

**IN PRESSEL'S GARDEN HOUSE:
A Tale from Old Tübingen** *

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It was in the twenties of the nineteenth century and even if worldly events were different from today, nevertheless the sun shone and the breeze blew over the peaceful green valley of the Neckar no differently from yesterday and today. A beautiful joyous day of early summer had dawned upon the Swabian highland and stood in festive mood over the town of Tübingen, castle and vineyards, the Neckar and its tributary the Ammer, the Seminary and the Seminary Church. The sun watched its image in the fresh shining river and sent playful delicate wisps of cloud across the bright sunny pavement of the market-square.

In the Theological Seminary the boisterous young men had just risen from the midday meal. In chattering, laughing, quarrelling groups the students strolled along the echoing corridors and across the paved courtyard which a jagged shadow divided obliquely. Pairs of friends stood in the windows and open bedroom doorways; the beautiful warm sunshine was vividly reflected in the youthful faces, whether joyful or serious or sprightly or dreamy and in ominous incandescent youthfulness there glowed many a still boyish brow whose dreams are still alive today and whose names are still revered today by grateful and enthusiastic youths.

In one of the corridor windows leaning out towards the Neckar stood the young student Eduard Mörike gazing happily towards the green noonday countryside. A pair of swallows soared by in joyous playful arcs in the sunny atmosphere, and the young man smiled without thinking, with a curve of his wilful handsome lips.

It happened not infrequently to the twenty year old, beloved by his friends for his inexhaustible bubbling good humour, that in happy good moments the whole environment froze into an enchanted image in which he stood with amazed eyes and felt the mysterious beauty of the world like an admonition and almost like a delicate, secret pain. Just as a prepared salt solution or a cold still pond needs only a gentle touch in order to congeal suddenly into crystals in rigid enchantment, so in the young poet's mind with that flight of swallows had the green silhouette of the tree tops and the slightly hazy mountain landscape beyond congealed into a transfigured and purified picture which spoke to his delicate senses with the exalted

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solemnly gentle voice of a higher poetic reality. Now the joyous light played more beautifully and more playfully in the heavy leafy tree tops; the chain of mountains in the veiled distance flowed across with more soul and significance; from the river bank the grass and rushes smiled up with more enchantment and the flowing river spoke in darker more powerful tones as if coming from primordial dreams of the gods, as if the green of trees and mountains, the murmuring river and the passing clouds were all wooing impetuously for redemption and eternal existence in the soul of the poet.

The shy youth did not yet fully comprehend the imploring voices, still untouched was his inner calling to be a transfiguring mirror for the beauty of the world. All of this lay only half conscious in the presentiments of this handsome joyous and yet reflective forehead and the awareness of an isolating distinction with its pains had not yet penetrated the poet's soul. To be sure he would often suddenly flee to his friends from such ghostly enchanted hours with an outbreak of pain and need of consolation, like a frightened child and in nervous loneliness would furiously demand music and conversation and hearty sociability. As yet the melancholy hidden beneath a hundred moods and the unsatisfied longing beneath all pleasures had remained foreign to his consciousness. And his mouth and eyes still smiled with unbroken *joie de vie*, and of those underlying aspects of constraint and shyness towards life, which we are familiar with in the image of the beloved poet, none of these had yet come into the pure countenance, except perhaps as a fleeting passing shadow.

While he stood looking and with delicate intuitive senses breathing in the young summer day, for moments completely alone and transported beyond time, a student came running down the stairs in a flurry of noise. He saw the one standing lost in thought, and came running up with stormy leaps and struck both hands violently upon the narrow shoulders of the dreamer.

Frightened and shaken out of deep dreams, Mörike turned around, ready to defend himself, a shade of insult in his face while his large gentle eyes still reflected the glory of his brief enchantment. But his smile immediately returned as he seized one of the hands around his neck and held it fast.

“Waiblinger! I should have known. What are you doing? Where are you running off to?”

Wilhelm Waiblinger's bright blue eyes blazed at him and his thick open lips changed into a pout like a spoiled and rather blasé feminine mouth.

“Where?” he exclaimed in his loud restless way. “Where then shall I flee to get away from you predestined preacher potbellies, unless to my Chinese refuge up in the vineyards, or perhaps better straight to some pub or other to drench my soul with beer and wine until only the highest peaks peer over the dirt and mud? O sea urchin, you might be the only one with whom I could go. But perhaps after all you

too are merely a slanderer and lazy philistine. Well, I have no one else left in this hell, I haven't a friend and pretty soon no one will be willing to walk with me. Am I not a clown, a scabby egoist and hopeless drunkard? Am I not a traitor who sells the souls of his friends to publisher Franckl in Stuttgart, a ducat for each miserable soul?"

Mörrike smiled and gazed into his friend's nervous and excited face which was so familiar to him and yet so strange with its mixture of brutal openness and pathetic need to show off. The long flowing locks of hair with which Waiblinger had appeared in Tübingen and which had brought him so much fame and mockery had been removed for some time. In an emotional moment he had had them cut off by the wife of an acquaintance.

"Well, Waiblinger," Mörrike said slowly, "you don't make things easy for others. A while ago you sacrificed your hair, but you seem to have forgotten that you made a resolution to drink no more beer before lunch".

With an exaggerated gesture of disdain, the other looked at him and tossed back his athletic head.

"Hell, now you too are starting to preach. That's the last straw for me. It's a lousy mess. But I tell you, anointed by the Lord, one day you will be sitting in a stinking country parish and will slave seven years for the ugly daughter of your master and you will put on a pot belly in the process and will sell the memory of your days for a mess of potage and you will deny the friend of your youth for the sake of a salary increase. For behold, it will be a disgrace and mortal sin to be considered a friend of Waiblinger whose name shall be obliterated in the memory of the good and pious. Sea urchin, you are uncanny, and it's my curse that I have to be your friend, for you too consider me beyond the pale, and when in the depths of despair I come to you and throw myself upon your mercy, then you reproach me for having drunk beer! No, I have only one friend left, only one, and I am going to him. He is like me and his shirt hangs out of his trousers, and for twenty years he has been as mad as I soon will be."

