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Demian

Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend

Hermann Hesse

1919

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Demian

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Hermann Hesse

Translated from the German by Ether Library

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The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth

Original title · *Demian. Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend*

Hermann Hesse (1877–1962)

Translated from the German by Ether Library

First published in 1919 by S. Fischer Verlag, Berlin.

A Note on the Translation

This is a complete translation of Hermann Hesse's *Demian*. *Die Geschichte von Emil Sinclairs Jugend*, made directly from the German. No earlier English version was used as its basis. The source is a public-domain transcription of the S. Fischer edition (Berlin, 1921), which reproduces the text first published in 1919. That first edition gave its author as Emil Sinclair, the narrator of the book; Hesse's own name appeared on it only from 1920. We print his name.

The subtitle is translated as *The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth*. Hesse's untitled opening pages, which begin with the two sentences he set as an epigraph, are headed here "Prologue"; the eight chapters keep his numbers and titles. *Der Schächer* names one of the two thieves crucified beside Jesus, so that chapter is called "The Thief on the Cross." Each of the 793 paragraphs of the original appears here as one paragraph, and the epigraph returns word for word where Sinclair repeats it in chapter five.

Sinclair writes as a man of about thirty, looking back on the years from ten to twenty. His past is told in the past tense, and his present reflections stay in the present, as in the German. His long sentences, his lists, and his returning words have been kept. The most important of these words is *Zeichen*, the sign God set on Cain in Genesis; we have written "mark" and "the mark of Cain" throughout, as the English Bible does, and kept "sign" only where Hesse means an omen in the sky. *Führer* is always "guide," *Dämon* is "daemon," *Schicksal* is "fate," and the god who unites God and devil keeps his name, Abraxas.

Two words of the period that are now slurs have been rendered neutrally. Names keep their German form, and Frau Eva stays *Frau Eva*, since Sinclair uses the phrase as a name. Spelling and punctuation are American. There are no translator's notes.

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Prologue

All I wanted was to try to live what was trying to come out of me of its own accord. Why was that so very hard?

To tell my story, I have to begin far back. If it were possible, I ought to go back much further still, to the very first years of my childhood and beyond them, into the distance of my origins.

When writers write novels, they tend to act as if they were God and could survey and comprehend some human story whole and entire and set it down as though God were telling it to himself, without any veils, essential at every point. I cannot do that, any more than the writers can. But my story matters more to me than any writer's story matters to him; for it is my own, and it is the story of a human being—not an invented one, a possible one, an ideal one, or one that in some other way does not exist, but a real, unique, living human being. What that is, a real living human being, people admittedly know less today than ever before, and so they shoot human beings dead in masses, each one of whom is a precious, unique experiment of nature. If we were not something more than unique human beings, if each of us could really be removed from the world entirely by a rifle bullet, there would be no point in telling stories anymore. But every human being is not only himself; he is also the unique, wholly particular point, important in every case and remarkable, where the phenomena of the world intersect, only once in this way and never again. That is why every human being's story is important, eternal, divine; that is why every human being, as long as he lives at all and fulfills the will of nature, is wonderful and worthy of every attention. In each one

the spirit has taken form, in each one the creature suffers, in each one a redeemer is crucified.

Few people today know what a human being is. Many feel it, and for that reason they die more easily, as I shall die more easily when I have finished writing this story.

I may not call myself one who knows. I was a seeker and am one still, but I no longer seek in the stars and in books; I am beginning to hear the teachings that my blood murmurs in me. My story is not pleasant, it is not sweet and harmonious like the invented stories; it tastes of nonsense and confusion, of madness and dream, like the life of all people who no longer want to lie to themselves.

The life of every human being is a way to himself, the attempt at a way, the intimation of a path. No one has ever been wholly and entirely himself; yet everyone strives to become so, one dully, one more clearly, each as best he can. Everyone carries remnants of his birth, slime and eggshell from a primeval world, with him to the end. Some never become human, remain frog, remain lizard, remain ant. Some are human above and fish below. But each one is nature's throw toward the human. We all have our origins in common, the mothers; we all come from the same abyss; but each one, an experiment and a throw from the depths, strives toward his own goal. We can understand one another; but each of us can interpret only himself.

Chapter One: Two Worlds

I begin my story with an experience from the time when I was about ten or eleven years old and went to the Latin school in our little town.

Much comes wafting toward me from there and touches me inwardly with pain and with pleasant shivers, dark lanes and bright ones, houses and towers, the striking of clocks and human faces, rooms full of coziness and warm comfort, rooms full of secrets and deep fear of ghosts. It smells of warm closeness, of rabbits and servant girls, of household remedies and dried fruit. Two worlds ran into each other there; day and night came from two poles.

One world was my father's house, but it was narrower even than that; it really took in only my parents. This world was largely familiar to me; its name was mother and father, its name was love and strictness, example and school. To this world belonged a mild radiance, clarity and cleanliness; here were gentle, friendly words, washed hands, clean clothes, good manners at home. Here the morning hymn was sung, here Christmas was kept. In this world there were straight lines and paths that led into the future; there was duty and guilt, bad conscience and confession, forgiveness and good resolutions, love and reverence, the word of the Bible and wisdom. Our future had to belong to this world, and so it had to be clear and clean, beautiful and orderly.

The other world, however, began right in the middle of our own house and was entirely different, smelled different, spoke differently, promised and demanded other things. In this second world there were servant girls and journeymen, ghost stories and

rumors of scandal; there was a gaudy flood of monstrous, alluring, terrible, mysterious things, things like the slaughterhouse and the prison, drunkards and scolding women, cows giving birth, horses that had fallen down, stories of burglaries, killings, suicides. All these beautiful and horrible, wild and cruel things were all around, in the next lane, in the next house; policemen and tramps went about, drunkards beat their wives, clusters of young girls poured out of the factories in the evening, old women could put a spell on you and make you ill, robbers lived in the forest, arsonists were caught by the mounted police—everywhere this second, violent world welled up and gave off its smell, everywhere except in our rooms, where Mother and Father were. And that was very good. It was wonderful that here with us there was peace, order, and quiet, duty and a good conscience, forgiveness and love—and wonderful that there was all the other as well, all that was loud and shrill, somber and violent, which you could still escape with one leap to your mother.

And the strangest thing was how the two worlds bordered on each other, how close together they were! Our maid Lina, for example: when she sat by the door in the living room at evening prayers and sang the hymn along with us in her clear voice, her washed hands laid on her smoothed-down apron, she belonged wholly to Father and Mother, to us, to the bright and the right. Right afterward, in the kitchen or the woodshed, when she told me the story of the little man without a head, or when she quarreled with the neighbor women in the butcher's little shop, she was someone else, belonged to the other world, was surrounded by mystery. And so it was with everything, most of all with myself. Certainly I belonged to the bright and right world, I was my parents' child, but wherever I turned my eyes and ears, the other was there, and I lived in the other too, though it was often strange and uncanny to me, though there you regularly got a bad conscience

and grew afraid. At times I even liked best of all to live in the forbidden world, and often the return home to the brightness—necessary and good as it might be—was almost like a return to something less beautiful, to the duller and drearier. Sometimes I knew: my goal in life was to become like my father and my mother, as bright and pure, as superior and orderly; but the way there was long, until then you had to sit out your years in school and study and pass tests and examinations, and the way led all the while past the other, darker world, right through it, and it was not at all impossible that you might stay there and sink into it. There were stories of prodigal sons to whom this had happened; I had read them with passion. In them the return to the father and to the good was always so redeeming and splendid, I felt entirely that this alone was the right, good, and desirable thing, and yet the part of the story that took place among the wicked and the lost was by far the more alluring, and if one had been allowed to say it and confess it, it was really sometimes downright a pity that the prodigal repented and was found again. But you did not say that, and you did not think it either. It was only somehow there, as a foreboding or a possibility, deep down in your feelings. When I pictured the devil, I could imagine him quite well down in the street, in disguise or openly, or at the fair, or in a tavern, but never at home with us.

My sisters, too, belonged to the bright world. They were, it often seemed to me, closer in their nature to Father and Mother; they were better, better behaved, more faultless than I. They had their faults, they had their naughtiness, but it seemed to me that none of it went very deep, it was not as it was with me, where contact with evil often became so heavy and tormenting, where the dark world stood much closer. My sisters, like my parents, were to be spared and respected, and if you had quarreled with them, you were always afterward, before your own conscience, the bad one, the one who started it, the one who had to ask forgive-

ness. For in your sisters you offended your parents, the good and the commanding. There were secrets I could far sooner share with the most depraved street boys than with my sisters. On good days, when all was bright and my conscience in order, it was often delightful to play with my sisters, to be good and well behaved with them and to see myself in a virtuous, noble light. This must be what it was like to be an angel! That was the highest thing we knew, and we imagined it sweet and wonderful to be angels, surrounded by a bright sound and fragrance like Christmas and happiness. Oh, how seldom such hours and days came off! Often at play, at good, harmless, permitted games, I was seized by a passion and vehemence that was too much for my sisters, that led to quarrels and unhappiness, and when anger came over me, I was terrible and did and said things whose wickedness I felt deeply and burningly even while I was doing and saying them. Then came grievous, dark hours of remorse and contrition, and then the painful moment when I asked forgiveness, and then again a ray of brightness, a quiet, grateful happiness without any division, for hours or for moments.

I went to the Latin school; the mayor's son and the chief forester's son were in my class and sometimes came to see me, wild boys and yet members of the good, permitted world. All the same, I had close dealings with neighbors' boys, pupils at the elementary school, whom we otherwise looked down on. With one of them I must begin my story.

One free afternoon—I was little more than ten years old—I was roaming about with two boys from the neighborhood. Then a bigger one joined us, a strong, rough boy of about thirteen, an elementary-school pupil, the son of a tailor. His father was a drunkard, and the whole family had a bad name. I knew Franz Kromer well; I was afraid of him, and I did not like it when he now fell in with us. He already had a man's manners and imitated the walk

and the sayings of the young factory hands. With him leading, we climbed down to the riverbank beside the bridge and hid from the world under the first arch. The narrow bank between the vaulted wall of the bridge and the sluggishly flowing water was made up of nothing but rubbish, of broken crockery and junk, tangled bundles of rusty wire and other refuse. Sometimes you found useful things there; with Franz Kromer in charge we had to search the stretch and show him what we found. Then he either pocketed it or threw it out into the water. He told us to look for things made of lead, brass, or tin; all of those he pocketed, and an old horn comb as well. I felt very uneasy in his company, not because I knew that my father would forbid me such company if he knew of it, but out of fear of Franz himself. I was glad that he took me along and treated me like the others. He gave orders and we obeyed; it was as if this were an old custom, although it was the first time I had been with him.

At last we sat down on the ground. Franz spat into the water and looked like a man; he spat through a gap in his teeth and hit whatever he aimed at. A conversation began, and the boys fell to bragging and showing off with all sorts of schoolboy exploits and nasty pranks. I kept quiet, and yet I was afraid that my very silence would make me conspicuous and turn Kromer's anger against me. My two companions had drawn away from me from the start and sided with him; I was a stranger among them and felt that my clothes and manner were a provocation to them. As a Latin-school boy and a gentleman's son I could not possibly be liked by Franz, and the other two, I felt it clearly, would disown me and leave me in the lurch as soon as it came to that.

Finally, out of sheer fear, I began to tell stories too. I made up a great robber's tale with myself as its hero. In a garden near the Eckmühle, I told them, a friend and I had stolen a whole sackful of apples one night, and not ordinary ones either, but nothing but

the finest reinettes and golden pearmain, the best kinds. I fled from the dangers of the moment into this story; inventing and telling came easily to me. So as not to stop right away and perhaps get tangled up in something worse, I let all my art shine. One of us, I told them, had always had to stand sentry while the other was up in the tree throwing the apples down, and the sack had been so heavy that in the end we had had to open it again and leave half behind, but we came back half an hour later and fetched that too.

When I had finished, I hoped for some applause; toward the end I had warmed up and grown drunk on my own storytelling. The two smaller boys kept silent, waiting, but Franz Kromer looked at me piercingly through half-shut eyes and asked in a threatening voice: "Is that true?"

"Yes, it is," I said.

"Really and truly?"

"Yes, really and truly," I insisted defiantly, while inside I was choking with fear.

"Can you swear to it?"

I was badly frightened, but I said yes at once.

"Then say: By God and my salvation!"

I said: "By God and my salvation."

"Well, all right," he said then, and turned away.

I thought that settled it and was glad when he soon got up and started back. When we were on the bridge I said timidly that I had to go home now.

"There's no such hurry," Franz laughed, "we go the same way."

He sauntered slowly on, and I did not dare to run off, but he really did take the way toward our house. When we got there, when I saw our front door and the fat brass door handle, the sun in the windows and the curtains in my mother's room, I drew a deep breath. Oh, homecoming! Oh, good and blessed return home, into the brightness, into peace!

When I had quickly opened the door and slipped in, ready to slam it behind me, Franz Kromer pushed his way in with me. In the cool, dim tiled passage, which got its light only from the yard, he stood beside me, held me by the arm, and said softly: "Not so fast, you!"

Startled, I looked at him. His grip on my arm was as hard as iron. I wondered what he might have in mind, and whether he meant to hurt me. If I screamed now, I thought, screamed loud and hard, would someone get down from upstairs quickly enough to save me? But I gave up the idea.

"What is it?" I asked. "What do you want?"

"Not much. I just have to ask you something else. The others don't need to hear it."

"Oh? Well, what else am I supposed to tell you? I have to go up, you know."

"You know, don't you," Franz said softly, "who owns the orchard near the Eckmühle?"

"No, I don't know. The miller, I think."

Franz had wrapped his arm around me and now pulled me right up close to him, so that I had to look into his face from very near. His eyes were wicked, he smiled an ugly smile, and his face was full of cruelty and power.

