."

It was almost an hour before they started. Gneis was not to be found at once, and it proved difficult to extract the garage key from Tangelmann, who was asleep. The car sped into the darkness, with doctor and professor, magistrate and constable, and Hütefritz.

The roadside hedges stood up like ghosts in the glare of the headlights. The west wind roared in their faces, and the little magistrate shouted, "It all looks quite peaceful. But I've got a damned unpleasant feeling in my insides. We shouldn't have sent her back."

No one replied, the car sped on.

"Hi!" cried the constable. "Stop!"

The doctor jammed on his brakes. "What's the matter?" he asked angrily.

The constable raised a finger. "Listen. . . ."

"What is it?"

A faint booming sound. . . .

"The bell, the Unsadel bell. . . . Look, sir. . . . Over there. . . ."

"What in God's name is the matter, Gneis?"

But they all saw it. . . .

It was as though a blood-red moon had risen. Then the moon dissolved, and tall, bright red tongues of flame shot up into the darkness and a dusky glare stained the horizon.

It was a fire—a fire in Unsadel!

"And Rosemarie is shut up there!" cried Hütefritz.

"Hurry, Doctor, hurry!" shouted the magistrate, and clapped him on the shoulder.

The car leapt forward like a live thing toward the deepening glare.

Chapter Twenty-Three

In which Rosemarie Thürke fights her battle alone

STORM AND RAIN, lowering clouds, a gray interminable day. Rosemarie paced up and down her little room. Yes, if the doctor did come now, she would call out to him and implore him to take her away. Never mind if he was angry with her. She did not care. Her fear was all that mattered now. As the hours passed and the rain pelted down and the wind roared, fear laid hold upon her; it whistled through the keyhole, it rattled against the windows. Fear stalked about the house. Her fear was not of Paul Schlieker. He fetched her silently from her room and set her to some task, stood darkly at her side, coughing, and then shut her up again. It was fear of the woman, Mali, who strayed about the house, silent, pale, and vacant, crossed the yard and fumbled for three minutes on a blank wall for a door handle that was not there. Her face was so utterly without expression that it seemed as though an inner and consuming flame had dried it up.

The woman came into the passage where Rosemarie—under Schlieker's charge—was mashing potatoes for the

pigs. She had a bottle in her hand, an open bottle of petroleum. She stopped, ignored the others and looked about her as though in search of something. Then she suddenly tipped the bottle upside down, spattering the oil on the floor. She stared down blankly, as though her mind was elsewhere and she did not see what she had done. And then it seemed to Rosemarie that something like a gleam of satisfaction spread over her face, the faintest semblance of a smile.

Schlieker leapt up with a curse and snatched at the bottle, but the woman held it fast. He tugged and pulled and in his voice too there was a ring of fear as he shouted: "Mali, Mali! Don't be a fool! What are you doing?"

Paul noticed the girl's eyes upon him. The bottle was empty, he had not been able to get it out of those small, frail hands. He seized Rosemarie by the shoulders and pushed her silently through the kitchen and the children's room into her bedroom. The bolt shot home and Rosemarie with a gasp of relief laid her head against the cool windowpanes. Outside, she could hear Schlieker talking excitedly, but she paid no attention to what he said. She was possessed by a shapeless fear of something that was coming closer.

Allowing for every eventuality, the magistrate must arrive by seven o'clock, or by eight at the latest. If only she could hold out until then, if only nothing happened before he came! But what could happen?

Slowly, very slowly, it grew dark and the house was deathly still. She would have been so thankful now if a childish hand had thrown gravel against the window! But

the garden was empty, the dripping trees were swaying and creaking under the onslaught of the wind. The lake was dotted with small white tufts of foam. Then the rain began once more.

She reminded herself that she must tell Schlieker that her parcel of underclothes was still in the sand pit. But when he fetched her out in the darkness to milk the cows, she said nothing. It made no difference now, the end was very near at hand. In an hour the magistrate would certainly arrive.

When she had finished the milking, she fed the cattle and rubbed them down. Then she kindled the fire and cooked something for supper. They ate alone in the kitchen, Schlieker on one side of the kitchen table, she on the other with the little oil lamp between them. Dark and menacing shadows filled the kitchen. Mali was not there, not a sound could be heard in the entire house, except the wind against the windowpanes, and now and again the scratch of a fork on a plate. Any company, even Paul's, would have been more welcome in that accursed house than the prison solitude of her room. But Schlieker sent her away immediately after the meal. She was not even allowed to wash the dishes.