He stopped, tugged violently on his long scarf that he tucked into his vest and suddenly continued in a much gentler tone, almost beseeching: "I tell you, I'm going to Hölderlin. I hope you'll join me?"

Mörrike pointed with his hand through the open window with a broad sweeping gesture. "Just take a peek out there! That is so beautiful, the way everything lies at peace breathing in the sun. That is the way Hölderlin saw it once, when he composed his ode to the Neckar valley. Yes, of course, I'll join you." He walked ahead but Waiblinger stopped a moment looking out, as if Mörrike had really for the first time shown him the beauty of the familiar picture. Then hurrying up he laid his hand on his friend's arm, nodded several times reflectively and his nervous countenance had become tense and still.

“Are you angry with me?” he asked abruptly.

Mörike only laughed and strode on.

“Yes, it is beautiful out there,” Waiblinger continued, “and there perhaps Hölderlin composed his finest pieces, as he began to seek the Greece of his soul in his native land. Anyway you understand that better than I do. You can quite calmly pick up a piece of beauty like that and carry it away and then let it beam forth again. I can’t do that, not yet, I cannot be so calm and still and so damned patient. Perhaps sometime later when I have become old and cold and finished raging.”

They stepped out onto the Seminary courtyard and crossed the shadow boundary. Waiblinger removed his hat and eagerly breathed in the warm sunny atmosphere. They walked down the street past quiet old houses whose green wooden shutters were closed on the south side against the midday heat. They walked down to the house of carpenter Zimmer, where a neatly piled load of fresh pine boards glistened in the shiny warmth and spread a fragrant aroma. The house door stood open and all was quiet, for the master was still observing his noonday break.

As the youths entered the house and turned to the stairs that led up to the mad poet’s turret room, a door opened in the dark hall. Out of a sun-saturated living room soft light penetrated outwards in bundles of rays, and in that radiance appeared a young girl, daughter of the carpenter.

“Good day, Fräulein Lotte,” said Mörike amiably.

Blinded by the light she peered into the dark space, then she came closer. “Hello gentlemen. Oh it’s you? Hello Herr Waiblinger; yes he is upstairs”.

“We want to take him for a walk, if we may?” said Waiblinger with an engaging voice, which he used to all pretty young girls.

“That is a good idea with this beautiful weather. Are you gentlemen going again to Pressel’s garden house?”

“Yes indeed, Fräulein Lotte. Can someone perhaps fetch him from there later? I’m just asking. If it’s not possible, we ourselves will bring him back. It’s always nice to come into your house, Fräulein”.

“Not at all! I’ll come myself and fetch him But don’t let him stay too long in the hot sun, its not good for him.”

“Thanks, I’ll keep that in mind. *Au revoir* then.”

She disappeared and with her the flood of light retreated behind the living room door. The two students climbed the stairs and found the door to Hölderlin’s room

half-open. With the slight sense of shyness and awe that he always felt before this threshold, in spite of repeated visits, Mörrike approached slowly. Waiblinger stepped ahead quickly and knocked on the door- jamb and since there was no answer, he cautiously pushed the door further open, as it gently creaked in its hinges and both entered.

In the very simple but pretty bright room whose windows looked upon the Neckar they saw the tall figure of the stricken poet leaning in a window, gazing down upon the river flowing past directly beneath the turret. Hölderlin stood in shirtsleeves, his shapely neck bare, his head slightly inclined towards the river. Next to the window stood the desk; goose quills stood in a container but one was lying obliquely upon several pieces of paper covered with writing. A gentle draught came from the window and rustled the pages.

At the sound the poet turned around and became aware of those who had entered, gazing at them with his pure beautiful eyes. Meanwhile his glance fell first upon Mörrike, whom he did not seem to recognize.

Embarrassed the latter made a little bow and said timidly: “Good day, Herr Librarian. How are you?”

The poet cast his eyes on the floor, let his eyes sink from the windowsill and bowed very deeply while murmuring incomprehensible words of humility. Again and again he bowed in eerie mechanical resignation, bent his handsome slightly greying head deeply, placing his hands together on his chest.

Waiblinger stepped forward, placed his hand on the other’s arm and said: “Just relax, revered Herr Librarian.”

Hölderlin bowed again deeply and mumbled half audibly: “Yes your Royal Majesty. As your Majesty wishes.”

And as he looked Waiblinger in the eyes, he recognized his friend and frequent visitor. He stopped bowing, offered his hand and became calm.

“We’re going for a walk,” the student said to him in a voice, which in the presence of the patient had lost some of its irritable and uneasy character. In fact Waiblinger in the company of the revered shade displayed a peculiar kindness otherwise foreign to him, and a gentle superiority for he lived *vis-à-vis* no other being in such an equable and loving relationship as to the mentally ill poet who was more than thirty years older and whom he knew how to handle, now gentle and consoling like a good child, now serious and respectful like a noble friend.

With amazement and embarrassed emotion the student Mörrike watched the way his impetuous and arrogant friend attended the sick poet with a rare delicate sympathy and with a skill acquired by assured practice. Waiblinger appeared to know

his way around with exactitude in Hölderlin's room. From a hook behind the door he brought the frock coat of the mental patient, from a drawer he brought forth his woollen scarf and he helped the obedient patient into his clothes as a mother does with her child. With his handkerchief he wiped the dust from Hölderlin's knees. He found the latter's large black hat and carefully brushed it clean and all the while he kept talking to him and cheering him up: "Now then, Herr Librarian, that's it. Yes indeed. Now there you are, that's the way. Then we shall go outside and to the trees and flowers. It's a fine day today. Now just put on the hat, *s'il vous plait*." To all this, the old poet replied nothing except sometimes in a polite distracted tone the words: "Your Grace commands. *Je vous remerci mille fois*, Herr von Waiblinger." He let himself be looked after and willingly stood still and his venerable face with its only partially distorted noble and handsome features seemed to watch, now full of distracted indifference, now in a kind of inner amused exalted superiority.

Meanwhile Mörrike had stepped up to the desk and without taking the page in his hands he read, as he stood, one of the manuscripts lying open. In metrically perfect well constructed verses there stood outlined a piece of the deranged poet's shadow life: fleeting thought often interrupted by nonsense and soft laments, among them images of vivid acuity in a sensitive cultivated language full of music but over and over again distorted and destroyed by words and sentences suddenly appearing in a harmless leathern bureaucratic style.