"Yes, my boy, I can tell you who owns the garden. I've known for a long time that the apples were stolen, and I also know the man has said he'll give two marks to anyone who can tell him who stole the fruit."

"Dear God!" I cried. "But you won't tell him anything, will you?"

I felt that it would be no use appealing to his sense of honor. He was from the other world; for him betrayal was no crime. I felt that exactly. In such things the people from the "other" world were not like us.

“Not tell him?” Kromer laughed. “My dear friend, do you think I’m a counterfeiter who can make two-mark pieces for himself? I’m a poor devil, I don’t have a rich father like you, and if I can earn two marks, I have to earn them. Maybe he’ll even give more.”

He suddenly let go of me. Our front hall no longer smelled of peace and safety; the world was falling to pieces around me. He would report me, I was a criminal, they would tell my father, perhaps even the police would come. All the terrors of chaos threatened me; everything ugly and dangerous had been called out against me. That I had not stolen anything at all made no difference whatever. Besides, I had sworn. My God, my God!

Tears rose in my eyes. I felt that I had to buy myself free, and in despair I dug into all my pockets. No apple, no pocketknife, nothing at all was there. Then I thought of my watch. It was an old silver watch, and it did not run; I wore it “just because.” It had come from our grandmother. Quickly I pulled it out.

“Kromer,” I said, “listen, you mustn’t give me away, that wouldn’t be nice of you. I’ll give you my watch, look; I’m afraid I don’t have anything else at all. You can have it, it’s silver, and the works are good, it just has one little defect, it needs repairing.”

He smiled and took the watch in his big hand. I looked at that hand and felt how coarse and deeply hostile to me it was, how it was reaching for my life and my peace.

“It’s silver—” I said timidly.

“I don’t give a fig for your silver or your old watch there!” he said with deep contempt. “Get it repaired yourself!”

“But Franz,” I cried, trembling with fear that he might run off. “Wait a little! Take the watch! It really is silver, really and truly. And I don’t have anything else.”

He looked at me coolly and contemptuously.

“So you know who I’m going to. Or I can tell the police too, I know the sergeant well.”

He turned to go. I held him back by the sleeve. It must not happen. I would much rather have died than bear everything that would come if he went off like that.

“Franz,” I begged, hoarse with agitation, “don’t do anything stupid! It’s only a joke, isn’t it?”

“Sure, a joke, but it could cost you dear.”

“Tell me what I should do, Franz! I’ll do anything!”

He looked me over with his narrowed eyes and laughed again.

“Don’t be stupid!” he said with false good nature. “You know how things stand as well as I do. I can earn two marks, and I’m no rich man who can throw them away, you know that. But you’re rich, you even have a watch. All you have to do is give me the two marks, and then everything’s fine.”

I understood the logic. But two marks! For me that was as much and as far out of reach as ten, as a hundred, as a thousand marks. I had no money. There was a little savings box that my mother kept for me; in it were a few ten- and five-pfennig pieces from uncles’ visits and such occasions. Apart from that I had nothing. At that age I was not yet given any pocket money.

“I don’t have anything,” I said sadly. “I don’t have any money at all. But I’ll give you anything else. I have a book about Indians, and soldiers, and a compass. I’ll go get it for you.”

Kromer only twitched his bold, wicked mouth and spat on the ground.

“Cut the chatter!” he said in a tone of command. “You can keep your junk. A compass! Don’t make me mad now, you hear, and hand over the money!”

“But I don’t have any, I never get money. I can’t help it!”

“Then you’ll bring me the two marks tomorrow. I’ll wait down at the market after school. And that’s that. If you don’t bring the money, you’ll see!”

“Yes, but where am I supposed to get it? Lord God, when I don’t have any—”

“There’s money enough in your house. That’s your business. So, tomorrow after school. And I’m telling you: if you don’t bring it—” He shot a terrible look into my eyes, spat once more, and was gone like a shadow.



I could not go upstairs. My life was ruined. I thought of running away and never coming back, or of drowning myself. But these were not clear pictures. I sat down in the dark on the bottom step of our stairs, huddled up tight, and gave myself over to misery. There Lina found me crying when she came down with a basket to fetch wood.

I asked her not to say anything upstairs and went up. On the rack beside the glass door hung my father’s hat and my mother’s parasol; home and tenderness streamed toward me from all these things, my heart greeted them pleadingly and gratefully, as the prodigal son greets the sight and smell of the old rooms of home. But none of it belonged to me now, all of it was the bright world of father and mother, and I had sunk deep and guiltily into the alien flood, entangled in adventure and sin, threatened by the enemy, with dangers, fear, and disgrace waiting for me. The hat and the parasol, the good old sandstone floor, the big picture over the hall cupboard, and the voice of my older sister from the living room inside were all dearer, more tender, and more precious than ever, but they were no longer comfort and a sure possession; they were nothing but reproach. All this was mine no longer; I could have no part in its serenity and stillness. I had dirt on my feet that I could not wipe off on the mat; I brought shadows in with me that the world of home knew nothing of. How many secrets I had had

before, how many fears, but it had all been play and fun compared with what I brought into these rooms with me today. Fate was running after me, hands were reaching out for me from which even my mother could not protect me, of which she must not know. Whether my crime was a theft or a lie (had I not sworn a false oath by God and my salvation?)—that made no difference. My sin was not this or that; my sin was that I had given the devil my hand. Why had I gone along? Why had I obeyed Kromer, better than I had ever obeyed my father? Why had I made up the story of that theft? Boasted of crimes as if they were heroic deeds? Now the devil held my hand, now the enemy was after me.

For a moment it was no longer fear of tomorrow that I felt but, above all, the terrible certainty that my road now led farther and farther downhill and into the dark. I felt clearly that new misdeeds must follow from my misdeed, that my appearing among my sisters, my greeting and my kiss for my parents, were a lie, that I carried a fate and a secret with me that I was hiding from them.

For a moment trust and hope flashed up in me as I looked at my father's hat. I would tell him everything, accept his judgment and his punishment, and make him my confidant and my rescuer. It would only be a penance such as I had often gone through, a hard, bitter hour, a hard and contrite plea for forgiveness.

How sweet that sounded! How beautifully it beckoned! But nothing came of it. I knew I would not do it. I knew that I now had a secret, a guilt that I had to swallow down alone, by myself. Perhaps I was at the parting of the ways just now; perhaps from this hour on I would belong forever and ever to what was bad, would have to share secrets with the wicked, depend on them, obey them, become their like. I had played the man and the hero; now I had to bear what came of it.

I was glad that when I came in my father took me to task over my wet shoes. It was a diversion; he did not notice the worse

thing, and I was allowed to bear a reproach that I secretly applied to the other as well. And as I did, a strange new feeling glittered up in me, an evil, cutting feeling full of barbs: I felt superior to my father! For a moment I felt a certain contempt for his ignorance; his scolding about the wet boots seemed petty to me. "If you only knew!" I thought, and I seemed to myself like a criminal being questioned about a stolen bread roll when he had murders to confess. It was an ugly and repugnant feeling, but it was strong and held a deep allure, and it chained me to my secret and my guilt more firmly than any other thought. Perhaps, I thought, Kromer has already gone to the police and reported me, and storms are gathering over my head while here they look at me as if I were a little child!

Of this whole experience, as far as it has been told up to here, that moment was what mattered and what lasted. It was a first crack in my father's sanctity, a first cut into the pillars on which my childhood had rested and which every human being must have destroyed before he can become himself. The inner, essential line of our fate is made up of these experiences that no one sees. Such a cut, such a crack grows together again, it heals and is forgotten, but in the most secret chamber it lives on and goes on bleeding.

I myself was horrified by the new feeling at once; I could have kissed my father's feet right afterward to beg his pardon for it. But nothing essential can be begged pardon for, and a child feels and knows that as well and as deeply as any sage.

I felt the need to think my situation over, to think up ways out for tomorrow; but I never got to it. All evening I was busy with nothing but getting used to the changed air in our living room. The wall clock and the table, the Bible and the mirror, the bookshelf and the pictures on the wall were taking leave of me, as it were; with a heart going cold I had to watch my world, my good and happy life, become the past and come away from me, and I had to

feel how I was anchored and held fast by new, sucking roots out there in the dark and the strange. For the first time I tasted death, and death tastes bitter, for it is birth, it is fear and dread of a terrible renewal.

I was glad when at last I lay in my bed! Before that, as a final purgatory, evening prayers had passed over me, and we had sung a hymn that was one of my favorites. Ah, I did not sing along, and every note was gall and poison to me. I did not pray along when my father spoke the blessing, and when he ended, “—be with us all!” a spasm tore me out of that circle. The grace of God was with all of them, but no longer with me. Cold and deeply tired, I went away.

In bed, when I had lain there a while, when warmth and shelter lovingly surrounded me, my heart strayed back once more in its fear and fluttered anxiously around what had happened. My mother had said good night to me as always; her step still echoed in the room, the light of her candle still glowed in the crack of the door. Now, I thought, now she'll come back once more—she has felt it, she'll give me a kiss and ask, ask kindly and full of promise, and then I can cry, then the stone in my throat will melt, then I'll throw my arms around her and tell her, and then it will be all right, then I'll be saved! And when the crack of the door had already gone dark, I went on listening for a while and thought it must, it simply must happen.

Then I went back to things as they were and looked my enemy in the eye. I saw him clearly; he had one eye screwed shut, his mouth was laughing coarsely, and as I looked at him and swallowed the inescapable down into myself, he grew bigger and uglier, and his evil eye flashed like a devil's. He stayed close beside me until I fell asleep; but then I dreamed neither of him nor of today; I dreamed that we were out in a boat, my parents and my sisters and I, and all around us was nothing but the peace and

brightness of a holiday. In the middle of the night I woke, still felt the aftertaste of bliss, still saw my sisters' white summer dresses shimmering in the sun, and fell out of all that paradise back into what was, and stood facing the enemy with the evil eye once again.

In the morning, when my mother came hurrying in and called out that it was late already and why was I still in bed, I looked ill, and when she asked whether something was wrong with me, I threw up.

Something seemed to have been gained by that. I loved being a little sick and being allowed to lie in bed all morning with chamomile tea, listening to my mother tidying up in the next room and to Lina out in the hall letting in the butcher. A morning without school was something enchanted, like a fairy tale; the sun played into the room then, and it was not the same sun they shut out at school by letting down the green blinds. But even that had no savor today and had taken on a false ring.

If only I had died! But I was just a little unwell, as I had often been before, and that settled nothing. It protected me from school, but it did not in the least protect me from Kromer, who would be waiting for me at the market at eleven o'clock. And this time my mother's kindness brought no comfort; it was a burden, and it hurt. Soon I pretended to be asleep again and thought things over. There was no help for it, I had to be at the market at eleven. So at ten o'clock I got up quietly and said I was feeling well again. I was told, as usual in such cases, that I must either go back to bed or go to school in the afternoon. I said I would like to go to school. I had made a plan.

I must not come to Kromer without money. I had to get hold of the little savings box that belonged to me. There was not enough money in it, I knew that, not nearly enough; but it was something, and a kind of instinct told me that something was better than nothing and that Kromer at least had to be appeased.

I felt wretched as I crept in my stocking feet into my mother's room and took my box out of her desk; but it was not as wretched as yesterday. The pounding of my heart choked me, and it got no better when, down in the stairwell, I found on my first inspection that the box was locked. It was very easy to break open; there was only a thin tin grating to tear through; but the tearing hurt, for only now had I committed a theft. Until then I had only pilfered treats, lumps of sugar and fruit. This was stolen, even though it was my own money. I felt that I was again a step nearer to Kromer and his world, that it was going downhill so nicely, step by step, and I set my defiance against it. Let the devil take me, there was no way back now. I counted the money anxiously; it had sounded so full in the box, and now in my hand it was miserably little. It was sixty-five pfennigs. I hid the box in the downstairs hall, held the money in my closed fist, and stepped out of the house, differently than I had ever gone through that door before. Someone upstairs called after me, it seemed; I walked quickly away.

There was still plenty of time; I slunk by roundabout ways through the lanes of a changed town, under clouds I had never seen before, past houses that watched me and people who suspected me. On the way I remembered that a schoolmate of mine had once found a thaler at the cattle market. I would gladly have prayed that God would work a miracle and let me make such a find too. But I no longer had any right to pray. And even then the box would not have been whole again.

Franz Kromer saw me from far off, yet he came toward me very slowly and seemed to take no notice of me. When he was near me, he gave me a commanding sign to follow him and walked calmly on without once looking back, down the Strohgasse and over the footbridge, until he stopped by the last houses in front of a new building. No work was going on there; the walls stood bare, without doors or windows. Kromer looked around and went in through

the doorway, and I after him. He stepped behind the wall, beckoned me over, and held out his hand.

“Got it?” he asked coolly.

I drew my clenched hand out of my pocket and poured my money into his flat palm. He had counted it before the last five-pfennig piece had stopped ringing.

“That’s sixty-five pfennigs,” he said, and looked at me.

“Yes,” I said timidly. “That’s all I have, it’s too little, I know. But it’s all of it. I don’t have any more.”

“I’d have thought you were smarter,” he scolded, with an almost gentle reproach. “Between men of honor there has to be order. I don’t want to take anything off you that isn’t fair, you know that. Take your nickels back, there! The other one—you know who—doesn’t try to beat me down. He pays.”

“But I don’t have any more, I just don’t! It was my savings box.”

“That’s your business. But I don’t want to make you unhappy. You still owe me one mark thirty-five. When do I get it?”

“Oh, you’ll get it for sure, Kromer! I don’t know just now—maybe I’ll have more soon, tomorrow or the day after. You understand, don’t you, that I can’t tell my father.”