"You can go to bed," he said and seemed to listen. Then the bolt rattled home and he had gone.

Again she stood at the window looking out into the night, but the blackness now confronted her like a wall. She felt, with the vagueness of a dream, as though she had spent her whole life behind a barred window, with a sightless view on to a world that must be there, but of which she could see nothing but this blank black wall.

"The magistrate must be on his way now," she said to

herself, for the kitchen clock had just struck half-past seven.

The house was deathly still, but she thought she could hear a rustling in the walls as if the beams were bending to their burden for the last time before they collapsed forever. Deathly still, surely the roof was cracking under some fearful strain that must bring the house down. She knew it, only a second more, and an avalanche of stone and plaster would overwhelm her. Instinctively she hunched her shoulders—then a shriek from the next room broke the breathless silence.

She shuddered and cried out in answer, but controlled herself once more. The avalanche had not fallen, Mali had had another fit, and that was all.

She waited for a while, to see whether Schlieker would fetch her out to help, but all was still; no one came. She laid her head against the wall—not a sound. Wearily she sank on to her bed and shivered as she pulled the coverlet over her knees.

Where could the magistrate be? He ought to have been here long ago. Would he never come?

Suddenly she was conscious of Schlieker standing before her, with the red stable lantern in his hand—a changed, terrified, and stricken Schlieker.

"Marie, Marie! Wake up! My wife's gone. I was outside and heard a footstep. She's gone and the stable's open. Come and help me find her."

He coughed and choked. She leapt to her feet, all her fear and weariness gone, the hour was at hand!

"Was it Mali outside?"

"No, it can't have been. I'll look in the stable, you search the house."

He dashed out with the lantern and left her in the dark. She felt her way into the kitchen and groped for the kitchen lamp, but could not find it.

"I could escape now," she thought, as she went on feeling for the lamp. Then she grew impatient, and ran across the passage into her father's room.

"Mali! Mali!"

No answer. She came back into the passage, and felt a chill gust of air: the trapdoor to the attic must be open. She climbed up the ladder, and with her head just through the trap, she stopped.

The attic floor was ablaze with rustling, swaying, blue-edged tongues of flame and among them stood Mali, in her nightgown.

"Paul!" shrieked Rosemarie down the ladder. "Come here! The house is on fire!"

She scrambled through the hatch, ran to the woman through the licking flames that now covered the floor while Mali remained rigid and senseless in the glare, but smiling faintly.

"Mali!" she shrieked, "come away—quick!"

"Listen," said the woman, "how it crackles! We're free!"

A gust of wind tossed a spurt of flame into the semblance of a bunch of fiery tulips. Rosemarie watched spellbound. The blossoms swayed on long blue stalks.

"Look," whispered the woman. "We're free."

Something stung Rosemarie's hand—a white and quivering flame had darted up beside her. She seized the woman, who seemed loath to follow.

"Quick," whispered Rosemarie.

Below, in the flickering glare that now shone through the trapdoor, stood the large black form of Schlieker.

"I—" he began. He shook his head. "I never meant this to happen. No, no," he repeated impatiently. "Now it's all up with everything."

He looked at Rosemarie. A glare that grew redder every moment fell on him from above. This was the crackling and rustling that Rosemarie had heard from her room.

"I've always had bad luck," said the man slowly. "And now you've brought me the worst luck of all, Marie."

He stood irresolute. Suddenly he burst into a laugh, stretched out his arms and said, with a strange sob in his voice: "Well, I'm done for. The house is on fire and it was you that did it!"

He went out of the passage, and left her standing with the rigid, staring creature at her side.

When Rosemarie had dressed the helpless woman, and got her out of the house, the flames were already bursting from the roof. Shouts could be heard from the village, and the bell began to boom. The wind hurtled down upon the fire, ripped away great shreds of flame and whirled them over the stable roof out into the night.

The cows lowed in their stalls. "The cattle ought to be let out," thought Rosemarie, so numb that she felt completely calm. But she did not move; she could not leave the woman at her side.

The flames hissed and crackled as they soared up into the night sky, but the windows on the ground floor were still dark.

"Father's things ought to be taken out," thought Rosemarie once more, but her limbs still refused to move.

Through the windows of the Schliekers' bedroom she could see a scattering shower of sparks, then crash after crash of blazing beams, and the clink of broken glass.

Soon the first villagers came running up, shouting, panting, scurrying in all directions before dashing across to the stable.

"Out of the way, you women!" someone shouted as he pushed past Rosemarie.

