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**Erich Wollenweber and his
brain Professor Doctor
Mirtelbrinft**

written by
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To my Father.

In gratitude for the names, the stories, the journeys on which he sent me and the incredible energy I have inherited from my *Mother* and him.

To all my Siblings and Friends who are always and ever there for me.

– CHAPTER 1 –

Scoring a Try

When I was young, I didn't always feel well. Now I'm in my early 40s and it's the year 2015.

But I didn't always feel like shit either. Maybe that's what life is all about: living enthusiasm hand in hand with dying touches of apathy.

No beautiful melancholy and also no pleasant approach to excitement in life, if you ask me. When I was young, that is, in my mid to early late 20s, I also often imagined myself giving speeches in certain circles on certain occasions; to say something really major, well, at least the truth. Sometimes it was just about communicating something to another person. The situation, the content, the sentences and each word were carefully evaluated and orchestrated in my head. This tinkering could keep me busy for hours and even make me cry.

Yet I did not truly realize a single one of these, my speeches. For whatever reason. They remained intellectual constructs.

Why I like watching movies so much?

Yeah, maybe that's exactly why.

It's about the revision of automated perception that a work of art enforces. This was said by my German studies professor once, but no one ever really listened to him. Maybe that's exactly what I wanted, that people would perceive me differently and come to new conclusions that the old, predetermined image wouldn't have given you.

Anyway, the answers to so many questions - even those I never asked myself - I received in the course of my life and most of them from my - to quote Forrest Gump - best good friend, the honorable and very lovable Professor Dr. Mirtelbrinft.

But even he was not always like that and started - like myself - quite small.

In fact, in a hospital. While my birth was a matter of 20 minutes, his was 48 times longer than mine. He already had a giant head like that back in 1971. Both the midwife and the doctor, who were really still quite 'old school', strictly disapproved of a C-section and stuck to their opinion that a child must be born naturally. This view was shared by his mother, who added that in the wild there wouldn't be anyone to cut open a birthing woman's stomach

either. About 20 years later, the medical community discovered with little notice that this approach was and always will remain complete nonsense.

Of course a child can also be delivered by cesarean section.

Even gladly in times prior to the early seventies of the 20th century.

And so it happened that after half an eternity Mirtelbrinft plumped out of his screaming mother, dark blue and completely slimy, and cracked his skull open on a rusty nail.

Not exactly, unfortunately: he merely slipped out of the midwife's hand and the only thing that could save him from the total destruction that his skull would have suffered if it had hit the tiled floor was the umbilical cord, which had not yet been severed.

I always picture this situation like a bungee jump, only in our case the rope (the umbilical cord) was stretched a little too far by the weight of the jumper (his rather heavy skull) causing the jumper to hit the ground (hospital tiles) briefly with his head (Mirtelbrinft with his skull) but not without a good smack.

Otherwise I simply cannot explain the obvious physiological deformation of his head. Sometimes I also think that the literally 'hard nut to crack' should tell me something, but I still don't know what. Perhaps, if nothing else, then at least that underwater births should be tried out more often, if the ultra-sound images show that the child has a gigantic oversized skull.

However, it is not unlikely that I pieced this story together from dreams, jokes and misunderstandings, in order to somehow give a tangible and not supernatural explanation to this Mirtelbrinft phenomenon, which I was supposed to get to know in my early mid-20s. Yes, as you get older, sometimes the truth gets carried away by the stories. Anyway, the cause for his genius as well as his deformed skull had to be from this world and why not from the very beginning of his life? Why should a short but violent collision with rather hard tiles directly after birth not explain the fact that his openly exposed skull bone plates were placed on top of one another and that, in the second step, a resulting mixing of different brain areas and the consequential new linkage of otherwise unfamiliar

areas resulted in an increased ability to think? Confusing neuro-speculations could be the tabloid headline for this. However, I can not think of any other plausible explanation.

Nevertheless, it could be that his wisdom was only noticed by me all these years and the supposedly obvious deformation of his giant skull only caught my eye, so that the complications during and shortly after his birth never occurred. I can't really say from today's perspective, but what I can say is that it could very well have been that Mirtelbrinft pulled the bungee jump stunt after his own birth. Crazy enough - genetically speaking - he most certainly was.

The idea of writing a book to simply try to capture and preserve something, be it anything, is almost as old as that of the imaginary speech. If I start it - so I always thought - it should be and had to become a universal work in a way. To be more precise, it had to be perfect. No mere rambling or telling of fiction or fictionally enriched reality. A book in which so many expectations on my part would have had to be fulfilled for it to be worthy in my eyes. Worthy of whatever and as far as the expectations were concerned: I couldn't even name them reasonably

myself... it had a lot to do with the way something was written and therefore how it was spoken, so for me a book was like an imaginary speech that was thought out, weighed, worked out to the last comma and brought to the point. But seen in this light, a book is a whole collection of such dialogues between a narrator and the reader, which makes it a truly complex undertaking that is difficult to follow in terms of imagination and arrangement. Especially if you want it to be perfect in any way. Oh goodness, sometimes there are and will be just too many thoughts. Here is something you don't hear anymore:

"The kid thinks too much." Such a slightly worried expression about a brooding person or even someone who lives a rather introverted life and really keeps things to himself is not often to be heard nowadays. Could this be a sign of the ubiquitous 'yakety-yak' that seems to be in fashion these days and which gradually eradicated all silent thinkers completely? So they receive even less attention and thus slide into oblivion. Too bad, I have always admired people like that, due to their intellectual activity, which did not necessarily have

to point to loss, desperation and loneliness, but could also be an indication of special, beautiful ideas, visions and desires. These people still had a sense for keeping silent about some things and only talking about them in particular situations. Secret ideas, ones dreams, the new or the old. It frequently used to appear to me (as well) that I was reaching my limits. Limits of different kinds. Unfortunately, increased sensitivity is always accompanied by an increasing awareness and self-centredness. Doing so in a rather peculiar, strange way. It is possible, for example, to perceive or discover that friendships or other interpersonal relationships are not sufficiently intense enough to have a satisfying effect on the subject. Or even that love didn't exist the way it was spooking around in my head - that I could have puked because of the way certain things were, that their nature led me to such an unpleasant weariness that I didn't see any way out.

At times this was so bizarre that every time I was struck down by the presents' full intensity, I respired so deeply

that I felt like I could start all over again. The cards would be dealt again, everything would

not be as bad as I had previously assumed, a kind of happy optimism that revives the doubter, seemingly without reason, and is able to snatch him out of his sadness.

I hear some bands even sing that you can't turn off a life that is fixated on a certain state of mind.

And yet it seems to have happened somehow. Things don't touch me like they used to.

I don't love anybody anymore. Something that used to be sacred, something I believed in no longer exists. It all became something. The intensity and attraction - to the positive or the negative end of each continuum - that I used to feel is no more. It hasn't given way to indifference, but to life as it is.

The dream is over. We are not living in a fiction of a written story.

Nothing's as special as it used to be. I'm just chasing the past, if I'm honest. I even pant and cry when I do.

A pity, I'm afraid you won't be able to shake the world to its foundations with my help anymore. It's unlikely anyone would have joined in anyway. All I do now is write. Write and write and write until the word loses its meaning. Like everything else

eventually does. I happened to dig up this old text of mine about half an hour ago:

The cigarette fell and the breath lingers.

Absolute silence before the great moment,

only the wind blowing over the heads

of the masses can be heard.

The short moment before the great awakening.
The blink of an eye before the never known.
The holding of a breath before the crowd rises.
The short, tingling moment before an inner movement
that grasps everyone:

The flaming statement rumbles
down from the high, sunlit balcony onto the crowd,
which is carried away as if by a huge,
untameable, raging stream.

The deep truth, the thing longed for by all,
is called and resounds through
land and marrow,
mountain and valley,
across the sea into
the vastness of the earth,
up to the ears of the world.

Each person is captivated by the wild determination and
the absolute urgency of this moment.

United in spirit, the infinite possibilities, the vision in
sight, as if dazed by the idea everyone believes in.

The earth trembles under this madness

under the power of man's will.

Reality and dream seem so close;
they almost lie in each other's arms;
hope tangible in the fresh air.

The bubbling, fiery mass foams and boils;
so powerfully waves the wonderful flags
on this exceptional night ...

It is revolution.

I've always wanted to announce that.

– CHAPTER 2 –

An almost metaphysical promise

"Identify yourself!, it sounded clear and dominant. Identify yourself! I could only babble... It was awful. I knew exactly what he meant and somehow I didn't have to answer, he knew what I was thinking and I knew what he would answer. I only know that I couldn't think of anything specific, and yet I know that there is already something there.

Is that enough?! That's the question... Is that all? Isn't there more identity to it? It doesn't get more differentiated, more profound, more qualitative? Not really individual, what your plans are won't work out. None of it will work out. And I cried and cried and cried, and life went downhill. And then I was awake and I was crazy. The reality seemed the same, but I wasn't the same anymore. I felt a rare coldness and distance from everything and myself... I don't know, but it's slowly getting better...", Erik finally told me about his dream.

I couldn't say much about it and yet I knew exactly about such mad dreams. A dream is the sole product of your own brain. Mirtelbrinft told me this

seemingly banal wisdom very early on and I thought about it a lot. So every dream event - including the contributions of other people, perhaps even those known to us - is completely imagined by oneself, somehow almost appearing to be self-invented.

During the night, these imagined characters appear - as in a theatrical performance - in the head and play the, in this state, very believable piece, the dream. As is widely known,

it is difficult for the dreamer to resist the very process of dreaming. It is not imposed from outside, but generated by the individual himself. And here is the interesting link: Everything that is dreamed comes from the dreamer himself, it is, as we know, often cognitive mechanisms of processing everyday experiences, but also going beyond that!

How else could the kid dream such abstract stuff? It speaks directly from his profound fear, despite all the effort and struggle to lead an anonymous life. It's terrible to know that one's own instinct for meaning and substance is so strongly questioned. And this from no one other than oneself.

A dream always provides information about the innermost currents, even if one should not and

cannot directly create a psychogram from it, it says an enormous amount. Even if they are only feelings. Or tendencies. Or the multitude of a continuum. Nowadays and not just recently, we simply talk far too little about our dreams. We don't dare. Because everyone knows how much truth lurks in them.

Mirtelbrinft began early on to explore dreams and made it his main research area. He was interested in everything subconscious and its deeper, intersecting lines in a personality. I sometimes joke about his 'dream interpretation practice', as I call it, but there is a lot of sense and help in recognizing one's own self and resolving possible psychological dissonances in these dream interpretations, as some indigenous peoples in Latin America still practice them today.

But apart from that, I was still sitting on the edge of the bed with my young friend and I could only think of one kind of prayer with which I tried to console him and asked him to repeat after me:

Light the dark

I wish I could see

Give me shelter

for saving my hope

Ban this death

to keep me alive

Walk with me

so that I'm not alone

Have no fear

the Lord will be there

Have no fear

I'm standing right behind him

I repeated the answering verses and also translated them into German for him. They seemed to me the most important thing, the boy needed someone and even against my expectations I realized that I could be that someone.

He's as old as I was when I first met Mirtelbrinft. I just feel in good hands, and in an unspeakable way we have trusted each other since the first time we met.

A little confused I took my hat and coat, put it on and left the house with my head bowed. It was a

lousy night, cold, poor and bitter. I turned up my collar and thought about myself again. It started to rain, the wind

blew its icy arrowheads into my face and I instinctively thought of an early text of mine.

Rejection to the world was its name, and it allowed someone to be pushed so desperately into oblivion, in the hope of finding peace there and not having to face any of these unholy depths he saw himself facing in this world. The limitation of his liberating experience of another time in another space was obvious to him and yet and precisely because of this he loved unreality even more and even more because he would never get it, since it does not exist.

It ended with the lines "In a rainy sad night someone enters this world again, falls asleep and hopefully never gives up."

As my grandmother always told me, there are some things that you never forget, some impressions, no matter how isolated, insignificant or magnificent, remain in your memory just as they were. Oh, so many things pass by without me ever being able to grasp them and somehow only the strange things stick to your memory.

I didn't really feel dirty at the time when the text was created one night, and I didn't see any way out other than fleeing and turning away from the world. I felt a deep sympathy, even affinity, for this someone who wrestled so desperately with the world and was happy about the fitting words and the complete rejection. The rain dripped against the windows and I realized a second thing at that time.

I always loved the things that couldn't be mine and for that very reason.

I ask myself, how does one come to such a love affair?

There cannot be any shittier way to forced unhappiness.

And yet I never gave up hope.

– Chapter 3 –
A perfect book again

Writing a perfect book is - as already mentioned - a difficult thing. The idea of writing a maybe halfway perfect book about the problem of writing, writing a perfect book, is completely rejectable. I mean, however interesting and tempting it may be for the artist to make the lack of subject matter itself a topic of discussion in order to question the most basic things themselves, to emphasize the complexity of the subject matter and one's own aspirations, and to express one's own confusions and aberrations, in my opinion this is not the way out, let alone an interesting and promising approach to a book.

Books as well as poems, songs and many other things exist to tell stories, to create moods, to let feelings be expressed and not to stand in the centre and say, "I really want to say something, only I don't know what!"

Of course, storylessness is still completely legitimate and in some cases also not without

originality, but the whole thing just seems to lack something.

Therefore I have decided differently.

When I was young, I often had funny ideas, rather fantasies, mind games, a world of imagination, where certain things could happen that I thought up but wouldn't really happen. Well, what you call fantasy.

For example to break out of this miserable and tiring life with the girl of my dreams at the curious first sight of each other in an unexpected moment while thinking the sentence

She did not have to say the words to express what we wanted. Or perhaps to take down a striker in a football match, who has broken through the defence, attacking, and most likely scoring, at the last second with a nice low tackle, and thus winning the red card as well as the victory of my team.

Give a fiery speech like once Martin Luther King or Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

To live such a special life that it finds its way into a poem or becomes part of a book.

Or live a life without fantasies about life.

My first encounter with Mirtelbrinft was - how shall I put it - an extensive one, perhaps rather meaningless, but nevertheless a very intense one.

It began on the first night out at my new home, when our generation of students who had moved into the individual and/or collective accommodation (shared flats) met up to drink for the first time after the introductory teaching sessions.

With my university education I hoped to learn many new and interesting things, to learn living on my own, to shape my own life, to develop in a direction I never anticipated before and of course, like everyone else, to escape the 'duty' of going to work or starting an apprenticeship after graduating from high school and its associated provisional determination to live a probably unexciting and sad life.

It was the first evening of future co-students. Apart from the usual introductions, forgetting-the-names-of-the-others-in-the-excitement-of-the-first-meeting, the short explanations about origins, the typical fears of and anticipations

about studying, the evening also became unstereotypically funny. And that was with the advancing hours.