“That’s no concern of mine. I’m not the kind who wants to do you harm. I could have my money before noon, you see, and I’m poor. You wear nice clothes, and you get something better for your midday meal than I do. But I won’t say anything. I’ll wait a little, for all I care. The day after tomorrow I’ll whistle for you, in the afternoon, and then you’ll settle it. You know my whistle?”

He whistled it for me; I had heard it often.

“Yes,” I said, “I know it.”

He went off as if I had nothing to do with him. It had been a business deal between us, nothing more.



Even today, I believe, Kromer's whistle would give me a fright if I suddenly heard it again. From then on I heard it often; it seemed to me I was hearing it always, over and over. There was no place, no game, no work, no thought that this whistle did not reach, this whistle that made me dependent, that was now my fate. I was often in our little flower garden, which I loved very much, on the soft, colorful autumn afternoons, and a strange urge made me take up again the games of earlier stages of my boyhood; I was playing, in a sense, a boy who was younger than I, who was still good and free, innocent and safe. But right into the middle of it, always expected and yet always horribly disturbing and startling, Kromer's whistle sounded from somewhere, cut the thread, destroyed the make-believe. Then I had to go, had to follow my tormentor to bad and ugly places, had to give an account of myself to him and let myself be dunned for money. The whole thing lasted perhaps a few weeks, but to me it seemed to be years, to be an eternity. Seldom did I have money, a five-pfennig piece or a groschen stolen from the kitchen table when Lina left the market basket standing there. Each time I was scolded by Kromer and heaped with contempt; I was the one who meant to cheat him and keep back what was rightfully his, I was the one who was robbing him, I was the one who was making him unhappy! Not often in my life has distress come so close to my heart; seldom have I felt greater hopelessness, greater dependence.

I had filled the savings box with game counters and put it back in its place; no one asked about it. But that too could come crashing down on me any day. Even more than Kromer's rough whistle, I often dreaded my mother when she came softly up to me—wasn't she coming to ask me about the box?

Since I had appeared before my devil without money many times, he began to torment me and use me in other ways. I had to work for him. He had errands to run for his father; I had to run

them for him. Or he ordered me to carry out something difficult, to hop on one leg for ten minutes, to pin a scrap of paper to a passerby's coat. In my dreams, night after night, these torments went on, and I lay sweating in the grip of nightmares.

For a time I was ill. I often vomited and was easily chilled, but at night I lay in sweat and fever. My mother felt that something was wrong and showed me great sympathy, which tormented me because I could not answer it with trust.

One evening, when I was already in bed, she brought me a little piece of chocolate. It was an echo of earlier years, when I had often been given such comforting tidbits to fall asleep on if I had been good. Now she stood there holding the little piece of chocolate out to me. I felt so wretched that I could only shake my head. She asked what was wrong with me; she stroked my hair. All I could get out was: "Don't! Don't! I don't want anything." She put the chocolate on the night table and went out. When she tried to question me about it the next day, I acted as if I did not remember anything. Once she brought the doctor in; he examined me and prescribed cold sponge baths in the morning.

My state at that time was a kind of madness. In the midst of the ordered peace of our house I lived timid and tormented, like a ghost, had no part in the life of the others, and seldom forgot myself for so much as an hour. Toward my father, who often irritably called me to account, I was closed and cold.

Chapter Two: Cain

Rescue from my torments came from a quite unexpected quarter, and along with it something new came into my life that has gone on working in me to this day.

A new pupil had recently entered our Latin school. He was the son of a well-to-do widow who had moved to our town, and he wore a mourning band around his sleeve. He was in a higher class than I and several years older, but I soon noticed him too, as everyone did. This curious pupil seemed to be much older than he looked; to no one did he give the impression of a boy. Among us childish youngsters he moved strange and finished, like a man, or rather like a gentleman. He was not popular; he took no part in games, still less in fights; only his self-assured and decided tone with the teachers pleased the others. His name was Max Demian.

One day it happened, as it did now and then at our school, that for some reason or other a second class was put into our very large schoolroom. It was Demian's class. We little ones had Bible history, the big ones had to write a composition. While the story of Cain and Abel was being drummed into us, I kept looking over at Demian, whose face strangely fascinated me, and saw that clever, bright, uncommonly firm face bent attentively and intelligently over his work; he did not look at all like a pupil doing an assignment, but like a scholar pursuing problems of his own. I did not really find him pleasant; on the contrary, I had something against him; he was too superior and cool for me, too provokingly sure of himself in his whole being, and his eyes had the look of grown-ups—which children never like—a little sad, with flashes of mockery in

it. Yet I had to keep looking at him, whether I liked him or not; but the moment he glanced at me once, I pulled my eyes back in alarm. When I think today about how he looked then as a schoolboy, I can say this: he was different from all the others in every respect, was wholly his own and bore the stamp of his person, and for that reason he stood out—yet at the same time he did everything he could not to stand out, carried and conducted himself like a prince in disguise who is among peasant boys and goes to every trouble to seem one of them.

On the way home from school he walked behind me. When the others had scattered, he caught up with me and said hello. Even this greeting, though he imitated our schoolboy tone in it, was so grown-up and polite.

“Shall we walk a little way together?” he asked in a friendly way. I was flattered and nodded. Then I described to him where I lived.

“Oh, there?” he said, smiling. “I know that house already. There’s a curious thing fixed over your front door; it interested me right away.”

At first I did not even know what he meant, and I was astonished that he seemed to know our house better than I did. There was, it is true, a sort of coat of arms as the keystone over the arch of the doorway, but over the years it had worn flat and been painted over many times; as far as I knew, it had nothing to do with us or our family.

“I don’t know anything about it,” I said shyly. “It’s a bird or something like that, it must be very old. They say the house belonged to a monastery once.”

“That may well be,” he nodded. “Take a good look at it sometime! Things like that are often quite interesting. I think it’s a sparrow hawk.”

We walked on; I was very self-conscious. Suddenly Demian laughed, as if something funny had occurred to him.

“Yes, I sat in on your lesson, you know,” he said briskly. “The story of Cain, who bore the mark on his forehead, wasn’t it? Do you like it?”

No, I had seldom liked anything at all of all the things we had to learn. But I did not dare say so; it was as if a grown-up were talking to me. I said I liked the story quite well.

Demian clapped me on the shoulder.

“You don’t need to put on an act for me, my friend. But the story really is quite curious; I think it’s much more curious than most of the others that come up in class. The teacher didn’t say much about it, of course, just the usual things about God and sin and so on. But I think—” he broke off, smiled, and asked: “But are you interested?”

“Well, then, I think,” he went on, “this story of Cain can be understood in a quite different way. Most of the things they teach us are no doubt quite true and right, but you can look at all of them differently from the way the teachers do, and then they usually make much better sense. With this Cain, for instance, and the mark on his forehead, you can’t really be satisfied with the way it’s explained to us. Don’t you think so too? That a man kills his brother in a quarrel can certainly happen, and that afterward he gets frightened and knuckles under is possible too. But that he should be specially decorated for his cowardice with a medal that protects him and strikes fear into everyone else is really very odd.”

“Of course,” I said, interested: the thing was beginning to grip me. “But how else are you supposed to explain the story?”

He slapped me on the shoulder.

“Quite simply! What was there first, what the story started from, was the mark. There was a man who had something in his face that frightened other people. They didn’t dare to touch him; he impressed them, he and his children. But perhaps, or rather certainly, it wasn’t really a mark on his forehead, like a postmark;

life is seldom as crude as that. Much more likely it was something uncanny and barely perceptible, a little more intelligence and boldness in his look than people were used to. This man had power; people shied away from this man. He had a 'mark.' You could explain it however you liked. And 'people' always want whatever is comfortable for them and proves them right. People were afraid of the children of Cain; they had a 'mark.' So the mark was explained not as what it was, a mark of distinction, but as the opposite. They said that the fellows with this mark were uncanny, and so they were. People with courage and character always seem very uncanny to other people. That a breed of fearless and uncanny people was going around was very uncomfortable, and so they hung a nickname and a fable on this breed, to take revenge on it, to get some little compensation for all the fear they had gone through.—Do you understand?”

“Yes—that is—then Cain wouldn't have been wicked at all? And the whole story in the Bible wouldn't really be true at all?”

“Yes and no. Such old, ancient stories are always true, but they aren't always recorded and aren't always explained the way they ought to be. In short, I think Cain was a splendid fellow, and they hung this story on him only because they were afraid of him. The story was simply a rumor, the kind of thing people gossip about, and it was quite true insofar as Cain and his children really did bear a kind of 'mark' and were different from most people.”

I was very astonished.

“And then you think the part about the killing isn't true either?” I asked, deeply stirred.

“Oh yes, it is! That's true, certainly. The strong one had struck down a weak one. Whether it was really his brother, you can doubt. It isn't important; after all, all men are brothers. So a strong man killed a weak one. Maybe it was a heroic deed, maybe not. But in any case the other weak ones were now full of fear; they com-

plained a great deal, and when you asked them, 'Why don't you simply kill him too?' they didn't say, 'Because we're cowards,' but they said, 'You can't. He has a mark. God has marked him!' That's roughly how the swindle must have come about.—Well, I'm keeping you. Goodbye, then!"

He turned into the Altgasse and left me alone, more bewildered than I had ever been. He was hardly gone before everything he had said seemed quite unbelievable to me! Cain a noble man, Abel a coward! The mark of Cain a distinction! It was absurd, it was blasphemous and wicked. Where did that leave God? Had he not accepted Abel's sacrifice, did he not love Abel?—No, nonsense! And I suspected that Demian had wanted to make fun of me and trip me up. He was a devilishly clever fellow, all right, and he could talk, but like that—no—

All the same, I had never thought so much about any story, from the Bible or anywhere else. And for a long time I had never forgotten Franz Kromer so completely, for hours, for a whole evening. At home I read the story through once more, as it stood in the Bible; it was short and plain, and it was quite crazy to look for a special, secret meaning in it. Any murderer could declare himself God's favorite that way! No, it was nonsense. The only nice thing was the way Demian could say such things, so lightly and prettily, as though it all went without saying, and with those eyes besides!

Something, to be sure, was not in order with me, was in fact in great disorder. I had lived in a bright and clean world, I had myself been a kind of Abel, and now I was stuck so deep in the "other," had fallen and sunk so far, and yet at bottom it was not so very much my fault! What about that, then? Yes, and now a memory flashed up in me that for a moment almost took my breath away. On that evil evening when my present misery had begun, there had been the business with my father; for a moment I had seen through him

and his bright world and wisdom all at once, as it were, and despised them! Yes, then I myself, who was Cain and bore the mark, had imagined that this mark was no disgrace, that it was a distinction, and that by my wickedness and my misfortune I stood higher than my father, higher than the good and the pious.

It was not in this form, as a clear thought, that I experienced the thing at the time, but all of this was contained in it; it was only a flaring up of feelings, of strange stirrings, which hurt and yet filled me with pride.

When I thought it over—how oddly Demian had spoken of the fearless and the cowardly! How strangely he had interpreted the mark on Cain's forehead! How strangely his eye, his curious grown-up's eye, had shone as he did! And it shot vaguely through my mind:—isn't he himself, this Demian, a kind of Cain? Why does he defend him if he doesn't feel himself to be like him? Why does he have that power in his look? Why does he speak so scornfully of the "others," of the fearful, who are after all the pious and the ones well pleasing to God?

I could come to no end with these thoughts. A stone had fallen into the well, and the well was my young soul. And for a long, very long time this business of Cain, the killing, and the mark was the point from which all my attempts at knowledge, doubt, and criticism set out.



I noticed that the other pupils, too, were much taken up with Demian. I had told no one anything about the story of Cain, but he seemed to interest others as well. At least many rumors about the "new boy" went around. If I only remembered them all now, each would throw a light on him, each would bear interpreting. All I still remember is that the first word was that Demian's mother was

very rich. It was also said that she never went to church, and that the son didn't either. They were Jews, someone claimed to know, but they might also be secret Mohammedans. Then there were tall tales about Max Demian's strength. What was certain was that he had terribly humiliated the strongest boy in his class, who had challenged him to fight and called him a coward when he refused. Those who were there said that Demian had merely taken him by the back of the neck with one hand and squeezed hard; then the boy had gone pale, and afterward he had slunk away and been unable to use his arm for days. For one whole evening it was even said that he was dead. Everything was asserted for a while, everything believed, everything was exciting and marvelous. Then for a while people had had enough. But not much later new rumors arose among us pupils, which had it that Demian was on intimate terms with girls and "knew everything."

Meanwhile my business with Franz Kromer went on along its inevitable course. I could not get free of him, for even if he left me in peace for days in between, I was still bound to him. He lived on with me in my dreams like my shadow, and what he did not do to me in reality my imagination made him do in those dreams, in which I became his slave entirely. I lived in those dreams—I was always a strong dreamer—more than in reality; I lost strength and life to those shadows. Among other things, I often dreamed that Kromer was mistreating me, that he spat on me and knelt on me, and, what was worse, that he was leading me into grave crimes—or rather not leading me into them, but simply forcing me through his powerful influence. The most terrible of these dreams, from which I woke half mad, contained a murderous attack on my father. Kromer sharpened a knife and put it in my hand; we stood behind the trees of an avenue and lay in wait for someone, I did not know whom; but when someone came along and Kromer told

me with a squeeze on my arm that this was the one I had to stab, it was my father. Then I woke up.

With all these things on my mind I did still think of Cain and Abel, but hardly anymore of Demian. When he first came near me again, it was, curiously enough, in a dream as well. That is, I dreamed again of being mistreated and violated, but instead of Kromer it was Demian this time who knelt on me. And—this was quite new and made a deep impression on me—everything that I had suffered from Kromer in torment and with resistance I suffered gladly from Demian, with a feeling that held as much rapture as fear. I had this dream twice; then Kromer took his place again.