Slowly, step by step, Rosemarie led the woman out of the rain of sparks into the garden. It was an effort to do anything, even to walk.

She stopped at a bench and sat down, drawing Mali down beside her. The house was a glowing, blazing torch. They sat and stared at it and did not move.

Here their friends found them, Professor Kittguss and Dr. Kimmknirsch, Herr Schulz and Hütefritz, staring into the flames, tearless and silent.

"Did you do it?" an inner voice asked Rosemarie. And again and again the question came: "Did I?"

Chapter Twenty-Four

In which there is eating, drinking, and dancing; but two persons stand aside

NINE MONTHS IS NOT A GREAT WHILE, but a great deal can happen between October and June. And it is now June, June of 1913, and on the meadows by Unsadel lake the hay is being cut. On the rooftree of a house by Unsadel lake stands the festal staff, topped with a tuft of pine needles and a bunch of fluttering ribbons. Straten, the red-faced master carpenter, has pronounced the blessing that invokes a golden table for the master and a well-stocked larder for the mistress.

The workmen nudge each other and grin a little, for it is indeed an unusual pair on whose heads these blessings have been asked: an elderly gentleman called Professor Gotthold Kittguss, and a very young maid called Rosemarie Thürke. But there was kindness and not malice in those grins; the men had learned to like the owners of that house, not merely in gratitude for many a cigar and glass of beer, but even more for kindly thoughts and friendly words.

They had knocked off work and were standing about in little groups, waiting expectantly for the gentry to lead the way to the inn, where the party was to be held to celebrate the roofing of the house. Rosemarie was still talking to Philip whom she wanted to persuade to come too.

"Philip," she said, "my dear Philip, do come with us today, there's going to be a little dance."

But the lad shook his head. "No, Rosemarie, I shall stay with the house. The house mustn't be left alone."

She looked at him and then she laughed: "Dear old Philip, all right, I'll send out some meat and fish for you and Bello. Come along, Godfather, Philip won't come, he doesn't want to leave the house alone."

"Quite right too, Fräulein," said the foreman, and took his place with her and the Professor at the head of the procession, while just behind them two concertinas burst into wailing music. "A growing house has to get used to life gradually. Otherwise it will never be a house, but only a stone box."

Philip listened and watched the procession depart. Then he climbed a ladder and perched on one of the roof beams. But he was not looking out over the village, whence he could now hear bursts of laughter and music from among the houses—he was looking out across the lake.

The lake lay like a burnished mirror in the sunshine, but when Philip had watched it for a while, he detected the black speck for which he had been watching.

Then Philip clambered down from his point of vantage on the roof, fetched Bello and walked down to the water-side. In the meantime the black speck had become a boat, which the occupant was rowing gently along the shore. Philip picked up a stone and threw it toward the boat. It dropped into the water a few yards short.

Philip nodded with satisfaction; that was his tacit pact with the oarsman, one Paul Schlieker from Biestow. Thus far and no farther!

Philip and Bello then patrolled the shore until the boat had slowly disappeared round the Biestow headland. They both kept steadfast watch and ward, although they might have spared themselves the trouble. For the man in that boat would never set foot on land, though none stood there to hinder him. It had been the scene of his disaster. A bewitched, accursed land from which he had escaped. Why should he ever go back to it again?

That had been a dreadful night when he fled from the flames into the black and storm-swept forest and he had lain a long and bitter time in hospital, sick to death and desolate. He was still young and he could learn—and he had somehow grasped the fact that a limit is set to the

power of evil on this earth, and that in the end the works of evil devour each other.

He had not reformed, far from it. He had now taken to peddling fish; with cart and horse and his load of fish he drove over the countryside, cheating his customers when occasion offered, indulging the petty delights of a bully who had seen better days.

But though he had not reformed, he was more sensible. He had come to terms with his adversaries and he had been paid a good sum of money—a great deal of money considering the way he had mismanaged his affairs. And in return, he had to pledge himself never again to molest Rosemarie Thürke or her friends. Well, he had no intention of breaking that agreement, he would never row his boat ashore, whether that idiot boy threw stones at him or not. But he looked at the rising house and could not resist it; whenever he had time he rowed over and looked at it. Rebuilt from the ashes. His wife was still in the asylum and would not come back to him. If he could torture no one else, he could torture himself.

The boat slid slowly round the bend, and the house passed out of sight. Trudi Beier soon appeared with a basket and brought Philip a share of the feast. When she had gone, he climbed through a window of the building into one of the rooms consisting at present of only four bare walls. But he sat down on an upturned pail and ate his meal in company with the dog. The room in which he sat was to be his room, his very own. Four walls and a window built specially for Philip Münzer!