"Well I guess we can go now," exclaimed Waiblinger when they were ready, and Hölderlin willingly followed, but not without repeating as they left: "As my Lord the Baron commands. Your Grace's obedient servant".

Thin and tall, Friedrich Hölderlin walked down the stairs behind Waiblinger, across the fenced-in courtyard and along the narrow street, his large hat pulled down close to his eyes, as he softly mumbled to himself and apparently without a glance at the surrounding world. But at the Neckar Bridge where two little barefoot boys crouched playing with a dead lizard, the tall, dignified figure stopped for a moment in order to take off his hat with a deep bow to the children. Mörrike walked beside him and here and there people looked out of windows and doorways at the grotesque little procession, but without much excitement or curiosity, for everyone knew the mad poet and his fate.

They climbed towards the sunny Oesterberg, past pretty bushy garden slopes and low vineyard walls. In front strode the distinguished vigorous figure of Waiblinger who knew from long experience that Hölderlin never walked in front and needed guidance. The latter walked slowly and seriously, his eyes mostly on the ground, and beside walked the sensitive Mörrike, dressed in black like his companion. In the fissures of the vineyard wall, there bloomed here and there deep red geraniums and white yarrow from which Hölderlin sometimes tore some twigs, keeping them for himself. The heat did not seem to bother him and when they stopped on the summit, he looked around with satisfaction.

Here stood Archdeacon Pressel's Chinese garden house that was lent to the students in summer and was now for some time occupied by Waiblinger for days at a time as long as the weather permitted. Waiblinger pulled a large iron key from his pocket, ascended the couple of stone steps to the entrance, opened the door and with an ceremonious gesture of invitation turned to his guest: "Enter Herr Librarian. And welcome!"

The poet took off his hat, stepped up and entered the cute little hut long familiar to him and beloved. Hardly had Waiblinger also entered when Hölderlin turned to him with a deep respectful bow and spoke with more vivacity than usual. "Your Grace has given orders. My respects to you, Baron. Your Magnificence will give me protection. *Votre tres humble serviteur.*"

Then he stepped up to the desk and stared with pressing interest up at the wall on which Waiblinger had painted in large Greek letters the mysterious motto: "One and all". In front of this saying he lingered for minutes in tense reflection. Mörike, in the slight hope of finding him amenable to conversation, approached and cautiously asked: "You seem to be familiar with this saying, Herr Librarian"?

But the latter at once drew back and entrenched himself in his impenetrable court ceremony. "Your Majesty", he said with great solemnity, "this I cannot and may not answer".

He was still carrying in his hand the carelessly gathered bunch of flowers that he now slowly plucked with his fingers and stuffed in his coat pockets. Meanwhile he stepped up to the wide low window which looked out at the bright vineyard and over the lower gardens, with a broad peaceful view of the river valley to the high mountains of the Swabian uplands. Lost in his view of the brilliant summer landscape, he stood still, breathing in deeply the pure atmosphere filled with sunshine and grape blossoms and one could see from his relaxed and happy features that his soul still stood open and responded to this beautiful picture with his former delicacy and sacred sensitivity. Waiblinger took the hat from his hand and told him to sit on the windowsill which he did at once. Then first Hölderlin, then Mörike received a well stuffed pipe of tobacco handed over by the host and now the sick poet sat smoking in silent pleasure, looking out at the summer-like valley. His restless mumbling had fallen silent and perhaps his exhausted mind had found its way back to the exalted constellations of his memory, beneath which he had once celebrated the brief glorious fulfilment of his life, stars whose names no one had heard him mention for two decades.

In silence the two friends inhaled the smoke from their pipes as they watched the quiet man in the window. Then Waiblinger got up and took from the desk a notebook in his hands and began to speak in a solemn voice: "Honoured guest, it is well known to you that we three represent a trinity of poets, even if none of us beginners may be compared to the composer of the immortal *Hyperion*. What could be more

natural and appropriate than that each of us should declaim something from his poems or thoughts? In this notebook here I have collected all kinds of things from your writings, Herr Librarian, and I earnestly beg you, read aloud to us something from it.”

He put in Hölderlin’s hand the notebook that the latter seemed to recognize immediately. He stood up and began striding back and forth in the narrow space and suddenly with a loud voice and a kind of touching passion he began to read the following: “When a man looks in the mirror and sees in it his image as if copied by a painter: it resembles the man. The picture of the man has eyes, on the other hand the moon has light. Perhaps King Oedipus has an eye too many. The sufferings of this man, they seem indescribable, inexpressible, beyond comprehension. When the tragedy represents something like that, it comes from there. But how do I feel when I now think of you. Like torrents the end of something tears me away to a place stretching out like Asia. Naturally, this suffering, Oedipus has it. Naturally that’s what it’s about. Did not Hercules suffer too? Of course. The Dioscuri in their friendship, didn’t they also endure suffering? Namely, to walk with God like Hercules, that is suffering. But that is suffering too when a person is covered with freckles, to be completely covered with freckles! The beautiful sun does that. The sun in its course leads the youths entranced with its rays as with roses. The sufferings that Oedipus bore seem like a poor man complaining of his needs, Oedipus, son of Laius, poor stranger in Greece! Life is death and death is also life. ... ”

During the reading his pathos had risen higher and higher and the students had followed the weird and at times deeply and awesomely significant words, not without anxiety and an uncanny shudder.

“We thank you,” said Mörike, “when did you write this?”

But the patient did not like being asked, he did not take the matter up. Instead he held the notebook before the young man’s eyes. “Look, Your Highness, here stands a semicolon. Your Highness’s wish is my command. No. Your Highness, poems need commas and periods. I beg Your Grace’s permission to withdraw.” With that he sat down again in the window, began to draw on the extinguished pipe and fixed his gaze on the distant Ross Mountain, above which a long narrow cloud stood with golden edges.

“Do you too have something to read aloud?” Waiblinger asked his friend.

