

P E T E R   L A N G

# Lucky Per

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN

Translated from the Danish with an Afterword by

NAOMI LEBOWITZ

*Lucky Per*, written at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century (1898–1904), has never before been translated into English, although its author, Henrik Pontoppidan, won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1917 together with his Danish countryman Karl Adolph Gjellerup. Indeed, Pontoppidan's novel was singled out by writers like Thomas Mann and Georg Lucács as seminal in modern world literature.

*Lucky Per* sweeps through every social, religious, literary, and philosophical circle of the 1890s, through the politics of city power brokers, the engineering of new technology, the alien correctives of provincial complacency by the ecumenical culture and complex of Copenhagen's Jewish set, the victims of the Russian pogroms, and the cosmopolitan chastisement imported from the European capitals by the self-exiled Georg Brandes, Danish critic of huge influence and presence, and a character in the novel. The contrast between the Danish capital and provinces is matched by that between Copenhagen and Berlin. The Austrian Alps are host to a clash between a form of progressive post-Darwinian naturalism and conservative Christianity, whereas Italy mediates between comparative morality and the classical and contemporary worlds.

Pontoppidan dramatically incorporates the perspectives of the makers of early modernism, such as Brandes, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Ibsen, biblical prophets, and Bohemian artists. Trolls from Scandinavian fairy tales haunt the novel's realism without ever letting them bully or appropriate either the life of the fiction or the life of the protagonist from his childhood as the son of a strict Lutheran pastor through the passionate sorrows and joys that led him to his full maturity. It is a rich and riveting work of moral, metaphysical, psychological, philosophical, and literary complexity and depth, carried by a large, varied, vivid, and vibrant cast of characters of all classes and persuasions.

**Naomi Lebowitz** is the Hortense and Tobias Lewin Professor Emerita in the Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis, where she regularly taught courses in world literature. Receiver of many awards, including a Guggenheim and AAUW fellowship, she is the author of books on Henry James, Søren Kierkegaard, Italo Svevo, and Henrik Ibsen, chapters on Michel de Montaigne, William James, George Santayana, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Gustave Flaubert, Joseph Conrad, and E. M. Forster, and articles on Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, André Gide, Martin Andersen Nexø, and Henrik Pontoppidan, among others. In 2007, she received the Leif and Inger Sjöberg Award from the American Scandinavian Foundation for her translation of chapter excerpts from *Lucky Per*, which the judges termed highly readable and long overdue.

Lucky Per



PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern  
Frankfurt • Berlin • Brussels • Vienna • Oxford

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Pontoppidan, Henrik, 1857–1943.

[Lykke-Per. English]

Lucky Per / Henrik Pontoppidan; translated from the Danish  
with an afterword by Naomi Lebowitz.

p. cm.

1. Denmark—Fiction. I. Lebowitz, Naomi. II. Title.

PT8175.P6L913 839.81'36—dc22 2010037486

ISBN 978-1-4331-1092-4 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-4539-0509-8 (e-book)

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**.

**Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the “Deutsche Nationalbibliografie”; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

Henrik Pontoppidan, *Lykke Per*,

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Nordisk Forlag A/S, Copenhagen 1898. Published by  
agreement with the Gyldendal Group Agency.

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of the Council of Library Resources.



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29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006  
[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

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Printed in Germany

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank appreciators of the project: Professors Herbert Lindenberger, Paul Michael Lutzeler, Richard Watson, Milica Benjamin, Philip Boehm, and, as well, Jill Levin, Stephen Kidd and Garth Hallberg. I owe much to those who helped me with translation problems and with editing: Professor Lynne Tatlock, Professor Frants Albert, Ruth Newton, and Inger Andersen.

For financial aid during the process of translation I would like to thank Kunststyrelsen Litteraturcentral of Denmark and Washington University in St. Louis. I am most grateful to have received the Leif and Inger Sjöberg prize for a portion of this novel from the Scandinavian Foundation in 2007. A version of the Afterword was derived from my essay: “The World’s Pontoppidan and his *Lykke Per*” published in the Spring, 2006 issue of *Scandinavian Studies*.

Most of all, I endlessly thank my husband and tireless editor, Al Lebowitz.

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## Chapter One

In the years before and after our last war, a pastor named Johannes Sidenius lived in one of the small market towns of East Jutland that lie hidden among green hills at the base of a thickly wooded fjord. He was a pious and stern man. In his outer appearance as in his whole way of life he differed sharply from the other inhabitants of the town who, for many years, viewed him as a troublesome alien whose peculiarities left them, by turns, cool or resentful. No one could help staring at him as he passed with his proud and austere bearing, striding through the crooked streets in his gray homespun tailcoat, peering through large dark-blue spectacles, and gripping the handle of a big cotton umbrella with which he forcefully stabbed the pavement at every step. Those who sat behind window mirrors on the look-out for him made faces or smiled at his reflection. The town's important merchants, its old country traders and horse breeders, never greeted him even when he was wearing his robe. Although they, themselves, wore wooden shoes and dirty linen coats and sucked on pipes in public, they considered it a disgrace and a scandal for their town to have such a beggar pastor who went dressed like a parish clerk, who obviously had trouble supporting himself and his brood of children. The community had been accustomed to an entirely different kind of clergy—to men in fine black suits and white cambric collars, men whose names had cast luster on the town and the church and who, later, became archdeacons or bishops, but still did not flaunt their piety, feel they were too good to interest themselves in the town's worldly affairs or to take part in its social entertainments.

In those days, the big red parsonage was a hospitable place where, when business with the pastor was finished, a petitioner was invited into the sitting room with the pastor's wife and the young daughters to have a cup of coffee or, when the visitor was distinguished, a little glass of wine or a home-baked cake and a lively chat about the day's local news. Now no one set foot in the house without a pressing concern and no one came further than Pastor Sidenius' sepulchral study, where the blinds were at half-mast so that the pastor's eyes would not suffer the reflection from the walls on the other side of the narrow street.

Here the pastor almost always received guests standing, did not ask

them to sit down, finished with them quickly, apparently took little interest in them, and was even less forthcoming with those who thought they had a right to special consideration. Even the town's officials and their families had stopped paying calls to the house after Pastor Sidenius, instead of offering them refreshments, had taken to examining them on their faith as if they were confirmands standing before the altar.

He aroused especially strong exasperation at funerals of prominent citizens to which the public paraded with horns and guild flags entwined with flowers, the civil servants in plumed hats and uniforms embroidered in gold. After a light lunch and a little port wine at the house of the bereaved, they deemed themselves ready for devotion and edification. Instead of the customary ample eulogy, Pastor Sidenius invariably limited himself to the recitation of a prayer, what one would expect at the funerals of non-baptized children and the poor. Not a word about the deceased's upright character and tireless industry, not one allusion to his worthy service to the town's welfare, to his selfless interest in street projects and the municipal water-works. The name of the deceased was scarcely uttered at the grave, and, then, always accompanied by phrases like: "this wretched heap of dust" or "this food for worms." The greater and more distinguished the assembly where the pastor was speaking, the more flags and banners that fluttered around the grave in the wind, the shorter the prayer became, the more wretched the remains for which the town had gathered, so that the mourners dispersed filled with indignation that was more than once aired audibly in the graveyard.

The only inhabitants of the town who had connections with the parsonage were a pair of misshapen old maids from the home for unmarried ladies of rank, together with a pale Christ-figure of a long-bearded journeyman tailor and a few so-called religiously "saved" paupers who, in Pastor Sidenius' home, found a refuge from their worldly surroundings. There could be no question of a social circle because Fru Sidenius was sickly and for some years had taken to her bed, and Pastor Sidenius was entirely indisposed toward society.

His hangers-on sought him out only for religious concerns, but they were sure to go to church every Sunday where they regularly assembled in a fixed place directly beneath the pulpit, annoying the other churchgoers by resoundingly singing even the longest hymns without consulting the hymnal.

Pastor Sidenius belonged to an old and extensive ministerial line that

could trace its ancestry back to the Reformation. For three hundred years the spiritual calling was like a sacred legacy from father to son—yes, to daughters, too, insofar as they often married the father's assistant or their brothers' fellow student. The self-confident authority for which the Sidenius preaching had long been known stemmed from this tradition. There were few parishes in the whole country where, over the course of the centuries, someone from the Sidenius family had not submitted his mind and heart to the rule of the Church.

Naturally not all these servants had been equally zealous. There had been some fairly worldly-minded among them—men in whom a long repressed life force erupted into a certain recklessness. In the previous century there was such a pastor in Vendsyssel—"mad Sidenius"—who tried to live the unrestricted life of a hunter in the great forests of Jutland's hill country. He often sat in the taverns drinking brandy with the peasants until one Easter Sunday in his drunkenness, he struck down the parish clerk in the church and caused his blood to spatter onto the altar cloth.

Still, the overwhelming majority of this family had been pious champions of the Church, many of them widely read as well, even learned theological seekers, who in their rustic seclusion had, beneath the gray monotony of the years, sought recompense for all their hardships in a quiet, introspective life of the mind, an absorption in their own inner world, where they at last found the true values of existence, its richest happiness, its real goal.

It was this scorn of all ephemeral things, passed from generation to generation in the family, that had been Johannes Sidenius' weapon in his life's struggle and kept his back unbowed and his mind upright despite the oppression of poverty and a multitude of adversities. For this struggle, he had a firm support in his wife with whom he lived in a most heartfelt and happy marriage, though they were not at all alike. She, too, was possessed of a deeply religious disposition, but, in contrast to her husband, was of a melancholy, passionate nature that imbued her with restlessness and dark anxiety. Unsteady in her faith from her childhood home, she had, under her husband's influence, become a zealot in whom the daily struggle to survive and the many childbeds had generated morbidly exaggerated conceptions of life's hardships and a Christian's responsibility. The years since her last delivery—years in which she lay paralyzed in her darkened sickroom and, finally, during the recent unhappy war, endured the enforced billeting of enemy soldiers, levies and bloody humiliations—hardly increased her con-

fidence in life.

Though her husband often earnestly reproached her, she could never really find relief from her anxieties. She knew they reflected a sinful lack of confidence in the grace of Providence and she kept instructing her children that outer contentment with everything was a duty before God and men. But she could become as agitated as over a crime when she heard of the townspeople's way of life, of their parties with many courses and three or four kinds of wine, about the women's silk dresses and the jewelry of the young girls—yes, she even had difficulty forgiving her own husband when now and then he came home from his walk with a modest gift and with a kind of silent courtesy, laid it before her on the bedcover: a pair of roses in a cone, a bit of fine fruit or a little pot of ginger jam for her night coughs. She was both happy and moved by his attention, but she could never keep from saying, even while she gently kissed his hands, "You should not have done that, you good man."

A brood of children, eleven in all, pretty but pale and, from time to time, sickly, grew up in that house—five bright-eyed boys and six bright-eyed girls, all easily recognizable among the town's young people by, among other things, their unusual collars that gave the boys a little girlish look and the half-grown girls a little boyish one. The boys wore their brown hair long and curly, reaching almost to the shoulders, while the girls, on the other hand, wore their hair combed smooth over their scalps and, at the temples, wound around the ears in tight, small braids.

Relations between parents and children, the overall tone of the house, were pervasively patriarchal. At the humble, meager mealtimes that invariably began with a prayer, the father sat at the end of the long, narrow table while his five sons, arranged as to age, sat on one side and, the six daughters, correspondingly aligned, on the other. The oldest daughter, the domestic Signe, took her absent mother's place at the other end of the table. No child ever dared to speak unless asked to, but the father spoke often to the children about their schooling, their lessons and comrades, and enjoyed putting himself into the story. In a pedagogic way, he described circumstances and incidents of his own childhood; he told about his schooldays, about his life in the mud-built parsonage of his father and grandfather, and so on. Sometimes, when he was in a special mood, he would tell humorous anecdotes from his student days in Copenhagen, about his life in the Regent's charity dormitory and student tricks played on night watchmen and the police. But if he had, in this way, induced the children to laughter, he

never failed, in the end, to give his story a cautionary point, admonishing them to turn their thoughts to the earnestness of their lives and their responsibilities.

The large family and its successes, beginning in school, gradually became Pastor Sidenius' chief pride and, at the same time, evidence of God's blessings on his house, which he received with humble gratitude. They were developing into bright, studious and very conscientious offspring—genuine Sideniuses—, who, one after another, grew into their father's image, took after him in every aspect, even to the same self-conscious carriage and the measured military gait. Only one of the children, a middle boy named Peter Andreas, caused his parents concern. He was not only willful in school, so that they received constant complaints, but already, at an early age, a deliberate insubordination surfaced in him in the face of the rules and customs of the house. Before he was ten, he rebelled against his parents, and the older he became, the more his provocative, overbearing defiance showed itself able to counter every imposition of discipline, restraint, or divine injunction.