What I lived through in these dreams and what in reality I have long been unable to separate exactly. In any case, my wretched relationship with Kromer took its course, and it did not by any means come to an end when I had at last paid off the debt to the boy, all from petty thefts. No, now he knew about these thefts, for he always asked me where the money came from, and I was more in his power than ever. He often threatened to tell my father everything, and then my fear was hardly as great as my deep regret that I had not done so myself from the start. Yet, miserable as I was, I did not regret everything, at least not always, and sometimes I thought I felt that everything had to be as it was. A doom hung over me, and it was useless to try to break through it.

My parents presumably suffered not a little from this state of things. An alien spirit had come over me; I no longer fitted into our family community, which had been so intimate, and for which a raging homesickness often came over me, as for lost paradises. I was treated, especially by my mother, more like a sick person than like a wrongdoer, but how things really stood I could best see from the behavior of my two sisters. In this behavior, which was very considerate and yet made me endlessly miserable, it was clearly expressed that I was a kind of possessed creature, more to be

pitied than scolded for my condition, but in whom evil had nonetheless taken up its seat. I felt that they were praying for me, differently than usual, and I felt the futility of that praying. I often felt a burning longing for relief, a craving for a real confession, and yet I also sensed in advance that I would not be able to tell and explain everything properly to either my father or my mother. I knew that they would take it kindly, that they would spare me a great deal, even pity me, but not entirely understand, and that the whole thing would be looked on as a kind of derailment, when it was in fact fate.

I know that some will not believe that a child not yet eleven could feel in this way. I am not telling my story to them. I am telling it to those who know human beings better. The grown-up who has learned to turn part of his feelings into thoughts misses these thoughts in the child and so supposes that the experiences are not there either. But only seldom in my life have I lived and suffered as deeply as I did then.



Once, on a rainy day, my tormentor had ordered me to the Burgplatz, and there I stood waiting and scuffing my feet in the wet chestnut leaves that were still falling and falling from the black, dripping trees. I had no money, but I had put aside two pieces of cake and had them with me so that I could at least give Kromer something. I had long been used to standing like this in some corner or other waiting for him, often for a very long time, and I accepted it the way people accept what cannot be changed.

At last Kromer came. He did not stay long today. He gave me a couple of jabs in the ribs, laughed, took the cake from me, even offered me a damp cigarette, which I did not take, however, and was friendlier than usual.

“Oh yes,” he said as he was leaving, “before I forget—you could bring your sister along next time, the older one. What’s her name, anyway?”

I did not understand at all and gave no answer either. I only looked at him in bewilderment.

“Don’t you get it? You’re to bring your sister.”

“Yes, Kromer, but I can’t. I’m not allowed to, and she wouldn’t come along anyway.”

I was prepared for this to be just another piece of harassment and a pretext. That was how he often did it: demanded something impossible, frightened me, humiliated me, and then gradually let himself be bargained with. Then I had to buy myself free with a little money or other gifts.

This time he was quite different. At my refusal he hardly got angry at all.

“Well, all right,” he said offhandedly, “you’ll think it over. I’d like to get to know your sister. It’ll work out one of these days. You just take her along on a walk, and then I’ll come by. Tomorrow I’ll whistle for you, then we’ll talk it over again.”

When he was gone, something of the meaning of his demand suddenly dawned on me. I was still entirely a child, but I knew from rumors that boys and girls, when they were somewhat older, could do certain mysterious, indecent, and forbidden things with each other. And now I was supposed to—it suddenly became quite clear to me how monstrous it was! My resolve never to do it was fixed at once. But what would happen then, and how Kromer would take revenge on me, I hardly dared think. A new torment was beginning for me; it had not been enough yet.

Disconsolate, I walked across the empty square, my hands in my pockets. New torments, new slavery!

Then a fresh, deep voice called to me. I was startled and began to run. Someone ran after me; a hand took hold of me gently from

behind. It was Max Demian.

I gave myself up.

"It's you?" I said uncertainly. "You gave me such a fright!"

He looked at me, and never had his look been more that of a grown-up, of someone superior who saw right through you, than now. We had not spoken to each other for a long time.

"I'm sorry," he said in his polite and yet very decided manner. "But listen, you mustn't let yourself be frightened like that."

"Well, it can happen, can't it."

"So it seems. But look: if you jump like that in front of someone who hasn't done anything to you, that someone starts to think. It surprises him, it makes him curious. That someone thinks to himself that you're strangely jumpy, and he goes on thinking: people are only like that when they're afraid. Cowards are always afraid; but I don't think you're really a coward. Are you? Oh, of course you're no hero either. There are things you're afraid of; there are people you're afraid of, too. And that's something you should never have. No, you should never be afraid of people. You're not afraid of me, are you? Or are you?"

"Oh no, not at all."

"Right, you see. But there are people you're afraid of?"

"I don't know... Leave me alone, what do you want from me?"

He kept pace with me—I had walked faster, with thoughts of escape—and I felt his look from the side.

"Suppose for a moment," he began again, "that I mean well by you. In any case you don't need to be afraid of me. I'd like to do an experiment with you; it's fun, and you can learn something from it that's very useful. Now pay attention!—I sometimes try my hand at an art called mind reading. There's no witchcraft in it at all, but if you don't know how it's done, it looks quite peculiar. You can surprise people a great deal with it.—Well, let's give it a try. So, I like you, or I'm interested in you, and now I'd like to find out what it

looks like inside you. I've already taken the first step toward that. I frightened you—so you're easily frightened. So there are things and people you're afraid of. Where can that come from? There's no need to be afraid of anyone. If you fear someone, it comes from having granted that someone power over you. You've done something bad, for instance, and the other one knows it—then he has power over you. Get it? It's clear enough, isn't it?"

I looked helplessly into his face, which was serious and clever as always, and kind too, but without any tenderness; it was rather stern. Justice or something like it was in it. I did not know what was happening to me; he stood before me like a magician.

"Have you understood?" he asked once more.

I nodded. I could not say anything.

"I told you it looks funny, mind reading, but it's all quite natural. I could also tell you fairly exactly, for example, what you thought about me that time I told you the story of Cain and Abel. Well, that doesn't belong here. I also think it possible that you've dreamed about me once. But let's leave that! You're a clever boy; most of them are so stupid! I like to talk now and then with a clever boy I trust. That's all right with you, isn't it?"

"Oh yes. Only I don't understand at all—"

"Let's stick to our amusing experiment! So we've found: the boy S. is easily frightened—he's afraid of someone—he probably has a secret with this other person that's very uncomfortable for him.—Is that about right?"

As in a dream I gave way to his voice, to his influence. I only nodded. Wasn't a voice speaking there that could come only from myself? That knew everything? That knew everything better and more clearly than I did myself?

Demian clapped me hard on the shoulder.

"So it's right. I thought as much. Now just one more question: do you know the name of the boy who went off from here a while

ago?”

I was violently startled; my secret, now touched, curled back painfully inside me; it did not want to come out into the light.

“What boy? There wasn’t any boy here, only me.”

He laughed.

“Go on, say it!” he laughed. “What’s his name?”

I whispered: “Do you mean Franz Kromer?”

He nodded to me, satisfied.

“Bravo! You’re a quick one; we’ll be friends yet. But now I have to tell you something: this Kromer, or whatever his name is, is a bad lot. His face tells me he’s a scoundrel! What do you think?”

“Oh yes,” I sighed, “he’s bad, he’s a Satan! But he mustn’t know anything! For God’s sake, he mustn’t know anything. Do you know him? Does he know you?”

“Don’t worry! He’s gone, and he doesn’t know me—not yet. But I’d quite like to get to know him. He goes to the elementary school?”

“Yes.”

“Which class?”

“The fifth.—But don’t tell him anything! Please, please don’t tell him anything!”

“Don’t worry, nothing will happen to you.—I suppose you don’t feel like telling me a little more about this Kromer?”

“I can’t! No, leave me alone!”

He was silent for a while.

“Too bad,” he said then; “we could have carried the experiment further. But I don’t want to torment you. But you do know, don’t you, that your fear of him isn’t right? A fear like that ruins us completely; you have to get rid of it. You have to get rid of it if you’re going to turn into a proper fellow. Do you understand?”

“Of course, you’re quite right... but it can’t be done. You don’t know...”

"You've seen that I know a few things, more than you would have thought.—Do you owe him money, by any chance?"

"Yes, that too, but that's not the main thing. I can't say, I can't!"

"So it wouldn't help if I gave you as much money as you owe him?—I could easily give it to you."

"No, no, that's not it. And I beg you: don't tell anyone about it! Not a word! You'll make me miserable!"

"You can rely on me, Sinclair. You'll tell me the secrets you two share someday later on—"

"Never, never!" I cried vehemently.

"Just as you like. I only mean that perhaps you'll tell me more sometime later. Only of your own free will, of course. You don't think I'll do the same as Kromer himself does?"

"Oh no—but you don't know anything about it!"

"Nothing at all. I'm only thinking about it. And I'll never do it the way Kromer does, you can believe me. After all, you don't owe me anything."

We were silent for a long time, and I grew calmer. But Demian's knowledge became more and more of a riddle to me.

"I'm going home now," he said, and pulled his loden coat more tightly around him in the rain. "There's just one thing I'd like to say to you again, since we've gotten this far—you ought to get rid of that fellow! If there's no other way, then kill him! It would impress me and please me if you did. I'd help you, too."

I grew afraid all over again. The story of Cain suddenly came back to me. It began to seem uncanny to me, and I began to cry softly. There was too much that was uncanny around me.

"All right, then," Max Demian smiled. "Just go home! We'll manage it. Although killing him would be the simplest. In such things the simplest is always the best. You're not in good hands with your friend Kromer."

I came home, and it seemed to me that I had been away for a year. Everything looked different. Between me and Kromer there stood something like a future, something like hope. I was no longer alone! And only now did I see how terribly alone I had been with my secret for weeks and weeks. And at once I remembered what I had thought through several times: that a confession to my parents would bring me relief and yet would not wholly set me free. Now I had almost confessed, to someone else, a stranger, and a premonition of deliverance came wafting toward me like a strong fragrance!



All the same, my fear was far from overcome, and I was still prepared for long and terrible reckonings with my enemy. All the more curious it seemed to me that everything passed off so quietly, so wholly secretly and calmly.

Kromer's whistle outside our house did not come, for a day, two days, three days, a whole week. I did not dare believe it at all, and inwardly I lay in wait to see whether he would not suddenly, just when you no longer expected him at all, be standing there again after all. But he was gone and stayed gone! Distrustful of my new freedom, I still did not really believe in it. Until at last I happened to meet Franz Kromer. He was coming down the Seilergasse, straight toward me. When he saw me he flinched, twisted his face into an ugly grimace, and without further ado turned back so as not to have to meet me.

For me that was an unheard-of moment! My enemy was running away from me! My Satan was afraid of me! Joy and surprise went through me and through me.

During those days Demian showed himself once again. He was waiting for me outside the school.

"Hello," I said.

"Good morning, Sinclair. I just wanted to hear how you're getting on. Kromer leaves you in peace now, doesn't he?"

"Did you do that? But how? How? I don't understand it at all. He's stayed away completely."

"That's good. If he should ever come back again—I don't think he will, but he is a nervy fellow—just tell him to remember Demian."

"But how does it all fit together? Did you pick a fight with him and give him a thrashing?"

"No, I don't much like doing that. I simply talked to him, the same as with you, and in doing so I was able to make it clear to him that it's to his own advantage to leave you in peace."

"Oh, you didn't give him money, did you?"

"No, my boy. You'd already tried that way yourself."

He got away, however hard I tried to question him, and I was left behind with the old uneasy feeling toward him, a strange mixture of gratitude and shyness, of admiration and fear, of affection and inner resistance.

I made up my mind to see him again soon, and then I meant to talk with him more about all of it, about the Cain business too.

It did not come to that.

Gratitude is not at all a virtue I believe in, and to demand it of a child would seem wrong to me. So I am not especially surprised at my own utter ingratitude, which I showed toward Max Demian. Today I believe with certainty that I would have been made sick and ruined for life if he had not freed me from Kromer's clutches. Even then I felt this liberation to be the greatest experience of my young life—but the liberator himself I ignored as soon as he had performed the miracle.

The ingratitude, as I said, does not seem curious to me. What does seem strange to me is only the lack of curiosity I showed.

How was it possible that I could go on living calmly for a single day without coming closer to the mysteries with which Demian had brought me into contact? How could I hold back the desire to hear more about Cain, more about Kromer, more about mind reading?

It is hardly comprehensible, and yet it is so. I suddenly saw myself untangled from demonic nets, saw the world lying bright and joyful before me again, no longer fell prey to attacks of fear and choking palpitations. The spell was broken; I was no longer a tormented soul in damnation; I was a schoolboy again as always. My nature sought to regain its balance and quiet as quickly as possible, and so it took pains above all to push the great mass of ugly and threatening things away from itself, to forget them. Wonderfully fast the whole long story of my guilt and my terrors slipped from my memory, apparently without leaving any scars or traces.

That I tried just as quickly to forget my helper and rescuer, on the other hand, I understand today as well. From the vale of tears of my damnation, from my terrible slavery to Kromer, I fled with all the urges and powers of my damaged soul back to where I had once been happy and content: into the lost paradise that was opening again, into the bright world of father and mother, to my sisters, to the fragrance of purity, to Abel's being well pleasing to God.

The very day after my short talk with Demian, when I was at last wholly convinced that I had won back my freedom and no longer feared any relapse, I did what I had so often and so longingly wished to do—I confessed. I went to my mother, showed her the little savings box with its damaged lock, filled with game counters instead of money, and told her how long I had, through my own fault, been chained to a wicked tormentor. She did not understand everything, but she saw the box, she saw the change in my

eyes, heard the change in my voice, felt that I was well again, that I had been given back to her.