Mörike shook his head and ran his fingers through his delicate, almost feminine blond hair. Hidden in his small standing desk at home in his Seminary room he had for a short while been preserving two new poems that were addressed “To Peregrina” and of their existence none of his friends knew. To be sure some of them knew of the strange romantic love of which those songs bore beautiful witness; but he had never spoken of them to Waiblinger.

“You are an odd one”, exclaimed Waiblinger in disappointment. “Why do you hide things especially from me? I hear nothing more about your poems and Herr Mörike has not been seen up here for weeks. Louis Bauer acts the same way. You are damned cowards, teachers’ pets!”

Mörike nodded his head uneasily back and forth. “Let’s not quarrel in front of him”, he whispered with a gesture towards the window. “But you’re wrong about the teacher’s pet. My friend, just last week I sat out another eight hours detention. That ought to reinstate me in your opinion. And pretty soon I can again read something aloud to you.”

Waiblinger had opened wide his shirt collar and taken off his coat. His powerful chest covered with dark hair could be glimpsed through the open shirt. “You are a diplomat!” he exclaimed in a hostile voice, and everything for which he had been suffering for weeks arose in him with renewed violence: “One never knows where one stands with you. But I tell you I want to know now. Why are you all avoiding me? Why does no one come out to me in the vineyard any longer? Why does Gfrörer run away when I try to talk to him? Oh I know. You’re afraid, you have stupid Seminary anxiety! You’re just like rats that abandon a ship before it sinks! For the fact that I am soon going to be expelled from the Seminary you know better than I. I am marked like a tree for felling. And you draw back and watch with your hands in your pockets to see how long I survive. And when they then saw me off, you are the clever ones and can say: ‘Haven’t we long ago predicted it?’ When the good citizen is to have a really jolly time, then someone must be hanged, and this time I am the one. And you, you stand with the others and that’s not right of you, for God’s sake, I tell you, you are worth more than the whole crew. You and I, we could together blow up the whole gang. But no, you have your Bauer and your Hartlaub, they run after you and imagine they too are a species of genius when they are merely warming themselves at your fire. And I can run around alone and suffocate on myself until I am kaput? It’s a good thing I have Hölderlin. I think that in his time those in the Tübingen Seminary broke his back too.”

“Well I can’t help laughing almost,” Mörike began in a soothing tone. “You blame me for no longer coming to you in the garden house. But where then are we sitting now? And I have climbed the Oester Mountain a couple of times, but Waiblinger was not there. Waiblinger had business in the Beckei and the Lammwirt and other taverns. Perhaps he has even been sitting inside here and just would not open when I knocked, just the way it was once with Ludwig Uhland.” He held out his hand to his companion. “Look Waiblinger, you know that I cannot always agree with you — you don’t even agree with yourself sometimes. But if you imply that I do not care for you, or even if you assert that I am too much in love with my place in the Seminary and am afraid of being regarded as your friend, then I simply cannot help laughing. I would rather be given an eight days’ detention, than betray a friend. So now you know.”

Waiblinger shook the offered hand so vigorously that his friend's mouth was contorted in pain. In a storm of passion he embraced him so fiercely that Mörike could hardly defend himself, and suddenly Waiblinger's eyes filled with tears and his breaking voice resounded high and childlike. "Of course I know", he exclaimed sobbing, "of course I know that I am not worthy of you. That damned drinking has dragged me down. You have no idea what I am going through and what is still killing me, you do not know the woman, that wonderful mysterious lady who is causing me to bleed to death."

"I know her all right," Eduard observed dryly, and with a little bitterness towards his friend he thought of his own pains over Peregrina.

"You do not know her, I tell you, even if you have seen her and know her name. I say, is she not terribly beautiful? Is it her fault that she is Jewish and could she be so awfully beautiful, if she were not Jewish? I am burning with desire for her, I can no longer read, I cannot sleep, cannot compose, only since I kissed her breast and wept on her neck, do I know what fate is."

"Fate is always love," said Mörike softly while thinking more of Peregrina than of his friend whose self-revelation was torture for him.

"Oh you," the latter exclaimed painfully and sank back in his chair, "you are a saint! Everywhere you stand on guard like a watchman and everywhere you participate only in what is beautiful and delicate and not in what is poisonous and ugly. You are a kind of calm good star, but me, I am a wild useless torch burning in the night. And that's the way I want it, I will flare up and burn away, its good that way, and it does not matter about me. If only I could create, before I go, something good and great, just a single noble, mature work. Everything I have done amounts to nothing, everything is weak and vain and self-centered. The one who could do it is sitting there in the window. He created his *Hyperion*, a starry image and a monument of his great soul. And you can do it too, in peaceful isolation you will create great and good works, you mysterious one into whose heart I can never quite penetrate. Oh, I know them all through and through, our friends, Pfizer in Stuttgart and Bauer and all the others, I have seen through them and emptied them and consumed them – like nuts, like nuts! Only you have always held out, only you have kept your secret to yourself. Only you I know not and I cannot crack you open and consume you! With me things are going down hill and you still stand at the beginning. It will happen to me as to our Hölderlin, and children will laugh at me. But I have composed no *Hyperion*!"

Mörike had become very serious. "You have composed *Phaeton*", he said softly.

"*Phaeton*! There I tried to be Hellenistic and how false, how repulsive that trash became! Don't talk to me of *Phaeton*! I cannot believe you still praise it, you stand so high above that trash. It's not worth a damn and I am a bungler, a miserable failure! It always happens that way with me. I begin a work of fiction with bright

joy and it blossoms and bubbles in me and does not leave me day and night, until I have drawn a line under the last chapter. Then I think I may have achieved heaven knows what, and after a while, when I look at it again, its all stale and colourless or it's all shrill, false and exaggerated. I know, with you it's quite different, you compose little and take your time over it, but than it turns out well and deserves to be seen. With me every idea turns immediately into a book and I must say, there's nothing more glorious, then to go storming away and pour oneself out in the ecstasy and fire of creating. But afterwards, afterwards! There stands Satan, grinning and displaying his cloven hoof, and the inspiration was humbug and the noble intoxication was imaginary. It's a curse!"