Pastor Sidenius sat often at a loss at his wife's bedside and dwelled upon this son who stirred in them both a frightening memory of that degenerate Vendsyssal pastor whose name was stamped in blood on the family's gene-alogy; and the brothers and sisters were involuntarily affected by the reaction of the parents. They increasingly looked upon Peter Andreas with unfriendly eyes and banished him from their games. He had, as well, come into the world at an unlucky hour, just as his father was transferred from an isolated, poor moorland folk parish to a provincial town where he was saddled with extensive official duties. Peter Andreas was, therefore, the first of the children to be handed over for his upbringing entirely to his mother, but she had more than enough to do during Peter Andreas' early years, taking care of the youngest of his brothers and sisters. In the end, paralyzed by ill health, she would gather them around her bed, but Peter Andreas was already too big for her to monitor his behavior.

So it happened that Peter Andreas, from birth, was a stranger in his own house. He had first sought refuge in the maids' room and in the shed of an old woodcutter, whose sober reflections on all passing events early influenced the boy's sense of the world. Later he found a second home in the big commercial houses of the neighborhood and their timber-yards where between menials and trade apprentices he assimilated a worldly view on life and its pleasures. This outdoor life, at the same time, developed his body

and raised a brick-red color in his chubby cheeks.

He soon became dreaded for his strength among the crowd of youngsters of the streets and lumberyards, and he set himself up, finally, as the leader of a little troop of small mischief-makers who ravaged the neighborhoods. Without anyone in his house first suspecting, he grew up as a little wild boy. It was when he was older, especially when he was nine and entered the town's grammar school that the boy's dangerous tendencies became evident; his parents and teachers tried hard to make good what they had missed, but it was too late.

One day, in late autumn, a member of the town's petty bourgeoisie was in Pastor Sidenius' study to arrange for a child's christening on Sunday. He accomplished his errand with as little delay as possible and already had his hand on the door latch when, after a short reflection, he turned again into the room and said assertively, "Incidentally, I could, at the same time, request you, Pastor, to be so kind as to keep your son out of my garden. He and some other boys find it very difficult to leave my apples in peace—and, plain and simple, I am not happy about it."

Pastor Sidenius, who sat bent over his desk with his large, dark blue spectacles pushed up on his forehead, about to inscribe the godparents' name in the church record, raised his head slowly at this remark, pushed his spectacles back into place, and said sharply, "What are you saying? Are you accusing my son of..."

"Yes, I am," continued the other with his hand on his hip, very satisfied to be able for once to lord it over the self-confident pastor. "Your son, Peter Andreas by name, is now a kind of chief of a group of small rogues who clamber over our fences. And justice is justice—even with a pastor's son. I will be compelled to turn to the police and then you can well expect the town hall to hand down a public punishment for the boys, and that will not make your appointment to this parish look good."

Pastor Sidenius laid down his pen with a trembling hand and stood up. "My son ..." he repeated, and his whole body shook.

While this was transpiring in the pastor's study, the little sinner sat in school and hid his bad conscience from the eyes of the teacher and his comrades behind a tall stack of books. He had, on the way to school, encountered the angry citizen who yelled at him from across the street, "Prepare yourself, my boy! I am just now going to have a little talk with your father!" Peter Andreas was not accustomed to take his father's anger particularly to heart, but this time, he had an unusual sense of having done

something unworthy, and grew increasingly uneasy as the hour drew near for him to return home.

He slunk with red ears through the parsonage door and past the entrance window where his father customarily watched out for him to call him in when he had done some mischief. But the window remained locked. Nor could he see any sign of his father in the courtyard or on the way to the kitchen door. Relieved, he began to breathe more easily. 'The old man merely wanted to threaten me,' he thought, and strolled into the kitchen where he usually got news about dinner. Seized by a sudden overconfidence, he ventured into the bedroom to greet his mother. Here he was stopped immediately at the door by a dark look from the bed. With a hard, strange voice, his mother said, "Go to your room. I don't want to see you." The boy stood there for a while; he could see his mother had been crying. "Don't you hear me? Stay in your room until your father calls you!" Dejectedly he stole away.

Sometime afterwards, the household's old one-eyed servant girl summoned him to dinner. His brothers and sisters already sat at their places around the table and waited. As soon as he appeared, they stopped talking, and from their silence and tight faces, he understood that they knew what was going on. He plopped into his seat and stuck his hands in his pockets in an attempt to appear cocky and confident, but no one looked at him. He did catch a glance from the big, soft, pensive eyes, under the joined dark brows, of his sister Signe at the end of the table.

Although he heard steps from the adjoining room, Peter Andreas started when his father opened the door. The pastor withheld his customary greeting. Silently he sat down at the table, bowed his head and folded his hands, but instead of grace, he began to speak of Peter Andreas.

"There is something," he said (eyes shut behind his dark spectacles) "that weighs on my heart," a 'serious affair,' about which I wish to talk a bit to my dear children before beginning the meal." Then he confirmed what most of them had already heard from their mother, about their brother's offense. "What has happened shall be neither hushed up nor excused. As it is God's will that everything that has been hatched in the dark shall one day become manifest, now is this deed come to light to receive His judgment. Peter Andreas has not respected God's law and command. As he has hardened his heart against his parent's admonitions, he has defied God's word that says, 'You must not steal.'"

"Yes, my son, you shall not be spared having your sin *named*. But you

shall also understand that it is out of love for you that your father and mother and all your big and small brothers and sisters speak to your conscience through my mouth. We cannot lose hope that we can succeed in finding a way to your heart so that you will not end up like that sinful brother over whom God pronounced that frightful curse: ‘You will be a wandering fugitive in all the earth.’” Around the table the small red and blue checked handkerchiefs of the children were set into motion. All the sisters cried and the older brothers were deeply affected and could barely hide it.

The father finally stopped with this aspiration: “Now have I spoken. And if Peter Andreas will keep my words in his heart and honestly seek the pardon of man and God for his offence, this affair will not further be raised among us, but will be buried and forgotten. So let us, then, children, come together in prayer to God who is in heaven, that he will take your misguided brother in his hand, that He will both humble his rebellious spirit and lead him out from sin’s thralldom, forth from perdition’s path. Grant us, O Lord, who is in eternity, that not one of us shall be found wanting when your children, on the day of Resurrection, gather round your glorious throne. Amen.”

Only Peter Andreas was affected in an entirely opposite way to what his father intended. He never allowed himself to be at all impressed by his father; rather, he had been a willing pupil of his older friends, outdoor servants and trade apprentices who had little respect for the pastor.

In spite of this, the boy was not yet entirely without feeling about these holy words and the threatening Bible commands his parents always sought to imbed in his conscience. When he, on Sundays, observed his father kneeling before the altar in his white robe or saw him standing under the richly carved pulpit sounding board, he sometimes felt seized by an ephemeral sense of awe.

On this occasion, the biblical words had no effect on him. At first he was apprehensive over the unusual form of his reprimand, but the fright did not last long. In his uncomplicated child’s perception there was an altogether foolish disproportion between the solemn warning of God and the paltry pair of apples he had pilfered over a fence. The longer his father spoke, the more audibly his brothers and sisters expressed their feelings, the more calmly and indifferently he viewed the whole scene.

At that moment a breakthrough occurred in the eleven year old boy’s mind. He eyed the others, finally, with a full sense of superiority—yes, even over the twins who had stared at their affected brothers and sisters un-

comprehendingly, and now began to blubber so pitifully he had trouble suppressing a smile.

Nevertheless, under the general pressure, his cheerfulness was strained. The lessons on humility had hit him too hard in his most sensitive spot, his sense of honor. His cheeks had gradually lost their color. Deep in his heart after his father's speech, a frightful agitation stirred, a dark, muffled repressed thirst for revenge that gathered like a shimmering mist over his eyes.

The memory of that dinner hour was to have a fateful consequence for the boy. An unappeasable hatred of his family awakened in his hitherto carefree soul, a defiant and bellicose feeling of abandonment that would become the heart and driving force of his future life. From his earliest years, he had felt himself deserted, virtually homeless, under his parents' roof.

Now he began to ask himself whether he really belonged there, whether or not he was an orphan his parents had taken in. The more he mulled this over, the likelier this seemed. Everything, even the increased reserve in his brothers and sisters as they avoided him, strengthened his suspicion. Hadn't he heard a hundred times that he was not like the others? And had his father ever given him a sign of affection or even a friendly word? Then there was his appearance. When he viewed himself in the mirror, he seemed darker than his siblings, with redder cheeks and white, strong teeth. He recalled, also, how a neighbor's menial, apparently as a joke, had once called him a tramp and a gypsy.

These thoughts, that he was not his parents' child at all, remained his *idée fixe*; it obsessed him the entire time of his growing up. Not only did it supply the rationale for his exceptional position in the family but it satisfied his boyish conceit. He had always felt it a kind of humiliation to be the son of an old, half-blind and toothless man who was mocked by the whole town. In addition, he felt deep shame over the poverty of the family situation. He was not very old before he chose to go hungry all day at school rather than eat his lard sandwich in front of his comrades. Once, when his mother had made him a winter coat out of his father's old cassock, he refused to wear it because the shiny cloth revealed all too obviously its origin. And when his mother tried to force him to wear it, in a fit of defiance, on the verge of tears, he tore it to pieces, and flung it to the floor.

He abandoned himself to the dream of being a child left behind by one or another vagabond gypsy band, one of those wandering nocturnal families the old one-eyed servant girl had so often spoken of, that had its haunt out

there on the barren heath where his parents had once lived. He imagined his real father as a powerful chieftain with black locks hanging down his back, a cape flung over his shoulders, a wooden staff in his brown, strong hand, a supreme Lord, a King over the dark heath's endless realm, the home of freedom and wild storms.

Peter Andreas was at that age of waking dreams when fancy's wings take flight. With all the doors of possibility flung open for him, he made his imagination an infinite field of play. No potential any longer seemed impossible. His dream would end in the airiest realms of Fairyland.

He regularly finished his flight by envisioning himself, at long last, as a King's son who, like the hero of a story just read in school, was abducted by an itinerate band, sold, and then held in captivity in the parsonage. He existed so completely in this story that sometimes it seemed he could remember scenes and incidents from a childhood lived in happy surroundings—for example, a large hall with marble columns and many black and white checkered floors over which his little feet glided...a blue lake surrounded by high hills...a monkey in a golden cage...a tall man in a red cape who seated Peter Andreas on his horse and rode with him into the large, dark woods.

Both his parents and teachers at school gradually became aware of the boy's brooding withdrawal that sometimes could seem monomaniacal. At home, he wandered silently through the rooms, apparently indifferent to everyone and everything. Out of the house, he went his own unpredictable way. His father could not get a word out of him, and even toward his mother, who, before, had earned a little of his confidence and with whom, when he really needed it, he always found the most understanding and indulgence—even toward her he became, year by year, more remote. When, now and again, at the end of the day, he knew she was alone, he would sit by her bed and offer to massage her legs afflicted with varicose veins. But he answered nothing other than "yes" or "no" when she sought to know why he was brooding. Nevertheless, she and her husband periodically tried to reassure themselves about him. His inaccessibility could, after all, simply be a sign that he had begun to be introspective. But one day, something happened that extinguished this last hope.

On a late winter evening the family sat together in the parlor and waited for the song of the watchman in the street signaling time for bed. The housewifely Signe sat on the horsehair sofa behind the big mahogany table, zealously working at her knitting, while at the same time, reading out loud

to her father from the newspaper, "Fædrelandet," that lay spread out under the low burning oil lamp. Her father sat in his usual evening spot in an old-fashioned high and stiff-backed armchair, upholstered with a flowery cover of the cheapest kind. He was tired and sunken, with bowed head. His arms were crossed on his chest. A large green eyeshade hid more than half of his pallid, gray, wrinkled beardless face. Almost asleep he heard—and, really, didn't hear—the monotonous reading of a four column article on foreign news. Pastor Sidenius was a morning man. Even in the middle of winter, he got up when the church bells rang six. In addition, he had no great interest in the worldly journals and papers. He used them chiefly as a kind of soporific to lull him to sleep in his after dinner naps.

Two of the younger girls, in their large, checked cotton smocks, sat beside Signe. Both, though red-eyed from sleepiness, diligently bent over their crochet. They looked like exact copies of their older sister, had the same slightly precocious expression, the same small tight braids in front of their ears, the same large bright eyes a bit protruding under strong, prominent brows. The door of the bedroom was open and, in the half-darkness, one of the smaller children sat by the side of the mother and massaged her aching legs.

Peter Andreas was also in the parlor. He stood by himself near one of the windows and sneaked secret peeks at the clock on the desk. He was now a fourteen-year-old boy, solidly built, his sleeves and pant legs too short for his strong limbs. His two older brothers were now young men studying at the university in Copenhagen. As currently the house's oldest son, Peter Andreas had inherited the little gabled room under the roof where he stayed, for the most part, when he was home. As soon as Signe stopped her reading, he used the occasion to say goodnight and escape, but his father stopped him at the door with the question—why was he leaving them? He gave the excuse he still had a school exercise to write.