It would probably be a little bizarre to start with funny drinking games and lively conversations and end the evening with your own name.

Anyway, it went according to the normal social schedule.

Mirtelbrinfthappened to be sitting near me with his little glass of martini, his giant skull and the neatly combed side parting on top of it, when they were just about to list the university events that were compulsory. Fortunately I had already been drinking. I did not have to and could not really participate. They all seemed to be quite nice and later on we talked about other things as well.

After the fourth bar change and the third to seventh beer - after three you usually stop counting - everyone was finally well drunk, the mood was cheerful, the seats were no longer binding and I found the courage to address Mirtelbrinfth.

His first name is really awful and difficult to pronounce, so I always stuck to calling him what I wanted. Often Mirtelbrinfth was the result.

"Jo, I may have forgotten your name again, but we study the same thing. It'll have to do, right?"

"Yeah, well, I don't think so. I'm only here tonight because of my buddy Frank. He's studying the same thing as you. I take psychology."

"Oh boy! I planned to do that too, but then something happened... I can't remember what it was, but I decided against it. Want another beer?"

"No, thanks. I got my martini here."

"Oh, yeah, so I've noticed. Don't you like beer?" "Not really."

"And what did you do all that time during your childhood," I asked, perhaps to make him laugh, but Mirtelbrinfth didn't find it very funny and our conversation died down, I went to the toilet and then sat down somewhere else.

Later that evening we met up again, taking a leak.

I asked him what his motivation for studying psychology was and, as I would often experience in my life, Mirtelbrinfth never cared about the place or situation in which he said anything. He always said what he wanted to say and that was regardless of space, time or the person he was talking to.

"Ever since I can remember, I have had a burning interest for the processes of the human psyche, why they behave the way they do, what makes a human such an individual being, defensive reactions, actions and behaviours that strengthen the own I, processing and compensation of external influences and of course for all kinds of psychological abysses. Why, for example, most men turn toward the can fixed to the wall when taking a leak so that their penis is not visible. After all, the toilet is a designated men's area, it is obvious that everyone has something hanging between their legs."

"Did it ever occur to you that some men are better equipped there than others?"

"So it has something to do with shame. Being naked, especially when it comes to the primary sexual organs, still

gives people a great deal of shame, at least people are still very uncomfortable. Not that I wouldn't count myself out, but it's just an interesting area."

"Oy. Being naked is great."

And with that we left the Pissuar and drank another five martinis and three to seven beers together,

until we finally arrived at the following momentous conversation:

"Hey Mirtelbrinft, did you ever think that the guys in the toilet just have fun peeing in from above instead of from the front?"

"No, I ruled out that possibility. Makes no sense. Then they could just turn their penis towards me and do it. But I've never experienced that before."

"Maybe it's because of you that everyone always turns away from you when taking a piss."

"Sure, it could be me. I have not yet designed a suitable test and procedure for this random example, so that the person turning away is standing next to a person reporting back to me every time he takes a piss."

"Oh, God, do you always talk so swollen?"

"Must be from reading all those science books..."

"Yes, I can tell you that much. Do you already know where you want to work?"

"No, but that's not why I'm here," he said, grinning. I laughed and added that I would rather study to find out more about these fields of knowledge than to be trained as a working machine with a brain.

"But you don't speak the way first impressions might lead one to believe."

I had never heard anything like it before and he didn't give me any time to answer.

"But the decisive factor is always the brain, or more precisely, the consciousness. As everyone knows, that's the difference between us and animals. It is the origin and cause of all perception, of your feelings, of the words you speak, of your complexes, of your joys, of your love as well as of your hatred, envy and other dark depths. Absolute individuality and uniqueness of each person is due to their unique way of thinking. Just look at the phenomenon of mind-paths -", I probably looked a bit silly and drunk, "yes, you know that when you think of something and it takes you further and further, from one association to another, all very own thoughts, which suddenly - without you wanting to - lead you to completely different, other thoughts. All this just points to the fact that an immense activity is going on inside the brain. However, the huge storage is not a gigantic hard drive, but very human and forgetful, so that at the end of such a mind-path you would often not find

your way back to the beginning. So, imagine if there were methods or techniques to examine these thought trails more closely, maybe even record them! In any case, one would only have collected individually applicable data, and for what exact purpose one could use this data is still a mystery to me, but imagine it, our individual way of thinking would be comprehensible! Your logical principle, according to which you act, and your affective motives revealed. That would probably be a big step towards even more comprehensive self-reflection, which might also go too far and have unpleasant consequences."

"Definitely interesting. But also dangerous. If you live in your own head too long, you'll never get out of it. Maybe a little shallow, but there's something to that. What always fascinates me is the interaction of all the things you just talked about, our thoughts and then these in relation to their real expressions. So in simple terms, what a person thinks of themselves and the world, how they then act and are and how they are ultimately perceived. Because there are so many inconsistencies and perspectives, and of course also harmonies and

common points of view, people like to talk to others about others. Talking behind their backs is just one form of it."

"That's right," said Mirtelbrinfth.

"It is also interesting to imagine someone who really cares about themselves and their environment, who tries to steer their life in a straight line, who sees certain signs as symbols in their life and acts on them. I always admire something like that, there is a touch of destiny in such a life, which I can't necessarily find in mine...", I said.

"Hey, don't worry my friend. Everyone is the master of their own destiny," Mirtelbrinfth then threw in to encourage me.

I went on like this:

"Yes, that's it. I can't really see it in me. I wouldn't say that I walk through the world completely emotionless, stupid and aimless, but sometimes it seems to me as if it is all a bit unsubstantial... maybe a prearranged 'Final Destination' would be a bit boring."

"Yeah, just keep doing what you're doing. I've only known you for about five hours, but I feel a power

in you that will probably make many a river swell. And it will keep some of your cronies in eternal loyalty and allegiance." He continued: "One who doesn't seem to have a big goal in mind is also more free to go to shore where he pleases. So don't be sad, we're going dancing now."

And that's what happened. We went dancing and drinking again and danced again and back to the beer and onto the dance floor and didn't think much anymore. It was a nice evening, good party.

On the way home I went through the meeting with Mirtelbrinfth again and the famous sentence "And this was the beginning of a wonderful friendship" didn't occur to me at that time. It would have been exaggerated, we had talked a little, that was it. A cool evening, funny conversation, got drunk, danced a lot.

Then, unfortunately, I was overcome by a kind of concern that I did not enjoy. It was the suspicion that I would establish rather distant relationships with all my 'new' friends, which would no longer be based on very honest common ground. You have not known each other for a long time, you don't have any hobbies or preferences in common, but

rather met each other in early adulthood, lived the same life for a few years and then said goodbye without shedding any tears. In the meantime, you meet at parties, rant a bit about studying, science and of course about life, change locations like your taste in music, step in dog shit and live alone.

Uh, yeah, there should be more heart to it. But it was just a concern. I then saved myself - maybe as compensation - into the great end of Dances With Wolves, in which the indigenous friend of Kevin Costner knew how to comment on the white man's departure from the village in a dignified and loud screaming way.

Arriving at the house I made myself a pizza, nodded off, made a second one, tossed it together with its plate on the floor while cutting it, finally enjoying it grudgingly in front of the computer.

This is how a certainty came into my consciousness that I simply could not refute directly.

Some times can never be repeated. I looked at - and I rarely did - the countless photos from home and even the memories of my mood at that time faded.

How can I remember someone else like that. Everything that connected us and separated us

forever, just weakening electronic impulses in the brain stem.

Nothing is the way it was and nothing will be the way it was again, because that's the way it has already been. In dark moments like these I really don't feel much like living anymore.

Why was my focus never on stone carvings, but on intellectual frippery and interpersonal impermanence?

Songs without recordings, life without soul, love without echo.

But the desperate attempt to preserve something, to chisel it in stone, I still don't want to leave undone.

– CHAPTER 4 –

Yes, she is just holding my hand

"She stood next to me and just held my hand. That's all. And it was so incredibly beautiful, I almost can't describe it. Love is hard to paint when it's that beautiful. I simply had the absolute, unquestioning certainty that it was just like that. Then I woke up and I was still happy. Well, I mean, even though I figured out it was just a dream. I had to write it down, that's how hard it gripped me."

Dreams can be more intense than reality.

"Did you sweat a lot?", I asked the boy. "No, not tonight", he replied.

Their certainties reach the maximum of credibility. One is the full experience of the event and yet every person has already forgotten thousands of dreams. Sometimes they are completely gone in a fraction of a moment, not to be recovered.

"Beautiful," I put in the gap.

I didn't want to torture him with the unnecessary thought that his dream could also drag him down,

because it wasn't exactly how it appeared to him. He knew it anyway.

You don't always have to unnecessarily verbalize everything.

"I don't know, should I tell her about it?" he asked. "You mean tell the girl that you had a dream about her?"

"Yeah, what else."

"Unfortunately, doing that always looks so stupid... the phrase somehow seems to be all too attached to the

connotation of I-adore-you," I objected. "Yeah, but I mean, isn't that what it said?" asked Erik.

"Yes, it did. It's stupid when things just sound so corny that you can't use them anymore. Although, if you waited for the right moment."

"Yeah, but when is that?" he asked.

I sighed, not knowing.

"Sometimes you wait your whole life for the right moment. Just grab her, that's it!", I joked, winking at him.

"I also thought of keeping it to myself. As a reminder of a meeting that was so secret that no

one, even she, would know about it. Except for me, my forgetfulness, and the piece of paper it's on," he said.

I would have done it that way, I know that. But the boy didn't lack courage. He had plenty of that, otherwise he would have never made it this far. But fortunately he wouldn't rush it either.

"Wow, everything is so calm and quiet here. I love sitting outside in the evening when everyone's asleep," he said, lighting his cigarette. I joined in and opened two more beers. Sometimes we would sit together at night and talk. Although I didn't really have anything in common with the boy, like a mutual hobby, or that we had spent much time together in the past - how could we when the age difference was almost a quarter of a century - we managed to sit together and drink beer quite well. Sometimes we didn't even speak. Pleasant relationship without the need to babble all the time.

"Here's what I wrote in the end," he said, handing me a piece of paper. I unfolded it and read:

*Blurred
appear the former contrasts.
The image becomes meaningless,
detaches itself from everything;
it dawns, standing in awe before the canvas,
after the art,
withdrawn in the last glow,
the essence.*

*So it seems,
the infinite peace
lies only in **undistorted silence**.*

Then again. And again after that. What did the image see in the bare canvas?

"What does the image see in the bare canvas?", I asked.

"No, the painting just came out. Well, the colors and everything that's painted on there."

"Oh, I see, so it sees a blank canvas", I said.

"Yes, exactly. An unpainted picture. Sort of the new day. It sees the possibilities that are yet to come.

How it can still change its overall image. It's thinking about a new way of painting", he said. "And it's so liberated, so relieved. It seems to be finished and satisfied with the day's work", I replied.

"It's tired. I think it can also be seen this way: the 'image' is not all colors together, but the consciousness of the image. In sinking into the twilight it looks at its own life, its peaks, the smoothness, what it is worth living for and what is ugly. Thus, everything becomes meaningless, without negative

or positive aftertaste. It has withdrawn to its core in the undistorted silence..."

"The last glimmer..."

"... Is a cigarette."

I smiled, finding it very appropriate for the last smoke of the day and asked him:

"Hey, do you know 'the evening' by Eichendorff?" "No idea."

"It fits very well, one of my two favorite poems:

The evening

*When people's loud desire falls silent,
The earth roars as if in dreams,
Wonderful with all the trees,
What the heart scarcely knows.
Old times, mild mourning,
And soft shivers roam,
Weather-glowing through the breast."*

"Please write it down for me," he said.

I did as instructed and gave him the note. He studied it briefly and asked:

"Seven verses, verse two and three and verse five and six rhyme. And then one, four and seven. What do you call a classic poem form like that?" I choked and replied, "Huh, I don't know!"

"For a minute I thought you had studied German." We laughed briefly. "No, really no idea. It's possible that something like that has a name. There is definitely a very

aesthetic form to this one. One meter throughout, the rhyming verses have the same number of syllables, and the rhyme scheme also indicates a detailed aestheticized structure. This used to be so common, it was part of the art casting the content in proper formal frameworks."

"Yeah, working on the form is too exhausting for me. I just wrote it down as it came to me." "Yes, that's perfectly fine too. If you have your reasons for that. Look - I know another Eichendorff poem, and this is how it is. The form seems so uncontrolled, untamed, and I can't quite put my finger on why. It almost makes it seem like he didn't write it at all. It's so out of character for him. Somehow I think he was so agitated and moved by it that even the form reflects that:

Go to sleep, go to sleep.
Nothing but clouds in the sky
Rest softly, rest firmly.
in the unstarred night,
Swing open! Swing open!
dead calm on the white horse
Ride on, ride swiftly.
on the vast plain across the white shore,
Feel deeply, hold on tight.
dashing away to the other edge.
Dream strongly, dream hard.
You will never again look
through her eyes into her soul.
Now go to sleep. Go to sleep at last.

"But there is a clear structure. With these intermediate verses. Verse by verse... they can be read on their own."

"Yeah, sure, but no meter, no fixed rhyme scheme, and somehow it doesn't fit in with these classic, well-formed poems..."

"Were you ever planning to run away?" he suddenly interrupted.

Sometimes one longs to be asked profound questions. The ones that are meant seriously and are not, as is so often the case due to their original seriousness, only used in jokes or ironically. It shot into my head like cold ice. Mirtelbrinft asked me once, and I answered exuberantly and extravagantly. Ah, sure, the things you think when you're young and spontaneous. But so much has already flown by, it was also this question until this evening. I had never eloped in all those wonderful years. Never, without looking back, run away, leaving everything behind, until at some point I disappeared into the unknown horizon and fell out of the world behind. In the poem it was not really

about eloping - perhaps more about dying love, dream escapes, problems falling asleep - but the boy hit me to the core. It made me feel old as hell. White beaches, dreams, the un-bernated night, the sky cloudy and so far away. No more euphemistic life goal to chase after. My life seemed to have somehow come to an end. Without ever having burned out.

These constant repetitions. Being isn't always easy.

– CHAPTER 5 –

A wild ride on public transport

Sometimes I would like to kill myself right after getting up in the morning.

No reason to live anymore.