And now, with lofty feelings, I celebrated the feast of my redemption, the return of the prodigal son. My mother took me to my father, the story was told again, questions and exclamations of astonishment came thick and fast, both my parents stroked my head and breathed freely after long oppression. Everything was glorious, everything was as in the stories, everything resolved itself into wonderful harmony.

Into this harmony I now fled with a true passion. I could not get enough of having my peace again and my parents' trust; I became a model boy at home, played with my sisters more than ever, and at prayers I sang the dear old hymns along with the others with the blissful feelings of one redeemed and converted. It came from the heart; there was no lie in it.

And yet things were not at all in order! And here is the point from which alone my forgetfulness toward Demian is truly explained to me. It was to him I should have confessed! The confession would have turned out less decorative and touching, but more fruitful for me. As it was, I clung with all my roots to my former paradise of a world; I had come home and been taken back into grace. But Demian in no way belonged to that world, did not fit into it. He too, differently from Kromer, but still—he too was a tempter; he too linked me to the second world, the wicked, bad world, and I wanted to have nothing more to do with that, ever. I could not and would not now give Abel up and help glorify Cain, now, when I had just become an Abel again myself.

So much for the outer connection. But the inner one was this: I had been delivered from the hands of Kromer and the devil, but not by my own strength and effort. I had tried to walk the paths of the world, and they had been too slippery for me. Now that the grip of a friendly hand had rescued me, I ran back without another

glance to either side into my mother's lap and the shelter of a protected, pious, gentle childhood. I made myself younger, more dependent, more childish than I was. I had to replace my dependence on Kromer with a new one, for I was not able to walk alone. So, in my blind heart, I chose dependence on Father and Mother, on the old, beloved "bright world," which I already knew was not the only one. Had I not done that, I would have had to hold to Demian and entrust myself to him. That I did not do so seemed to me at the time a justified mistrust of his disconcerting ideas; in truth it was nothing but fear. For Demian would have demanded more of me than my parents demanded, much more; with prodding and admonition, with mockery and irony, he would have tried to make me more independent. Ah, that I know today: nothing in the world is more repugnant to a human being than to go the way that leads him to himself!

Nevertheless, about half a year later, I could not resist the temptation, and on a walk I asked my father what one should think of the fact that some people declared Cain to be better than Abel.

He was very surprised and explained to me that this was a view that lacked all novelty. It had cropped up as early as the time of the first Christians and had been taught in sects, one of which called itself the "Cainites." But of course this mad doctrine was nothing other than an attempt by the devil to destroy our faith. For if one believed in Cain's being right and Abel's being wrong, then it followed that God had been mistaken, and so that the God of the Bible was not the true and only God but a false one. And in fact the Cainites had taught and preached something of the kind; but this heresy had long since vanished from mankind, and he only wondered that a schoolmate of mine could have heard anything about it. Nevertheless he earnestly admonished me to give up such thoughts.

Chapter Three: The Thief on the Cross

There would be beautiful, tender, and lovable things to tell of my childhood, of my safety with my father and mother, of a child's love and a contented, playful drifting through life in gentle, dear, bright surroundings. Others have told enough about such things. I am interested only in the steps I took in my life to get to myself. All the pretty resting places, islands of happiness, and paradises whose magic I came to know I leave lying in the glow of distance, and I have no desire to set foot in them again.

That is why, as long as I am still dwelling on my boyhood, I speak only of what came to me that was new, what drove me forward, what tore me loose.

These impulses always came from the "other world"; they always brought fear, compulsion, and a bad conscience with them; they were always revolutionary and endangered the peace in which I would gladly have gone on living.

The years came in which I had to discover anew that there lived in me myself a primal urge which had to creep away and hide in the permitted and bright world. As it does every human being, the slowly awakening feeling of sex fell upon me as an enemy and destroyer, as something forbidden, as temptation and sin. What my curiosity was seeking, what created dreams, desire, and fear in me, the great secret of puberty, did not fit at all into the sheltered bliss of my childhood peace. I did what everyone does. I led the double life of a child who is no longer a child. My consciousness lived in what was familiar and permitted; my consciousness denied the new world that was dawning. But alongside it I lived in dreams,

urges, and wishes of a subterranean kind, over which that conscious life built itself ever more anxious bridges, for the child's world in me was falling apart. Like almost all parents, mine gave no help to the awakening drives of life, which were never spoken of. They helped only, with inexhaustible care, my hopeless attempts to deny what was real and to go on living in a child's world that was growing more and more unreal and false. I do not know whether parents can do much in this, and I do not reproach mine. It was my own business to come to terms with myself and find my way, and I did my business badly, as most well-brought-up people do.

Every human being goes through this difficulty. For the average person this is the point in life where the demands of one's own life come into the harshest conflict with one's surroundings, where the way forward has to be fought for most bitterly. Many people experience the dying and being born again that is our fate only this one time in their lives, in the rotting and slow collapse of childhood, when everything we have come to love is about to leave us and we suddenly feel the loneliness and deadly cold of space around us. And a great many remain hanging on this cliff forever and cling painfully all their lives to the irretrievable past, to the dream of the lost paradise, which is the worst and most murderous of all dreams.

Let us return to the story. The feelings and dream images in which the end of childhood announced itself to me are not important enough to be told. The important thing was this: the "dark world," the "other world," was there again. What had once been Franz Kromer was now lodged in me myself. And with that the "other world" gained power over me again from outside as well.

Several years had passed since the business with Kromer. That dramatic and guilt-laden time of my life lay very far from me then and seemed to have vanished into nothing like a short nightmare.

Franz Kromer had long since disappeared from my life; I hardly took notice if I ever happened to meet him. But the other important figure in my tragedy, Max Demian, never again disappeared entirely from my circle. Yet for a long time he stood far off at the edge, visible but not active. Only gradually did he come nearer again, radiate powers and influences again.

I am trying to recall what I know of Demian from that time. It may be that for a year or longer I did not speak to him a single time. I avoided him, and he in no way pushed himself on me. Now and then, when we met, he would nod me a friendly greeting. It sometimes seemed to me then that there was a faint note of scorn or ironic reproach in his friendliness, but that may have been imagination. The story I had lived through with him and the strange influence he had had on me then seemed forgotten, by him as by me.

I search for his figure, and now that I think back on him, I see that he was there after all and that I noticed him. I see him going to school, alone or among others of the older pupils, and I see him moving among them strange, solitary, and quiet, like a star, surrounded by an air of his own, living under laws of his own. No one loved him, no one was close to him, except his mother, and even with her he seemed to deal not as a child but as a grown man. The teachers left him alone as much as they could; he was a good pupil, but he made no effort to please anyone, and every so often we heard rumors of some word, some remark or retort, he was supposed to have given a teacher, which left nothing to be desired in blunt challenge or in irony.

I think back, with my eyes closed, and I see his image come up. Where was that? Yes, now it is back. It was in the street in front of our house. One day I saw him standing there with a notebook in his hand, and I saw that he was drawing. He was copying the old coat of arms with the bird over our front door. And I stood at a

window, hidden behind the curtain, and watched him, and saw with deep amazement his attentive, cool, bright face turned toward the coat of arms, the face of a man, of a scholar or an artist, superior and full of will, strangely bright and cool, with knowing eyes.

And again I see him. It was a little later, in the street; coming from school, we were all standing around a horse that had fallen. It lay, still harnessed to the shaft, in front of a farm wagon, snorting searchingly and piteously into the air with distended nostrils and bleeding from an invisible wound, so that at its side the white dust of the road was slowly soaking through dark. As I turned away from the sight, with a feeling of nausea, I saw Demian's face. He had not pushed his way forward; he stood at the very back, at ease and rather elegant, as was his way. His gaze seemed to be fixed on the horse's head and again had that deep, quiet, almost fanatical and yet passionless attentiveness. I had to look at him for a long time, and then, still far from being conscious of it, I felt something very peculiar. I saw Demian's face, and I saw not only that his was not a boy's face but a man's; I saw more, I believed I saw, or felt, that it was not a man's face either, but something else besides. It was as if there were something of a woman's face in it as well, and above all this face seemed to me, for a moment, not male or child-like, not old or young, but somehow a thousand years old, somehow timeless, stamped by other ages than the one we live in. Animals could look like that, or trees, or stars—I did not know that; I did not feel exactly what I am saying about it now as a grown man, but something like it. Perhaps he was handsome, perhaps I liked him, perhaps he was repugnant to me, that too could not be decided. All I saw was this: he was different from us, he was like an animal, or like a spirit, or like a picture; I do not know what he was like, but he was different, unimaginably different from all of us.

My memory tells me no more than that, and perhaps even this has partly been drawn from later impressions.

It was only when I was several years older that I at last came into closer contact with him again. Demian had not been confirmed in church with his own age group, as custom would have required, and at once rumors had again attached themselves to that too. It was said again at school that he was really a Jew, or no, a heathen, and others knew that he and his mother were without any religion at all or belonged to some fabulous, wicked sect. In connection with this I think I also heard the suspicion that he lived with his mother as with a lover. Presumably it was the case that he had been brought up until then without any denomination, but that this now gave reason to fear some disadvantage or other for his future. In any case his mother decided after all to let him take part in confirmation now, two years later than others of his age. So it came about that for months he was my classmate in confirmation lessons.

For a while I kept quite apart from him; I wanted no share in him; he was too surrounded for me by rumors and secrets; but above all I was bothered by the feeling of obligation that had remained in me since the affair with Kromer. And just then I had enough to do with secrets of my own. For me the confirmation lessons coincided with the time of decisive enlightenment in sexual matters, and despite my good will my interest in pious instruction was much impaired by it. The things the clergyman talked about lay far away from me in a quiet, holy unreality; they were perhaps quite beautiful and valuable, but not in the least urgent and exciting, and those other things were exactly that in the highest degree.

The more indifferent this state of mine made me to the lessons, the more my interest turned again toward Max Demian. Something seemed to bind us. I must follow this thread as pre-

cisely as possible. As far as I can recall, it began in a lesson early in the morning, when the lamp was still burning in the schoolroom. Our clerical teacher had come to speak of the story of Cain and Abel. I was paying hardly any attention; I was sleepy and scarcely listening. Then the pastor began, with raised voice, to speak urgently of the mark of Cain. At that moment I felt a kind of touch or reminder, and looking up I saw from the front rows Demian's face turned back toward me, with a bright, speaking eye whose expression could just as well have been mockery as earnestness. He looked at me only for a moment, and suddenly I was listening intently to the pastor's words, heard him speak of Cain and his mark, and felt deep within me a knowledge that it was not as he taught it, that you could look at it differently too, that it was open to criticism!

From that minute on there was a connection between Demian and me again. And strangely—hardly was this feeling of a certain belonging together there in my soul when I saw it carried over, as if by magic, into physical space as well. I did not know whether he could arrange it himself or whether it was pure chance—at that time I still firmly believed in chance—after a few days Demian had suddenly changed his seat in the religion lesson and was sitting right in front of me (I still remember how gladly, in the middle of the wretched poorhouse air of the overcrowded schoolroom in the morning, I breathed in the delicate, fresh smell of soap from the back of his neck!), and again after a few days he had changed again and was now sitting beside me, and there he stayed, the whole winter and the whole spring through.

The morning lessons had been entirely transformed. They were no longer sleepy and boring. I looked forward to them. Sometimes we both listened to the pastor with the greatest attention; a glance from my neighbor was enough to point me to a curious story, a strange saying. And another glance from him, a very par-

ticular one, was enough to remind me, to stir criticism and doubt in me.

Very often, though, we were bad pupils and heard nothing of the lesson. Demian was always well behaved toward teachers and classmates; I never saw him get up to schoolboy foolishness, he was never heard laughing out loud or chattering, he never earned a teacher's rebuke. But very quietly, and more with signs and glances than with whispered words, he knew how to let me take part in his own pursuits. Some of these were of a curious kind.

He told me, for instance, which of the pupils interested him and in what way he studied them. Some of them he knew very precisely. Before the lesson he said to me: "When I give you a sign with my thumb, then so-and-so will turn around and look at us, or scratch his neck, etc." Then during the lesson, when I had often almost stopped thinking about it, Max would suddenly turn his thumb toward me with a conspicuous gesture; I looked quickly toward the pupil in question and saw him every time, as if pulled on a wire, make the required gesture. I pestered Max to try it on the teacher too sometime, but he would not do it. But once, when I came into the lesson and told him I had not learned my work today and very much hoped the pastor would not call on me, he helped me. The pastor was looking for a pupil to recite a piece of the catechism, and his roving eye came to rest on my guilty face. Slowly he came over, stretched out his finger toward me, already had my name on his lips—then he suddenly became distracted or uneasy, tugged at his collar, stepped toward Demian, who was looking him firmly in the face, seemed about to ask him something, but surprisingly turned away again, coughed for a while, and then called on another pupil.

Only gradually, while these jokes greatly amused me, did I notice that my friend often played the same game with me. It happened that on the way to school I would suddenly have the feeling

that Demian was walking some way behind me, and when I turned around, sure enough, there he was.

“Can you actually make someone else think what you want him to?” I asked him.

He gave the information readily, calmly and matter-of-factly, in his grown-up way.

“No,” he said, “you can’t do that. You see, there’s no such thing as free will, even if the pastor pretends there is. Neither can the other person think what he wants, nor can I make him think what I want. But you can observe someone well, and then you can often say fairly exactly what he’s thinking or feeling, and then you can usually also foresee what he’s going to do the next moment. It’s quite simple, people just don’t know it. Of course it takes practice.