"You must not talk like that", Mörike began kindly, in a voice full of consolation. "After all we're still almost children, you and I, we can still toss out what we made yesterday and found beautiful. We must keep on trying and learning and waiting. Goethe too has written things of which he wanted to hear nothing further."

"Goethe, of course!" exclaimed Waiblinger with irritation, "there's another knight of patience, watching and collecting! I don't like him".

Suddenly he stopped and both young men looked up in surprise. Hölderlin had abandoned his seat in the window and, made uneasy by the loud heated conversation, he now stood and looked at Mörike. His face quivered uneasily and the tall thin figure looked needy and suffering.

Since both remained struck with silence, Hölderlin bent over Mörike's chair and touched him gently on the shoulder and said in a strangely hollow voice: "No Your Grace, Herr von Goethe in Weimar, about Herr von Goethe, I cannot and may not express myself".

The ghostly intervention of the insane patient and his apparent entry into their conversation – something very rare with him – had moved the friends in an uncanny way and almost frightened them.

Now Hölderlin resumed walking to and fro in the tiny room, sad and anxious, like a big bird in captivity, speaking incomprehensible words to himself.

"We had completely forgotten him", exclaimed Waiblinger full of remorse and was transfigured. Again he looked after the poet like a gentle guardian, led him back to the window and praised the view and glorious fresh air, restarted the pipe which had been lying on the floor, gave consolation and kindness like a mother. And again Mörike was overcome with fondness for his demanding and disquieting friend, as he watched his kind and benevolent efforts, and he silently reproached himself for having really neglected him for a long while. He knew Waiblinger's fantastic drive for exaggeration and the unaccountable rapid ups and downs of his moods, but what Mörike knew through hear-say of that dangerous Jewess was of course worrying, and his friend's recent outbreak had caused him earnest concern.

The delicate and sensitive Mörike had always seen in Waiblinger a primordial picture of inexhaustible youthful high spirits and vigorous power but now this being damaged by alcohol and distorted by psychic self-castigation, had a depressing affect upon Mörike, for it seemed as if Waiblinger was in despair sliding down a slippery slope steeper and steeper towards an unhappy fate. Even the strange intimacy, even friendship, with the mental patient seemed to him today to have acquired an inscrutable significance.

Meanwhile his friend was sitting in the window beside his pitiable guest, the vigorous youth beside the greying extinguished man; the ever-deepening sun glowed warmly and colourfully on the mountains. In the valley a long raft of pine logs floated downstream; students were sitting on it, swinging beakers that glistened in the sun and they were singing a mighty song of joy so that the sound drifted all the way up to this lofty peak.

Mörike stepped up to both of them and looked out. At his feet lay the beloved region in its gentle beauty, the Neckar glistened upwards with shiny light and the singing and youthful *joie de vie* was wafted up in the heavy atmosphere like a warm breath of life. Why were they sitting here so poor and deprived, these poets of excess, the old and the young one, and why was he standing here himself with faltering friendships and shaken by a disgraceful hopeless love, why was he here so dissatisfied and sad beside them? Was that only his sensitivity and weakness that he so often succumbed to melancholy moods? Or was it really the poet's fate that no sun could shine upon him whose dark shadows could not help collecting in his own soul?

With empathy he reflected on the life of Hölderlin who had once been not only a poet but also a gifted philologist and high-minded educator, had stood in a social relationship with Schiller and lived as private tutor in the household of Frau von Kalb. Hölderlin had been just like Mörike, a pupil of the Theological Seminary and should have become a pastor but had fought against that, just as Mörike was thinking of fighting that fate. The other had asserted his will but in doing so he had used up his best strength! And how had the world received the seminarian who had become unfaithful, the tender hearted poet? Nothing had come his way except poverty, humiliation, hunger, homelessness, until he was worn out and fell victim to the decades-old illness, which seemed to be less derangement than a deep exhaustion and hopeless resignation of his spent heart and mind. There he was sitting now with his divine forehead and his still seductively pure eyes, the ghost of himself, sunk in a mute childlike state with no way out; and even if he wrote sheaves of paper out of which sometimes a truly beautiful verse peeked like a bright eye, it was after all nothing more than the game of a child with bright marbles.

As Mörike stood behind the other two, so moved and pensive, Hölderlin turned to him and stared fixedly and searchingly at the youthful face with its delicate but very lively, somewhat soft features, whose forehead and eyes were full of spirit and full of the innocence of childhood. Perhaps the older man felt how like him this

youth was; perhaps the purity and inspired brightness of this forehead and the deep dream of youth in those magnificent eyes, as yet unmarred by any shame, reminded him of his own youth; but one may doubt whether even this simple chain of thought was too exhausting for his mind; perhaps his unfathomable earnest glance rested only in purely sensuous pleasure on the face of the student.

While all three fell silent for a while and each felt echoes of the previous lively conversation still reverberating in themselves, Fräulein Lotte Zimmer came climbing up the vineyard slope. Waiblinger saw her still far away and watched with silent pleasure the approach of the strong girlish figure and as she came closer and answered his loud greeting with a nod and a smile, he made a leap through the lower window and strode to meet her last steps.

“It’s an honour for me”, he explained exuberantly and pointed invitingly to the stone steps. “It is an honour for me to be able to greet such a pretty young lady for once in this narrow cell. Come in, esteemed Fräulein Lotte, three poets will kneel at your feet”.

The girl laughed and her healthy face glowed red from the rapid ascent of the mountain. She remained standing on the small stairway and listened in amusement to the tone of the student, but then abruptly shook her blond head. “You had better remain standing, Herr Waiblinger, I am not used to knees. And bring out to me my poet, I have enough to do with one”.

“But you will come in for a moment at least! It is a temple, Fräulein and not a robber-den. Are you not in the least curious?”

“I can do without it, Herr Waiblinger. Actually I have always imagined a temple quite differently.”

“Indeed? How do you mean?”

“Well, I don’t know. In any case more solemn and without tobacco smoke, you see. No don’t bother, you’re just joking after all. I won’t come in; I have to turn back immediately. Just bring Hölderlin out to me, please, so I can take him home.”

After some further jokes and formalities, he went in and nodded to the patient, put his hat in his hand and led him to the door. Hölderlin seemed unwilling to leave, one could tell from his eyes and his hesitating movements, but he said not a word of request or regret.