When Peter Andreas had gone, his father, still a little blurry from sleepiness, inquired, "Is there nothing worth reading in the newspaper?"

"How late is it then, children?" his mother's weak voice asked from the bedroom.

"It's ten after nine," answered the little girls in unison as they looked at the clock.

There was still some time. They all knew the watchman would soon come. Only the voices of the people passing by in the street could be heard, since a layer of new-fallen snow made their steps soundless.

“Shall I read on?” asked Signe, turning to her father “Well, let it go,” he said, got up, took off his eyeshade and began to walk back and forth to shake off his drowsiness before the evening prayer.

A few minutes later, the deep hum of the old night watchman’s song was heard. It sounded like a drunken man chatting loudly to himself. The two little girls began immediately to pack up their sewing things as Signe started to tidy up for the night. The two servant girls were summoned from the kitchen and Signe sat down at the piano.

The mother’s voice again emerged from the bedroom: “Shall we sing this evening, ‘Praise God, He is near?’”

“You hear that?” said the father who stood behind the big armchair and rested his folded hands on its back.

Signe had a full and very beautiful soprano voice, which, in contrast to the characteristic moderation that marked all her other modes of expression, she projected with a natural power. As she sat there, with her thick hands, reddened from work, on the old instrument’s yellow keys, her eyes uplifted, it was not difficult to see what kind of faith, and hope, and love had given this young woman, not yet twenty years old, the strength to sacrifice her youth to the service of her home and small siblings. It was no romantic ecstasy that lit up her little, round face. She did not sing in an otherworldly transport to the heavens that would open up and carry off the soul in a blessed vision. Like the genuine Sidenius that she was, she had no predisposition for Catholic mysticism.

The certain confidence mirrored in her glance and face that gave the voice such an unusual inner strength sprang from a corresponding sober and dogmatically grounded conviction that she belonged to the little troop of believers who walked on the narrow path of virtue and would find their reward in heaven where, at last, glory would ransom all earthly pain and privation.

In the middle of the hymn’s second verse, her father suddenly raised his head. “Quiet!” he exclaimed and stopped the singing.

At the same time, her mother called out from the bed, “There is someone ringing the gate bell!”

Now the others heard the heavy clang of the night bell from the opposite end of the house and it stirred, in the midst of the evening’s stillness, an instinctive sense of alarm.

The father went through an adjacent room into his study next to the front door and opened a window.

“Who is it ringing in the night?” he cried out.

Inside the parlor a man’s voice could be heard from the street. While the two little girls nervously looked at each other and then at Signe who still sat at the piano, their father, from within, asked in a rather harsh tone, “Your sick child...What is your name and where do you live?...Krankstuegyden? Oh, yes. How old is the child?...One year? Strange that the citizens of this town first need their pastor when danger threatens. Most of the time, you have no need to feel God’s presence. How is it you have neglected to baptize the child for so long? Yes, naturally I shall come. You should go home and arrange what is necessary, put everything in order before I come.”

“And,” he called after the man who had already moved off, “you might see to it that there is a light on the steps.”

When the pastor came back to the parlor, he asked for Peter Andreas. “I’ll call him,” said Signe, who knew that her father, because of his weak eyesight, did not like to go out at night and on slippery streets without a companion. “Signe, you can stay here and help me with my robe. Boel can fetch him,” said the pastor, glancing at the old servant and going into the bedroom to get dressed. In the meantime, the mother’s night lamp was lit and, in her usual depressed tone, she said, “Johannes, dress warmly. It’s very cold tonight. I could sense it by the sound of the church clock. Signe, get father’s lined waistcoat. It’s hanging in the closet.”

Old Boel came back with the news that Peter Andreas was not in his room and she could not find him anywhere in the house.

The pastor reluctantly got up from his chair on which he had just settled himself in order to close up his collar at the back of his neck with a pin. He turned pale. Since he could see by the servant’s disturbed expression that she knew more than she was telling, he moved close to her and asked emphatically, “What’s going on? Out with it...You’re hiding something!” Trembling with anxiety at the pastor’s anger, she confessed that many times, lately, she, who had her room like Peter Andreas just under the roof, had heard the boy steal out into the night. Since she now found his room empty, she had investigated more closely and found the window in the entrance hall half open and fresh footprints in the snow outside.

The mother tried, then, to get out of her bed, but she fell back on her pillow with a bitter cry and held a hand before her eyes as if afflicted with vertigo. The pastor went to her and clasped her other hand.

“Calm down, mother,” he said, though his own voice trembled.

“God help us!” she groaned.

“Amen,” said the pastor loudly without letting go of her hand.

In the meantime, Peter Andreas could be found at the big hills around the northern part of town where a merry troop of young people was vigorously sledding in the bright moonlight. They had chosen the Kongelige Amtschause for their track, a broad, level downward slope that from the top of the hill, led in a single great swoop almost into the town. If you had sufficient speed and were not afraid of the watchman, you could hurtle down the steep Nørregade almost to the marketplace in front of the town hall.

During this long descent, the freest and widest view over the whole country opened up before your eyes—first, of the snow-covered town with the red lamps in the street and white moonlight on the roofs; next, of the frozen fjord, and the icy meadows; and finally, of the far country with its villages, woods, and snowy fields. Over it all was a high cottony heaven where moon and stars seemed to play hide and seek with the clouds, as if this whole old planet were infected with the youngsters’ joyfulness.

Hurray! The iron runners whizzed down the icy track through shrill whistles and gay shouts, the sleds steered by long ice-axes that trailed after them like a rudder, skipped over small stones, rode over each obstacle as easily as a boat over a wave. Here and there, along the way, small clusters of adolescent servant girls stood with thick kerchiefs around their heads and their hands tucked into their aprons as in a muff.

When it happened that one of the little athletes tipped over and remained sitting on the track like a rider thrown from a horse, while the empty sled flew down the hill at double speed, merciless laughter erupted from these groups of girls, mixed with a scornful hooting of the boys who chanced to whiz by just then. The worst mocked were the grammar schoolboys, the uninitiated, who were a decided minority. Peter Andreas’ highest sense of disgrace came from the humiliation of belonging to this class.

He, himself, steered with conceited assurance, his new, smart, long sled, painted red and named “Bloodeagle” that he had irresponsibly taken on credit from one of the town’s wheelwrights and that, in the daytime, he hid in one of the timber-yards. It flew through the air lightly and soundlessly on its English racing runners while he continuously roared: “Out of the way!” His round cheeks glowed; his eyes were triumphant with competitive zeal. Now and then, in the middle of his rush, he raised himself upon his runners, and swung his ice-ax over his head, like a warrior his lance, shouting: “Heigh-ho!” His exuberant lust for life, all the giddy, ambitious, young joy he had to hide or suppress at home or school, broke out now, so spon-

taneously and rashly that he seemed a little ridiculous even to his best friends.

Suddenly a high, warning shout sounded from the bottom of the hill. In a flash, all the sledders steered off the track and tumbled into the deep ditches on both sides of the path. Those who were high on the track hurriedly hid behind bushes and snowdrifts, while only the girls stood where they were, content to stick their heads together and giggle.

Down by the entrance to the town the watchman was going on his rounds. With his long greatcoat, his metal badge shining on his breast like a star, he stood there in the moonlight at the end of the dark street. In consideration of the horses of the farmers coming into town for purchases, sledding on the main road was strictly forbidden. Because of that, the boys had posted lookouts there and at the bottom of the hill to guard against a surprise attack.

Now the fearsome watchman stood there and surveyed the suddenly empty street. Here and there a “cluck cluck” or a “meow,” followed by snickering and giggles could be heard from the ditches. The watchman raised his threatening cudgel, and turned back into town, shaking his head. Shortly after, the watchman’s signal again sounded and, a couple of minutes later, the sporting on the hill was again in full swing.

Meanwhile, an older apprentice had lured one of the girls onto his sled, which immediately inflamed the ambition in Peter Andreas’ breast. In the middle of the run, he braked in front of a group of girls, always on the verge of laughter, and invited the tallest of them to join him. After a little hesitation, she yielded and sat in front of him astride the sled. Boldly he wrapped his arms around his conquest and off went “Bloodeagle”.

“Watch out!” he shouted at the top of his lungs to proclaim his triumph to the whole world.

“Did you see Peter Andreas?” “Yeah, that was Per!” he heard, in passing, from a pair of comrades who were going back up the hill with their sleds. His heart swelled with pride. He had caught their tone of reluctant admiration.

The black-eyed, dark-haired pauper girl turned around on the wild ride to look at him appreciatively and laughed with her large red half-open mouth that made his cheeks burn. Old dreams surfaced again in his breast: dreams of gypsy life and happiness on the wide heath, dreams of a carefree, wandering life, with a tent or a mud hut as a home, a life open to the stars and fleeting clouds.

The sled stopped just before the town. The girl wanted to stand up and turn to her new friend, but Peter Andreas forced her to stay seated—he didn't want to risk losing her—and began to pull the sled up the hill. Step by step he struggled with the heavy load. He imagined himself a warrior, a Viking going home from a triumphant campaign in a strange land, conveying his booty with him, a beautiful woman, a stolen princess, who would be willing to be with him in his beamed house deep in the woods. Spurred by his fantasy, he set his feet against the icy slope, straining with every muscle so hard that perspiration broke out on his forehead. When they had reached the top of the hill and he had again mounted the back of the sled to race down, the girl turned to him and asked: "Is it true what they say, that you are a son of the pastor?"

The question brought him so abruptly back to reality that he grew pale. He forced a "No" through his teeth — with an intensity he felt down to his toes. Meanwhile the sled flew down the slope as the runners seemed to sing.

He had never known so strongly as in that moment that he did not belong to his house, to that half-dark, stuffy room where his father and siblings now sat and sang hymns, muttered apprehensive prayers in the middle of a magical winter's night—in a sort of underworld blindness to the light and full of a dread of life and its glory. He felt himself a thousand miles from that scene, under a wholly different heaven, at one with the sun and stars and the sailing clouds. Listen! His ear caught once more a familiar sound from down under...the striking of the church clock. Like a message from the underworld it reached him through the silvery light of the frosty air—eleven heavy, dark, slow beats. How he hated that sound. Wherever he was and at all hours of the day it rudely broke into his happy dreams...calling and warning him. It was not possible to escape very long before it summoned him back. Like an invisible spirit it pursued him down all his prohibited paths. When, in the spring, he had stolen out to the meadows with his giant kite "Heljo," or, in the summer, took out a boat to the fjord to catch perch, each quarter hour that ghostly voice stole into his ear with its summoning sound. "Hello!" he shrieked to drown out the voice and squeezed the tall girl, as if in provocative defiance, still harder. She turned again, smiling at him with a glance that sent a sweet shiver down his back. "You're beautiful," he whispered in her ear. "What's your name?"

"Oline."

"And where do you live?"

"On Smedestræde in the Riisagers' house. Where do *you* live?"

“I?”

“If you’re not the pastor’s son, who are you, then?”

“Who am I? I can’t say. But why don’t we meet tomorrow night on Voldstræde, when it gets dark?”

“I’d like that.”

Without regarding the danger, Peter Andreas had run over the town boundary and was still going at full speed down Nørregade. He had not gone far before a large form sprang up from the street corner and with a thundering “Stop!” caught the sled with the crooked end of his cudgel, upsetting it and flinging both children into the snow. The girl, with a wild scream, fled the scene, while the powerful hand of Ole the watchman grabbed Peter Andreas’ neck. “Come here, boy! I’ll teach you devilish kids not to mess around with the authorities. To the town hall with you! No backtalk! Whose cursed kid are you, anyway?”

Peter Andreas understood immediately that it would take real ingenuity to get out of this jam. Quickly, breathlessly, he said, “It was good that I met you, watchman. There’s a huge scuffle up there among the boys. Iversen’s big apprentice has pulled a knife. You better hurry...he’s really furious.”

“What are you saying?”

“He stabbed the mayor’s son. I hope he’s not dead. He is lying in a big pool of blood.”

“The son of the mayor!” groaned the watchman and released Peter Andreas.

“I’ll run to tell his family and fetch Doctor Carlsen,” said Peter Andreas and quickly grabbed the rope of his sled. Before the watchman could collect himself, he was gone.

It was almost midnight when he climbed the neighbor’s fence and crawled in by the entrance hall window he had left half opened. He had taken his boots off outside in the snow and with careful steps was sneaking up the loft stairs. At that instant, the door of the study opened and his father stood before him with a lamp in his uplifted hand. For some seconds, father and son stood facing each other without saying a word. Only a rattling noise could be heard from the lamp globe in Pastor Sidenius’ trembling hand.