“Among butterflies and moths, for example, there are certain moths in which the females are much rarer than the males. The moths reproduce just like all animals: the male fertilizes the female, which then lays eggs. Now if you have a female of these moths—naturalists have often tried this—the male moths come flying to this female in the night, and from hours away! Hours away, imagine! For many kilometers all these males sense the one female in the area! People try to explain it, but it’s hard. It must be a kind of sense of smell or something like that, rather the way good hunting dogs can find and follow an imperceptible trail. You understand? Those are the kind of things nature is full of, and no one can explain them. But now I say: if the females of these moths were as common as the males, they simply wouldn’t have that fine nose! They have it only because they’ve trained themselves for it. When an animal or a human being directs all his attention and all his will toward a particular thing, then he attains it too. That’s all. And it’s exactly the same with what you mean. Look at someone closely enough, and you know more about him than he does himself.”

The word “mind reading” was on the tip of my tongue, and with it I could have reminded him of the scene with Kromer, which lay so far back. But this too was a strange thing between the two of us: never, ever did either he or I make the faintest allusion to the fact that several years before he had once intervened so seriously in my life. It was as if nothing had ever been between us before, or as if each of us were firmly counting on the other’s having forgotten it. Once or twice it even happened that we were walking down the street together and met Franz Kromer, but we exchanged no glance and said no word about him.

“But then how is it with the will?” I asked. “You say there’s no free will. But then you say again that you only need to direct your will firmly at something, and then you can reach your goal. That doesn’t fit! If I’m not master of my will, then I can’t direct it this way or that just as I please either.”

He clapped me on the shoulder. He always did that when I pleased him.

“Good that you ask!” he said, laughing. “You must always ask, you must always doubt. But the thing is very simple. If a moth like that, for instance, wanted to direct its will at a star or somewhere else, it couldn’t. Only—it doesn’t even try. It seeks only what has meaning and value for it, what it needs, what it absolutely has to have. And that’s exactly where it achieves the unbelievable—it develops a magical sixth sense that no animal but it possesses! People like us have more room to play, certainly, and more interests than an animal. But we too are bound within a relatively quite narrow circle and can’t go beyond it. I can fancy this and that, of course, imagine, say, that I absolutely want to get to the North Pole, or something of the kind, but I can carry it out and want it strongly enough only if the wish lies wholly within me, if my whole being is really filled with it. As soon as that’s the case, as soon as you try something that you’re commanded to do from within, then

it works, then you can harness your will like a good horse. If, for example, I were to make up my mind now that I want to bring it about that our pastor no longer wears glasses, it won't work. That's just playing around. But when, back in the fall, I got the firm will to be moved from my seat up front, it worked quite well. All at once there was someone there who came before me in the alphabet and who had been ill until then, and because someone had to make room for him, naturally I was the one who did, because my will was ready to seize the opportunity at once."

"Yes," I said, "it was very strange for me too at the time. From the moment we took an interest in each other, you kept moving closer and closer to me. But how was that? At first you didn't come and sit right next to me, you sat a few times in the bench in front of me first, didn't you? How did that come about?"

"It was like this: I didn't really know myself where I wanted to go when I longed to get away from my first seat. I only knew that I wanted to sit farther back. It was my will to come to you, but I hadn't become conscious of it yet. At the same time your own will was pulling along with it and helping me. Only when I was sitting there in front of you did it occur to me that my wish was only half fulfilled—I noticed that what I had really wanted was nothing other than to sit next to you."

"But no new boy came in that time."

"No, but that time I simply did what I wanted and sat down next to you without further ado. The boy I changed places with was only surprised and let me do it. And the pastor did notice once that there had been a change—in general, every time he has to deal with me, something secretly bothers him; you see, he knows that my name is Demian and that it isn't right for me, with my D, to be sitting way back there among the S's! But that doesn't get through to his consciousness, because my will is against it and because I keep preventing him. He notices every so often that

something isn't right, and looks at me and starts to puzzle over it, the good gentleman. But I have a simple remedy for that. Every time, I look him very, very firmly in the eyes. Almost everyone takes that badly. They all grow uneasy. If you want to get something from someone, and you unexpectedly look him very firmly in the eyes, and he doesn't grow uneasy at all, then give up! You'll get nothing from him, ever! But that's very rare. Actually I know of only one single person with whom it doesn't help me."

"Who is that?" I asked quickly.

He looked at me with the somewhat narrowed eyes he got when he was thinking. Then he looked away and gave no answer, and in spite of my violent curiosity I could not repeat the question.

But I believe he was speaking of his mother then.—He seemed to live very close to her, but he never spoke to me of her, never took me home with him. I hardly knew what his mother looked like.



At that time I sometimes made attempts to do as he did and to concentrate my will on something so hard that I would have to attain it. There were wishes in me that seemed urgent enough. But it came to nothing and did not work. I could not bring myself to talk to Demian about it. What I wished for I could not have confessed to him. And he did not ask, either.

My faith in matters of religion had meanwhile developed a number of gaps. Yet in my thinking, which was thoroughly influenced by Demian, I differed greatly from those of my classmates who could show a complete lack of belief. There were a few of these, and now and then they let fall remarks such as that it was ridiculous and unworthy of a human being to believe in a God, that stories like the one about the Trinity and the immaculate birth of

Jesus were simply laughable, and that it was a disgrace that people still went around peddling such stuff today. I did not think so at all. Even where I had doubts, I knew enough from the whole experience of my childhood of the reality of a pious life, such as my parents led, and knew that it was neither unworthy nor hypocritical. On the contrary, I had the deepest reverence for religious things, as before. Only Demian had accustomed me to look at the stories and articles of faith more freely, more personally, more playfully, more imaginatively, and to interpret them so; at least I always followed the interpretations he suggested to me gladly and with relish. Much, admittedly, was too harsh for me, such as the business about Cain. And once during confirmation lessons he startled me with a view that was, if possible, bolder still. The teacher had spoken of Golgotha. The biblical account of the Savior's suffering and death had made a deep impression on me from my earliest days; sometimes as a little boy, on Good Friday say, after my father had read the story of the Passion aloud, I had lived fervently and deeply moved in that sorrowfully beautiful, pale, ghostly, and yet tremendously living world, in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, and when I listened to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* the dark, mighty splendor of suffering of that mysterious world had flooded over me with every mystic shudder. Even today I find in this music, and in the *Actus tragicus*, the epitome of all poetry and all artistic expression.

Now at the end of that lesson Demian said to me thoughtfully: "There's something there, Sinclair, that I don't like. Read the story again and taste it on your tongue; there's something in it that tastes flat. I mean the business with the two thieves. Magnificent, the way the three crosses stand together on the hill! But then this sentimental little tract of a story about the good, honest thief! First he was a criminal and committed shameful deeds, God knows what all, and now he melts away and celebrates such tearful feasts

of reform and repentance! What sense does such repentance make two steps from the grave, I ask you? It's once again nothing but a real parson's tale, sugary and dishonest, larded with sentiment, and with a most edifying background. If you had to choose one of the two thieves for your friend today, or consider which of the two you could more readily trust, it certainly wouldn't be this tearful convert. No, it's the other one, he's a man and has character. He doesn't give a fig for a conversion, which in his position can be nothing but pretty talk anyway; he goes his way to the end and doesn't cravenly renounce the devil at the last moment, the devil who had to help him until then. He has character, and people of character tend to get short shrift in Bible history. Perhaps he's a descendant of Cain, too. Don't you think?"

I was very dismayed. Here in the story of the Crucifixion I had believed myself quite at home, and only now did I see how impersonally, with how little power of imagination and fancy, I had heard it and read it. Even so, Demian's new idea sounded fatal to me and threatened to overturn notions in me that I believed I had to hold on to. No, you could not treat everything and anything like that, the holiest things included.

As always, he noticed my resistance at once, even before I said anything.

"I know," he said, resigned, "it's the old story. Heaven forbid anyone should get serious! But I'll tell you something—: here is one of the points where you can see the defect in this religion very clearly. The thing is that this whole God of the Old and New Testaments is an excellent figure, certainly, but not what he's really supposed to represent. He is the good, the noble, the fatherly, the beautiful and also the lofty, the sentimental—quite right! But the world is made of other things too. And all that is simply ascribed to the devil, and this whole part of the world, this whole half, is suppressed and hushed up. Just as they praise God

as the father of all life but simply say not a word about the whole of sexual life, on which life after all depends, and declare it if they can to be the devil's work and sinful! I have nothing against worshipping this God Jehovah, not the least thing. But I think we ought to worship *everything* and hold it holy, the whole world, not just this artificially separated, official half! So then, alongside the service of God, we must also have a service of the devil. I would think that right. Or else one would have to create a God for oneself who includes the devil in himself as well, and before whom one doesn't have to shut one's eyes when the most natural things in the world happen."

Against his habit he had become almost vehement; right afterward, however, he smiled again and pressed me no further.

But in me these words struck the riddle of my whole boyhood, which I carried within me every hour and about which I had never said a word to anyone. What Demian had said there about God and the devil, about the divine, official world and the hushed-up, devilish one, was exactly my own idea, my own myth, the idea of the two worlds or halves of the world—the bright and the dark. The insight that my problem was a problem of all human beings, a problem of all life and thought, passed over me suddenly like a holy shadow, and fear and awe came over me as I saw and suddenly felt how deeply my most personal life and opinions shared in the eternal stream of the great ideas. The insight was not joyful, though somehow confirming and gladdening. It was hard and had a harsh taste, because there was in it a note of responsibility, of not being allowed to be a child anymore, of standing alone.

Revealing so deep a secret for the first time in my life, I told my companion about the idea of the "two worlds" that I had held since my earliest childhood days, and he saw at once that my deepest feelings thereby agreed with him and proved him right. But it was not his way to take advantage of such a thing. He listened with

deeper attention than he had ever given me, and looked me in the eyes until I had to turn mine away. For I saw again in his look that strange, animal timelessness, that unimaginable age.

“We’ll talk more about it another time,” he said considerately. “I see that you think more than you can tell anyone. But if that’s so, then you also know that you’ve never entirely lived what you thought, and that isn’t good. Only the thinking we live has any value. You knew that your ‘permitted world’ was only half the world, and you tried to suppress the second half from yourself, the way the pastors and teachers do. You won’t succeed! No one succeeds, once he has begun to think.”

It struck me deeply.

“But,” I almost shouted, “there just are things that are really and truly forbidden and ugly, you can’t deny that! And they are forbidden, and we have to renounce them. I know there’s murder and all possible vices, but am I supposed to go off and become a criminal just because they exist?”

“We won’t finish with it today,” Max soothed me. “You certainly shouldn’t kill anyone or rape and murder girls, no. But you aren’t yet at the point where you can see what ‘permitted’ and ‘forbidden’ really mean. You’ve only sensed one piece of the truth so far. The rest will come, you can count on it! For instance, for about a year now you’ve had an urge in you that’s stronger than all the others, and it’s considered ‘forbidden.’ The Greeks and many other peoples, on the contrary, made a deity of this urge and worshiped it in great festivals. So ‘forbidden’ isn’t anything eternal; it can change. Even today anyone may sleep with a woman as soon as he has been to the pastor with her and married her. Among other peoples it’s different, even today. That’s why each of us has to find out for himself what is permitted and what is forbidden—*forbidden* for him. You can go through life without ever doing anything *forbidden* and still be a great scoundrel. And just the same the other way

around.—Really it's only a question of laziness! Whoever is too lazy to think for himself and be his own judge simply submits to the prohibitions as they happen to be. He has it easy. Others feel commandments within themselves; things are forbidden to them that every man of honor does every day, and other things are permitted to them that are otherwise frowned upon. Each of us has to stand on his own."

He seemed suddenly to regret having said so much, and broke off. Even then I could understand with my feelings, to some extent, what he felt in doing so. For pleasantly and apparently offhandedly as he used to bring out his ideas, he could not abide for the life of him a conversation "just for the sake of talking," as he once said. But in me he sensed, alongside genuine interest, too much play, too much pleasure in clever chatter, or something of the kind; in short, a lack of complete earnestness.



As I read again the last words I have written—"complete earnestness"—another scene suddenly comes back to me, the most compelling one I lived through with Max Demian in those still half-childish times.

Our confirmation was approaching, and the last of the religious lessons dealt with Holy Communion. This was important to the pastor, and he took pains; something of consecration and solemn feeling could no doubt be sensed in these hours. But in just these last few hours of instruction my thoughts were bound up with something else, namely with the person of my friend. As I looked forward to confirmation, which was explained to us as our solemn reception into the community of the church, the thought forced itself on me irresistibly that for me the value of this half year or so of religious instruction lay not in what we had learned here, but in

Demian's nearness and influence. It was not into the church that I was now ready to be received, but into something quite different, into an order of thought and personality that must somehow exist on earth and of which I felt my friend to be the representative or messenger.

I tried to push this thought back; I was in earnest about experiencing the confirmation ceremony, in spite of everything, with a certain dignity, and this seemed to go poorly with my new thought. But do what I would, the thought was there, and it gradually joined itself in my mind to the thought of the church ceremony so near at hand; I was ready to celebrate it differently from the others; for me it was to mean reception into a world of thought such as I had come to know in Demian.

It was in those days that I once again had a lively argument with him; it was just before a lesson. My friend was buttoned up and took no pleasure in my talk, which was no doubt rather precocious and self-important.

"We talk too much," he said with unaccustomed earnestness. "Clever talk is worth nothing, nothing at all. It only takes you away from yourself. Getting away from yourself is a sin. You have to be able to crawl completely into yourself, like a tortoise."

Right after that we entered the schoolroom. The lesson began; I made an effort to pay attention, and Demian did not disturb me in it. After a while I began to feel something peculiar from the side where he sat beside me, an emptiness or a coolness or something of the sort, as if the seat had unexpectedly become empty. When the feeling began to grow oppressive, I turned around.