But sometimes I get up in the morning and the world is mine. I could tear out trees, as they like to say. The sun is shining into your face with full force, you take a drag from your cigarette and your head is packed with plans. Not only for this day. Wonderful. But somehow sunshine stories don't appeal to people. It doesn't seem as interesting as sick longing, failure and other negative stuff. But that's why the happy ending was invented, so that people only have to see the boring stuff right at the end. And the really good stories have to have a non-positive ending, so to speak. Someone dies, the love is broken or can't work, all the Native Americans die, and everything else, or just the crucial component that was the point all along, goes to pieces. Well, whatever. They are stories and they only have to do with life as far as they are

interpreted. And most of the time they're just bullshit that can't keep up with life at all.

But most of the time they are beautiful. You can get immersed in them so well and, if you believe in them, believe in them.

When I sometimes rummage through my old memories for this book and go through the stories again, organize them and remember as much as possible, I do this so intensively that afterwards the 'now' seems rather plain to

me. I sit somewhere, open my eyes again, it's usually very quiet, and I am alone. The whole big chunk between college and now is suddenly gone and I start crying ever so bitterly. Forgetting is the worst brain disease. Definitely super sad. When your life suddenly seems to have evaporated, and your most beautiful moments lie deep in the past, there's nothing left for you but to break down howling like a dog trying to beat the band.

Well, it's actually kind of funny. Occasionally I falter as to whether this book won't eat me up at some point and I'd better keep my hands off it. One begins to doubt it and to drag it completely through the mud because of its lack of everything. The ice

you stand on seems so thin and it thins down with each doubt. But honestly, there has to be a risk involved somewhere, otherwise there wouldn't be any thrill. It is quite a loser's attitude to go at it, to try again and again in a fighting manner, to start anew, always grasping at the last straw with which you can just barely breathe under water, but sometimes you don't have a choice. Whether the work then stands solid as a rock in the surf and stretches its bold tip towards the sunlight in defiance of all the waves remains to be seen. Quite a good blurb. Possibilities...

The only other option for me - to stay financially afloat in the real world - was therefore to take on any number of pointlessly moronic side jobs so that I could pay the rent. For the most part, it was wait staff jobs, but their clients also preferred to employ female temps instead of not necessarily drinking enthusiasm-increasing male waiters. I could only sweeten this dull job to a limited extent by secretly taking

smoke breaks and eating leftovers, and, as already mentioned, I wasn't asked too often. So I ended up with my hated and at the same time beloved job in public transport. The name sounds a

bit euphemistic and you can imagine that no value was placed on particular gender affiliation there either. In my case, a job in public transport meant sitting behind a counter in a dirty subway shaft and selling people their single tickets, group tickets, four-way tickets and/or weekly tickets. I think the longest conversation I once managed to have with a customer was the following:

"One ticket, please."

"What'll it be?"

The woman looked at me stupidly and a little scornfully and said nothing in response to my question.

"All right, a single ticket. Have a good trip then." "Oh" - then after a short pause - "thank you very much, very kind. You know, I'm just going home now, when do you get off here?" she replied and walked away smiling slightly.

I think she was fucking with me. But since I was just starting the lousy late shift, I didn't have the chance to find out more. I never saw her again.

And that's exactly what happens in this business all the time. If there were a training program for ticket sellers, you could call it training to become a

manager of human one-time encounters. Every time a ticket is sold, the same well-rehearsed social interaction takes place. Another person wants a ticket, I have the tickets in front of me, hand one out for cash and we part again without a goodbye and hello and often still without a thank

you. The will or idea or even the thought of building a social relationship with the lonely ticket seller didn't exist with exactly none of the people who have ever bought a ticket from me.

Maybe it was just the business idea, which really didn't add up to much more.

Next to me in the cell, sat the stupid aunties from ticket information. That was a great job! At least in comparison to mine. There were dialogues going on and after a few weeks I could have helped most people better than the regular staff. Well, but nobody asked me. That's why I created my own thoughts. I got the ticket-for-cash number down pat after a week, so I could try to mentally distance myself, but it was tough in this uninspiring environment. So I stuck with the people. Where they went, where they came from, what they had done there, what they were up to. The vocabulary

already indicates the suspicion that came over me more and more during this work. Some days I thought about real conspiracy theories, although I never seriously thought or worried about whether I had gone crazy, it was more a kind of game to escape the tristesse for a bit.

People would buy tickets from me out of sheer distraction, for example, while their accomplices were able to slip through the security grid unnoticed to smuggle explosives onto the train and use them to set off fireworks at the main station. I already had the phone in my hand and would have loved to have jumped out of my bunker and struck down the terrorists red-handed, but new customers were already arriving and I had to continue selling.

Still: stay alert. Keep your eyes open, boy. In this dark and sinful city, someone has to keep an eye on things. Who, if not the ticket clerk.

Once I almost stumbled upon a very cunning gang of tricksters. Their leader tried to buy a group ticket for herself and her horde of small-town top terrorists, insisting on the 'children's discount'. My suspicion that this supposed kindergarten field trip was a group of genetically engineered Lilliputian

robots with knives and explosives in their underpants was to prove not so wrong. I heard one of them mumbling unintelligible stuff, which clearly pointed to the defective language board in the little bundle of joy. I then inspected him more closely. I shouted at him that he would not pass, not by me, and that the secret service and the police had already been informed. The little boy immediately started to cry, his leader gave me her death stare and babbled something about, "impudence to treat little children like that" and "I will complain to your superior". And I thought to myself, fine, if she wants to go public with it, then I'll reveal her secret intentions. Plus, it would give me a chance to actually meet my supervisor. Something new.

Those were some days, on others I slept, pretended I only knew Hebrew, put a curse on the tickets, gave out free rides, tried to rip off the clientele with cheap card tricks, hid under the table in my booth, introduced new price offers and - this was always the funniest thing - did exactly the opposite of what was written on the one sheet of work instructions pinned to the wall next to me.

When I received a letter one day that gently tried to tell me that my job had fallen victim to a damned rationalization measure and that a ticket vending machine would now take my place and do the work without human compassion, but with a more cost-effective accuracy, the last shred of illusion evaporated, that anyone would have been interested in my work.

A vending machine. Without a terrorism alarm. Especially not that one.

Mirtelbrinft always liked to listen to the stories from the underworld. He still gave me tips and advice on how I could get even more effective alleged criminals by the scruff. But it was no use and I was glad to be done with this job. Senseless waste of life energy. I think that many people are tormented by the fear of having left behind absolutely nothing that lasts or has more effect than a breeze. No, it is more likely that it depresses many people or has at least crossed the minds of most of them. In that case it is shoved off into the repression camp, where it is systematically forced to be forgotten, and the soul is light once more. It can enjoy itself again, be distracted and have fun. Mirtelbrinft

would have said something like, "this is a completely natural process of self-protection", "unpleasant thoughts that threaten one's own existence, question it, doubt it or whatever are inevitably thrown out by the psyche", "there lies the line between healthy and mentally ill", "you cannot exclude yourself from this."

That's not what I want anyway. But if you look at the situation matter-of-factly, you will inevitably come to the conclusion that all life without continuance will dissolve

into nothing and that most human efforts will dry up, much less never actually be realized.

Clearly, there is to say that life is not about the impact postmortem, nor about having somehow changed the world just for the sake of having one's own flat feet appear in the history books. It's about having the time of one's life, in the time of one's life. Doing what makes you happy. Whether it's self-realization or counting matches, it doesn't matter.

Except that somehow I'm missing the big picture... the struggle, the will, the signs, the destiny, the mission, the urgency. It's too arbitrary, too transparent. It's all over the place.

There must be more.

- CHAPTER 6 -

Rugby and no, not american football

"Well, I don't know how to describe it either. Sometimes - to be quite honest - I'm tormented by a certain paralysis, it goes along with other accompanying symptoms ranging from overtiredness to minor disappointments or even insignificant minutes filled with concrete emptiness, i.e. short moments in which nothing works, the possibilities seem to be exhausted and everything falls back onto a kind of sober pedestal. It seems to me that there is only a constant running back and forth between the magic of the slightly euphoric existence and the creeping daily lethargy that takes over, in which one also develops all kinds of fears whose final consequence of action always means the continuing lethargy."

I was sitting in our place again with the boy and it was pouring out of him, pure, unfiltered, unspoiled. "It's hard to say what exactly is bothering you. Whether it's the eternal grind of self-doubt, the simple ups and downs of life, or really some kind of dark force that seeks to paralyze you," I said.

"If it was just the simple ups and downs, I would accept that. And this diabolical dark force, I don't believe in it. It will probably be the doubt. Born from too much self-reflection. Which yet, with all the self-confidence I think I have, pierces and stabs deep, with a serum of fear. Injecting several fears at once, designed to drive me mad, into the worst of them, despairing lethargy." he spoke accentuatingly, grinning deeply. I looked at him in wonder

and concern at the same time and he explained: "I am not completely free of these emotional fluctuations, but I have now found a kind of solution that gathers everything I have experienced so far - in general or just on this particular day - so resolutely and uncompromisingly under itself that I can finally get some air on top, keep an overview and find something like peace for myself. It's a kind of redemption, overcoming inferior conditions.... very relieving."

And I knew what he was talking about. It was the reason why we met in the first place almost a year ago.

It all began on a very rainy Saturday afternoon in the summer. I had to get out of my apartment;

otherwise the ceiling, eaten away by the sultriness, would have fallen on my head. My articles, which I was writing as a freelance journalist for a more or less funny satirical magazine, didn't really want to be written.

I had reached the point where the joke didn't want to strike a spark, I was also missing the flints, I was very, very dissatisfied - as is sometimes the case in journalism - and I was so uninterested in the editorial deadline that it might as well have been called a bicycle chain. I went out the door and always to the left, if a crossroads gave me the opportunity to do so - an old mental exercise or journey of thought to explore human activity in the brain, during this very activity, as Mirtelbrinft once told me - to find out what would really happen. And nothing happened at all. I could have made the trip from the MRI tube as well as from home. I knew the roads, the area, the traffic, the people who were probably standing in their stores, the dirt on the street corner, the position of the sun, the smell in the air.

But let's slow down: Prejudices and supposedly dead-set expectations can already quite influence

the perception of reality and I realized that it was not at all as I thought. The road was different, the area new to me, no traffic, no people, different dirt also, no sun anywhere, a refreshing clarity in the air. And it was raining cats and dogs. It was bucketing down. A downpour, as if the Flood had broken loose up there.

I walked liberated, with my arms stretched up through the warm wetness, remembering a phrase of Mirtelbrint that he knew from clinical psychology:

"Walk a path that is unknown to you, completely unfamiliar, keep walking on it, have faith in yourself and you will realize that you are going to find your way.... And also the way back again." A much-loved phrase of mine used to be, "I never thought the path would lead me here." Even though nothing groundbreaking had happened to that point, the phrase fit the situation.

I felt new, somehow cleansed, but definitely on a path that had not been charted before. And that was the purpose of it.

It seemed to me like a remote area of the city in which I was wandering, and it wasn't long before I

stepped on the borders of a kind of stadium, in the belly of which an inordinate number of small figures were running around. I approached the field, but still stood far above the ground on a rise, at which point I was able to determine that it was some sort of game. There were certainly more than two dozen men on the field, running together, but also against each other, in - seen from the

outside - rather confused, uncoordinated courses, now and then a ball flashed, loud cries rang out, the ball flew with spin through the air, a whole squad of players of one team rushed off, a part of them got through or shattered at the defense.

Clearly, there was no question: I had never seen this before. It was breathtaking.

I had to get closer. And the details of the game and the players became increasingly apparent and in no way lost their sharpness and brutality. It was becoming clearer and clearer, the two teams were not playing a game in this sour weather, yet in clear air, but fighting a relentless battle against each other, in which individually, but also collectively all efforts were made to decide the outcome: Mass versus impact versus speed versus power, ready to

strike, momentum with harshness, out of control - under control. Maximum energy on impact, culmination.

Pain-distorted faces, downed warriors, piles of fighters piled on top of each other, solo runs, rushes, moves, battle cries, exhaustion, grouping, solidarity, help, injuries, uprising, stampede, defeat, madness. Pause. Indescribable. Five minutes. Then once more.

Tears welled up in my eyes. It was all so crystal clear, so uncompromisingly honest, that the whole lying rest of the world was no longer any of my business. At least in those first, unique moments, I would have traded every single hour that I later spent dying in bed, many years from that point on, after my cowardly life, just to be able to stand on that court one time, just one time, and knock my opponent

down hard with a single, long leap. He could have broken my bones for that.

It was almost romantic how energetically and decisively the players - and every single one of them - stood up for what they so hotly desired: the opponent on the ground.

After the game, some of them more, some less destroyed, they came stomping off the field, some with red heads, others with wounds on their faces, legs or arms, all of them at the same time dripping wet and heavily dirty, but with such a relieved look in their eyes that some looked downright happy. They had been richly endowed by the fulfillment of their desire for pain, victory and hard struggle. Warrior poets.

After that, there was drinking. I was quickly discovered and integrated. Since then, I've been writing the match reports for their website and am one of the few supporters who go along to away games. It was not a popular sport. Rather for a rare, select elite. That sounds too dramatic and arrogant, but it just means that you had to be born for it.

Erik was new, only a few months in, and the nickname Erik the Terrible would have suited him excellently. Probably too long.

Still, I talked to him late at night, only half in my right mind, and confessed:

"I have the deepest respect for what you are doing. To look fate in the face without fear and struggle and force it to cross-check. You can always succumb

to some influences, you probably do it all the time. One obeys rules, lives as one should, as the currently prevailing economic and cultural-industrial system provides and what

it or its leaders suggest as valuable and desirable. Man is what his environment makes of him. Compromises, identity crises, knowledge and the opposite. And yeah, the point is why I'm saying this, um yeah. Mh. No, completely gone. Oh no..."

"When the world sometimes threatens to collapse on you with its weight, or your head is pretty much close to exploding with all the thought processes, you have to somehow free yourself from it, break the chains and know how to. This whole thing is such a fabulous reduction of complexity. Wonderful. It hurts, but that's fine. It's simple, no it's more, it's clear," Erik said.

"And that will give you new courage. You can see that in every movement, in every breath. No more fear, finally. No backing down. Succumbing or giving up, in the face of circumstances," I said, and he concluded:

"Someone famous once said - and this is also the team's Latin motto:

aut viam inveniam aut faciam

which means:

if I can't find a way, I'll make one

Applicable to everything and everyone. To the negative state, self-realizing a change. That's how I want to think forever." Erik concluded.

After that he toppled over.

I found my way home again.

Whether I found *myself*, I don't know.

Since then, I always have to cry a little when I watch the guys do what they love.

– CHAPTER 7 –

A radical-poetic search for the unknown

"Fuck this world!" - was written in bold letters on a demolished wall on the east side of the station. A coherent symbol, under which a head was sprayed with tears running down its face. Whether it came from the same artist remains to be seen, perhaps a cross-street co-production. I would actually like it better.