“Like a thief you go in and out of your father’s house,” said the pastor, finally. “Where are you coming from?” he added in a half whisper as if he barely had the courage to hear the answer.

Peter Andreas admitted, without beating around the bush or excusing himself, where he had been—in that second he felt such contempt for his

father he couldn't even lie to him. He confessed his purchase of "Blood-eagle" and his debt to the wheelwright.

"It's gone that far with you, has it?" said his father without revealing that his worst anxiety had already, in reality, been allayed. He knew there were a few secret places of indecency in town, and he had been afraid that his son was lured to such a spot by bad examples. "Go to bed," he added. "You are a sinful child! We'll talk more about it in the morning."

When Peter Andreas, early the next day, was called down for morning prayers in the living room, he was prepared for a repetition of the solemn scene of stigmatizing he had endured on the occasion of his apple theft. Signe sat at the piano under a single lighted lamp while the rest of the large room lay in darkness. It was so cold a frosty cloud came out of the hymn-singing mouths.

The first and second hymns were sung and the creed recited without any reference made to yesterday evening's incident. Nothing about it was said to him even later in the day. Pastor Sidenius had been sitting the whole morning at his wife's bed and the they had come to the recognition that it was fruitless to try any longer to influence the boy's mind by persuasion. They could only trust that with God's mercy, time, and life's discipline would straighten him out. They agreed to provide pointed nails for the top of the neighbor's fence. Besides this, the father would personally assure himself every evening that the youngster was in his bed.

Peter Andreas was indifferent. Whatever his parents did with him—whether it was good or bad—no longer made an impression on him. The time had passed when, to shorten his torment, he would plot adventures—an outright revolt or a secret flight, sallying forth into the world, seeking, at random, the kingdom of his dreams. He was now both old and wise enough to realize he could most surely and quickly gain his longed for independence if he would patiently finish school, and, furthermore, it wasn't long before he found other ways to frustrate his father's vigilance. When everything was quiet in the house, he would, with a rope, lower himself out of the gable window onto the half-roof of the entrance hall and slide from there onto the gutter and into the street. Consequently, on many a moonlit night he still lolled out by the fjord with his beloved fishing line and, on the way home, gave the watchman his catch for keeping his mouth shut.

He had found a way as well to renew relations with the dark-eyed Oline from the Riisagers' house. A couple of times he made a night-assignation with her in one of the big timber yards. But that was soon over. The free

and easy coarseness in the girl's expression and manners filled him with shame. When she, once, essentially, made an assault on his virtue, he shied away and stopped seeing her.

Continually stirred by the coal ships and the small, Swedish timber boats, he had a special predilection for the poor life of the harbor. He came to know the manager of a little provisions shop, and he often spent his free periods there to listen to sea stories, of adventures in foreign lands, of powerful steamships that could accommodate up to two thousand people, and of the activities of the big ports with their large shipyards and docks.

But the life of the seamen did not tempt him. He aimed higher. He wanted to be an engineer. That profession seemed to him to command the most possibility for the real fulfillment of his dream of a proud and free-roaming life, rich in adventures and exciting incidents. Also, the choice of a practical profession would give him the means to break away cleanly from his family and the glorified centuries-old traditions. His was a calculated challenge, especially in relation to his father, who would often disparage the general joyous anticipation of a great technological future. Once, when the public interest was roused among the citizens by a proposal to get the town's navigation moving through a deepening of the fjord's channel, his father viewed the project with special contempt: "These people with their perpetual concern about everything but the one thing necessary!" From that day, Peter Andreas wanted to be an engineer.

He got a push in that direction from his school. While most of his teachers, already at an early stage, deemed him one who would never accomplish anything worthwhile, he had gradually found for himself a friend and protector in his mathematics teacher. An old military man, he spoke very highly of his capabilities to Peter Andreas' father when he had the chance a couple of times, and he resisted the pastor's impetuous plan to take his son out of school and make him learn a craft. The old soldier seemed to be impelled by an empathic understanding of the boy and to find satisfaction in reducing the strict priestly monitor to silence with his praise.

Then, too, the town's attitude towards Pastor Sidenius and his house was beginning to change. Times and practices had, eventually, moved the citizens to reconciliation. Many of the old merchants and horse breeders who had, almost up to the present day, determined the public opinion of the town, in the course of years had died and, what is more important even, neither in their businesses nor in the disposition of their wealth did they use their appropriated authority reasonably and fairly for the town's welfare.

They had been businessmen of the old school, who, in their country pride, refused to realize that the times were leaving them behind as they disregarded changes effected by new developments in communication. Many of the town's best families that had lived lavishly on inherited fortunes sank almost into poverty after the war. As their status diminished, their need for religion's consolations grew. Pastor Sidenius' earnest words about earthly vanity and the true riches of poverty and deprivation began to find a way into the hearts of the people—most of all, of those who had, in the past, been his worst enemies. The group of worshipers who, on Sunday, gathered to hear his preaching, steadily increased, and it no longer happened that the citizens refused to greet the pastor when he passed them, at least not when he was in his robe.

It was while these developments were taking place that freedom's hour finally sounded for Peter Andreas. Pressed by the old mathematics teacher's persistent advocacy, his father eventually consented to send him to the capital to study at the Polytechnic Institute. He was sixteen years old.

\* \* \*

One pretty autumn evening, when the weekly passenger boat slowly steamed out through the endless bends of the fjords on the way to Copenhagen, Peter Andreas stood at the sternpost with a bag slung over his shoulder and looked back at the town that grew gradually darker against the pink evening sky. His departure from home had cost him no tears. Even his goodbyes to his mother were made without great emotion. Yet, as he stood there in his new, tailored suit with a hundred daler banknote sewn in the lining of his vest and saw the town's swarm of roofs and the church's heavy brick tower disappear in the twilight, a sense of uneasiness seized him and there stirred in his breast a vague feeling of gratitude. He felt he hadn't managed the farewells to his family well, and almost wished he could turn back to say goodbye again. As the distant sound of the church's evening bell—home's last greeting and warning—was carried out to him over the meadows, he experienced feelings of reconciliation.

This susceptible mood sustained itself during the first days in the capital. It got even stronger as he became prey to the typical feelings of loneliness that oppress the provincial pilgrim in the big city with nothing but strange and indifferent faces. He knew no one in Copenhagen. None of his schoolmates had come here, wanting, instead, to finish their schooling. He felt completely depressed in his loneliness; often he went down to the quay by the Exchange to see whether a skipper of an apple cargo from home

might come with whom he could chat about his town and common acquaintances. Only his disaffection for his father stayed constant; it was always to his mother that he wrote when he felt like it.

Of his older brothers, one, Thomas, had already, a year ago, completed his studies and was appointed to a country post as curate. The other, Eberhard, lived, to be sure, in the city, but was, just now, out of town; and even when he would return, they would never see each other. Eberhard was cautious, anxious, and self-contained—fearful of coming into contact with something that could hurt his reputation. He felt, therefore, very annoyed by this degenerate brother who came like a wild stray to make his way without having completed his schooling.

During the first two months, Peter Andreas lived in a wretched back room of an attic in the inner city with a view of a crowd of red roofs. Later, he moved into the lodgings of an old couple in Nyboder.

The day before Christmas Eve, he traveled home overland, after having announced his coming arrival in a very short letter. On the interminable day-long journey through Zealand and Funen, and at the sight of so many happy Christmas travelers who filled the compartments, he was reminded with what excitement the homecoming of his older brothers was always anticipated, how lamps were lit in the rooms, and how the evening meal was postponed until after the train's arrival to make the reception all the more festive. And he thought of his old friends who, possibly, already knew he was coming and might be at the station to greet him.

The compartment gradually emptied on the journey through Jutland and, finally, he was left alone. It had grown dark, the ceiling lamps were lit, and heavy rain was hitting the windowpanes. When he heard the train running over a bridge, his heart began to race. He knew the sound, which would last five minutes. It was Skærbaek Bridge. He rushed to the window and wiped off the pane...yes, there was the brook...and the meadows and the Skærbaek hills. And now the tracks turned and the town's lights could be seen dimly through the rain.

His sister Signe was on the platform to meet him. A slight sensation of discomfort shot through him when he saw her. She stood there, her shoulders a little stooped, in a short, frightfully old-fashioned coat. She wore black gloves and, below a tucked up skirt hem, her long, thin ankles could be seen above her large feet in galoshes. It embarrassed him that she had to be viewed like that, exposing her unfortunate appearance to general criticism. In addition, he had fully expected to see his younger twin brothers

and that raised the suspicion that only Signe met him because she was the one sibling with whom he had the least to do.

On the way home, through the streets, he soon divined that his parents were not really happy about his visit; they thought it unwise, Signe said, that he already was taking a vacation. Such a trip cost money—he should, first, at any rate, have asked for his father’s permission.

Even before they reached the parsonage, Peter Andreas’ feelings had become cool. And when he came into the parlor and saw his father sitting there in his usual place, on the old, faded chair, with his green eyeshade, he regretted not having stayed in Copenhagen. It was obvious that his father, patting his cheeks, welcomed him with reluctance. The door into the dining room was closed. Peter Andreas could hear the floor being scrubbed, and when his eyes lighted on a few sandwiches on a tray on the table, he understood that the others had already eaten. His mother was, as always, in her bed. Her welcome lacked neither sincerity nor warmth; she kissed him on both cheeks, but his heart remained chilled.

Peter Andreas was too young to understand that he had committed nothing worse than sharing the common plight of a younger child in a large family in which the oldest had harvested the first fruits of the parents’ affection. Even if this love was not diminished towards the younger children, it certainly was qualified. For the parents, it missed the glamour of the new that kindled every step of the future. At bedtime, when Peter Andreas was alone up in his old attic room, he began to laugh. He made fun of himself, mocked his own sentimentality that had made him long for this so-called home and he swore with all his heart that he would never again be taken in by such a mood.

When Christmas came with all its holy ceremonies he felt no part of, with the constant churchgoing and so much hymn-singing, he counted the hours until he could get away and again be his own man in Copenhagen. His meeting with his friends was disappointing as well. Influenced by their parents’ view of him, some of them pretended to hardly know him. His father and siblings had only reluctantly spoken about him, which led the town to understand he was someone who had gone astray. Many of his classmates displayed, in addition, a vanity that came with having graduated to higher studies. He had rapidly sought them all out, but none of them asked him to come again.

Immediately after New Years Day, he returned to Copenhagen.

## Chapter Two

It was said that, in his day, the old, pensioned Chief Boatswain Olufsen of Hjertensfrydgade was one of Nyboder's best-known and most respected citizens. Every morning, when St. Paul's clock tower rang eleven, his tall, thin, and a bit wobbly form could be seen walking out of the rickety door of a two-story building where he lived in the top apartment. For a moment, he would stand on the sidewalk and, just like the seaman he was, look up to the clouds and let his eyes run over the roof ridges as over the rigging of a ship. He was dressed in a somewhat faded but very neatly brushed overcoat, a wide Dannebrog ribbon in his buttonhole. A gray top hat sat on his white hair, and he steadied himself on the umbrella held in his left hand, on which he wore an old shriveled leather glove.

With his right arm behind his back, he shuffled along slowly and carefully down the uneven flagstones. At the same time, in the window mirror at the front of the apartment, his wife came into view, following him with her eyes until he was safely over the deep gutter at the corner of Elsdyrgade. She was in her flowered night jacket with newspaper curlers in front of each ear, enjoying the vision of his well cared for form with a proud self-satisfaction, as if he were exclusively her own creation.

At that moment, the Boatswain passed Nyboder's guardhouse with the high gallows on which the alarm bell hung and switched his umbrella to his right hand in order to greet with the gloved hand any of the guards who should give him a military salute—something he prized and always carefully observed. Then he turned into Kamelgaden and walked toward Amalienborg Slotsplads where he arrived every day on the exact hour of the changing of the guard. After he had heard the music awhile, he went back across Store Kongensgade and by Borgergade farther into the city.

Here, where he was outside his former domain, where no one knew him as Boatswain Olufsen who had received his Dannebrog ribbon from the King's own hand, where he was, in short, just a common stroller that people could elbow with impunity—here something in his back and legs seemed to slow him down involuntarily, while he anxiously tottered forward on his aching feet through the rushing passers-by. He never went farther than Købmagergade. What lay on the other side of that street was, for him, not the right Copenhagen, but a kind of suburb so far removed he couldn't

understand how anyone could want to live there. In his eyes, Adel-og-Borgergade, the town's main artery, together with the quarter around Grønne-Svaerte-Regnegade, the tollhouse, and Holmen, made up his world. When on his return walk, he reached the last brush-maker in Antonistræde or after visiting Frøken Jordan's subscription library in Silkegade to exchange a book for his wife, he turned around and went home.