The darkness slowly fell. . . .

Outside Otto Beier's inn stood a motorcar; not Brewer Tangelmann's old bus, but Dr. George Kimmknirsch's

new car. The doctor had come out from Kriwitz to be present at his friends' party, and he had brought Herr Schulz. Many of the villagers were standing outside Beier's dance hall, peering at the guests within; beside the Professor sat the magistrate, and little Rosemarie Thürke sat between Dr. Kimmknirsch and Hütefritz. The Professor had just sat down, he had made a speech and the old gentleman was much moved. He thanked everyone who had helped in the work, and he went on to say that they had built much more than a house, reminding his hearers of the old saying that we build our house not merely here, but also for eternity upon the other bank. He told them that he was already a very old man, who had thought his life was over and had only a little more scribbling left to do. But here in Unsadel something more than an old house had been burnt down, a selfish life had also been destroyed. He fancied a good deal else had been destroyed too—here Rosemarie nodded—and now the garland was fluttering above the new rooftree.

A rather unusual speech for such a ceremony—but there was a message in it for all. Not only Rosemarie, but her young friends, all nodded. And the workmen nodded—in fact the speech was distinctly popular.

And when dinner was over, the concertinas came into action, and the young folks began to dance.

"No, Herr Straten," said the young doctor. "I know quite well that it's your right to have the first dance with Fräulein Thürke, but this time you must stand aside in my favor—I have to go away to a confinement at once. Or I shan't get a dance at all."

"Right you are, Herr Doctor," laughed Straten. "I'm old enough to wait."

So the pair began to dance. They danced once round, twice round, dived through the throng, stopped in the doorway and stood with quickened breath looking out into the June night.

"Shall we?—" asked the young doctor.

"Yes," she replied, and they ran through the twilit garden down to the lake.

On the shore they stood still and listened. From the hall came sounds of merriment and song. The night wind rustled in the reeds, and a little to the left, across the lake, they could see a tiny reddish glimmer.

"That's Philip's lantern," said Rosemarie, pointing, "there's the house."

"Yes, there it is," said the doctor.

"Do you think it's too far away?" asked Rosemarie rather anxiously.

The doctor reflected, then he answered somewhat mysteriously, "It's certainly far away—but not too far. I have a car now."

This time it was Rosemarie's turn to reflect. "Is a car worth the expense?" she asked doubtfully.

"Yes," he replied. "Faulmann has discovered he is really getting old, and says he'll be glad to let me have his country practice. The confinement this evening is one of his cases."

"Oh," said Rosemarie. Then both were silent. They were standing at least a yard away from each other, and both seemed deep in thought.

"Yes," said the doctor at last, turning abruptly toward her. "The country people take a long time to get used to a new face—it will be at least two or three years before I

get a decent practice. I mean one that will support me and—"

He stopped, and looked at her intently.

"Oh, well, Herr Doctor," said she, standing up very straight, "I'm only just seventeen. . . ."

And then the two of them, hand in hand, walked slowly from the darkness back to the lights and gaiety of the dance hall.

Epilogue

My account of Professor Kittguss' studies is not, I fear, first hand. It is based on the biography of Johann Albrecht Bengels by Dr. Oscar Wächter (Stuttgart, 1865); and a work entitled *The Interpretation of St. John the Divine or Rather of Jesus Christ*, set forth by Johann Albrecht Bengels (Stuttgart, 1746).

With this limitation, that relates only to Professor Kittguss' work and not his character, the incidents and characters of this story are entirely imaginary.

The author proposes to continue the story in a later volume.

H.F.

NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HANS FALLADA *was born in 1893 in Griefswald in Pomerania and lived the first eighteen years of his life in big cities. But he moves around cities with distressed unease. It is only over plowed fields that he walks surely and happily.*

Fallada says of his childhood: "I was a crazy scamp, always falling downstairs, pretty much of a good-for-nothing, and very early in life finding an escape in the fantasy world of books."

Very young, he left this "fantasy world" and went to the country as an agricultural student. He loved farm life, but he could not make a success of it. He could handle cattle—but not men.

So back he went into his world of books. He wrote two novels, with little success. Then came a new beginning—and Little Man What Now?

Today the Fallada family lives on a little farm in Pomerania and its most famous member has realized the dream that he described when he was living in the city: to spend his days on the soil, creating life from the earth, and his evenings in the world of paper, creating his universally beloved books.

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