It is somehow fascinating how much people wallow in their own pain. As if the positive is not worthy of being scrawled on the wall. But there's not so much creative power in the positive, you'd think.

I would like to tell you a story from my youth that I still can't really make sense of. Somehow bizarre, very touching because of it and I dare say that nothing like this has ever actually happened to anyone.

Mysterious, anonymous secret communication is her sign and she was full of love in a way that is not possible in real interpersonal relationships.

I once saw a girl in a window while I was walking home early in the morning, dreamily and slightly melancholically watching the hustle and bustle on the street and thinking to herself.

Maybe she was just waiting for the letter carrier, but she inspired me and I wrote to her:

What are you looking at,
my friend,
high up out of your window?

The wild, senseless hustle and bustle everywhere,
the foggy expanses,
to the right and left,
the nakedness of reality?
One of the many eerie abysses,
which can be recognized,
in them the flowers,
which bloom nevertheless,
or do you continue to bend
in front of you?
Stop trying. Do it at last.
You could be much quicker.
Your heart will never turn to stone.
It beats, you run and you breathe.
You don't give in.
Jump into the wonderful years
and enjoy this damn life!

I don't even know if she ever really got the letter, or if she even got the chance to read it. Perhaps her well-heeled, early-retired neighbor walked through the front door that morning - with newly purchased cigarettes, an obnoxious grease sheet under his arm and 500g of fresh fryer grease for breakfast - saw the folded piece of paper with "For the girl in the attic" written on it, took it, skimmed it, instantly went back to his morning reading with deep-fried potato wedges and thus helped my addressed words to pass into meaningless nothingness.

It could just as well be that she read it and reoriented her life. More often, however, I imagined the fat, incapacitated

guy who later that day suddenly stopped, as if struck by a blow, and perished miserably because he forgot to take a breath. Contrary to the obvious assumption of the

emergency doctor, it wasn't a stroke or heart attack - caused by his fatty arteries - that took the lying there pound boy down, but the stark reality of a thought that he was able to grasp just before he froze. It was the thought that he had 'forgotten' something, a little something on the way from the front door to his apartment, a thought that normally didn't occur to him and yet he knew what it meant.

Only a distant idea of it remained, even though it was in the very recent past. A last, small memory that felt like another, long-forgotten life.

Without courage, no turning back, no movement, no life, without life, no vital functions.

Better idea: she read it. And tried desperately to make contact with me. But that didn't work. I never passed her house again, I never saw her look out of her window again, I don't know where she went, who she met and what she did then. But that wasn't the point of the communication I started. And I was to realize that when it happened to me.

Cognitive blockade and shock experience with subsequent coherence creation of the relevant proportional content. That's how I would try to

describe the fact of death in a pseudo-scientific way off the cuff. Mirtelbrinft would certainly have the exact technical term ready.

When you go to the cellar to get milk and then stand in the cellar and think "Aja, that's the cellar"; it's similar, only different.

But that wasn't the story of the radical poet TT that I actually started before and would like to continue.

Mirtelbrinf and I had devilishly good nights together. Beer - well, it didn't really matter what kind of alcohol - but mostly beer in huge quantities, lots of music and loud music until the morning, every time. Probably not an entirely healthy existence. But at the same time a somehow satisfying, but also exhilarating activity. Elation goes for a walk with its opposite. Anything can happen. Always in search of the zero point, the beginning of the whole thing, the source of things, and along the way there are always headaches, experiences, chaos, sometimes sex and all the wonderful things that can very well be categorized as 'unexpected'.

One night we met a rather disheveled and, as he said himself, 'shot' man called Will.

The setting was simple: old, shabby shed, snuff-sniffing, drunk landlord, some deranged people drinking beer and trying to forget reality or at least dampen it. And me and Mirtelbrinf in the middle. The beer was always so cheap there on some days that you didn't even have to pre-drink at home so you didn't have to lug beer around. We really liked these pubs. Very unpretentious. Just like us, and they often had quite amusing names like "Zur Postschwenke", "Die Alte Maurerkelle", "Saufloch", "Zum trunkenen Horst", "Brigittschens Okolytenbar" and so on.

In those days, I learned to live like an alcoholic. No hangover and no home. Gastronomy as life. Rarely have I experienced so little content and substance, but it was the very best for evening fun away from the normal, regulated

world that jumps around within its boundaries. Beer in, words out, everyday life hanging over your chair with your jacket and washing down your ambitions and undigested disappointments. In the maelstrom of drugs and sleepless nights, in the manic party frenzy and penetrating headache of those days, life soon felt

different than before. Somehow more distant, further away, no longer touchable, controllable.

Sometimes it all seems to be exactly what it is:

A bleak, worn-out steppe with people who don't really mesh with each other and who use intoxicants - in a legal and effective version: alcohol - to breathe fun and passion and illusions into the whole thing. After that, you look around your own four walls and see less and less that you have taken with you on your own journey through life, less and less that means anything to you and more and more loneliness, which is alleviated by the occasional distraction.

Once you get to the point where even the wake-up call that is regularly spit out by the alarm clock no longer brings you home and only sleep leads you into another, less oppressive world with a non-binding reality, you definitely ask yourself why you should stay.

The meaning, no, rather the fulfillment in life - often trivialized or stabbed into heights that you no longer want to talk about - simply becomes more and more unattainable, unreal with every action,

every breath, every thought, as if it no longer exists at all.

Things flow before you in dark currents. You recognize some of them - they used to be your own - and the others are theirs and will remain theirs.

How can you explain it when you no longer understand the world?

Better: when you no longer like it?

The endless differentiation, its individualistic results, the huge pile of mainstream and all this in the eternal network of communications that almost explode the whole thing.

Why does one's own point of view turn to hatred when one watches the ever-recurring social reproduction at work? You are constantly looking into the face of a strange, extremely ugly grimace and can no longer get any pressure, any uplifting acceleration into your life.

You can think yourself broken.

But you can also get back on your feet and I'll write about what happened to me.

On the evening in question, Will, the alcohol veteran, came into the "Schwanzloch" around half past one and couldn't stop talking. Disjointed stories about two weeks in prison, alleged sex adventures, rumors about the landlady and her dog and a story that finally caught our attention about billboards and advertising pillars that had been pasted over en masse in the city. Not such an interesting story at first, but he had taken photos - God knows what else he had his camera for that evening. And they showed amazing things:

Someone had gone to the trouble of pasting posters with directional arrows over event notices and other billboards all over the city. These were kept simple, white background, black arrow in 3D view.

What was that supposed to mean? What were these seemingly arbitrary arrows supposed to say or show?

Will didn't know the answer either, drank his whisky and Coke, slurred his words one last time and stormed out without paying the bill. We followed behind him because we felt obliged to the landlady and stood rooted to the spot in front of the door of the "Schwanzloch". There was the first arrow on a

five meter by four meter billboard and it was pointing straight at me. Or the "Schwanzloch".

Will shouted something about the end of the world and that this was revenge for man-made capitalism and that the search for truth and love in the world had finally been given the go-ahead.

However, Mirtelbrinfth and I strolled through the city, thinking about the arrows and their significance. According to Mirtelbrinfth, an arrow is always a direct indication of destination and path problems.

Me: "Fucking smartass. Get a grip on your life and think about it like someone unbiased... maybe it's something like a scavenger hunt!"

"Which will lead us to the end of the rainbow and infinite riches. That's for sure," he said.

I objected again, saying that Mirtelbrinfth was a lazy sock with a skull that was far too big and whose fitness level was still below that of his body.

Provocations never really bothered him, he didn't seem to be receptive to them, or rather, he simply wasn't interested in them. It was too... boring for him, perhaps.

Anyway, we followed the arrows and after about 15 minutes we reached the center of town and that's

where it stopped. However, we had also arrived at our destination.

A huge banner fluttered from an ancient gate with many words, whole sentences, a real text on it. We stood breathlessly next to each other and read:

Search

The tired light of the desk lamp is still burning.

Thoughts run hot in your head,

minge and leave

a smoking, spent mass.

It is no more and collapses

in exhaustion.

The heavy veils,

which only disappear during the day,

lie like a heavy carpet

over the sensitive germ.

In the darkness

the steep abyss

only really becomes visible.

"Which way of the path?"

- Confused, the path runs.

Hesitating at the crossroads;

The voice of uncertainty (taking everything into consideration) points in all directions again:

"Decisions are made elsewhere."

Mountains are climbed with difficulty,

always followed by valleys; the clothes dry again after

the river has been swum through;

dirt and mud from the road can be washed off
afterwards
, you survive.

But the path is missing something... -
asks the insightful sadness,
*"It is nothing and it will remain.
Lost and certainly not to be won,
is the -what you call- feeling."*

Arrived deep down
in the maw of the abyss,
where the masses lie buried,
where black haze replaces the air,
where the soul has made its rounds
in vain endless times
(and it cannot tie a rope to hang itself);
down there somewhere something
flashing, deeply hidden,
whose light would make the relentless eyes
of the constant, restless inner turmoil
burst in a flash,
just waiting to be sought.

At last, that which is impossible to find was found.

But where can I find you, my stranger?

Before we could leave, we read it again, even sat down
on the floor and were silent for a long time.

Literature can do so much and is so weak at the same
time. A paradox. Usually the most vulnerable people write
strong stuff, good stuff, proud stories, huge garbage. The

strong or everyone else often doesn't write at all. Even though it is almost the best and most groundbreaking invention of mankind. Without writing, we would not be at the

cognitive level that humanity is at today. Another story.

The whole thing repeated itself about a month later. And for Mirtelbrinf and me, it was almost the same as the first time.

Friday evening in the "Biertonne", the billets thick, the fats thick, the gourmand bellies fatter with every beer that washed through them. The conversation was softened by yeast and enriched with old stories until Frank, Mirtelbrinf's buddy, came rushing in as if stung by a tarantula and ordered three Veterano and six beers to go.

Outside the door, Mirtelbrinf and I noticed again that the whole town was covered in posters and this time even more so. All the cars, lampposts, street signs, numerous buildings and pavement edges once again bore our directional directives.

We followed them once again and, by chance or by design, ended up back in the city center at the Ancient Gate and read:

Nightly whispers

Who turns them on and off, you ask.

I don't know, I say

- maybe there's someone there.

What they do, you ask.

I don't know, I say

- keeping secrets.

How many they are, you ask.
I don't know, I say
- but their number is odd.
Why are they hanging there, you ask.
I don't know, I say
- we hung them there ourselves.
Do they see us, you ask.
I don't know, I say
- what's more important is that we see them sometimes.
Do they dream a lot, you ask.
I don't know, I say
- maybe the werewolf in them is howling
and they are very, very tired like us.
There's not much left,
it blows from somewhere to nowhere,
than to go on.
You check again and ask:
Why are they so beautiful?
I sigh and wait and answer:
You'll have to ask them yourself.

Frank felt like he had been bitten by the monkey bug and was completely beside himself. He thought he had discovered two completely different, but related, levels of interpretation.

"Frank, don't get so crazy! Take it easy." I advised him, "have a beer first."

But he was right, Mirtelbrinft replied, which surprised me, because literature and poetry had previously interested

him as much as a mouse does an elephant. It just wasn't his cup of tea.

He then went on to explain that this text, written in line form, was not a poem in the classical sense, but definitely a modern piece written in the last 15

years. The dialog form and the title of the text indicated that this was a whispered conversation between two close people at night. The lyrical you appears as the person seeking advice, as it asks questions alternately with the lyrical me and responds to the lyrical me's answers, which always begin the same way, with new questions.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the lyrical 'I', as an instance of knowledge for the lyrical 'you', does not always pretend to possess ultimate truths to questions which, at first glance, appear to be quite incomprehensible for textual reasons. The crux of the poem therefore lies in the search for the mysterious "she", who or what could be meant by it. And from here on, it is purely a matter of interpretation. He sees three large metaphor complexes, all of which can be easily declined through the poem. This ambivalence, or more precisely this density of poetic content that can be interpreted in various ways, is extraordinary and - in his opinion - encompasses the three major areas of the metaphysical, the positive dream with all its teleological driving force and the negative, personal

guilt and repression, in short, the skeletons in the closet.

So much for Mirtelbrinf't's analytism. On the way "zum Vollen Hans Guck in die Luft", in order to process this second radical poetic action, we came across an alternative ending to the poem, whether by chance or by design:

Why are they, so many times more beautiful than anything imaginable, even if it is inspired, sitting on the radiant ray of light of all suns, riding right into the human heart?

All three of us were at a loss. So it was a simple matter of three men's dinners and a safety cola for Frank.

Mirtelbrinfth was also almost unstoppable. After the second gentlemen's table and the first visit to the toilet, he dropped onto his bar stool and opened up:

"God knows I can't avoid it, but there's more in this poem than we see at a glance. It's so sad, no, melancholy, that it almost smells of it! I can smell the scent of this mood. It is unbelievable. I revise

my approach to interpretation. The theme of the poem is not necessarily one of the themes I outlined earlier, but a much simpler one. It is the longing for night that is so deep within us all."

"I keep wondering who is supposed to clean all the arrows off the cars... Is the city responsible for that kind of thing?" Frank added, not quite compatibly, and seamlessly added what a huge mess it was and that if someone tried to do that to his car just once, he would remove the balls from between their legs and then hang them on the Ancient Gate.

"It is people's projections that are meant! Projections of love of the one great thing that could fulfill the seeker, but he has become very tired of the search. And yet again, this longing for the stars is the most sacred thing for him and the thing that fulfills him the most. Romanticism...", Mirtelbrinfth continued, while Frank almost simultaneously

began to think about how he could protect his car against night-time smear attacks, before finally making a skilful, erratic mockery of late romanticism.

"This hackneyed sentimentalism completely passes me by! These dirty little late romantics with their

pseudo-exaggerated sentimental crap can stay the fuck away from me. Fuck off with your poems and songs or at least stop publishing them all the time!" said Frank.

In response to my objection that late Romanticism had been over for a while and that it hadn't done any harm, that people might like to read it and enjoy it, he took his hand, put the top of it under his nostrils and let me hear twice what he thought of it:

"The bums are responsible for the fact that we are now sinking into this damned, postmodern arbitrariness. Nothing is sacred to us anymore. The maxims today are just: money, sex and power! The Romantics are just as much to blame as the Enlightenment and all other literary figures for the fact that we live in these meaningless times. It's all been done before, Goethe is long dead, the genius writers have left us, there are no new themes or genres. We are stuck in a postmodern affluent society in which it is completely arbitrary and doesn't matter whether you hang a poem or a scrotum on the Ancient Gate. There are no more boundaries, there is no more attention, there is no more..." and so it went on for a while.