Generally, there were a couple of hours before he returned to Hjertens-frydgade because of his custom of stopping at each street corner to observe the stream of passing people and traffic. Above all, despite the eighty years and his bleary eyes, he enjoyed looking at the servant girls, especially those with bare arms. If it happened that one of them, by chance, brushed close by him, he would whisper some little love-words and hurry away, giggling and ducking his head.

And he couldn't resist standing for a moment in front of the shop windows to look at the displays and memorize the prices of everything from underclothes in the knitted goods shop to the diamonds in the jewelry store. Not that he had any intention to buy these things (he was, at any rate, strictly prohibited; his wife, knowing full well his weakness for young, pretty women, never trusted him to go out with money); but with his empty pockets, he was satisfied to go into the shops and have various goods laid out before him, ask prices of the most expensive items and trot off saying, "I'll let you know."

By afternoon the Boatswain was home in his parlor, the "salon," as they called it in Nyboder slang, a low-ceilinged, cabin-like room, with a row of small windows that looked out on the street. He sat here at one of the windows with a skull-cap on his head and looked, hour after hour, at the crowds of half-domesticated crows coming in from the parks, either onto the roof ridges of the houses across the way, or croaking and fighting around the pavement's dust-bins which, at that time, still sat before every door on the quiet and empty streets. Now and then a film fell over his old, fading eyes. His head sank slowly onto his breast and his lips puffed out.

"Now you are again cooking peas, little father," said his wife, referring to a peculiar hum that came from the Boatswain when sleep overpowered him. She had her accustomed afternoon place on a low chair by the stove, where she sat and knitted, reading at the same time a tattered novel that lay before her on her knees, turning the pages with her elbow, so as not to interrupt her knitting. A cage with a canary that hopped on its perch hung in the window and a young blonde girl, their foster-daughter Trine, often sat sewing in the back room with its door open.

Madam Olufsen was almost as tall as her husband and had the figure of a cavalry rider, with a hint of a gray moustache. She was hardly attractive when she went around in the morning in her night jacket and paper curlers, but in the afternoon, after she had tied her stays, put on her black merino dress, and hidden her half-bald head under a ribboned cap—in front of which the now carefully arranged temple curls displayed themselves almost flirtatiously against the not altogether faded cheeks—the talk, in Nyboder, of her former glory could well be believed.

All in all, she and the Boatswain had been a handsome couple. They had also been a happy couple. If the Boatswain was not always strictly true to his vow to keep all the sworn Commandments, by compensation, his wife was faithful enough for both of them, although, in younger years, she had not lacked temptations. If rumors could be believed, a prince, who always stalked the young women of Nyboder when their husbands went on long journeys, having introduced himself one night on the corner of Marinade, propositioned her. She deeply curtsied, lowered her eyes, and quietly followed him into one of the dark, isolated avenues behind the embankment. Here in this secluded spot, out of the goodness of her heart, she swiftly laid the little wizened highness over her knees and gave him a spanking, which was not the first chastisement an offended Nyboder wife had allotted him, but certainly the most powerful.

The reputation this old couple enjoyed with their fellow citizens was longstanding, and their house was still a popular gathering place for various of the quarter's elite. The kind of social events held here could not be found in many Nyboder houses. Outside of the usual church holidays—the so-called days of prayer and repentance—observed everywhere in Christendom with rich food and warm punch—a long line of family events and annually recurring special days of a private nature were celebrated. There was a birthday for Peter the canary's adoption by the family, and a commemorative day for the Boatswain's big toe, cut off many years ago because of caries. Best of all was Madam Olufsen's cup-day in the spring, when the air warmed up, that began with a large chocolate lunch for the barber who organized the event.

The gathering for these occasions consisted of the same seven or eight old friends of the house who for more than forty years had celebrated important family occasions together: pensioner Chief Carpenter Bendtz from Tulipangade, pensioner Quartermaster Mørup from Delfingade, Chief Gunner Jensen, and Riveter Fuss from Krokodillen, all with wives. Nor had the course of the celebration undergone any significant change in the last

generation. When the guests were gathered in the back room, the Boatswain would open the door into the "salon" where the table was set and invite his friends to eat, with the same amusing reminder, that now was the time to "shovel something into their faces." When everyone was seated and the hostess had put the steaming goose or ham on the table, Riveter Fuss regularly, at that very moment, feigned surprise, tilted his chair back and said: "Now, Madam Olufsen, you have laid an enormous egg!" Whereupon Madam called him an old fool and bade the guests to feel at home.

At this point, as it often happened, the door opened for a curly-haired young man, whose arrival was greeted with a general shout of joy. He was everyone's favorite. All the old people stood up courteously and extended their hands; little Trine blushed and busied herself with bringing a chair in from the next room, setting a new place at the table, and fetching a warm plate from the kitchen. The new guest, a twenty-one year old student at the Polytechnic School, was the Olufsen's tenant, Sidenius, who for a couple years had lived below in a pair of small back rooms that belonged with the Boatswain's apartment.

Gradually, as the decanters and brandy bowl were emptied, the mood became very gay. Only Trine remained quiet and still as she saw to attending the guests. She filled the glasses, passed the bread around, changed the plates, trimmed the candles, fetched salt cellars, retrieved lost handkerchiefs, and brought water for the ladies when they began to get sick or to hiccough—all so noiselessly that her presence was hardly noticed. It was as if an invisible spirit was serving the company. She was so little and undeveloped in spite of her nineteen years that she was easy to overlook. The old folk considered her still a child, a diminutive child; and, in truth, she was a little slow-witted as well. She was a poor, plain orphan the Boatswain had adopted and whose origin was unknown. She was no beauty, and even for the young Sidenius, she was nothing more than the indiscernible instrument that brushed boots and washed linens.

As the punch bowl and the sugar-sprinkled apple cake appeared on the table, the company entertained itself with various songs of fellowship and patriotism. Madam Fuss made herself particularly noticeable—more for the power than the beauty of her highly admired treble voice.

While the singing continued, Trine went into the kitchen after having made sure that the guests were well provided for. She lit a candle from the open hearth and carried it down the house's small and steep steps—a kind of ship's ladder—to put in order Hr. Sidenius' rooms for the night. They were two small, dark, and humid rooms, poorly furnished with a little oilcloth

sofa and a folding table where books, drafting tools, and large rolls of pencil-marked papers lay helter-skelter.

Trine set the candle on the table, opened a window, and stood for a moment dreaming, with her hand on the window frame. She looked out upon a romantic full moon shining over the tiny fenced garden and gardening shed. Suddenly she shuddered as though frightened by her own thoughts and patiently set about putting the untidy rooms in order. She collected clothing thrown over chairs and hung them up behind the corner curtain of the bedroom. She rearranged the books on the table and placed all the many small drafting tools in their designated cases.

Although the young gentleman had never troubled to give her instructions concerning these things, to tell her carefully where he expected, even demanded, them to be, the instinct that love creates in the simple taught her his habits, how to guess at his wishes, how to find her way steadfastly through the labyrinth of whims and disordered fancies that enter into such a young man's peculiar and decided will. He had once and for all, let her know—and he had, on that occasion, made a frightful grimace as he lifted his finger—that she should consider her service to him as her life's work and special destiny, for which God would on Judgment Day, call her to account.

It was, therefore, with a dedicated feeling of a high and sacred calling, that she entered his small rooms and busied herself with his belongings. A special sense of devotion lingered in the little bedroom while she fussed with his bed, and arranged his slippers conveniently in place, the toes turned inward, and laid his matches by the lamp nearest his bed. When she finally took his pillow between her hands to fluff out the feathers she squeezed it for a moment to her heart, and with a worshipful expression, closed her eyes.

In the meantime, the old folks in the "salon" were becoming more and more giddy. Riveter Fuss had fetched his guitar and in spite of the ladies' objections, began to sing the disreputable broadside ballad, "The Overfed Lady at Gammelstrand." The men shouted with joy as the young Sidenius laughed and, from eighty-four year old Chief Carpenter Bentz, a muffled chuckle sounded as if it came from inside a bottle. But the women rose offended, and marched off to the back room, where coffee, candies, and black currant liqueur were being served.

Not until it was almost morning did the company break up. The married couples toddled homeward reconciled and in such a happy state of mind that they were beguiled into affectionate hugging and kissing in the street.

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It was here, through these old people who emptied the cup of joy to the dregs, that Peter Andreas had found his first sanctuary—a provisional refuge on the way to that country of happiness his dreams had promised him. Here he had met the most beneficent understanding of just that part of his nature that, at home in the parsonage, had been oppressed or branded as the work of Death or the Devil. He had been especially thankful for this home during his lonely first year in Copenhagen, and for the whole cheerful and idyllic neighborhood that was a little hidden province in the midst of the capital. Later, after he had gradually widened his circle of acquaintances, his relation to the two old people and their little society acquired a more fleeting character, but he never broke with them and the old couple remained fond of him and interested in his welfare, almost as if he was one of their own family. More than once he would be going to bed on an empty stomach and Madam Olufsen, considerately, would invite him to “try out” the new cheese or “give his opinion” of a freshly baked ham. (It had not taken them long to discover his poverty despite the fact that he did everything to hide it.)

However, the Olufsens did not succeed in getting a real insight into him. Chatty and lively as he would be at times, he never spoke, or only jokingly, of himself or his goals. When they asked him directly, he liked to say, “I’m studying to become a government minister,” and would be stubbornly silent about his home and family relationships even though Madam Olufsen never grew tired of asking him. He had decided to consider all the past as something dead and forgotten; each bitter and humiliating remembrance must never be allowed to haunt his existence. He sought to make his mind a clean tablet for the glowing gold script of Luck and Triumphs. There was no picture on the table or walls to remind him of the home he had left, or reveal it to others—at least, not until he could justify a demand there for vindication. If he were suddenly to die, no one could find in his most secret hiding place so much as a letter saved or any other sign that could reveal who he was and where he came from. He even changed his name. He no longer signed himself Peter Andreas but simply Per, and he was sorry he could not adopt another last name.

His connections with his childhood home had gradually shrunk to short letters in which he sent receipts quarterly for any money he received from his father to help him out—an entirely insufficient amount to cover such large expenses as lectures, books, and drafting and measuring instruments, that his studies demanded. From the time he was eighteen, he taught

arithmetic in a boy's school and, to get by, copied out blueprint designs for a master craftsman.

At times he was depressed. He felt degraded by his poverty and, above all, by his job teaching in a boys' school, which he never mentioned. What is more, he became disillusioned with his studies and the future possibilities they could generate.

When, four or five years ago, he was about to enter the Polytechnic School, he had an almost holy expectation. He had imagined it as a kind of temple, a solemn intellectual workshop where the future happiness and well being of free men were forged by the thunder and lightning of the mind. He found, instead, a hateful, ugly building in the shade of an old bishop's see. Inside, there were many dark, melancholy rooms permeated with the smell of tobacco and sandwiches, where a group of young men stood bent over small tables covered with papers, while others sat with long pipes and read notebooks or surreptitiously played cards.

He had expected his future teachers to be devoted preachers of natural science's sacred gospel; he met instead old, dry schoolmasters in the lecture halls, not much different from the teachers he had just left at home. One of them, a perfect mummy, whose voice, in the lecture, would give out at any moment and had to be renewed by a swig from a medicine bottle, taught what he remembered from Hans Christian Ørsted's day. Another, Professor Sandrup, his teacher of engineering proper, wore a white necktie, and most resembled an old theological scholar or clergyman. He enjoyed a certain reputation for theoretical knowledge, but was a pedant who, out of pedagogical conscientiousness, had prepared long, scholarly accounts of the uses even of the simplest instruments, like axes and wheelbarrows. On the exams, he demanded a literal rendering.

Already for some time, Per had realized that a proficient engineer was, in any case, no longer a proud fairy tale hero striding through the world, as he had once deceived himself into believing, but a common bureaucrat, a meticulous recording machine, a living tabulator, chained to a drafting table. Furthermore, most of his fellow students—especially those who were considered the most promising by both teachers and classmates—dreamed of a steady, secure position as an administrator, even if subordinate, that would allow them as fathers with multiple responsibilities, to order their little house and garden. After forty years of faithful service, they could retire with a small pension, a token of distinction or a "Counselor of Justice" title.

Per was tempted by no such prospect. He felt he had not been created for common or cheap happiness. He felt master-blood in his veins and demanded a seat of honor at life's table among the earth's free and chosen.

He had selected the means that would allow him to gain the desired proud independence. While he managed to go to lectures and seminars fairly regularly, attending to the humiliating trivial work that would secure him a future income, he had secretly busied himself with making a draft of a large water construction project—a fjord realignment which he had planned in his first student years in Copenhagen. Its origin lay even further back in time, all the way to his boyhood, when he had heard so much talk about reviving navigation through the fjord by deepening and realigning the channel and rebuilding the harbor—an undertaking, finally abandoned, of which his father had spoken disparagingly because of the considerable disturbance that arose in the town. Even then, Per had dreamed of completing that great plan, of directing the fresh flow of ocean and the golden outpouring of international trade into the town's poor harbor of apple barges. The dream, to become the savior of the city that had witnessed his humiliation, had never completely left him. After his last unhappy Christmas visit, it over-powered him. In his loneliness this *idée fixe* gave him no peace. With a kind of religious conviction, he saw the realization of this dream as his life's destiny and present goal.