With the irreproachable politeness behind which he had for so many years fended off the world and kept himself concealed, he turned with a glance and a bow first to Mörike, then to Waiblinger, strode obediently to the door and there turned around with a final bow: “My most devoted compliments to Your Excellency. Your Excellency has commanded. Your most devoted servant, Your Lordship.”

In a friendly fashion Lotte Zimmer took him by the hand outside and led him away and the two students stopped on the steps watching the departing pair as they descended the mountain between the vineyards and rapidly becoming smaller, the tall solemn man in the hand of his caregiver. Her blue dress and his large black hat could still be seen for some time.

Mörike saw how his friend followed with sad looks the disappearing afflicted one. He was anxious to distract and cheer up his sensitive and excited friend. He also wanted to avoid, in the emotion of an unguarded hour, revealing all too much of his innermost feelings, for Waiblinger had months ago ceased to be his unconditional intimate. Mörike who on lonely days could linger for hours on end in a melancholy with no foundation, did not like and took pains to prevent others from seeing this side of his complicated nature, especially this friend who himself liked to indulge in an almost repugnant display of his inner being.

Resolved to break the ban and to rescue himself and his companion to the more cheerful side of life, he slapped his knee noisily and assumed a mysterious expression and said in a tone of badly feigned- indifference: “By the way, I recently met an old acquaintance”.

Waiblinger looked at him and saw his expressive face shrouded in a quivering cloud of lightning-like humour about to burst forth; the corners of his mouth were playing as if testing sarcastic folds, the thin cheeks tensed over the strong cheekbones in roguish humour, and the half-closed eyes seemed to crackle with restrained cheerfulness.

“Well, who was it?” asked Waiblinger with cheerful intensity, “come, we’ll go in”.

In the small room Mörike half closed the windows, so that they were sitting in snug warm twilight. He strode vigorously to and fro and suddenly stopped, facing Waiblinger, gave a loud laugh and began: “Well, God knows, the man called himself Vogeldunst, Museum Director Joachim Andreas Vogeldunst from Samarkand, and he asserted that he was on an important, most important business trip with far reaching consequences. He came from Stuttgart with recommendations from Schwab and Matthison — impossible to turn him away!— and he intended to continue his journey the very same evening by special stage coach to Zürich, where he was awaited impatiently by highly placed patrons. Only the reputation of this exquisite seat of the muses, he said, and the special fame and glory of the Theological Seminary, this revered nursery of excellent minds had caused him to interrupt his rapid trip for a few hours and he did not regret his decision, no indeed, he hoped never to regret it, although his friends in Zürich, Milan and Paris would not forgive him an hour’s lateness. In fact Tübingen is quite charming and especially towards dusk when in the narrow streets along the Neckar there prevails a really ravishing twilight of a highly picturesque delicacy, so to speak romantic-poetic. The Emir of Belutchistan who had commissioned him to collect copper engravings

of all beautiful European cities would be delighted when he brought them to His Highness. But where would there dwell a good copper engraver, *un bon graveur sur cuivre*; but of course he would have to be a master, a real artist full of esprit and feeling. By the way are there not some hot springs here? No? He thought he had heard of them — but no that's in Baden-Baden; that must be not far from here. And was the poet Schubart still alive — he meant that unhappy fellow who had been sold to the Hottentots by Frederich the Kind and there he had composed the African national anthem. Oh, he is deceased? Alas the pitiable man! Meanwhile, I had a strange feeling as the fellow rattled off his eloquent speech while twiddling his silver coat buttons with his long thin fingers. You have already seen him, I kept thinking, this Director Vogeldunst with his hot springs and his long spidery thin fingers. The man produced a snuffbox from his long blue frock coat which hung down behind to his shoes. It was a wooden snuffbox turned on a lathe. He opened it and took a pinch, turning it in his ghostly hands while bleating in high notes his fearfully excited pleasure and he then smiled so extremely sweetly, while drumming the Parisian March with his finger nails on the snuffbox. Why I felt like in a dream, and I was tormenting myself and making wild guesses like a candidate in an examination when the questions get tough so that he breaks out in perspiration and his spectacles get misted over. But Herr Joachim Andreas Vogeldunst from Samarkand allowed me not a moment to collect myself, just as if he knew how I felt inside, and was having his malicious pleasure in my state and intended to go on letting me roast for a good long time. He talked about Stuttgart and about the lovely poems of Herr Matthison, which the latter had read aloud to him in person, in which poems a certain interestingly piquant pallor was not to be denied by connoisseurs, and in the same breath he demanded in the most pressing manner whether the post-route from here to Zürich did not go through Blaubeuren, you see he had heard of a lump of lead which must be lying around somewhere there and that might excellently suit his first class collection of curiosities. He thought he would visit Lake Constance in order to pay his respects in passing at the grave of Herr Dr. Mesmer. He considered himself namely a faithful old follower of animal magnetism just as he owed his acquaintance with the soul of the universe to Professor Schelling and after all he ought to be called a sincere friend of culture. At least he had translated into Persian the *Fantastic Tales* of Hoffman and he had all his clothes made in Paris and had also been decorated by the late Pashe of Assuan with a valuable order. It depicted a star whose points were made of crocodile teeth and he used to be glad to wear it on his chest but once during a dance he had wounded a Berlin lady of the court in the neck, since which time he had resigned himself to no longer wearing this pretty decoration. But as he said that, the Museum Director gently drew the flat of his hand over his head and the little man did that so carelessly and zephyr-like, that I almost could not help laughing out loud. For now I know him - who was it?"

"Wispel!" exclaimed Waiblinger in delight.

"Good guess. It was Wispel. But he had changed, I must admit. So I began to indicate my discovery quite gently and said first, it seemed to me that I had seen

him once before. He smiled. He said he found himself in this charming country and in this delightful town for the first time in his life. By the way he must not forget to take with him a copper engraving of the town and although he regretted not remembering, it was nevertheless quite possible that I had seen him before. Perhaps in Berlin? Or definitely in St. Petersburg? No? Or in Venice? On the island of Corfu? No? Well then, he was sorry but the gentleman must be in error. No, I said, it just occurs to me, it was in Orplid. His mouth had fallen open a moment. Orplid? Yes, right, he had once been there as companion to old King Ulmon, but the latter had unfortunately died meanwhile. — Now perhaps you recognize our friend Wispel? I asked now, looking him straight in the eyes. I can swear it was he, but do you think he quivered even with an eyelash. Nothing of the kind! Wi—Wips — Wipf — he said thoughtfully and acted as if he could not utter the absolutely strange name.”