Mirtelbrinf was able to add something else that didn't fit, as the following thought now found its way into his parts of the conversation:

"And yet one cannot deny the poem this pessimistic, deeply pessimistic and eternally pessimistic soul. The number is odd, even the number of question and answer lines is odd, it stands out, no rhyme far and wide to drag the reception. Whispers, secrets, a howling werewolf somewhere or nowhere.

Not much remains... except the recurring longing for the peace and fulfillment of the stars and their promise of beauty. You could sink into it..."

And before this last sentence, whether by chance or not, Frank's polemic and my digressive excursion of thought ended, so that we both fell off our stools laughing and then all lay in each other's arms to ring in the last round.

"When you leave, you should at least say goodbye with a loud bang," I summarized and less than five minutes later we were back on the street.

Sternhagelvoll, of course, and strangely or even situationally, I remembered a piece I had written in a jokey mood:

Again and again we see:
Lights shine, water wanders,
earth ends, fire flickers
also: women fly, love hails,
stars fall, spores sprout
and: Women hail, star spores sprout in Love, nosediving
Nevertheless, the question remains (always)
and also the answer:
What do we do now
with the life that has already begun?

Constantly fill it up and drink it to the last drop, **again
and again!**

I started the rhetorical question:

"What are we going to do with the evening that has already begun?"

Frank: "Off to Neutrons, but as quickly as possible or is Chrom's Luke still open?"

Mirtelbrinf: "I'd recommend a more sophisticated establishment. Booze on the Ancient Gate! Follow

me, we're storming the Bastille! To arms, men! Pour l'égalité, fraternité et j'oublié!"

Unaware of Mirtelbrinf's stupidity, we clambered up the Ancient Gate, singing a not-so-old war song: "On to comrades on horseback, on horseback into the field, drawn to freedom. In the field a man is still worth something; there his heart is still weighed..."

We raided our secret stash on site. But it was already empty, so we just lay down under the crowded starry sky and looked drunkenly into the heavens.

The only thing we could hear was Mirtelbrinf snoring and a sentence from Frank that I will probably never forget after that evening:

"You know, sometimes when I really look up and it looks empty up there, I get a bit scared."

My last thoughts on this, but hopefully words, were:

"Rest softly, rest firmly
in the unshadowed night,
such night lurks full of
danger and darkness,

which can plunge you into ruin
without a light at your side.
Summon him,
the guardian of the night,
the warrior of the fallen,
the lighthouse of the lost,
the vehicle of the disabled,
and the soul of the seeker."

The third time it happened, we weren't the only ones lured onto the poetic trail by the mysterious directional directive clues.

About 10 weeks later, the Festival of the Half Pear was in full swing and everyone was dressed up weird.

Especially Frank, who had tastelessly dressed up as Mongo and simply put on round glasses and a bib. Mirtelbrinft went as a gangster and I went as his old lady.

At the climax of the party, everyone held hands and gave their left neighbor a kiss on the mouth with their eyes closed. Not only because it was common knowledge that people always tried to stand next to a busty girl, but also simply to avoid worse things. The reason for this was that there were always a lot

of ugly, old, young-looking chavs mingling with the audience at this event to finally meet a young bouncer again. You could get hit on pretty nastily. Likewise as a woman.

But back to the general course of the event. A whole bunch of people who normally don't know each other at all kiss and have their eyes closed for about 15-20 seconds.

During this window of time, the radical poet must have somehow managed to board the stage and hang up a huge banner. Perhaps it had already been prepared the night before, but that is not of crucial importance.

The banner bore the following words in beautiful script:

*The greatest truth in **life** is hidden.
Take cement for your **own**
destiny and no flowers; **my**
puzzle is not complete,
it seems **as** if
it is swaying in the wind, **more:**
as if it is tearing its legs out to finally start running
and yet only writes verse and column to **you**
a silent tree thinks of **love**
and in the end, uprooted, **I** fall.*

The half-pear festival usually ends in a kissing torrent, people lie in each other's arms, the men cheat on their wives and vice versa, the teenagers kiss for the first time, the 12-year-olds drink their first beer, the babies scream in their baby carriages because someone has finally stopped paying attention to them, the old hags fish for fresh meat and everyone who isn't interested drinks beer or pear schnapps.

Only this time everything was different. Some cried, many looked around distraught and didn't know how to deal with the situation. The old people were too full to understand. The young ones didn't understand the poem either. Only I stood there and knew what was going on. Unfulfilled love, a tree that can't get going and ends up

falling. The column with a tendency towards self-abandonment and an absolute definition of love. The verses inappropriately patched together from disjointed

metaphors: the secret, flowers, cement, puzzle and a tree.

"An upsetting poem about the most important thing in life, so full of grief and insightful sadness," explained Mirtelbrinft, who didn't seem relaxed, Frank lying full in the corner, his short-term companion on top of him trying in vain to wake him up. The whole crowd slowly dispersed when there were problems with the music system and the event went down the drain.

It made me more than thoughtful. The evening was over. But not my way home. That was still ahead of me. I climbed onto an old bridge, looked into the empty darkness and suddenly had to cry. The sun was slowly rising and I felt very pathetic. I hated the birds that were chirping, the city I lived in, the person I was and who was inside me and everything outside of that. Such situations are untenable, yet they happen.

When you feel like that, you're glad when you finally fall asleep.

– Chapter 8 –
You fortune cookie

I'm always keen on the fortune cookies you get after eating at the Chinese restaurant. I don't believe in religions, at best I'm interested in their origins and mythology like Mirtelbrinf, I don't go to black masses even now, I don't stab voodoo dolls, dance naked around the fire at night - although that would definitely be funny - I don't follow any obsessive actions and I'm not an atheist or agnostic. But somehow my limited scientific mind tells me that it is rather unlikely that the true existence of God and God's providence - even though I and so many others often fervently hope for it in a personal sense - really exists.

But I do believe in the little messages from the fortune cookies. I pick them up, stick them somewhere or put them behind my cell phone battery. That doesn't work for others. They are just pointless astrological predictions and platitudes, but they work for me.

I often go to Chinese, Mongolian or other Asian restaurants with Erik and everywhere we go we get

our beloved fortune cookies. It would probably be my dream job to work in such a factory or simply to eat them every day and have them shine positively and harmoniously on my life. They are simply superior to the horoscope because the cookie doesn't taste that bad either.

Erik was different this time. He seemed so calm and yet somehow deeply moved. His face didn't have the youthful cheekiness it usually does, but a maturity that looked like age on me. His posture could be described as firm and

straightforward, while mine bordered on frailty. His eyes were calm and kind. His gaze was deep and merciful. The abundance of sublimity in him that evening made it seem as if a thin film had formed around him, shielding him a little from the world, cushioning the consequence of existence, making his life much easier. I almost went mad not knowing what it was that made him so content. The thing that I couldn't find for so long and still don't have in my hands.

But the boy had it. He had finally found what was impossible to find. I once knew that phrase. It promises so much satisfaction and hope while at

the same time making it impossible to achieve. A contradiction. Not the only sentence by the radical poet TT that I brooded over for years and whose dimensions of meaning I tried to fathom. I simply cannot forget those days with Mirtelbrinft and the three encounters with the texts of the radical poet TT will stay with me forever. I wonder what I had to do with the fact that I saw them back then, but was also somehow able to understand them in an unexpected way. What he or she had written back then was not so far away. Still timeless. The double T-carrier. A massive figure in poetry and also out on the streets. Who was TT looking for? Love, fulfillment... meaning, fate?

Erik and I hadn't seen each other for a long time. I hadn't heard from him for a long time. After dinner and a long, relaxed break, he began: "I've been wandering for so long. In my head. Floundering and finding desired truths. Up and away again to the next gossip that tied me up for a while and that I declared sacred. My head never gave me

any peace. I was driven by my projections and fears. But it could be that this has now come to an end. Once

and for all... although I've thought and said that before."

"What happened?" I asked.

"I'm not quite sure myself yet," he replied thoughtfully, "I've become aware of myself and it's not as nice an experience as you might think. It's..."

"... just a realization like many others?"

"No, no. More than that. I can feel that. But somehow it's not such a big 'aha' moment or something like a turning point in my life. It doesn't feel like a fateful turning point, the culmination of wisdom or anything like that. It feels drier, more sober, somehow less spectacular."

"Maybe that's what peace feels like. The opposite of being driven, somehow non-committal, without constraints. Maybe look at it like this: You are no longer a prisoner in your own prison. You have freed yourself and now you don't know what to do with yourself. You are reborn... even if that sounds a bit highfalutin."

He laughed. We both laughed and he continued:

"I haven't been well recently. A kind of depression, I think. I've been so lost in endless, dull thoughts and I've somehow found myself. I was able to come to

terms with myself and explain my behavior and thinking to myself. And I didn't need drugs to do it, I just needed a hell of a lot of depression. Not a good trade-off."

"I figured something like that," I said. "You've been unavailable for so long, like you fell off the face of the earth..."

"That's how it felt," he replied. "You know, I miss the high of the last few years so much. And that unlimited strength. The incredible speed. The feeling of power. The belief that I could do anything, that I could achieve unlimited self-realization... Now I'm just someone who has supposedly found their self, but is still somehow empty-handed."

"But you're never satisfied either. Life is a constant up and down. It's not all good and bad, uplifting and down, providential and forlorn. There are also nuances. Everything is constantly oscillating. Be happy to have finally freed yourself from these extremes that you have lived through, to have left them behind you. Now you are free and have to rediscover yourself. That feels strange."

"Just so unfamiliar... but you can't imagine how much I miss it... the elation. Feeling my own destiny, the personal prophecy, the self-made, absolute standing sense. The speed. The drive. The trip. All of it."

He sounded so wistful and moved and I went through the years I had known him. He was always a boy with heart and soul, with passion. One of the good ones, as they say. And yet he was also someone who thought a lot, I'm sure he often felt sorry for himself and lived in his head. But to be honest, I can't really presume to know him. He always tells me abstract, personal things and I get an insight into his psyche, but I don't think anyone can claim to really know him in the sense of knowledge. He remains the boy and there is also a hint of a deep intertwining of our characters. A connection.

"You can't plan or predict zero hour," I suggested to him. "It probably comes when you least expect it, in a severe depression."

He seemed a little absent-minded, but shook himself out and finally said, "Oh, you know what?

I can be happy to be alive, to have overcome the sick time, even if it was more like enduring it.

I can be happy to feel the world, even if I'm constantly crying over emotional nuances. I can be happy to be someone, even though I sometimes lack an inner importance.

I will be happy in my life, I tell you. You don't get a new one every day... you said it... Cheers!"

Our fortune cookies were on the bill and mine read: "Your trouble will disappear and you'll be lucky." Reassuring.

His said: "It's not raining on every day." Whether the first one tasted so good or didn't say enough, he put his luck to the test and ordered another one.

The second one said: "You will hold a life in your hands. More than once."

The accuracy of the prediction had been transferred to Erik.

– Chapter 9 –

Punk rock is best heard loud

When I finally met Tommy again after a long time, it was a reunion as you would imagine. Completely drunk, in a crowded pub, we suddenly stood in front of each other and it must have taken us a while to recognize each other. But then the road to Rome was open. We talked and talked until the store kicked us out, then we wandered around the neighborhood and ended up at my house. The neighbors probably knocked on the door for several hours until one of us woke up from his coma and finally turned off the stereo, only to go back into a fully intoxicated coma sleep. It was just like before. Unbeatable. Intoxicated. Full of music. A full life.

Tommy and I were good friends when we were students. We played in friendly bands. Mine had been together for a while, while Tommy's band called Rebellion! Rookie had only recently rehearsed together. We immediately had a sympathetic relationship with each other and so we often met up to play our latest creations for each

other. And, of course, to drink and have a good time.

The ambitions to make it big were never serious or concrete. But the ambition was real. The passion in their fingers, in their brains, in their dreams. Accordingly, the joy of gigs and recordings. These were small steps towards becoming a real band. Having created and experienced something meant a lot to us. But also the friendship among ourselves and with each other. Those were conspiratorial times in which we lived.

Until they outstripped us at some point. They had established themselves, their musical style and their skills and had passed us by. In terms of audience response and performances, they simply had more to offer. We were left behind and experienced a brief creative break, to put it euphemistically, and lost ourselves in trivialities, unproductive circles around ourselves, boring Sunday afternoons, music on a very low flame. It happens and everyone must have experienced it at some point. But habit and cohesion, even when things don't look so rosy, never let the fire go out completely. It seems quite normal to me today to be jealous of the small

successes of Rebellion! Rookie's small successes, which we displayed in our internal circle back then. What else do you do for self-protection reasons, Mirtelbrinft would say now. It wasn't all that bad either. We also witnessed their descent and departure from their original musical style.

However, it wasn't schadenfreude that won out, but rather something compassionate that turned out to be jealousy when they were successful.

Occasionally we played concerts together or organized them ourselves. They were the best. There's nothing quite as powerful as standing on a six by four meter stage in front of hundreds of people with your instrument, the adrenaline pumping through your neck and your knees fidgeting with excitement. The low notes boom insanely fast and precisely in your back and the melody sweeps your last remaining brain cells down the slope in a tumble, so that the seconds of your performance, your song, your entire life pass as if they belonged to a different era. The transition of

physicality into immaterial vibration. The dissolution into nothingness. The statement without words. The arrangement with magical means.

You can't grasp music, you can only feel it. And when that happens to you, you've won.

Winning something in a material sense back then was a different matter. That happened rather rarely, but that wasn't what we had come for. It was always the same game of nine to twelve songs, which we presented on stage in their imperfect conception. In front of an audience that was always bored and unable to respond. Sometimes it also sucked when the musically imperfect arrangement was added to the mix. So be it. For the most part, it was extraordinarily meaningful and identity-creating.

We spent nights together with a common goal. You can also spend the nights doing inferior things. Back then, Mirtelbrinft often came to our rehearsals to analyze the songs and ultimately to make us mad. Usually guests come and are full of words of praise. They want to be nice. Mirtelbrinft was never nice. You got the impression that he simply didn't have to stick to that. That was beyond his competence.

With sentences like "The song gives the impression of a tough number at first, but loses its clarity and purposefulness in the course of the following verse: the connection between the parts seems very loose

and artificial. Apart from the emotional, orgasmic climax in the bridge, my verdict is modest." or "The song starts promisingly, but then turns into a verse-chorus mash that just bores me, although it's surprising again with how much

penetration you know how to celebrate this boredom." we had to deal with. Once he even went so far as to describe our songs as a "desperate attempt at forced musical expression sparsely broken down by four people with instruments in their hands." to describe it. You can't deny him one thing.

He had not the slightest idea about music. But it was simply in his nature to judge. And it was always so funny with him. This stalker would-be universal scholar who was second to none.