For three years, since he had learned how to adapt a canal profile to the proportions of a professional map, he had been working on this. Night after night he had stolen time from his sleep to chart bed plans and current velocities, sketch fascine constructions, banked slopes, pier heads and ringed spars. And through the years he developed his plan, adding something new, making it more and more massive. Influenced by some well-known German professional publications, he conceived the idea of extending the deepened channel to the other side of the town like a canal or a system of canals on the Dutch model. What he vaguely projected as a final, impressive goal was a network of broad arteries that would connect all the large rivers, lakes, and fjords of middle Jutland with each other and put the cultivated heaths and the flourishing new towns into contact with the sea on both sides.

But a depression intruded each time his thoughts flew to such a height. The shaggy monster of impotence settled itself on his worktable and laughed scornfully at his dreams of greatness: "You're crazy," it admonished. "Until you become old and gray, you cannot be allowed to carry through anything like that in this country, where it looks like presumption for a young man to

have ambitions other than to seat himself hunched over in an office chair, and where an engineer who wants to preserve the highest esteem and confidence of his fellow citizens may hope for a post like a royally appointed highway bureaucrat. Have you already forgotten what your respected teacher, the revered Professor Sandrup, with his paternal earnestness, impressed on your mind when you began, in an examination, to trot out new views (not assigned) gleaned from reading modern German authors: ‘Try, young man, to fight against the premature desire to show off your independence’—not true? Instructive words! Wise and weighty words.”

After a while, he seldom allowed such bitter thoughts to chafe his spirits; he was too young and his mind too unsettled. In general, a brisk walk, a glance at a pretty girl, a small dinner party at the old couple’s apartment, or an evening passed with some friends in a café, was sufficient to dissipate the gathering storm-clouds. Women were an especially helpful diversion when a bad mood threatened. He was now twenty-one years old and attraction to the opposite sex was ready to dominate his imagination and give it a new horizon.

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One evening he went with an acquaintance to an old-world Swiss café that was a favorite gathering-place for the city’s dispersed artistic and literary demi-monde. While his comrade enthusiastically pointed out some of the day’s most talked about artists and authors among the company, Per, with little interest in such things, fixed his attention on a young woman standing behind the counter—a tall and slender figure with splendid strawberry blond hair.

“That’s ‘Red Lisbeth’,” his companion explained, “The model for Iversen’s ‘Venus’ and Petersen’s ‘Susanne’. Not bad, is she? What a complexion!”

From that day on, Per became a frequent patron of the café, especially at those times when it was not so crowded. He was very attracted to the young woman and, when it became evident the feeling was mutual, he soon had an intimate relationship.

Per was, at this time, quite vain about his appearance. He had a strong and sturdy body, a high forehead, dark, curly hair, and large blue eyes under joined brows. Above his full mouth could be seen the beginnings of a mustache. Thanks to Madam Olufsen’s motherly care, he had kept his bright young complexion, his cheeks their country color. When he circulated among people, he would smile without being aware of it and that constant

empty smile easily deceived those who did not know him; they simply looked upon him as a child in sweet harmony with all of existence. On the whole, he did not succeed in shedding his provincial air. Still, when he was in his best clothes he cut an imposing figure, carried himself well, and moved rather gracefully. Despite his continual destitution, he never neglected his clothes. At any rate, when he was seen in the street, he was always neat and trim. He had already ascertained that, to certain eyes, a white shirt front and an immaculately fitted coat could have more significance for a young man's future than a prolonged, dedicated, ascetic diligence. Nothing vital was lost so long as appearance was maintained. At home, on the other hand, he was careless with himself and felt a certain comfort and satisfaction in wearing out his old clothes.

The café where he now had become an habitu  and where he wasted more time and money than he could afford was called "The Pot." It was frequented by a bohemian clique known as "The Independents," consisting of younger, and singular older, beautiful souls, genuine talents who, nevertheless, had, in some way, become stalled, either never really maturing or growing old before their time. The very controversial seascape painter, Fritjof Jensen, sat there in the evening—his was a broad-shouldered Viking body with wavy black hair and beard, in a short sailor jacket,—a genial, imaginative painter, an engaging, jolly brother with a foaming tankard, but as soft and unreliable as a boy in puberty. Each morning, the sick poet Enevoldsen, a lonely melancholic, polished his lorgnette or tenderly rubbed his hands or lost himself in the enjoyment of a cigar; he had sat that way, year after year, but supported by all kinds of little jobs had chiseled his verse of glowing color—small masterpieces that initiated a whole new tone in Danish poetry. The young, naturalist figure painter with a bulldog face, J rgen Hallager, sat there—the inciter and anarchist, who wanted to overturn society, reform art, abolish academies, and hang all professors, but who supported himself legitimately as a retoucher for a photographer. And there was the old mocking-bird, the journalist and dramatist of comedies, Reeballe, a bow-legged, wig-wearing dwarf with one shining eye and one dim, whose long yellowing goat's beard hung over his always dirty shirt front—the inevitable target of all caricaturists in the city's humorous papers. He willfully circulated among the tables, often in a fairly drunken condition, with a chewed cigar stump in the corner of his mouth and with one or both hands tucked behind him in his waistband, darting here and there among people he didn't even know and mixing his nonsense into their conversations. He, also, wanted to reform the world, but in the classic spirit.

His ideal was Socrates, with his standpoint of clear, sober knowledge. In moments when his mind was fully befogged, he liked to strike his breast and call himself, "the last Greek".

Despite the fact that Per was so much younger than these men and had not, himself, made any attempt to cultivate them, he enjoyed the honor of being involved in their circle—partly, as Fritjof Jensen once professed, for the sake of his "painterly red cheeks," but really because of his relation to Lisbeth, who was their favored pet. Some of them owed half their fame to her beautiful, silken hair and soft skin. As recompense, they paid her the special attention of always recognizing that moment's preferred admirer, including even those who in no way belonged to the artistic society.

Per continued, nonetheless, to feel a stranger in this group; and it was not merely because of his modesty that he seldom took part in the conversation. He had as meager a sense of painting as of poetry, but his imagination found sufficient nourishment in his studies. It remained so totally absorbed in his great future work that no passion was left for art.

However, he was not an indifferent spectator. He was silently amused by these curious men who could fly into a rage over a color combination and talk themselves into a state of ecstasy on the subject of four rhymed lines, as if mankind's welfare hung on their right conception. He enjoyed this kind of scene as he would a stage comedy and he would laugh to himself when he noticed how much Lisbeth also was seized by the madness and, proud that her figure was so important to art, would gladly have her life understood as an inspired offering to Beauty's glorification.

One of the men frequenting "The Pot", who seemed particularly interested in Per, did not belong in the circle and, in general, did not even seem to be welcome there. This was a certain Ivan Salomon, a young Jew, the son of one of the richest men in the city—a little, adroit fellow, a brown eyed squirrel, always smiling, very obliging and very happy to be moving among so many famous artists. It was that man's most ambitious dream to discover a genius one day and champion him. He was always on the hunt for a hidden or unappreciated talent whose patron he could be. Every little particular aspect of appearance that he spotted—a pair of deep-set eyes, a firm forehead or even just uncut hair—he took immediately as a sign of special gifts, and many funny stories were told about the disappointments he had suffered in this regard.

He had now pinned his hopes on Per who was rather annoyed by his attentions. He even resisted his flattery. He felt uncomfortable when Hr. Salomon—with distinct allusions to Per's quick success with Lisbeth—

ingratiatingly claimed he was marked out to be an Aladdin, a charmed boy on whose Caesar-brow, God's finger had written: "I come, I see, I conquer!" At the same time, such words really thrilled Per, made him quiver in his innermost, hidden being. It only pained and humiliated him that he should first hear this prophecy from the foolish mouth of a little Jew.

One evening Per came into "The Pot" around midnight and found himself in the middle of a riotous Bacchinal. It was the great Fritjof Jensen—just "Fritjof" as he was called by everyone—who was letting go on the occasion of selling "Hurricane in the North Sea," one of his four two-foot canvases, to a butter merchant. Some small tables had been lined up in the middle of a room that was divided from the other part of the restaurant by a corridor. Here, a score of guests sat around two wreathed bowls of champagne punch.

Fritjof, enveloped in a cloud of tobacco smoke, sat at the head of the tables, enthroned like an Olympian. His great private cup called "The Deep" stood in front of him and his blurry eyes and voice signaled his drunkenness. For more than twenty-four hours he had been feverishly running about, spending night and day in oyster and wine bars with prostitutes, and in the woods, dragging along any friend or friend's friend he encountered on the way.

Among a series of speakers, a pale young man with Mephistophelean features suddenly sprang up on his chair and loudly toasted an absent friend, a certain Dr. Nathan, of whom Per had often heard, always enthusiastically, at the "Pot." He was a literary critic and beloved philosopher counted in certain young academic circles as their spiritual leader, who, dissatisfied with his native land, had settled in Berlin. Per knew little else of the man, except that it was impossible not to come across his name in every serious or comic newspaper at hand—Dr. Satan, as he was invariably called. That the man was a Jew had prevented Per from desiring more intimate knowledge of him. He simply disliked that foreign race nor did he have any leaning towards literary men. The Doctor had even given lectures at the university, that theologically defiled womb for the whole of academic philistinism—in Per's eyes, the country's characteristic curse.

The pale, young speaker, who stood on his chair and gesticulated wildly, was a poet named Povl Berger. Cheered on by his drinking partners, he called Dr. Nathan his "hero," then his "God." After he emptied his glass, he crushed it in his hand to honor him, and blood ran over his fingers. Per sat open mouthed. He felt he was in a madhouse.

In the course of the night, new guests joined the company, and two small tables were brought in to accommodate them. For practical reasons, the tables were not placed in the row, but on the sides, so that the whole company formed a cross.

A bellow, a thunderclap, erupted. It was Fritjof shouting, "We will not sit here under this cursed sign of Galilee! Piety nauseates me! Let us form a horseshoe. We will bargain with the devil, honor his very footwear. Move out, friends!"

When everyone had indulged him and all had again taken their seats after the uproar, he lifted his full cup and proclaimed: "I greet you Lucifer. Holy rebel! You guardian spirit of freedom and happiness! The god of all younger devils. Grant me many fat butter merchants and I will build you an altar of oyster shells and empty champagne bottles. . . Hey, proprietor! . . . Gripomenus! More wine here! Hey, is anyone listening?"

The proprietor, a little Swiss in a short jacket, popped in through the restaurant door, that had been closed and unlit for some time. Shrugging and gesticulating, he begged pardon, but he couldn't serve anymore this night; it was past two, and the street's friendly watchman had already once knocked on the pane to warn him.

"The time! The time!" shouted Fritjof. "We are gods, Gripomenus! Time is for tailors and shoemakers!"

"Yes," answered the little proprietor with his head tilted to one side and his hands folded on his chest "and for restaurant owners—unfortunately." When he noticed that his joke had been well received, he added, with a smile, that he would be glad to accommodate the gentlemen again the next day; they could come early if they wished. "We open at seven."

But Fritjof flung himself back in his chair and reached deep into his right trouser pocket. "We shall have wine!" he bellowed as he scattered a handful of clinking coins all over. "Here is the butter! Will you have more? Drink, friends. Let the mess be! We are not philistines."

But this grandiosity was too Olympian for his companions. They suddenly became sober and busied themselves picking up the coins that had rolled onto the floor, while Fritjof still went on shouting: "Wine—we shall have wine and women! Wine, I say!"

Gradually, the drinking bout broke up. The proprietor respectfully took every guest aside, and amicably asked each one to leave the premises "because of the police." He led them out through the back door. Only Fritjof was unyielding and kept shouting.

At last, only Per was left with him, but since he, too, wanted to leave, Fritjof grabbed his arms and tearfully threatened, begged, implored him to stay.

Per let himself, finally, be persuaded. He felt he couldn't be responsible for leaving the painter in such an inflamed state of mind. With Fritjof's promise to stay peaceful, "Gripomenus," shaking his head, brought in coffee and cognac and shuffled away.

Fritjof planted his elbows on the tabletop and propped his bearded head between his hands. He suddenly became silent and stared down through half-closed eyes.

Per sat at the other side of the table and lit a new cigar. A single half-lowered gaslight burned directly over their heads. The rest of the large room was barely visible through the gray veil of whirling dust and tobacco smoke. The clutter of empty tables and chairs was all around them just as the guests had left them: a mess of cigarette ashes, champagne corks, broken glass littered the tables. But it was quiet now—so strikingly still after the wild noise that each sound could evoke a faint echo from all the corners of the room.