“Magnificent”, exclaimed Waiblinger in jubilation”, “that’s just like him, the windbag, Vogeldunst! But what did he want of you then?”

“Oh, nothing special”, laughed Mörrike, “I’ll tell you later. But now I have to go out for a moment”.

He pushed the shutters open again, outside the gold of evening was spreading and the mountains lay blue in the mist.

He went out but re-entered after a minute, completely changed, his face strangely slack with gently pouting mouth, his eyes empty and restless, his hair hanging a little over his forehead. All this changed him completely. With hovering, bird-like movement of arms and hands, with feet turned outwards, hopping on tip-toe, he was Wispel to a “t”. In addition he had assumed a high, strangely flat fluttering voice.

“A fine evening to you, Herr Magister”, he began, and paid a worldly bow, holding his hat in his left hand by the brim. “A fine evening, I have the honour and pleasure of presenting myself to you as Museum Director Vogeldunst of Samarkand. Perhaps you will allow me to look around a little? A pleasant place to stay up here, *en effet*, allow me to congratulate you on this delicious Tuskulum”.

“What brings you here, Wispel?” Waiblinger now enquired.

“The name is Vogeldunst, please, Director Vogeldunst. I must also humbly request that you not address me in the familiar fashion, not on account of my insignificant person, but out of respect for the many exalted and distinguished lordships, in whose service I have the honour to stand.”

“Well then, Herr Director. How can I be of service to you?”

“You are Herr Waiblinger MA?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. You are a poet. You are a poetic genius. O, please no superfluous modesty! We know about your merits. Sir, I know your immortal works: Three days in *Phaeton* or *The Songs of Greece* in the underworld. What? Don’t go to any trouble I am completely informed.

“Well, go on then, the devil take it, you, Director in the Upper World!”

“The gentleman with the MA belongs in the Tübingen Seminary? Then I would like politely to enquire whether you are content there?”

“Content? In the Seminary? Go on, I would have to be one of the cattle. Anyway the matter has two sides; the gentlemen of the Seminary you see are just as little satisfied with me as I am with them.”

“Very well, *très bien*, honoured sir! Just as I had wished. I am, you see, in the *aimable* position of being able to offer the honoured scholar a quite significant improvement of his circumstances.”

“Oh, much obliged. May I ask — ?”

Mörrike-Wispel stepped back slightly, carefully put his hat on a book-shelf, made with his arms the most sublime motions of flight and sang in high descant but in a mysterious low tone: “You behold in me, sir, a modest man, a man of small merit perhaps, but a man, sir, who knows how to do his task without vainglory and who has already served their exalted lordships to their satisfaction. Allow me sir to sum up quite briefly, as becomes a man whose time is exceptionally valuable. I carry the most flattering letters of recommendation from Herr Matthison and Herr Schwab in my pocket. It’s a question of a not unimportant opportunity. Listen and pay careful heed to my word! I am looking for a replacement for Friedrich Schiller.”

“For Schiller! Indeed sir —”

“You will understand me, indeed I flatter myself that you will approve. Listen! Among the distinguished men to whom at present I dedicate my humble services is Lord Fox in London, one of the greatest and richest men in England, Peer of Great Britain, friend and intimate of His Majesty the King, brother-in-law of the minister of finance, godfather of Prince Jacob of Cumberland, owner of the counties —”

“Well, all right. And how is it with this lord?”

“The Lord knows how to value my talents, indeed I may venture to call myself his friend, Sir. Once on a court hunt in Wales he introduced me to Baron Castle-

wood with the truly jovial words: This man is a jewel, dear Baron! Another time when the Princess Victoria had just been born – I had just returned from Spain –“

“All right, all right, but continue! Lord Fox—”

“Lord Fox is an unusual man, sir. At that time I had the honour to accompany him on the hunt in his own carriage. It was a foxhunt, sir, and the fox is hunted in England on horseback; it is the favourite pastime for the nobility, *vous savez*. The famous Lord Chesterfield is also said to have been a great foxhunter, likewise Lord Bolingbroke. He died of blood-poisoning.”

“Come to the point, sir!”

“I am always at the point. A foxhunt is indeed a charming business, even if a Russian buffalo-hunt may be more interesting. I attended such a buffalo-hunt in the Urals. But to sum up, the great lords in England have strange and, *je vous assure* expensive passions. I know a gentleman of the East India Company who did nothing else but summon all the physicians of Europe because of a pain in his left knee. I recommended to him then the personal physician of the Elector of Brunswick— now I’ve forgotten his name —”

“Whose name? The Elector’s?”

“No the doctor. I am devastated. I would never have considered it possible, in fact my memory has left me in the lurch very rarely. He was a very skilful fellow who understood his profession. By the way he was not able to help the lord in England after all, and he asserted afterwards that that man’s pains were not curable anyway, as they existed purely in his imagination. Anyway the Englishman was dissatisfied; it was for me a real embarrassment. – But you interrupted me. It is a matter, then, of finding a substitute for Friedrich Schiller. You see Lord Fox wants to have a German poet in his collection. I myself persuaded him to that and why should he not? He possesses a Tibetan priest, a Japanese sword-dancer, a magician from the Moon Mountains and two genuine witches from Salamanca. You know I am myself in a certain sense a piece of a man of letters, and as I undertake all kinds of travels and have many acquaintances I could perhaps make the not entirely uninteresting observation that a very large number of German poets are Swabians, and that a very large number of these Swabian poets belong to the Theological Seminary and that a large number of them seem to be little satisfied with their circumstances. *Eh bien* ! I thought I could acquire a Swabian poet for Lord Fox. He will pay travel expenses and pay two thousand taler a year. It’s not very much but one can live on it. My enquiries abroad have led to the conclusion that Friedrich Schiller is the most famous Swabian poet and I travelled to Jena to pay him my respects. Unfortunately I found out that Herr Schiller had died quite a while ago. But Lord Fox wants to have a living poet, *vous comprenez* —”

Mörrike stopped suddenly in mid-sentence. Up from the town struck the Seminary-Church clock; the sun already lay low. It was seven o'clock.