Back then, we went to our biggest gig to date and we spent the last rehearsal beforehand in a kind of unearthly excitement and anticipation that we had never experienced before. Mirtelbrinft was also there again and we had one hell of a good evening. A mixture of alcohol-soaked conversations and short sessions on the instruments that lasted late into the night. There's nothing better than that.

Mirtelbrinft and I sat together on the couch for a long time and at some point he started to tell me about his sister. He had never mentioned her before and hadn't said anything else about his family. It surprised me and drew my attention to the fact that he was probably very keen to talk about it and would only have it with me.

"She still seems so young and fragile, you know? She wears her innocence so proudly that you can see it from afar. She shines. It's not the innocence of a little girl, but rather a pure relationship with her surroundings and a pure soul that lives within her. She does not allow herself to be infected by the misery of the world. She stands up for the

value she sees. She recognizes the sincere spirit of things and acts accordingly.

In short: she is a good person. She shines straight out of herself. I love her."

"Wow, Mirtelbrinft, why are you telling me all this?" I asked him. It has to be said that he was already quite drunk, otherwise he would probably have answered differently.

"The ways of the Lord are inscrutable. Have no fear, he will be there. Trust in him. He will guide you

through the darkness and protect you from evil. For his is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

"No, no. You have a specific reason for telling me this. You've never done anything like this before. Come out, boy," I urged him.

"Yes, you're right. It does bother me. It bothers me because she's never been involved in my real life before. We only know each other superficially. She doesn't know any of my friends. She doesn't go out... but tomorrow she will. She's going to your concert."

"Really? What's her name? Then I can put her on the guest list."

"Marta. Marta Mirtelbrinft." ---

I don't know if she came. In any case, the concert was groundbreaking. We played as the support act for Rebellion! Rookie and left all the competitive thinking aside. We concentrated fully on the music and the gig. We were lucky that the place was packed and people were

already crowded together when we played. You could tell they were hungry for music. Until we marched onto the stage, there

was only music from the tape and it didn't really satisfy anyone. They hadn't come for that.

Sometimes it's lucky to be the first band of the night. There are those rare concerts where the party peaks at 21:00 and the atmosphere is at its most sparkling. Most people are barely aware of the wedding of excitement and the spark that sets the fire ablaze, but everyone behaves accordingly. It was lucky for us.

It went like clockwork and the performance was to be one of our best. But something remarkable happened in the meantime, of which I am probably the only witness. But I don't really know if I can trust myself. I would like to tell you about it.

It so happened that I was overcome with nervousness due to the heated atmosphere. I couldn't concentrate on anything properly. The alcohol wasn't working properly, so I couldn't relax and couldn't look forward to the performance that was about to begin, but instead became afraid. Fear of failure, of showing off nothing. Nothing significant. Fear of demonstrating the emptiness in our statement, of the emptiness in me. Existential

fear of life, of being on display, of being analyzed, of being looked at. The center is one of those things.

On stage, I was overcome by a kind of blackout and at the same time the very unpleasant feeling I had expected. Self-fulfilling prophecy. I wasn't feeling well, but then it happened. The unexpected. During one of my shy glances

into the audience, I saw something that made me wonder. I looked again and again. I felt so at ease in this mutual exchange of glances. There was something about this person that I could see without their eyes. Their shape, their being looked by itself, straight out of itself, like a star against the pitch-black background of the universe. Pure light was born in her over and over again and it flowed out of her like the lively notes of our music flow out of us. We met for a few seconds, but it seemed like an eternity. A touch of love so indescribably good, renewing, honest.

She raised her hand as if in greeting. We knew and recognized each other somehow. But it was more than a sign that carried a meaning. More than a socially meaningful, communicative act. More than the interpretation of all people together. She sought

union and I almost lost consciousness. A key experience doesn't come along every day.

My dream that had come true or simply a figment of my anxiety-ridden brain?

No matter, it gave me the confidence to play the gig properly, to fall in love with the songs again, to live the music. Imagination or enlightenment. I can't ask anyone. I did not see her again after the gig.

How was I ever going to tell anyone about it? It wouldn't come close to what I experienced. The limitations of language. The end of words and the beginning of feeling.

It's a thing with lightning love.

– Chapter 10 –

My friends

Friends. Friendship. It usually lasts longer than you think. At least if it has substance. In my experience, out of 500 or so, one remains. But you can't get rid of that one. Even if you're already 40. And although you no longer live in the same city, you see each other more often than you would expect due to the general centrifugal forces that prevail in this area of human coexistence. Making connections in a friendly sense is something that people are simply born with. They follow this instinct mercilessly regardless of their own needs. Well, there are at least some people for whom interpersonal relationships mean more than their own ego. These people, who mercilessly subjugate their own social sensitivity and search for attachment to their thirst for recognition and profiling, should not be mentioned here at all; they do not deserve a line in this book, they actually deserve nothing in this world, no respect, no pity, perhaps even money to make them happy. Well, if it goes that fast; to each their own.

Since he moved away, Mirtelbrinfth comes back once or twice a year to our university town, where I still live, and we spend the weekend together.

Mirtelbrinfth usually had little to do with women. Sexual attraction was not his specialty. So he was able to pursue his vocation regardless of a partnership and also visit me whenever he felt like it.

What do we do? Well, actually always the same. We roam the streets in search of rancid pubs where normal, lonely people drink their beer and smoke cigarettes. One after the other, one after the other. The eternal circle of life, as you might say. There's always a nice place to drink a beer next to the hopeless old farts at the bar and the gambling addicted sluts and washed-up idiots at the machines. Smoke a cigarette. To buy the waitress a green. To dedicate another smoky puff to the smoky air. Giving a buried story another go. Helping the trivial to another mention. To have the most endless drunken conversations. Taking a sip towards the intoxicating satisfaction. Alcohol. The lubricant of society. The solution to an ever-changing problem.

But mostly as a rock in loneliness and the means to temporarily bridge it. Together.

Mirtelbrinf and I have always been pub people and so it's a simple satisfaction of needs for both of us when we go out. Neither of us has the feeling that the other might be bored, has something better to do or feels responsible for the other: there's always something of an unspoken agreement. The nice thing is that our relationship has never really changed after all these years together. It has always remained the same and we were and are completely satisfied with this state of affairs. It's nice when you don't have any excessive demands or longing expectations of a relationship. For us, it works all by itself and that's the really relaxing thing about it. We don't have to do anything great to make it work. The chemistry is just right. We only occasionally indulge in reminiscing about the past or making friends with each other. Sometimes we keep quiet

and it's so terribly pleasant. We can still sit next to each other, look at each other and say nothing. Once you've met someone like that, you've already achieved a lot or at least been very lucky.

Our nightly outings are pretty much the same as they used to be, but of course a few things have changed. In recent years, it has become customary for us to go out for a good meal: Welcome to the adult world. But the rest has stayed the same.

The last time we walked through the beautiful, narrow streets of the city center a month ago, through the Judengasse past "Peters Petroleum Politur", which marks the beginning of the pub street. This was followed by the "Dorfmatratze", the "Hintertreffchen", "Die Schelle", "Gollum", "Brigittschens Okolytenbar", the "Mopeterei", the Mongole, "Tunnelblick", "Klausis Kombüse", "Zum vollen Haubicht", the "Klosettenkönig", "Irmis Nuckelpinte" and "Thorstens Knüppelei" for the really hard-boiled. We walked two more corners and, funnily enough, passed the "Schwanzloch" and I remembered the directive signs from back then, which we noticed one night when we stumbled out of the hole. The radical poet TT and his work. They were briefly the focus of public interest. Everyone wanted to know who was crazy enough to do such things, especially the police. And me. At the time, I had the vague idea that the messages were

addressed to me. I could find myself in the texts, recognize myself and also another person who was looking so longingly for their stranger.

At last, the impossible to find had been found. Not yet.

"Hey Mirtelbrinft, how's the practice going?" I asked him as we sat at the counter of Schlampi's "Alphabetenclub".

Mirtelbrinft has been implementing his own 'business idea' for several years, although he would never call it that himself. He has opened a practice. For people who suffer from their dreams. He uses scientific brain research methods to investigate the phenomenon of dreams in his sleep laboratory. He records brain activity and analyzes it. However, he has not yet succeeded in making the leap from recording electronic brain waves to the content. Instead, he talks to his patients, has them write dream diaries and interprets these experiences together with them.

"It's going well," he says. "People come from the most remote areas of Germany and want to take advantage of this unusual service. I am so happy

that I can gather insights into this unexplored area. The human dream holds so many mysteries."

"And have you sorted out the payment method by now? What do the health insurance companies say?"

"Yes, the same as four years ago. They don't pay anything. It's not an established field of suffering. It hasn't been proven that it provides a cure. But I notice time and again that people get something out of it. They leave the practice with added value. They are happy about the reflection. And it helps them."

"I have to be honest: I'm always seized by a similar dream. It stresses me out immensely. It's a bad dream. Not a classic nightmare. Just a bad dream."

"Recurring, you say? That always testifies to great inner preoccupation. Sometimes also a lack of processing in the waking state. A kind of repression, you know?" he suggested.

"I don't think so. The topic is so present. Well, yes, but often only subliminally. No, you're right, I don't think about it much anymore."

"That's it. The dream is the subliminal. The unthought, but inwardly still processing. Sometimes

dreams are just pointless. For many people. Or we simply don't recognize their meaning, perhaps our intellect is not sufficient to understand them. But there is also a lot to suggest that dreams often have no meaning. The brain takes a break and spins away. Imagine that your mind simply tells you the story of a dream while you are awake, how it explains it, but it didn't happen at all. Perhaps it was completely different, completely pointless or outside your personal horizon of perception of the world. The dream often blurs beyond recognition the moment you wake up. And it dives straight back into the subconscious, supposedly disappearing forever or influencing you for the rest of your life. I don't know enough about dreams.

It is so difficult to find out anything conclusive about this because I can only draw my conclusions from the statements of my patients. There is no objective measuring device. Mine only allows me to draw conclusions about brain waves and activity in different areas. I would have to get through the skull, but of course no one is available for that... but to come back to your problem. Outside of meaningless dreams, which are only a fraction of all

dreams, there is also the field of meaningful dreams. You are someone who dreams your fears. That's what my experience and assessment tells me. And his secrets."

"It's my greatest fear."

We were silent for a while. I didn't really want to bother him with professional matters in his private life. But he could always deal with it.

"What are you dreaming about, Mirtelbrinf?" I asked.

"Oh, I rarely get asked that. Really. In the professional therapist-patient relationship, there's no room for personal conversation or getting to know people. I don't allow that at all. It has simply been shown that this approach of a therapist-patient relationship is more effective because the patient concentrates more on themselves and cannot identify with or want to understand the person behind the therapist. My professional care focuses on the patient's needs. They provide the input. Of course, we can also talk about contemporary or almost personal issues in passing. But never in depth. It's all about the patient and how I give them advice on overcoming

personal problems and help them with their own reflection. Explaining and interpreting dreams is incredibly complicated. As I said, some things cannot be analyzed at all. It can only be deciphered in the long term," he replied.

"Mirtelbrinf, what are you dreaming?" I insisted.

"A bit of everything. Sometimes I dream an incredible amount, or rather I know a lot about what I dream. We dream all the time, but we don't always remember everything, only a fraction of what happened. Even if what we can catch and memorize sometimes doesn't make sense,

it says a lot about you, about your inner processes and conflict resolution strategies."

"You keep avoiding me. I think, well, sometimes it seems to me that what I dream is just gross nonsense. It's always like this, it's like this, like this - it just always shows me something that hurts me. Only once in my life have I had something like a liberating, positive dream. That was over 30 years ago now. I was walking hand in hand towards the sunset in a sunny vacation spot with a girl I was in love with. The predominant feeling was relief, freedom, love. It was incredible. In everything else,

it's exactly the opposite. I dream immature, undeveloped, supposedly lower character traits of mine in different situations. It's always the same, just with different people in different places in different contexts. Things that have built up, things that I have known for a long time and had almost forgotten. It's like someone is trying to torture me. With my own inferiority complexes."

"I'm so sorry about that. I wouldn't wish that on anyone," Mirtelbrinfth replied.

"So now, after so many years, I've learned to some extent how to live so that I'm okay. In any case, without tearing ups and downs. Almost a bit boring, very structured. But this shit just won't go away. It's pretty stubborn, but so am I. I'll probably dream badly for the rest of my life, but it doesn't knock me down, it drags me down, sometimes for a whole morning, it confuses me, it makes me wander, it taints my perception, but the belief in a good life, in the end of every pain, in an inner healing gives me hope. And when it comes down to it, I will be there, stand my ground and

never give up again. Never again succumb in the face of a negative force, which

I refer to as such because it seems to attack me inexplicably after such dreams."

"Have no Fear, the Lord will be there.

Have no Fear, I'm standing right behind him," whispered Mirtelbrinft.

I looked down at the ground, then briefly into his eyes.

Into the distance, the emptiness, the memory. To meaningful times, a cohesion, a hope, an assurance in just two sentences. Nothing more pseudo-religious has ever touched me so deeply. The answer to all the metaphysical speculation and faith babble, to the questions of pressing loneliness, of despair seeking help, can also simply be friendship. When it comes to the annoying question of meaning, it can also simply be a song that lulls you into a sense of security and finally gives you the reassuring answer to your distress. When a thought becomes all-encompassing. I said again:

"It's the boy I admire. My image is in him. I see myself in him. We share the same dispositions, but he lives a completely different life. He seems more unencumbered, even though he is maddeningly aware of the torment. He is a superhero at heart.

He is always on the lookout, knows about the abysses of humanity - he has internalized them - but his actions are pure and honest. His power is not physical, but it can move the innermost parts of the world.

When you're sitting on the balcony with him and you pop the cap on your Okolyte and it fizzes, it craves, it foams,

it runs, it... then you know it's a special moment. He is a special person, not like any ordinary person, socialized by ordinary circumstances, raised in confused circumstances, characterized by qualities that are a joke to mention and tell. Its essence is much deeper than standard language allows, it's hard to read and even harder to render... oh God, now I'm starting to ramble."

"No. You seem to have met an extraordinary boy. In my perhaps sober way, there's one thing I can't approve of. It's a phenomenon that comes with age. At least in some people, no, actually in many people. It is the turning away from the principle of creating interpersonal bonds. They sit in other corners of the pub, even though it's completely empty, they can no longer get excited about little things that serve to form friendships, they no longer

make appointments, they remain at a safe distance, barricade themselves behind their job, remain on their own, perhaps still on their partner, they are supposedly self-sufficient.