Since Fritjof sat without a word, Per thought that, at last, he had fallen asleep. He clinked his glass against Fritjof's: "Skål." Instead of answering, Fritjof began to talk mournfully of death. He looked shakily at Per with his purblind eyes and asked him if he ever felt uncomfortable when he thought *here* about what might be *there*—on the other side of the grave.

Per, who did not have such impulses and was far too concerned with his present life to project possibilities of a future life, thought, at first, that Fritjof was joking. But when he started to laugh, Fritjof seized his arm and said half anxiously, half commandingly, "Quiet, young man! Let us not forswear anything! It's very easy to be careless about it in your green years. But wait until you have your first gray hair and feel a queer sort of tingle when you think that your well cared for body one day shall be served as a celebratory meal for some hundreds of hungry worms. Just a little superfluous fat around the heart—done! A pillow of shavings under the head, eight screws in the coffin lid—and voilà, the table is set! Let us not forswear anything, I say. Perhaps there is still more beyond the stars than our modern Hebrew Prophets dream of. In that case, what then? Won't there come a day of reckoning for us all? We imagine ourselves to be so smart. Yes, indeed! But happier? Skål!"

Per's eyes opened wide. He stared at that bearded wild bear, that high priest of happiness and the cultivation of beauty in life, who suddenly

displayed himself as the soul-mate of Per's father and mother, a spirit from the underworld who wandered in the realm of shadows, whose thoughts circled around the grave and the beyond—in dread of the powers of light he had, just a moment ago, so exuberantly conjured up.

This was not the only time Per got such a surprising insight into the inner feelings of the "Independents" and made out a dark side, an irrepressible remnant of a haunted self that, in an unguarded moment, would play unpleasant games with their day self. He would watch the "last Greek," Reeballe, when he was uncharacteristically sober, struggle fairly seriously to sustain his conscience, and Lisbeth regularly fetching her confirmation hymn book from the chest of drawers whenever she felt her hip pain or was frightened she was pregnant.

Gradually it dawned on him what it was, in general, that crippled the power of human beings and made the world a big hospital for invalids. Some sought consolation in drink, others drowned out the "inner voice" with childish boasting and wild games, a third kind, anesthetized, shut themselves up as in a snail's shell during a storm, while a fourth lost themselves in idle dreams of a future anarchistic brotherhood among men—so everyone, in general, belonged to one of these groups and struggled with ghosts, while life, ruddy-cheeked and smiling, invited them to the celebration around them. He recognized it all from his childhood!

Suddenly, the dizzying sensation swept over him that he would be someone exceptional, special, a man who already as a child, through a happy chance, had broken his chains while the age's freest spirits were still in thrall. Ivan Salomon's words—that Per had Aladdin's luck and God's legend on his brow—bore a fresh and extensive significance. He had only to wish, to desire without scruples, and all life's glories would be his!

So, conquer then; he was a King's son! He already wore the ruler's crown on his head. And there had already been one who had seen its glimmer and read the inscription: "I come, I see, I conquer."



## Chapter Three

One day, after long consideration, Per collected some rolls of drafting paper and computation copybooks and sought out Professor Sandrup in his private quarters to ask him to look at his canal and fjord realignment project and render his opinion. The Professor ran his eyes over the plan, silently set his spectacles on his long nose and uttered small grunts of dissatisfaction. With the discomfiting capacity that old teachers develop, in the course of years, to be able instantly to finger a work's weak points, he quickly indicated a mistake in Per's calculation of the current's velocities.

Per could deny neither the existence of the mistake nor its consequence for the whole plan. He blushed a flaming red and made no attempt to defend himself. The Professor again took off his spectacles as he acknowledged Per's interest and industry evident in his work, but earnestly advised him not to spend more time on this kind of useless experiment—to apply himself, rather, to the practical and regular study of prescribed examination subjects.

When Per got home he again spread his papers before him and studied them thoroughly. It didn't help. The mistake could not be disregarded. It had slipped in at the very beginning of his computations and the adjustment would have a consequence, as the Professor had correctly seen, that the projected middle water level at the river's lowest point would be depressed below sea level. In other words, the whole plan rested on a false premise and could not be achieved.

Once again his face flushed with shame. His whole proud kingdom had collapsed in ruins. For over an hour he sat hunched inertly over the table with his head in his hands.

Suddenly he stood up, threw the sketches, calculations and estimates pell-mell into a drawer, lit a cigar, and strode out into the city where he spent the afternoon in a billiard room. He walked around, loudmouthed and in shirtsleeves, playing with anyone who asked him. He was, withal, unusually sure in his strokes and won game after game. No one who saw him could imagine he had, the same day, suffered such an ignominious disappointment.

Late in the afternoon, an acquaintance came in who offered a ticket for

sale at half price to an artist and student carnival that evening. Per bought it instantly.

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The next evening, he stood in snowy weather with his coat collar up and waited on one of the dark, quiet corners of Frue Plads. There wasn't a person in sight. No footprint could be seen in the white snow that carpeted the ground around the church. The statues of Moses and David before the entrance looked like a pair of Holberg lawyers with big, white wigs and black cloaks.

Per waited for a lady, a young woman he had met at the carnival and danced with half the night. He didn't entertain high hopes she would come. This was his first love adventure with a genuine lady, and she had given him no promise. She had virtually rebuffed his bold request with a self-conscious jest.

The bell in the tower had long since sounded nine, and he was thinking of going home when someone cleared his throat behind him. It was a messenger who asked his name and then gave him a letter. Per moved under the nearest street lamp and while his nostrils flared to take in the stationery's scent of violets, he read: "Obviously, I have not come. But I'll try to get you an invitation to a party at the manufacturer Fensmark's next Sunday. I think there is a shortage of gentleman dancing partners." The letter bore no signature, but there was a postscript: "I am really angry with you. I hope you are a little ashamed of yourself."

Per shoved the letter into a pocket and smiled with satisfaction. He thought of Lisbeth. He could now, finally, get rid of her. He had long felt a distaste for such virtual prostitutes with their crudeness and fickleness, fleas and filthy bedrooms. A richer and better love life would now begin for him. His fantasy rolled out a thrilling future of amorous adventures, dangerous assignations, secret cab rides, hidden hand squeezings under the table, stolen kisses behind a fan, horrendous confessions.

From Skoubogade he turned onto Vimmelskaft where he abruptly interrupted his beautiful fantasies with a coarse oath. A little man in a sable coat under a big umbrella came directly towards him on the sidewalk. Despite the fact that the umbrella hid the whole of his upper body, Per had recognized him immediately by the quick pace of his steps. It was Ivan Salomon.

To avoid him Per quickly stepped over the gutter to cross the street, but it was too late. A loud greeting: "Hr. Sidenius! Isn't that Hr. Sidenius?" pinned him in place.

“If you are on your way to ‘The Pot’, said Salomon, “I would dissuade you. I have just come from there. This evening it’s hard to endure the boredom. Only Envoldsen is there; our good poet sits absent-mindedly and polishes his lorgnette. He was obviously having great difficulties over where to put a comma. Shall we go somewhere else? Will you give me the pleasure of dining with me this evening? You’re free, aren’t you?”

Per yielded; he couldn’t think of any objection that Salomon wouldn’t be able immediately to overcome. Besides, he didn’t have any great desire to go home to be with himself in a rotten mood because of what lay in the bureau drawer. He wouldn’t be able to sleep. Since the man wanted his company, why not this one time?

Shortly thereafter, they sat on a wine-red velvet sofa in a newly built elegant restaurant of a hotel favored by traveling country gentry and commissioned officers. An expensive Brussels carpet covered the floor and large mirrors graced the walls. Service was quietly plied by waiters in formal jackets, and the patrons, several of whom were women, carried on soft-voiced conversations.

Per felt, at first, a bit ill at ease. Not only was he unused to moving in such distinguished circles, but he was especially embarrassed about being there with Salomon. The latter, with his raucous and uninhibited manner, attracted an ill willed attention.

A patron sitting alone, whom Per had not yet noticed, looked up crossly from his newspaper. He was roughly forty years old, a tall, slack, skeletal figure, nearly bald, with an emaciated face, a long, blond moustache, and a gold pince-nez. He had scrutinized Ivan Salomon with a critical glance, but as soon as he caught sight of Per, a blush suffused his pale cheeks and he hid behind his newspaper so that nothing of his body was visible except a pair of long, crossed legs.

“What would you like to eat? Some oysters?” asked Salomon, as he pulled off his rich brown gloves and stuck them between the two lowest buttons of his waistcoat. “Do you have really fresh shellfish this evening?” he asked the waiter who responded with a slight, nonchalant bow.

Per couldn’t make himself admit that he didn’t particularly care for this elegant dish, but, on the other hand, didn’t want to miss the opportunity for a solid dinner. He was hungry from the long wait in the cold air. He yearned for meat, cheese, and eggs, many eggs. “Oysters are good,” he said, “but I confess I am hungry as a wolf.”

“Bravo, excellent!” Salomon rejoiced and clapped his hands, inciting all of the highly vexed patrons, even the ladies, to turn towards them, and the

single gentleman's lorgnette to peek out for a moment over the newspaper's edge.

Salomon continued questioning the waiter: "Let me hear what else you have this evening."

The waiter rattled off a list of dishes.

"Let us have all of it—everything!" Salomon shouted with unbridled gaiety as his arms swept over the table. "Lay it on! A fine supper! And quickly, little friend! We are as hungry as wolves."

Per, who had seen that even the waiter's expression was condescending, knew no other way out of his embarrassment than to adopt Salomon's tone. He took a toothpick from the holder on the table, leaned back in the sofa corner and cast a challenging glance around the room.

The shellfish was served on a bed of ice with a chilled bottle of champagne. Wild fowl, asparagus, omelets, cheese, celery, and fruit followed. Per ate heartily. He mused that since he might come here only once, he should really take advantage of it. It was the first time in his life he had been favored with such a royal offering.

While Salomon only pecked at the first dishes, his incessant conversation was lavish. He commenced his favorite theme, the Renaissance. "Mankind's Golden Age," he said. "Poets, artists, inventors—all the magnificent talents—were living like princes, honored by kings, loved by queens; geniuses in our day starve in a garret room and hardly count in good society. Consequently, their work so often misses the mark of greatness, the kind of power that irresistibly sweeps you away. I spoke before of Enevoldsen. God knows I hold his talent in high regard. I consider his "Creation" a lyrical masterpiece. But after that—is it not so? Filigree work, charming figments of imagination, pretty statuettes instead of monuments. For three days he has been pondering one adjective. He is missing great experiences, that's the thing. Ah, if one were rich, rich, rich!"

He leaned against the sofa back with hands clasped behind his neck and sat with a leg tucked under him, displaying a bit of a red silk stocking.

"I thought you *were* rich," remarked Per dryly, just to say something.

"Ah, rich! . . . No, one should be able to strew millions around, scoop gold with both hands! Geniuses should be established like small princes around the country, surrounded by courts, hunts, masked balls, mistresses! Think of Rubens! Think of Goethe, of Voltaire!"

He stretched across the table to fill Per's glass. Then he tried to make his guest talk about himself and his future plans. An acquaintance he had in common with Per, also a student at the Polytechnic, had informed Salomon

that the young man, outside of his regular studies, was working on some kind of invention. It bothered Salomon not to have been able to make Per reveal this in order to offer him support.

But Per was now less than ever inclined to this kind of confidence. He pretended not to understand anything. When he finished his meal, he lit a cigar and leaned back, no longer paying attention to the other's effusions. His thoughts, on fire from the wine, gravitated to Fru Engelhardt, the woman from the Carnival. Meanwhile, his eyes traced swirling clouds of cigarette smoke transforming into a high, floating flower, a billowy alcove curtain from behind which Fru Engelhardt's ripe body was barely visible in all its sheer loveliness. He realized, for the first time, how much he was in love. Admittedly, if he were honest, he would confess that his feelings for her, until that moment, had not differed greatly from those he entertained generally for pretty, full-bodied women. The only thing that gave him pause was the matter of her age. Hardly young, yet certainly not over thirty, but even if she were, her dark brown eyes, as large as a pair of ripe chestnuts, her bold carriage in her enchanting Columbine costume, her heaving shoulders, the trembling nostrils of her little snub-nose—all betrayed a youthful ardor, a proclivity to passion, that canceled out the age question.

His eyes fell on the gentleman with the gold lorgnette, who, at last, had laid aside his paper and now was summoning the waiter for the bill. When their eyes met, they both raised themselves up a little to make a ceremonial greeting.

"Good Lord, that's Neergaard!" Salomon exclaimed. "Do you know him?"

"Not really...I bumped into him by chance yesterday at the carnival."

"What? Were you there?...I didn't see you."

"It was terribly overcrowded. You were there, too?"