There I saw my friend sitting, upright and with good posture as usual. But all the same he looked quite different than usual, and something went out from him, something surrounded him, that I did not know. I thought he had his eyes closed, but saw that he was keeping them open. But they were not looking; they were not

seeing; they were fixed and turned inward or toward some great distance. He sat there perfectly motionless; he did not even seem to breathe; his mouth was as if carved out of wood or stone. His face was pale, uniformly pale, like stone, and his brown hair was the most living thing about him. His hands lay before him on the desk, lifeless and still like objects, like stones or fruit, pale and motionless, yet not limp, but like firm, good husks around a hidden, strong life.

The sight made me tremble. He is dead! I thought; I almost said it aloud. But I knew that he was not dead. My eyes clung spell-bound to his face, to this pale, stony mask, and I felt: this was Demian! The way he usually was, when he walked and talked with me, was only half a Demian, one who for the time being was playing a part, adapting himself, going along out of kindness. But the real Demian looked like this, like this one, so stony, ancient, animal, stonelike, beautiful and cold, dead and secretly full of unheard-of life. And around him this quiet emptiness, this ether and starry space, this lonely death!

“Now he has gone entirely into himself,” I felt, shuddering. Never had I been so alone. I had no share in him; he was out of my reach; he was farther from me than if he had been on the remotest island in the world.

I could hardly understand that no one but me saw it! Everyone ought to be looking this way, everyone ought to be shuddering! But no one paid any attention to him. He sat like a statue and, as I could not help thinking, strangely stiff like an idol; a fly settled on his forehead and walked slowly across his nose and lips—not a crease of his face twitched.

Where, where was he now? What was he thinking, what was he feeling? Was he in a heaven, in a hell?

It was not possible for me to ask him about it. When, at the end of the lesson, I saw him living and breathing again, when his eyes

met mine, he was as before. Where had he come from? Where had he been? He seemed tired. His face had color again, his hands moved again, but his brown hair was now without luster and as if weary.

In the following days I gave myself over several times in my bedroom to a new exercise: I sat bolt upright on a chair, made my eyes fixed, held myself completely motionless, and waited to see how long I could stand it and what I would feel. But I only got tired and had a violent itching in my eyelids.

Soon afterward came the confirmation, of which no important memories have stayed with me.

Now everything became different. Childhood fell into ruins around me. My parents looked at me with a certain embarrassment. My sisters had become complete strangers to me. A disenchantment falsified and faded the feelings and pleasures I was used to; the garden had no fragrance, the forest did not beckon, the world stood around me like a clearance sale of old things, flat and without charm; books were paper, music was noise. So the leaves fall around an autumn tree; it does not feel it; rain runs down it, or sun, or frost, and within it life slowly withdraws into the narrowest and innermost place. It does not die. It waits.

It had been decided that after the vacation I was to go to another school and for the first time be sent away from home. At times my mother came to me with particular tenderness, taking leave in advance, trying to conjure love, homesickness, and forgettability into my heart. Demian had gone away on a journey. I was alone.

Chapter Four: Beatrice

Without having seen my friend again, I traveled to St. at the end of the vacation. Both my parents came along and, with every possible care, handed me over to the protection of a boys' boardinghouse kept by one of the teachers at the Gymnasium. They would have frozen with horror had they known what sort of things they were now letting me wander into.

The question was still whether in time I could become a good son and a useful citizen, or whether my nature was pressing toward other paths. My last attempt to be happy in the shadow of my father's house and spirit had lasted a long time, had at times very nearly succeeded, and had in the end failed completely all the same.

The strange emptiness and isolation that I came to feel for the first time during the vacation after my confirmation (how well I was to know it later, that emptiness, that thin air!) did not pass so quickly. Leaving home went strangely easily; I was really ashamed that I was not sadder; my sisters cried for no reason; I could not. I was astonished at myself. I had always been a child of feeling, and at bottom a rather good child. Now I was completely changed. I behaved with total indifference toward the outer world and for days on end was busy with nothing but listening into myself and hearing the streams, the forbidden and dark streams, that rushed there underground in me. I had grown very fast, only in the last half year, and looked out into the world lanky, thin, and unfinished. The boy's charm had vanished from me entirely; I felt myself that no one could love me like this, and I in no way loved myself either.

I often longed greatly for Max Demian; but not seldom I hated him too and blamed him for the impoverishment of my life, which I bore like an ugly disease.

In our boardinghouse I was at first neither liked nor respected; they teased me at first, then drew back from me, and saw me as a sneak and an unpleasant oddball. I liked myself in the role, exaggerated it even further, and sulked my way into a solitude that from outside always looked like the most manly contempt for the world, while secretly I often succumbed to consuming fits of melancholy and despair. At school I could live off knowledge piled up at home; the class was somewhat behind my former one, and I fell into the habit of regarding the boys my own age, a little contemptuously, as children.

So it went on for a year and more; even the first visits home during vacations struck no new notes; I was glad to leave again.

It was the beginning of November. I had fallen into the habit of taking short, meditative walks in all weathers, during which I often enjoyed a kind of bliss, a bliss full of melancholy, contempt for the world, and contempt for myself. So one evening I was strolling in the damp, misty dusk through the outskirts of the town; the broad avenue of a public park lay completely deserted and invited me in; the path was thick with fallen leaves, in which I scuffed my feet with a dark voluptuousness; it smelled damp and bitter; the distant trees stepped out of the mists ghostly, huge, and shadowy.

At the end of the avenue I stopped, undecided, stared into the black leaves, and greedily breathed in the wet smell of decay and dying, which something in me answered and welcomed. Oh, how flat life tasted!

From a side path someone came along in a flapping cape coat; I was about to walk on when he called to me.

“Hello there, Sinclair!”

He came up; it was Alfons Beck, the oldest boy in our boarding-house. I was always glad to see him and had nothing against him except that he was always ironic and avuncular with me, as with all the younger ones. He was reputed to be strong as a bear, was supposed to have the master of our boardinghouse under his thumb, and was the hero of many a Gymnasium rumor.

"What are you doing here?" he called out affably, in the tone the older boys used when they occasionally condescended to one of us. "Well, shall we bet you're making up poems?"

"Wouldn't dream of it," I said gruffly, brushing him off.

He laughed, walked beside me, and chatted in a way I was no longer at all used to.

"You needn't be afraid, Sinclair, that I wouldn't understand that sort of thing. There's something to it, when you walk like this in the fog in the evening, with autumn thoughts and so on; you like to write poems then, I know. About dying nature, naturally, and lost youth, which resembles it. See Heinrich Heine."

"I'm not that sentimental," I defended myself.

"Well, let it go! But in this weather, it seems to me, a man does well to look for a quiet place where there's a glass of wine or something of the sort. Will you come along for a bit? I happen to be all alone.—Or would you rather not? I wouldn't want to play your tempter, my friend, in case you're a model boy."

Soon afterward we were sitting in a little tavern on the edge of town, drinking a dubious wine and clinking the thick glasses. At first I did not much like it; still, it was something new. But soon, unused to wine, I became very talkative. It was as if a window in me had been thrown open, and the world shone in—how long, how terribly long it had been since I had talked anything off my soul! I fell to letting my fancy run, and in the middle of it I treated him to the story of Cain and Abel!

Beck listened to me with pleasure—at last someone I was giving something to! He clapped me on the shoulder, he called me a devil of a fellow and a brilliant rascal, and my heart swelled high with the bliss of letting dammed-up needs to speak and confide pour out luxuriously, of being recognized and counting for something with an older boy. When he called me a brilliant rascal, the word ran into my soul like a sweet, strong wine. The world burned in new colors; thoughts flowed toward me from a hundred bold springs; spirit and fire blazed in me. We talked about teachers and classmates, and it seemed to me that we understood each other gloriously. We talked about the Greeks and about paganism, and Beck was determined to get me to confess to love affairs. There I could not join in. I had experienced nothing, nothing worth telling. And what I had felt, constructed, and imagined in myself sat burning in me, it is true, but even the wine had not loosened it or made it something I could tell. Beck knew much more about girls, and I listened to these tales feverishly. I learned unbelievable things there; things I had never thought possible stepped into flat reality and seemed a matter of course. Alfons Beck, at perhaps eighteen, had already gathered experience. Among other things, that girls were a funny business: all they wanted was to be flattered and courted, and that was all very nice, but not the real thing. With women there was more success to be hoped for. Women were much cleverer. Mrs. Jaggelt, for instance, who had the shop with the exercise books and pencils, you could talk to her, and the things that had already happened behind her counter would not go into any book.

I sat there deeply enchanted and dazed. Admittedly, I could not exactly have loved Mrs. Jaggelt—but all the same, it was unheard of. Springs seemed to be flowing there, at least for the older ones, of which I had never dreamed. There was a false ring to it, of course, and everything tasted smaller and more commonplace

than, in my opinion, love had any right to taste—but all the same, it was reality, it was life and adventure; here beside me sat someone who had experienced it, to whom it seemed a matter of course.

Our talk had come down a little, had lost something. I was no longer the brilliant little fellow either; I was now only a boy listening to a man. But even so—compared with what my life had been for months and months, this was delicious, this was paradise. Besides, it was, as I only gradually began to feel, forbidden, very forbidden, from sitting in a tavern to what we were talking about. I, at any rate, tasted spirit in it, tasted revolution.

I remember that night with the greatest clarity. When the two of us, late, walked home past dimly burning gas lamps in the cool, wet night, I was drunk for the first time. It was not pleasant, it was extremely painful, and yet even that had something to it, a charm, a sweetness; it was rebellion and orgy, it was life and spirit. Beck looked after me gallantly, though he scolded me bitterly as a raw beginner, and he brought me home, half carrying me, where he managed to smuggle us both in through a hall window that had been left open.

But with sobering up, to which I woke in pain after a very short, deathlike sleep, a senseless anguish came over me. I sat up in bed; I still had my day shirt on; my clothes and shoes lay strewn about the floor and smelled of tobacco and vomit; and between headache, nausea, and a raging thirst a picture came before my soul that I had not looked in the eye for a long time. I saw home and my parents' house, father and mother, sisters and garden, I saw my quiet bedroom at home, saw the school and the marketplace, saw Demian and the confirmation lessons—and all of it was bright, all of it was bathed in radiance, all of it was wonderful, divine, and pure, and all, all of it had—so I knew now—still belonged to me yesterday, only hours ago, had been waiting for me, and was now, only now, in this hour, sunk and cursed,

belonged to me no longer, cast me out, looked at me with disgust! Everything dear and intimate that I had ever received from my parents, back to the farthest, most golden gardens of childhood, every kiss of my mother's, every Christmas, every pious, bright Sunday morning at home, every flower in the garden—all of it was laid waste, all of it I had trampled underfoot! If constables had come now and bound me and led me to the gallows as the scum of the earth and a desecrator of the temple, I would have agreed, would have gone gladly, would have found it right and good.

So that was what I looked like inside! I, who went about despising the world! I, who was proud in spirit and thought Demian's thoughts along with him! That was what I looked like, scum and a filthy pig, drunk and soiled, loathsome and vile, a savage beast overwhelmed by hideous urges! That was what I looked like, I who came from those gardens where everything was purity, radiance, and sweet tenderness, I who had loved the music of Bach and beautiful poems! With disgust and indignation I could still hear my own laughter, a drunken, uncontrolled laughter that broke out in fits and starts, silly. That was I!

In spite of everything, though, it was almost a pleasure to suffer these torments. For so long I had crept along blind and dull, for so long my heart had sat silent and impoverished in a corner, that even these self-accusations, this horror, this whole hideous feeling of the soul was welcome. It was feeling, after all; flames were rising, after all; a heart was quivering in it, after all! Confused, I felt in the midst of misery something like liberation and spring.

Meanwhile, seen from outside, I was going steadily downhill. My first drunkenness was soon no longer the first. There was a great deal of drinking and horseplay at our school; I was one of the very youngest of those who took part, and soon I was no longer someone tolerated, a little one, but a ringleader and a star, a famous, daredevil frequenter of taverns. Once again I belonged

wholly to the dark world, to the devil, and in this world I was thought a splendid fellow.

And all the while I felt miserable. I lived on in a self-destructive orgy, and while among my companions I passed for a leader and a devil of a fellow, for a damnably dashing and witty young man, I had deep within me a frightened soul fluttering with anxiety. I still remember that once tears came to my eyes when, leaving a tavern on a Sunday morning, I saw children playing in the street, bright and merry, with freshly combed hair and in their Sunday clothes. And while, among the puddles of beer on the dirty tables of low taverns, I amused and often shocked my friends with unheard-of cynicisms, in my hidden heart I had reverence for everything I mocked, and inwardly I lay weeping on my knees before my soul, before my past, before my mother, before God.

That I never became one with my companions, that I remained lonely among them and could therefore suffer so, had a good reason. I was a tavern hero and a scoffer after the heart of the coarsest, I showed wit and showed courage in my ideas and speeches about teachers, school, parents, church—I could stand up to dirty jokes too, and even ventured one myself now and then—but I was never there when my companions went to girls; I was alone and full of a glowing longing for love, a hopeless longing, while by my talk I ought to have been a hardened rake. No one was more vulnerable, no one more bashful than I. And when every so often I saw the young girls of the town walking ahead of me, pretty and neat, bright and graceful, they were wonderful, pure dreams to me, a thousand times too good and pure for me. For a time I could not even go into Mrs. Jaggelt's stationery shop anymore, because I blushed when I looked at her and thought of what Alfons Beck had told me about her.

The more I knew myself to be constantly lonely and different even in my new company, the less I could get free of it. I really no

longer know whether the boozing and swaggering ever actually gave me pleasure; and I never got so used to drinking that I did not feel painful consequences every time. It was all like a compulsion. I did what I had to, because otherwise I had no idea at all what to do with myself. I was afraid of long solitude, afraid of the many tender, bashful, heartfelt moods to which I always felt inclined, afraid of the tender thoughts of love that came to me so often.