It is the obstructed path of old age, which no longer uses, recognizes or even ignores the abilities of youth, which have worked excellently to create bonds, and tries to exist without them. It is a ridiculous aberration like no other. What do people lack more than a personal relationship in which they can have fun, affection and trust together? There are no more beautiful unspoken stories than those about friends, their cohesion and history... ", Mirtelbrinft finished and I began:

"Maybe I'm rambling or starting to ramble again, but among the many, many stories that life has knitted, that it

continues to knit between people, among those that were, those that are still going on and those that are already buried, that no longer make it into people's conversations, never made it, forever hushed up, repeated a thousand times, mentioned once, happened a billion times, continuing every second from here to infinity; among all these stories of humanity, of the greats of

history and the small interpersonal ones, in this trade of content-filled connections, of meaningful networks, the very stuff of life, there is one that stands at the very top, gathering everything else under itself with ease and can probably be considered the most impressive. "

"You mean Gandhi."

"And his incredible respect for life. His belief in God. In the God who transcends religions. In breaking the chains of oppression. His philosophy. As Einstein once said, people of future generations would hardly think it possible that a man like Gandhi, flesh and blood, ever walked this earth."

Mirtelbrinft said, "There is a scene in this movie where all of Gandhi's actions and aspirations culminate. It is not the ejection from the train and the beginning of the struggle, nor the moving speech at that meeting in which Gandhi draws the attention of the politicians to real life with real concrete problems in India's countryside; neither the long and painful hunger strikes, nor the impressive, simple life in the countryside and its fusion with it. Rather, it is that magical moment before he sets off on the most famous of his

marches: the salt march. A large crowd awaits his departure outside his village, he walks out of his hut with a

boy in his home-made clothes and stops in front of the Times journalist who, referring to an equally eloquent sentence by Gandhi, says to him in view of his publications that have caused a worldwide sensation: "It would have been very uncivil of me, to let you make such a long journey for nothing."

And Gandhi laughs from the heart... he looks to the ground, looks once to the left, once to the right and says the legendarily simple and at the same time driving words: "We'll do.""

"I never knew you were so passionate about Gandhi and this movie," I said.

"There was one night when I watched it, drunk mind you, twice in a row. And I was burning up inside."

Mirtelbrinf and I are often separated by very basic world views. We are so different. But in some ways we are like identical twins. I probably wouldn't have thought that the most impressive story this world has ever woven would be the same for him as it is for me.

But as beautiful as some moments or communicative communions are, they always have an end. And so Mirtelbrinf drove away again and I am left here alone with my memory, the time, these notes, my lonely devotion to various things that don't seem to get me anywhere and you, Gandhi.

But the very existence of this historical event makes me breathe a sigh of relief. One can be proud to be human because one of us once fought for humanity. From now until eternity. No one can take that away from us.

"At least we beat the English," they say in rugby in Wales.

– Chapter 11 –
The psychiatry chapter

Funnily enough, I can only think of a catchy headline for this experience. It stands like nothing else in my life. Like a gruesome abyss that looks up from the depths so hideously dark that all the social, spiritual, psychological and physical implications make the observer so sick that they avert their gaze and banish everything connected with it to the darkness of memory, so that it may rot there until doomsday.

I have not had a good experience with these places.

They are the worst place in the world.

And this is due to a variety of factors. On the one hand, you are haunted by the awfulness of your own perception, which overshadows life everywhere, even outside, this so-called disease, the agony, the perishing, the vegetating in the pestilence. As if that weren't bad enough, the bloodsuckers come along and analyze the misery within yourself. They organize the administration of the dying. The various therapies on offer mutilate your mind and fill your (self) humiliated life with

even more shame, so that your own self-esteem is constantly being thrown down the drain.

Of course, at the abyss of feeling, of existence, on the dying side of life, it always seems as if every action is another kick from above, which one accepts kneeling down, with an expressionless face and destroyed body, holding on to the humiliation, not finding the ego in the graveyard,

only enduring it because life does not stop just when it is no longer worth sustaining.

The constant observation, the humiliating own behavior, the hopeless situation. As a human being, you can hardly even remotely imagine this hopelessness. It is a horror that awakens in you anew every day. It doesn't really let up for even a second. For weeks. For months. How is man capable of inflicting such agony on himself. It is a curse or perhaps just the consequence of the factors of socialization, character, ego development, fateful events and genetic disposition. It is a loss of maturity, of independence, of respect. Even for yourself.

These places do not serve recovery. They are for safekeeping. So that nothing worse happens. To

preserve you and wait until the pills take effect or the person decides to go out again.

At times when I'm well, I dream about it at night.

No concrete psychiatric dreams, but dreams in which I feel bad. The absolute certainty of being completely enveloped in black, tearing darkness. There is no feeling for anything. Everything has turned negative. And it doesn't let up for a second. A state, a perspective on life that turns against everything connected with life. Pure evil.

If it has befallen you again and again, there is often only hell to escape to. For safekeeping. Preservation. Mutilation. The worst place in the world.

A regulated daily routine is supposed to provide saving structure, in reality it only regulates the functions of life: Sleeping, eating, excreting. The constant conversation does not serve to clarify the splitting of the soul, but only to check

the vital functions and funny tricks that are supposed to make life beautiful again.

Being with fellow sufferers doesn't help in my opinion; it's just an imitation of sociality, of a social network. The atmosphere is supposedly friendly

and sterile - it has to be - but it hounds you, it stings your senses so much, you have to smell it, feel it, taste it, touch it, hear it and see it. The doctors and nurses turn into ugly creatures who vulture after your condition and watch you constantly. The visit is distressing, but also a ray of hope and a final escape into the world outside, from which you feel so rejected. There is simply nowhere to go.

A continuing mass operation of structures, absurdly run down and functioning as if in perpetuity, waltzing on and mauling, crushing people - despite all attempts to the contrary, some of which should also be held in honor - to finally leave a void.

But they can't really help what they do. It's only humane, only that can't help in the ring of evil, only preserve. Maybe that's what they really want. So it is the eternal hell. The worst place in the world.

But it is also easy to call it evil. Basically, it comes from deep within you. You carry and give birth to it yourself. It's a sobering fact, but it's still attached to you. Ultimately, as always, it's probably a mixture of internal and external circumstances.

But one impression remains: I didn't choose this fate. It has befallen me. It breaks into your life. Like

an oncoming rain that you can't do anything about. It showers you. All day long. It doesn't let up for a second. An inner terror. Which, absurdly, I did to myself.

But it was all so long ago.

And "it seems like ages ago...", since I wrote the last chapter of this manuscript. And even with that, I don't know what to do. I don't want to publish anything or anything else because I don't think anyone would be interested in what goes on in the head of an aging, resigned guy who can only get himself to write when he's had a drink. And then only his psychiatric memories rise to the surface...

Funnily enough, I now remember a conversation with Mirtelbrinfth about 25 years ago. In that particular situation, I was preoccupied with something that has always bothered me and still does today.

We had one of our conversations, which were imbued with an honesty that rarely comes to light. And in which we once again tried to capture the entire world in a single conversation:

"Mirtelbrinfth, in this tangle of human coexistence, interaction, the omnipresent communication

networks, the structures of life that are based on shared experience, in these everyday, banal, identity-forming, perfect and simultaneously deficient processes that hold everything together, I am afraid. Fear of loss, of total disappearance, of extinction. My brain. What would we do without the basic substance, without the basic ability to perceive reality, to bundle it, to transform it into a

cognitively processable content and to share it with the social environment?

A life with impaired brain function. Everything that would be of any value would simply be out of reach, inaccessible. I am sometimes trapped in this fear. I fear not being able to participate in human life because I am no longer cognitively capable of doing so and will become a second-class person who receives sincere disregard from others because of it. I have social anxiety. Fear of being nothing, ridiculous, deficient, a fart in history. I am afraid of not being enough. Of not fulfilling expectations. Not to be enough. Of not being worthy. Elementary, fundamental, basic fucking fear. Do you understand?"

"I understand very well. It doesn't sound nice, but your fear is the result of a long cognitive training. Such processes develop from the primal fear of not being loved by your parents and then take on a life of their own. They are now part of your perception, like a pair of invisible glasses that you constantly have on. In your case, supposedly harmless impressions trigger the activation of concepts in your brain that suggest such a judgment. Your only chance is to realize this and then consciously step out of this perception, however impossible this may seem. Always be aware of how your subjective perception runs in a particular situation. You can expose it, nail it and bring it down. You have to believe in yourself, my friend."

"It's just so, so..." is written on prison walls.

"There is nothing more difficult than breaking out of negative mental automatisms. People have lived in their ideas and projections for a long time, but they hardly ever

have anything to do with reality. This must be constantly checked and questioned in an ongoing and continuous process so that illusions, imaginations and misconceptions can be uncovered and removed. You have to undergo training that

finally puts an end to the avoidance of reality that you are practicing by living in imaginations. To imagine that your brain can or has already given up the ghost, in the truest sense of the word, is absurd. You are a human being, as far as I can tell, and your brain is working perfectly. Don't lose yourself in insane mind games, better turn around and recognize reality."

Even towards Mirtelbrinf, I felt slightly uncomfortable because I had opened up. An overload of stimuli followed and I was not ready for an answer, but he continued with the legendary words about our friendship:

"Take it from your brain professor, Doctor Mirtelbrinf, good friend."

After a short pause, during which I somehow breathed a sigh of relief and grinned for the first time in a long time, he added:

"But I am also the one to whom you can say with full conviction at any time and for all eternity," and he straightened up, looked into the distance, then back at me and with an infinite look directly into my eyes, "Light the Dark, I wish I could see. Give me

shelter, for saving my hope. Ban this death to keep me alive. Walk"

And I took over seamlessly, because I knew these sentences, they were in me, eternally chiseled into the flesh of my brain and heart: "with me, so that I'm not alone."

And Mirtelbrinft mercilessly added his answer to my prayer:

"Have no Fear, the Lord will be there.

Have no Fear, I'm standing right behind him."

If anyone should ever read that:

Yes, I had a friend like that and I still do. There are few things in my life that I have been so proud of that it has meant more to me than the whole world. Mirtelbrinft.

"You have to realize," he continued, "that it's part of your nature to ask more questions than others, especially more questions with a self-doubting tendency. You must accept this and will only be able to put it into perspective through a long learning process of calibrating your perceptions. But you must not give up, you have to promise me that. As it stands, your life has been given a heavy burden,

probably also by yourself, but you will find something in the discovery of your own powers to master and love this life that will strengthen your ego, water it like a small plant and allow you to swell into something big.

It's something big that sets you apart from the rest of the world and makes you special: your vulnerability. It gives you great sensitivity, which goes hand in hand with the ability to really do the greatest thing in the world."

"The greatest things in my world are the abysses I run from," I said.

"No! I can see that you have not yet fully recognized the greatest thing in the world. You have seen it several times

and dreamed of it, but you have not yet held it in your hands. You feel it deep inside you, how it rumbles and awaits its first maturity."

He let a moment pass so that I could follow him again and continued:

"I know your brain, your heart and your spirit and I tell you this: In your fear-ridden supposedly trusted life, you have the ability, the one ability that makes all the difference, that can gather all the endured suffering, pain, self-humiliation, hatred and its

brother doubt under itself all at once, push it into a corner, herd it together and lead it to its just and long-awaited annihilation."

I was amazed and he said:

"You will go up the steps to the real place of heavenly peace."

To really do the greatest thing in the world. I have an idea of what it could be and what it would lead me to. But the strength and courage to walk that path, up those steps, doesn't seem to be here.

I recently found a note from back then. Fluff in my head:

"How do I declare and win the love of a woman? The one who means everything to me? How does life work? How do I overcome a state of 'self-remoteness' where it seems that everything I believe in and live by is of no value to me anymore? Is there a certain level of madness beyond which I can no longer find my way back? Should language not be staged at all, but practiced freely and

authentically? Is there perhaps not such a big difference, because both come from us? To what extent can language

really capture what I want to express? I love, and I want to live."

– Chapter 12 –

And so ended the journeys of Professor Doctor Mirtelbrinft

He died ten minutes before I rushed into the room. Not because I sprinted all the way from the station to the hospital and collapsed on the floor, but because I couldn't see anything because my eyes were swollen red from all the tears.

He was lying there peacefully, just like they always say about deceased loved ones. They always lie there peacefully, so peaceful and calm.

So calm and peaceful,
lying gently on their last bed,
on their last day, at the last hour,
their eyes wide open,
no more breath of air over their mouth,
no last beautiful face to breathe.
At the end of the word of the remaining
it seems so frighteningly meaningless,
what a poem can do. To say.

The one who left is never there again to answer.

Oh, what I wouldn't give to talk to her just one more time. And with him too. Both such extremely respectable and good people, who I would have loved to tell on their way that I love them very much, that I was always more than happy to clean, mop and take out the garbage for them. I loved talking to these people, connecting with them inwardly, breaking through the prison of conscious solitary existence and watching football with them. No matter what, I would have stood in for them. I have them to thank for the

foundation stones of my life. That means I owe them their lives. At least one.

I just hope, by all the gods, that the peace is real.

Still, I was too late and his message, his last words, the very last thing Mirtelbrinft wanted to tell me before he left, now remains unheard.

I sat at his head and held his hand. Transience, somehow the root of all poetry.

At that moment, his sister enters the room.

"He asked me to give you his coat," she said and handed it over to me.

I accepted it and remained in this position for an indeterminable amount of time. Whether it had

been dark outside before or only for a moment or forever, I can no longer say.

It was over. Without my best friend, life was suddenly terrifyingly pointless.

Why can't best friends die together or live forever. In the end, the randomness of nature takes even a Mirtelbrinft.

At that moment, his parents arrived. They looked ancient and deeply saddened. His mother had never approved of Mirtelbrinft trying out his imaginary experiments on himself. And you can only agree with her when experiments mean partially opening the top of your own skull and using various substances to experimentally uncover synapse structures and trace electronic impulses.

Mirtelbrinft's research drive could rival that of a top athlete. And not the usual 10 to 15 years that an athlete is given, but three times as long.

His father looked as if someone had punched him in the face. He didn't say a word. For parents, watching the child they gave life to die is probably the worst thing in the world. Or to be too late to do so themselves.

Hospitals are often so shabby that it should come as no surprise that so few people visit them. Crooked bathrobes with small amounts of saline solution on the line shuffle along the corridors, it smells clinically clean and you are constantly looking around to see if you are being attacked. We bought four coffees and sat down in the smokers' corner in front of the main entrance. I was slightly chilly and Mirtelbrinft senior told me to wear his son's coat. I felt it and put the coat on.

I felt in my left pocket and there was a note inside.