"Yes, I was there; I was Hamlet! Didn't you see me?"

Per well recalled having seen a little black costumed knight in the crowd with a lady dressed as a snow-queen, who had kindled a sense of scandal in the other ladies, partly because of her daring décolletée, and partly because of the diamonds decorating her white veil like glittering rainbows of frost crystals.

"You were with a lady?" asked Per.

"My sister—yes."

"Ah..."

Meanwhile, the gentleman with the gold lorgnette had stood up and was, at that moment, about to don his coat with the waiter's help. Per observed

with some envy his very correct and elegant clothes, the cool sophistication with which he let the waiter bring him both his hat and cane and, then, the way, with merely a movement of the hand, he requested a light for his cigarette.

The previous night, when Per had danced for the first time with Fru Engelhardt, he had popped up beside them and introduced himself. After that, he had steadily watched them from a distance, suggesting to Per he must be a rival.

As Hr. Neergaard passed their table to leave the restaurant, Salomon waved amicably and exclaimed: "Good evening, Neergaard...Good evening! How are you?"

Hr. Neergaard lifted his eyebrows as if greatly surprised. Then he smiled indulgently and, not even taking the cigarette from his mouth, responded with a detached nod. In contrast, he greeted Per with almost exaggerated courtesy that obliged Per, once again, to get up to bow.

When he had gone, Per asked, "What kind of a fellow is he, really?"

Salomon shrugged. "Don't know what I can say...I don't really know him well. Merely met him now and again at social occasions. He was once an eminent person. He is a law graduate, bears a distinguished name and has excellent connections....In other words, he had chances to make a brilliant career in our small circle. There was also once talk about appointing him to the diplomatic service...to the legation in London, I think.

That interested even the Prince of Wales. I don't know what it was that blocked the way. In any case, he wouldn't take an appointment. He certainly is a peculiar man. Now he holds an extremely modest post in one of the ministries."

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The day after Per received the invitation to the ball Fru Engelhardt had promised to get for him, he busied himself to improve his wardrobe so that his appearance in Copenhagen social circles would not appear shameful in the eyes of the other gentlemen. It was obvious he needed to borrow some money.

He was introduced by one of his café acquaintances to an old, one-time farmer who made his bit of capital grow by lending it out to young men at an interest rate of sixty percent, secured by the borrowers' life insurance policies, books, furniture, christening and vaccination certificates. He required, as well, a ceremony of verbal guaranties, with a hand on the Bible, in the presence of witnesses.

Madam Olufsen was wide-eyed at the introduction of each new item

that, almost daily, was brought into the house from the town's big stores. She and her husband often discussed what could be going on. Per said nothing. In fact, when he was at home, which had become seldom, he was very reclusive. The only one who could have shed some light on the situation was the silent Trine. Love's thousand-eyed instinct had quickly instructed the simple girl—so far as her understanding of this sort of thing could reach—as to what was developing here. And more frequently than ever, she would take refuge in the privy when sorrow overwhelmed her and she could be alone with her tears.

She devoted herself with even greater care to his small rooms, zealously attending to, and fussing over everything that belonged to him, especially the new things she took to be his wedding wardrobe, as if it were a matter of her own happiness. She sewed labels on the fine linen, handkerchiefs, and silk stockings, and laid clean paper in the bottom unlocked drawers of Per's bureau, where they all would be placed. When the evening of the ball came, it was she who knotted his white necktie, buttoned his gloves, told him his new dress-coat fit him well, and that his barbered hair looked good. And at eight thirty, when the ordered cab had not yet come, it was she who railed against the tardy fool of a driver and who, in the sleet and darkness, without a hat or shawl, ran up and down Adelgade, trying to get another cab.

By the time Per stepped into the ballroom the dance had already begun. A dozen pairs waltzed elegantly over the floor, while an equal number stood or sat along the walls. Among these he quickly discovered Fru Engelhardt sitting in a fire-red silk dress and fanning herself with a large down-bordered fan. A gentleman with a shiny baldhead, rocking his top hat on his knee, sat at her side. It was Neergaard.

The sight of that man put a damper on Per's mood, especially at the jealous thought that *his* presence also was owing to Fru Engelhardt's favor. He did not dance in the first quarter hour, but stayed in the neighboring room where some older men were playing cards. Only towards the end of the first waltz did he bow stiffly before his young friend without looking at her escort. She seemed reluctant to recognize him. Finally, she stood up, gathered up her train with a half-motherly smile and pressed her full body against his arm.

"What an ungrateful man you are," she said in her Copenhagen dialect after they had danced a few times around the room, without Per having uttered a word. "You haven't once thanked me for the invitation I got you. It wasn't so easy, I want you to know."

"I am deeply obliged, Fru Engelhardt."

“How formal! Is something bothering you?”

“Yes, a little.”

“And what’s that, if you can trust a lady.”

“Why is Neergaard here? I can’t stand him. You’ll do me a kindness if you don’t dance with him.”

“I must say, that request is a bit presumptuous.” She laughed and pressed again against his arm. Per laughed as well. Her secret sign of trust, the scent of her hair, and the half-bare bosom resting on his chest inflamed him. They danced four rounds and by the time he led her back to her place, Neergaard had disappeared. Per saw him a little later standing at the other end of the room, paying court to a young girl with long, yellow braids down her back.

Meanwhile, the ball dragged on slowly through the first dances without anyone much enjoying the party except for the servants who were permitted from time to time, to look into the room. Only when the gentlemen in the side-rooms discovered that refreshments had been brought out did things get more lively. This assemblage was somewhat mixed and the tone fairly unrestrained, as is generally the case in cultivated families without grown sons, whose ball partners are procured from acquaintances or acquaintances’ friends with no voucher other than an address out of a directory. Since the guests felt in no way obliged to the house, they carried on freely, yawning and criticizing and making demands as if in a public place.

The host, a little white-haired man who didn’t even know the names of his guests, moved about anxiously through the rooms and felt more alien than anyone. With a forced social smile, he conscientiously performed the duty laid on him by his wife and daughter, “to put the dancers to work.” Whenever he found a gentleman idling before the paintings on the drawing-room walls, or stopping a little too long for refreshments, he positioned himself at his side and initiated a conversation that began innocently enough with some observation about art, or theater, or skating, but invariably ended with the guest, under his supervision, turning back to the dance room where he presented himself to one or another of the house’s old friends whose dance card had some blanks.

Fru Engelhardt had promised Per the cotillion, but when refreshments were finished and the dance began, he sought her in vain in both the hall and the adjacent rooms. At last he found her in a little, dim, six-cornered tower room on the other side of the living room. She sat all alone on a sofa in a corner that could be seen only after entering.

She greeted him with a gentle, tired air of sadness and said that he had

the right to be angry with her, but she had no more desire to dance, and understood he would think it required him to leave the dance, too, to keep her company. She could not accept such a complete sacrifice on his part. He must not feel obliged to stay.

Even with his social inexperience, Per was not so naïf as to miss her meaning. He shoved a chair over by her side and, for a time, the two sat silently, while the music and noise, quite muted since it had to pass through two or three large rooms, reached them from the dance. Suddenly Per took her hand resting on the sofa arm, and since she let him hold it, he declared, in plain words, his love and his desire for an assignation. She did not seem unwilling, and he bent over her white arm and planted one, two, three kisses up to her elbow. He had really thought she would prevent him; she did say she would be seriously angry if he did it again—but the glance of her moist eyes and her swelling bosom contradicted her words.

Footsteps were heard outside the room, and Per had just enough time to push himself back in the chair when Neergaard's tall form appeared at the door. He bowed politely, excusing himself, but remained standing there hesitantly with his hands behind his back.

"Come in," said Fru Engelhardt.

"Do you want company?" asked Neergaard in a provocative way that displeased Per.

"Not really. But if you have something amusing to tell us, we'll be glad to hear it."

"Ah yes... You and Hr. Engineer Sidenius sit here so drearily alone... so completely abandoned by the world."

"Yes," she sighed, fanning herself gently and leaning back in the corner of the sofa. "It's so depressing how tired I am... completely done in by the dance and so many people. But you? Why aren't you dancing? You seemed so thoroughly engaged tonight."

"No, dear lady," he said, finally deciding to enter the room. "Now I think I, also, am in a gloomy mood and will practice saying a clean farewell to the world—You permit?" He pulled up a chair so that Per and he sat face to face without even having greeted each other.

Fru Engelhardt's tongue became very busy. She commented on several of the ladies' dresses, criticized the social conglomeration, then by contrast, strongly praised the food. Per looked at Neergaard and said nothing. Nor did Neergaard. He had bent forward so that his face was obscured. His elbows rested on his knees and his long hands, slightly shaking, played with the gloves on his lap.

“How boring you have become, Neergaard,” she blurted. “You who once were so entertaining. What really is wrong with you? It’s probably something to do with a woman.”

“Perhaps.”

“Yes—there’s the little Frøken Holm. Naturally!...She might be just your style. I’ll say it to you, Hr. Sidenius: Hr. Neergaard has always been courteous enough to tell me that he goes for the blond and blue-eyed. And all the better bargain if she comes from the country.” She turned once again to Neergaard. “The pure scent of clover, summer sun and sweet milk ...a genuine dairymaid—that’s what I always wished for you...When shall the wedding be?”

Hr. Neergaard, who had lifted his head, leaned back against his chair, with his hands folded on his top hat resting on his stomach and said with a sigh of resignation: “When you’ve reached my age, it’s most sensible to look on yourself as already dead. Then you have only to take care you have a dignified funeral.”

Fru Engelhardt laughed. “You are really too bleak for this world. What should we poor women say? Look at the old cavalry captain Frich in there; he is sixty-two and leads a dance like a young lieutenant. I’m convinced he is still a lady-killer....Ah, no, at your age, men still have a lot of happiness in store.”

Neergaard bowed to her. “I thank you, dear lady, for your consoling graveside speech. I well realize that, today, men as well as women, know the art of conserving the really striking freshness of youth into maturity in the way we have learned to conserve peas, asparagus and other summer vegetables. But an old preserved cavalry captain is still, to me, an abomination. No, we should resign ourselves to our age, give to youth what is youth’s—and save ourselves many tribulations. At my age, a man can have tribulations enough. Rheumatism, indigestion, gallstones, and then the operating table—these are the real assets on the wrong side of forty.”

“Oh, but memories,” Fru Engelhardt said softly. “The good memories, Neergaard, have you forgotten them?”

“Memories—hmm! Aren’t those a kind of preserved commodity, a poor winter comfort against their loss from the vanished summer? No, let’s not talk of memories! Just one more nuisance—so that, as we gradually age, they make us feel all life’s incidents as a steadily weaker and wearier repetition.”

“Ah, you’re altogether impossible tonight. But I excuse you. You’re sick, Neergaard...You live an altogether irregular life. You should really

talk to a doctor. I'm certain he will prescribe a cure in Carlsbad."

"Perhaps...Or, instead those tried and true iron pills in a fully loaded revolver. As a painkiller, they can't be beat."

"Ah, I won't talk to you anymore. You can't be serious for a moment."

During this exchange, Per had shifted his eyes from one to the other. Their intimate tone had once again made him a little troubled about this relationship, but he calmed himself by recalling Fru Engelhardt's remark on carnival night, that she and Neergaard knew each other from childhood. Also, save for the witty recommendation of a stay at the distant Carlsbad, he interpreted her consistent demeanor toward Neergaard as annoyance at his importunities.

The dance was virtually over; in the room's dusty mist only three or four couples, giddy with love, whirled on while the music repeated its band beats in faster and faster tempo. But it started to be lively in the rooms where tired and breathless pairs settled themselves around the always well-stocked refreshment tables.

Carriages began to ride off. Fru Engelhardt went around the room to make her farewells on the arm of her husband. He was a tall, stout, good-natural wholesaler who had spent the evening playing cards. When they were going past Per, to his dismay, the wife stopped and introduced him. The husband took his hand and uttered some polite words, but Per was so embarrassed he could not look him in the eye.

Why did she do that? he wondered, a bit disconcerted, when at the same moment he heard her say very loudly to her husband in the middle of a crowd at the door, obviously with the intention that he should hear her: "Is it not Tuesday you go to London, dear?" The wholesaler confirmed this. Per turned red and smiled; then he turned pale and smiled with a long, radiant look, his eyes following the white shoulders above the red silk dress. Yes, now his life would begin.

Towards three o'clock Neergaard and Per were walking home in the moonlit night. It wasn't Per who had sought this company, but when Neergaard, on leaving, had asked him where he lived and whether he couldn't join him since he was going the same way, he couldn't say "No". He considered the offer as the final acknowledgment of his victory in the battle for Fru Engelhardt—a peace offering. In addition, he found it hard to resist the worldly man's show of politeness to him, in spite of the difference in their ages.

Neergaard spoke of the social gathering and of the whole evening's diversion. But Per was too busy with his own feelings and with the