"Oh woe, that's another black mark!" exclaimed Mörrike a little dismayed. "We will never get back to the Seminary on time and I have just finished a detention."

"Oh never mind", observed Waiblinger with vexation, "its just too bad about Wispel. The damned church clock! Come, we'll begin again".

But Mörrike shook his head; he was suddenly exhausted. He carefully stroked his hair into position and for a moment closed his eyes; his face looked tired. "Are you coming with me?" he asked then. "If I beg the porter a bit, perhaps he'll let us in after all."

Waiblinger stood irresolute. That beautiful Jewess, his ill fate, awaited him that evening. For an hour he had quite forgotten her; he had not felt so well for a long time. Meanwhile he began to shut the shutters, Mörrike helped, then the two stepped out of the garden house which had become dark and they were in the warm evening which still shed a reddish glow on the stone steps.

Now Waiblinger locked the door from outside. "No", he said as he drew out the key, "I am going to remain outside this evening. But I'll accompany you into town. It's been a great afternoon; it's long since I had such a good time. You know things are going badly with me and you must not bear me a grudge if I have shouted at you a little. It's all intended for myself, even what was addressed to you and if you think badly of me, then you certainly cannot think worse of me than I do myself".

They walked downhill towards the town in the twilight. The town with smoking chimneys and roofs still obliquely reflecting the sun lay modestly and close-pressed around the mighty towering Seminary Church.

"Look, you'd better come with me to the Seminary", Mörrike began urging after a long pause. "Its not just on account of the porter. We could spend the evening reading together *Hyperion* or Shakespeare; it would be nice."

"Yes, it would be nice", sighed Waiblinger. "But I have a date; it's out of the question. Another time we'll sit out here and then you must bring your poems. Those were good times when Louis Bauer and Gfrörer still came and we carried on like children in the garden house! Who knows how often we'll be together again; it can't last much longer. There's no longer any air for me to breath or ground to stand on in Tübingen."

"You must not think like that. You've been living on the wild side for a while and have made enemies; but all that can change." His voice sounded light and comforting but his friend gave a negative shake of his powerful head and his stubborn somewhat swollen face became bitter.

“Tell me now: what should I get out of it if they really kept me in the Seminary? At the end of it I would have to pass my examination and become a preacher or a school- teacher. Vicar Waiblinger! Parish administrator Waiblinger! Of course I don’t know yet what is to become of me but certainly not that. There is not much to learn here, our professors are just pot-boilers, perhaps with the exception of Haug. No I’ll run the risk. I must try to stand on my own feet, as poor Hölderlin did in his day, and I am stronger than he. I am not as pure and noble as he, unfortunately, but I have more strength and better blood. It would be best if I left right now, voluntarily; one can’t start young enough, if one is going to make one’s way in life. But then you know what’s keeping me in Tübingen — this love that will either make or break.”

He suddenly fell silent, as if he had said too much and at the next corner shook his friend’s hand.

“Well good night, Mörike and give my greetings to Wispel.”

“I’ll tell him.”

They had shaken hands when Mörike turned back again. He looked his friend straight in the eye and said in an unusually serious tone: “You must not forget what gifts you have. I tell you one must be prepared to give up much, if one is going to become great and create something of worth.”

With that he walked on and his friend remained standing looking at him as the slender youth now in a sudden burst hurried towards Bursa Street and the Seminary. Waiblinger who normally could not take any admonitions was infinitely grateful for these words for he probably felt their most secret exquisite meaning: that Mörike believed in him. For one who so often lost faith in himself that was a consolation and a deep warning.

Slowly he walked on to the house of his beautiful Jewess, the fateful sister of Professor Michaelis.

At the same time Friedrich Hölderlin was walking to and fro, restless in his turret room. He had eaten his evening meal and as was his custom he had put the plate on the floor beside the door. He did not want anything in his cell that did not belong to him, and in the narrow confines of his withdrawn existence there was no room for plate or glass, or picture, or book.

The afternoon was still having a strong effect upon him: the beloved quiet hut in the vineyard, the expansive summer landscape, shining river and student song, companionship and conversation of the two young men, especially that handsome slender one whose name he did not know. Although he was tired, uneasiness kept driving him to and fro, back and forth, and sometimes he stopped at the window looking out lost into the night.

Once more he had heard the voice of life today and it went on echoing strangely and upsetting in his shadowy world. Youth and beauty, intellectual conversation and distant imaginary worlds had spoken to him who had once been Schiller's guest and invited to the banquet of the gods. But he was tired, he could no longer grasp the golden threads, no longer follow the polyphonic hymn of life. He could only hear now the thin single melody of his own past and that had been nothing but infinite yearning without fulfilment. He was old, old and tired.

With the last light of the dying day, the sick man took pen in hand once more and amid the confused, toneless verse with which a sheet of the coarse paper was covered, he wrote in his beautiful elegant script this brief sad lament:

I have enjoyed the pleasant things of this world,
The joys of youth have long since passed away.
April and May and July are distant.
I am nothing and do not care to live on.

Not long after this Wilhelm Waiblinger had to leave the Seminary and Tübingen. It was his fate to drink the joy and misery of freedom in rapid thirsting draughts and to burn out early. He emigrated to Italy and never saw again his homeland and friends. Poor and abandoned, as an adventurer avoided by everyone, he was lost to sight and his life was extinguished in Rome.

Mörike remained in the Seminary, but at the end of his studies could not decide to become a pastor. After unhappy attempts to make his way in the world and after hopeless struggles, he finally had to creep to the cross. But as he never became wholly a preacher, so he never enjoyed a whole and happy life. Painfully he accepted his modest lot and shaped in stolen hours his imperishable poems.

Friedrich Hölderlin remained in his Tübingen turret room and lived on another twenty years in his dead half-light. -