Mirtelbrinft senior slowly recovered and began to formulate the first, still rather unclear sentences:

"When we, uh... yeah. When we drove here, we were beside ourselves. My head, my head was beside me. Mh, yes, no... but it's a bit more relieving outside the hospital, isn't it?"

I felt in my right pocket and there was no note in it.

His wife looked at the floor and probably remembered the birth of the 'giant skull', the only nickname Mirtelbrinft ever had. She couldn't understand how her son had risked his life so recklessly and broken his mother's heart.

"He was a man of science. There's no doubt about that. But perhaps not much more..." Mirtelbrinft senior then said.

I felt in the inside pocket and his heart was still there.

I unfolded the piece of paper and read it out loud:

Action is the soul of the world

"Ha, it must be in something better, the charm of life: for to be someone else's ball is a sad, depressing thought, an eternal slavery, a merely artistic, a reasonable, but for the sake of it all the more miserable animalhood. What do we learn from this? That we learn from this that to act, to act is the soul of the world, not to enjoy, not to feel, not to be sensitive, that by this alone we become like God, who acts unceasingly and delights unceasingly in his works: that we learn from this that the power acting in us is our spirit, our highest share. We learn this from the fact that this power that acts in us does not rest, does not cease to act, to stir, to rage, until it gives us the freedom to act: Good God, place to act, and if it were the chaos you created,

desolate and empty, but freedom dwells only there, and we could brood over it imitating you until something would come out - bliss! Bliss, the feeling of the gods!"

(Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz)

Look at it, feel into it, jump on it, listen to it, don't let yourself be disappointed for good, never turn back, but turn back if you have to turn back, dig, fly, live, dwell, dream, witness!

**Dare,
force the encounter
with your fear and overcome it.
You will still achieve much.
Old times, balmy grief**

**And quiet shudders wander...
With a tear in my buttonhole and in eternal memory
of the wonderful time**

MB

Underneath was the post script, but I didn't read it out loud because I didn't understand it.

**Reach into your left jacket pocket
and go your way!
I've only known it myself for a short time.**

I read the note in my left jacket pocket:

**WW - TT - MMB
welcome To The next level**

And the scales fell from my eyes. The first thought. It was gone as quickly as it came. I recognized something that I am no longer able to reproduce afterwards. In a moment that I will probably never be able to get back. All that remains is the feeling of that flash, how it struck me for a moment. The solution is as fleeting as life itself. A hint of a trace remains. I almost staggered and set off on the uncertain path home. I thought of special events in my life: The first encounter with Mirtelbrinft, about a letter to the girl in the attic and a concert and whose singular appearance once saved my life.

Later at home, I couldn't sleep. I read the old stuff, turned around and around again, smoked cigarettes, drank, walked around aimlessly and didn't sleep a wink that night.

I recorded it:

"And so ended the journeys of Professor Doctor Mirtelbrinft. A day like any other in this world.

The sun rose, for him one last time with his loved ones, people's loud lust for traffic, cattle breeding on the streets, mindless wandering and in everything no, but absolutely no, pause. And so it sinks again.

The intelligent view of the innermost depths of things, their system and their soul, as precisely as those who have now come to rest could, is gradually disappearing from this world. Those who follow are of a different kind. It is indescribable when you lose your best friend.

Death is the worst thing that can be irreversibly done to a person. Irretrievable.

Mirtelbrinft simply always wanted too much. Much more than the present could allow him.

What would have become of my life without him, at least it would certainly have been different; not nearly as questionable, but also nowhere near as full of answers.

My dearest Mirtelbrinft, this entire work should be dedicated to you and the boy.

To the people who were often closer to me than anything else.

His last words. The last thing a person has to say. If you are there when it happens. But he tricked time with a single maneuver. He wrote it on a piece of paper and I got it from his sister. And I found it again in his coat.

I am so happy about these words, they shine into my life
and are almost the dearest thing I have left of him.

What drives me are the combinations of letters.

The radical poet TT between me, WW, and the three-
letter, unknown sequence MMB. That was so Mirtelbrinf.
A master."

– Chapter 13 –

*And so the journeys of Erich Wollenweber ended and began
at the same time*

Hope - as they always say so beautifully in church - the hope to hope. Yes, and every pub has its own idiot. Some even have two. And you let yourself get drunk again without a hole and start to hope again until everything eventually succumbs in a big moronic mush and rushes down the toilet.

I mean, there is so much pessimism, injustice, thirst for faith, abandoned animals, bad music, fake people, bitter disappointments that it would be enough for two worlds. But the one is already so full of it, it almost bursts, it overflows like a grave overflowing with corpses. Too little space for all the stuff. Too little room for the sunshine. Too little room for me. ---

I've been wandering around. For weeks. No longer recognize the streets, the lights, the way properly. I wonder if I need glasses. My apartment is in a state. I wander around. No longer recognize the manuscripts, sleep in broad daylight, restless in bed

at night, get lost in the afternoon. I go to the library to borrow a pen and to the bakery to buy a sheet of paper. Clear moments are rare. I wonder if a doctor can help. Cirrhosis of the brain. Does it exist. I do exist. There are dreams. I forgot them all. All my memories together. I forgot many. The meaning of words. Forgotten. Fall of the kingdom. Gone. Something about love. Never heard. A

house. Not built. An airplane. Not flown. The balloon.
Burst. The boy. A hope.

But when everything is gone. A dream not dreamed.
Where will it lead me if I no longer remember my dreams.
Wrong paths. I can still go them. How long it takes until
even that is no longer possible. Until I leave. The last walk.
To peace there. Where is my imagination. The escape into
the imagination. It no longer works. I am no longer well. I
am suffering. From myself. I'm wandering around. Am I
still alive. Where is the consciousness. Where have I gone. I
never thought the path would lead me here. Disgusting.

When your favorite saying points to hell. What can I do?
What did I want? Once. Back then. If it wasn't too late now.

—

That's what days look like sometimes. I don't know what
to make of it. What's happening to me? The boy came by
today. He said he was worried about me. It was one of those
bad days. He said I wasn't my usual self. I sat huddled in
my chair. He asked what was wrong. I refused to answer.
He asked if I was still reading. I kept quiet about my book.
He asked if I still loved it, the written word. A light went on
in my heart. He began to tidy up. I closed my eyes. When I
woke up, I was lucid again.

Then I went into my bedroom and found an envelope on
my pillow.

Inside was a text:

The Dragon Slaying

*This earthly divine delight cannot find the right measure in
words,*

*so simply give the dragon hunter
happiness, courage and fun
call out to him, whisper to him:*

"Action is the soul of the world.

Bliss! Bliss! The feeling of the gods!"

He hurries out of the door,
The little luggage he has squeezed together
through thick laces,
outside on all kinds of paths,
initially through thorns and undergrowth,
between bare trees,
such a journey often
only arises in bad dreams.

No exuberant heroism
or human thirst for recognition
drove the man setting out on the adventure,
it was not a real decision,
just the vague certainty that he would have to do it at
some point.

He traveled a long way,
through quiet villages, a busy town,
but his hunger could not be satisfied,
he was still not full.

He walked through the most beautiful landscapes,
over snow-white mountains, through fragrant valleys,
jumped over wide rivers,
but he still didn't feel like resting:
slaying a dragon;
that was the greatest of his needs.

Blackheart's name was one
and he lived for ever,
but it was not so much his flamethrowing,
nor the eager virgin's eating
that spread the unspeakable terror,
it was the dragon's dark breath,
which he brought upon all and sundry,
these got lost in the darknesses of life,
in guilt, doubt, hatred they frightened themselves to
death, only his name was avoided, to die.

A fearless hero is then called for,
who breaks this power, but our protégé was not such a
one at all,

without knowing of Blackheart's
infernally evilness he had set off,
to travel, to slay the sluggish dragon Rootsfixed
and find her: the own lady.

And then indeed,
he was soon to meet her,
she was picking flowers in the little forest;
her song carried her words,
echoing far into the distance,
her voice,
inspired by the song,
soared until it reached his ears,
and he, when it sounded in his head,
raised his voice and sang.

Of course, it was the song of love

and he wondered how he could get her
his uncanny love,
so defeat one of the biggest dragons.
And of course, he just went there,
had at least one foot in it,
told her something,
made two, but rather just a joke,
showed her the place where he always sat
and sank into her in the sunset,
the feeling of the gods, that!
Under a cloudless sky,
entwined, they floated along,
their movement starry,
the spark of the gods, that!
She took him by storm
with her charm,
but in the early morning
she no longer slept in his arms.

*Well,
certainly the story would be too simple
and not true,
if it wasn't broken again.*

It grew cold in the fields of the dragon meadows,
the ears of corn swayed gently,
no more sparks to kindle a new fire,
it did not occur only once to him to shoot himself,
so great was the longing for last night,
all at once it was all over,

someone else was the power.

Blackhearted he went down and fell

- His soul was torn,

you could see the dying sounds flowing from it -

and he did not rise again.

He lay there for a long time saying nothing,

winds no longer blew him away,

this tear in his heart, which drilled itself ever wider,

next to gloomily poisoned,

slow mind games,

it was more terrible than the free suicide,

oh God, our hero hung in nothingness,

like not many.

Away! Away!

So he wished to fly

- it was his fears,

that drove him mercilessly -

into another world, only to win there secretly and so our
dragon hunter would have decided against us.

*But the path is never straight and so it did not come, quickly
on to the next bend,*

where events break again:

How senseless and shattered he pondered there,

no longer aware of what he could change,

without self-respect he did not even realize

how much he was running towards his doom,

yet against his will

was in this disgusting ordeal
somewhere hidden
the end of the twisted brainset:

String. Simply, string,
which bound his wobbly life again,
in which he found much meaning and strength,
which he then knew how to wind into knots,
to make something of it
- It was like a bath in warm sand -
from life and his things:

And so
he stood again
with all his weapons,
which were none,
with all the contradictions,
between toe and hair,
a lone fighter alone against multitudes
He blazed away as red as fire,
as if the earth were burning,
as if it were real:

**"Your heart is free, your heart is great,
have the courage to follow him."**

The following night
it was Blackheart's lair,
from which a foul stench emanated,
but, dear friends,
we anticipate it:

it was our Hempfling,
who won the death struggle.
The fury that drove him that night,
can be seen in the following lines,
in which he describes it himself:

"And I stabbed, once more, right into the black heart of this horror; like a man possessed I pulled the blade out again and rammed it with all my might even deeper into Blackheart's huge dragon heart and broke the blade off.

So I touched her face with both hands,
and then kissed my bride fiercely."

*Well, that was the story
of courageous dragon slaying,
- whether truth, dream, legend - let it be
of overcoming the darkest bondage,
to the beginning of a life, all paths open to it.*

The boy knows how to do it. He's got it down. It's more like a huge mess, but it's his signature. Unmistakable. I suddenly feel better again. Healing through literature; whatever form it takes, the author must be likeable. Or the message or the word. It takes a certain magic to make you feel at home.

Well then! Let's go, let's go! Forward with roar and roar. The borders are open. The world is waiting. A protégé is

needed. Even if it is a Hempfling. A hero who finds himself and conquers the dragon. On to the boy. Let's set sail!

The bubbling, fiery mass foams and boils;

waves its wonderful flags so powerfully on this special night.

- And so the journeys of Erich Wollenweber end and begin at the same time. -

The decision is made. What the boy doesn't know is: I won't be coming back from our trip. He still has a lot to do here. But for me, the end has been found. I can only go forward. With my brain cirrhosis, all that awaits me here is the miserable oblivion, the past, Blackheart's hellish malice.

His dragon heart must be broken, stabbed, the blade broken off to finally begin a new life. All paths are open to it.

– Chapter 14 –

End

I never thought that the road would lead me here. How much I already thought that after setting off on this, my last journey in this life, at the end of the following it is written in bigger letters than it was ever imagined.

So Erik and I set off on our travels. A rather unlikely pair, despite the parallels. He didn't say much that morning, he seemed very tense and nervous. We climbed the stairs to the platform, I looked up and thought of the auspicious stairs. The kind of stairs that led up to the real place of heavenly peace. And finally we were at the top.

He faltered, slowed his walk until he finally stopped. Turned around and grabbed my upper arms.

"I haven't always made it easy for you, my friend, but above all, you haven't always made it easy for yourself. Before I was ready and standing here with you now, I had to put two pieces of the puzzle together. And I am probably the only person in this world who has been able to do that."

He waited for an indescribable moment - like the one in which Lt. Dan tells Forrest Gump that he never thanked him for saving his life, looked behind me for a moment and chose his words carefully:

"I never told you that I met a nurse in a psychiatric ward."

He was almost trembling, his knee was wobbling, but his voice was firm:

"In an honest moment, she told me a 25-year-old, almost unheard-of story about a note in the hallway and a

subsequent - how shall I put it - radical-poetic field campaign and a long search that has been fruitless to this day."

I didn't know what hit me. Deep down, I sensed that this was probably the moment before the moment of my life. Erik was holding the key in his hands. I always knew it: he holds a life in his hands, more than once.

He continued:

"And then, in the last few weeks, when you weren't feeling well and you were increasingly losing your presence of mind, I found a manuscript lying on the table in your apartment. I read it. I read a lot about you. And about me. And a radical poet. A searching

soul who is tired of going astray and longs for fulfillment. A piece of human life so honest that it made me tremble."

He waited another moment and wiped a tear from his face.

"I don't believe in fate, but I do believe in luck, not in the sense of coincidence. That I was allowed to put these two pieces together is my greatest honor. And that I was able to persuade you to take this long-delayed, probably last ride on this side of your life."

He whispered in my ear:

"There are things you can't see. Some things you can't hear or touch. You feel them.

You feel them.

You *feel* them.

You feel **her**.

You feel her."

I turned around and unexpectedly looked her in the eye. The moment wouldn't stop. I saw the color of her eyes, but I couldn't name them now. I looked into the middle of her pupil and then lost myself in the color around it. How deep eyes can be.

She said: "There you are, my stranger."

And My aMswer Became our life.

It is written somewhere on the east side of the old train station, on the back of the cancel:

The greatest thing in the world
**"A love in its bond,
so tender and breaking,
but its path is free
promising all the happiness of reality."**

It blew from somewhere to nowhere.

Let's just imagine that the old man and his companion dissolved into nothing - just as he always feared, but also sometimes longed for - they simply disappeared from this world. But shortly before the end, he was able to form one last thought in my imagination that pleased him.

*13 slightly melancholy, sad, open endings and the final good.
That was his book.*

Hoisted into the light of day and given 14 headings by:

Erik (the Terrible)

- in eternal connection to my best old friend, the journeys he sent me on and the last one I took him on –

*All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not touched by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.*
- J.R.R. Tolkien

*It has to start somewhere
It has to start sometime
What better place than here
What better time than now.*
- Zack de la Rocha