One thing I lacked most of all—a friend. There were two or three schoolmates I liked very much to see. But they belonged to the good boys, and my vices had long been no secret to anyone. They avoided me. To all of them I was a hopeless gambler whose ground was giving way under his feet. The teachers knew a great deal about me; I had been severely punished several times; my eventual expulsion from the school was something people were waiting for. I knew it myself; for a long time I had no longer been a good pupil but scraped and cheated my way laboriously through, with the feeling that this could not go on much longer.

There are many ways in which the god can make us lonely and lead us to ourselves. This was the way he took with me then. It was like a bad dream. Over filth and stickiness, over broken beer glasses and nights talked away in cynicism, I see myself crawling, a spellbound dreamer, restless and tormented, along an ugly and unclean road. There are dreams like that, in which, on the way to the princess, you get stuck in puddles of muck, in back alleys full of stench and refuse. So it was with me. In this not very refined way it was my lot to become lonely and to put between myself and childhood a locked gate of Eden with mercilessly shining guards. It was a beginning, an awakening of homesickness for myself.

I was still frightened and felt my nerves jump when, alarmed by letters from the master of my boardinghouse, my father appeared in St. for the first time and unexpectedly confronted me. When he came the second time, toward the end of that winter, I was already

hard and indifferent, let him scold, let him plead, let him remind me of my mother. In the end he was very angry and said that if I did not change, he would have me driven out of the school in shame and disgrace and put me in a reformatory. Let him! When he left that time, I felt sorry for him, but he had achieved nothing; he had found no way to reach me anymore, and for moments I felt that it served him right.—

What became of me was all the same to me. In my strange and not very pretty way, with my tavern sitting and my swaggering, I was at war with the world; this was my form of protest. I was ruining myself in the process, and at times the matter looked to me something like this: if the world had no use for people like me, if it had no better place, no higher tasks for them, then people like me would simply go to ruin. Let the world bear the loss.

The Christmas vacation that year was very cheerless. My mother was shocked when she saw me again. I had grown even more, and my gaunt face looked gray and ravaged, with slack features and inflamed rims around the eyes. The first fuzz of a mustache and the spectacles I had recently begun to wear made me even more of a stranger to her. My sisters shrank back and giggled. Everything was dismal. Dismal and bitter, the talk with my father in his study; dismal, greeting the few relatives; dismal above all, Christmas Eve. For as long as I had been alive that had been the great day in our house, the evening of festivity and love, of gratitude, of the renewal of the bond between my parents and me. This time everything was only oppressive and embarrassing. As always, my father read the Gospel of the shepherds in the field, “keeping watch over their flock,” as always my sisters stood radiant before their table of presents, but my father’s voice sounded joyless, and his face looked old and pinched, and my mother was sad, and to me everything was equally painful and unwelcome, presents and good wishes, Gospel and Christmas tree. The gingerbread smelled

sweet and gave off thick clouds of sweeter memories. The fir tree was fragrant and told of things that no longer were. I longed for the end of the evening and of the holidays.

It went on like this all winter. Only recently I had been sternly warned by the masters' council and threatened with expulsion. It would not last much longer. Well, for all I cared.

I had a special grudge against Max Demian. I had not seen him all this time. At the beginning of my school days in St. I had written to him twice but had received no answer; for that reason I had not visited him during the vacations either.



In the same park where I had run into Alfons Beck in the fall, it happened, in early spring, just as the thorn hedges were beginning to turn green, that a girl caught my eye. I had gone walking alone, full of disgusting thoughts and worries, for my health had grown bad, and besides I was constantly short of money, owed sums to classmates, had to invent necessary expenses so as to get something from home again, and had let bills for cigars and similar things run up in several shops. Not that these worries went very deep—if one of these days my time here came to an end and I drowned myself or was put in the reformatory, then these few trifles would not matter anymore either. But still I lived constantly eye to eye with such unlovely things, and suffered from it.

On that spring day in the park I met a young lady who attracted me very much. She was tall and slender, elegantly dressed, and had a clever, boyish face. I liked her at once; she belonged to the type I loved, and she began to occupy my fantasies. She was probably hardly much older than I, but much more finished, elegant and well defined, already almost entirely a lady, but with a touch of high spirits and boyishness in her face that I liked enormously.

I had never succeeded in approaching a girl I was in love with, and I did not succeed with this one either. But the impression was deeper than any before, and the influence of this infatuation on my life was tremendous.

Suddenly I again had an image standing before me, a lofty and revered image—ah, and no need, no urge in me was so deep and fierce as the wish to revere and worship! I gave her the name Beatrice, for I knew of Beatrice, without having read Dante, from an English painting of which I had kept a reproduction. There she was an English Pre-Raphaelite figure of a girl, very long-limbed and slender, with a narrow, long head and spiritualized hands and features. My beautiful young girl did not quite resemble her, though she too showed that slenderness and boyishness of form that I loved, and something of the spiritualized, ensouled quality of the face.

I never spoke a single word to Beatrice. Yet at that time she had the deepest influence on me. She set up her image before me, she opened a sanctuary to me, she made me a worshiper in a temple. From one day to the next I stayed away from the drinking bouts and nightly prowls. I could be alone again, I liked reading again, I liked going for walks again.

The sudden conversion earned me plenty of mockery. But now I had something to love and worship, I had an ideal again, life was full again of premonition and bright, mysterious twilight—that made me impervious. I was at home with myself again, if only as the slave and servant of a revered image.

I cannot think of that time without a certain emotion. Again I tried, with the most heartfelt effort, to build myself a “bright world” out of the ruins of a period of life that had collapsed; again I lived wholly in the single desire to put away the dark and evil in me and to dwell entirely in the light, on my knees before gods. Still, this present “bright world” was to some extent my own creation; it

was no longer a flight back to crawl under my mother's wing and into an irresponsible safety; it was a new service, invented and demanded by myself, with responsibility and self-discipline. The sexuality from which I suffered and from which I was forever and ever on the run was now to be transfigured in this holy fire into spirit and devotion. There must be nothing dark anymore, nothing ugly, no nights spent groaning, no pounding heart before lewd pictures, no listening at forbidden doors, no lustfulness. Instead of all that I set up my altar, with the image of Beatrice, and in consecrating myself to her I consecrated myself to the spirit and to the gods. The share of life that I withdrew from the dark powers I brought as a sacrifice to the bright ones. My goal was not pleasure but purity, not happiness but beauty and spirituality.

This cult of Beatrice changed my life completely. Only yesterday a precocious cynic, I was now a temple servant, with the aim of becoming a saint. I not only put away the wretched life I had grown used to, I tried to change everything, tried to bring purity, nobility, and dignity into everything, thought of it in eating and drinking, speech and dress. I began the morning with cold sponge baths, which at first I had to force myself to take. I behaved seriously and with dignity, carried myself upright, and made my walk slower and more dignified. To onlookers it may have looked comical—inside me it was nothing but divine service.

Of all the new exercises in which I sought expression for my new state of mind, one became important to me. I began to paint. It started with the fact that the English picture of Beatrice I owned did not resemble that girl enough. I wanted to try to paint her for myself. With an entirely new joy and hope I gathered together in my room—I had recently been given one of my own—fine paper, paints, and brushes, and set out palette, glass, porcelain dishes, pencils. The fine tempera colors in little tubes that I had bought delighted me. There was a fiery chromium oxide green among

them that I believe I can still see as it first lit up in the little white dish.

I began with caution. To paint a face was hard; I wanted to try other things first. I painted ornaments, flowers, and little imaginary landscapes, a tree by a chapel, a Roman bridge with cypresses. Sometimes I lost myself entirely in this playful activity, was as happy as a child with a box of paints. But at last I began to paint Beatrice.

Some sheets were complete failures and were thrown away. The more I tried to imagine the face of the girl I met now and again in the street, the less it would come. At last I gave that up and simply began to paint a face, following my fancy and the promptings that arose of themselves from what had been begun, from the paint and the brush. It was a dreamed face that came out of it, and I was not dissatisfied with it. Still, I went on with the attempt at once, and each new sheet spoke a little more clearly, came closer to the type, though by no means to reality.

More and more I grew used to drawing lines with a dreaming brush and filling surfaces that had no model, that arose out of playful groping, out of the unconscious. At last one day, almost unconsciously, I finished a face that spoke to me more strongly than the earlier ones. It was not that girl's face; it was long since no longer meant to be. It was something else, something unreal, but no less precious. It looked more like a youth's head than a girl's face; the hair was not pale blond like my pretty girl's, but brown with a reddish tinge; the chin was strong and firm, but the mouth red as a flower; the whole somewhat stiff and masklike, but impressive and full of secret life.

When I sat before the finished sheet, it made a strange impression on me. It seemed to me a kind of image of a god or a sacred mask, half male, half female, without age, as strong-willed as it was dreamy, as rigid as it was secretly alive. This face had something to

tell me; it belonged to me; it made demands on me. And it resembled someone, I did not know whom.

For a while now the portrait accompanied all my thoughts and shared my life. I kept it hidden in a drawer; no one was to get hold of it and be able to mock me with it. But as soon as I was alone in my little room, I took the picture out and kept company with it. In the evening I pinned it to the wallpaper over the bed facing me, looked at it until I fell asleep, and in the morning my first glance fell on it.

It was just at that time that I began to dream a great deal again, as I had always done as a child. It seemed to me I had had no dreams for years. Now they came back, an entirely new kind of images, and again and again the painted portrait appeared in them, living and speaking, friendly to me or hostile, sometimes twisted into a grimace and sometimes infinitely beautiful, harmonious, and noble.

And one morning, as I woke from such dreams, I suddenly recognized it. It looked at me so fabulously familiarly; it seemed to be calling my name. It seemed to know me, like a mother; it seemed to have been turned toward me since the beginning of time. With a pounding heart I stared at the sheet, at the thick brown hair, the half-womanly mouth, the strong forehead with the strange brightness (it had dried that way of its own accord), and nearer and nearer I felt in me the recognition, the finding again, the knowing.

I jumped out of bed, planted myself before the face, and looked at it from very close, straight into the wide-open, greenish, staring eyes, of which the right one stood a little higher than the other. And all at once this right eye twitched, twitched slightly and delicately, but clearly, and with this twitch I recognized the picture...

How could I have found it out so late! It was Demian's face.

Later I often compared the sheet with Demian's real features as I found them in my memory. They were not the same at all, though

similar. But all the same it was Demian.

Once, on an early summer evening, the sun shone slantwise and red through my window, which faced west. The room was growing dim. Then I had the idea of pinning the portrait of Beatrice, or of Demian, to the window frame and looking at it as the evening sun shone through. The face blurred without outlines, but the reddish-rimmed eyes, the brightness on the forehead, and the fiercely red mouth glowed deep and wild out of the surface. I sat facing it for a long time, even after it had gone out. And gradually a feeling came to me that this was not Beatrice and not Demian, but—myself. The picture did not resemble me—nor was it meant to, I felt—but it was what made up my life; it was my inner self, my fate or my daemon. That was how my friend would look, if I ever found one again. That was how my beloved would look, if I ever had one. That was how my life would be, and so my death; this was the sound and rhythm of my fate.

In those weeks I had begun some reading that made a deeper impression on me than anything I had read before. Even later I have seldom experienced books in that way, perhaps only Nietzsche. It was a volume of Novalis, with letters and aphorisms, many of which I did not understand and all of which nonetheless attracted me and spun themselves around me unspeakably. One of the sayings now came to my mind. I wrote it with my pen under the portrait: "Fate and temperament are names for one concept." That I had now understood.

The girl I called Beatrice I still met often. I felt no stirring anymore when I did, but always a gentle accord, an intuition full of feeling: you are bound up with me, but not you, only your image; you are a piece of my fate.



My longing for Max Demian grew powerful again. I knew nothing of him, nothing for years. A single time I had run into him during a vacation. I see now that I have suppressed this brief encounter in my notes, and I see that it was out of shame and vanity. I must make up for it.

So, once during a vacation, when I was strolling through my hometown with the blasé and always somewhat tired face of my tavern days, swinging my walking stick and looking into the old, unchanged, despised faces of the philistines, my former friend came toward me. Hardly had I seen him when I flinched. And quick as lightning I had to think of Franz Kromer. If only Demian had really forgotten that story! It was so unpleasant to have this obligation toward him—really a silly children’s story, but all the same an obligation...

He seemed to be waiting to see whether I would greet him, and when I did, as calmly as possible, he gave me his hand. That was his handshake again! So firm, warm, and yet cool, a man’s!

He looked attentively into my face and said: “You’ve grown up, Sinclair.” He himself seemed to me quite unchanged, as old, as young as ever.

He joined me; we took a walk and talked about nothing but trivial things, nothing about the old days. It occurred to me that I had once written to him several times without getting an answer. Oh, if only he had forgotten that too, those stupid, stupid letters! He said nothing about it.

At that time there was as yet no Beatrice and no portrait; I was still in the midst of my wild time. Outside the town I invited him to come into a tavern with me. He came along. Boastfully I ordered a bottle of wine, poured, clinked glasses with him, and showed myself very familiar with the drinking customs of students, and also emptied the first glass in one draft.

“You go to taverns a lot?” he asked me.

“Oh, yes,” I said lazily, “what else is there to do? In the end it’s still the most fun.”

“You think so? Could be. There’s something very fine about it, of course—intoxication, the Bacchic! But I find that with most people who sit in taverns a lot, that’s been entirely lost. It seems to me that running to taverns is something downright philistine. Yes, for one night, with burning torches, for a real, beautiful intoxication and frenzy! But again and again like this, one little glass after another, surely that isn’t the real thing? Can you picture Faust, say, sitting at a regulars’ table evening after evening?”

I drank and looked at him with hostility.

“Well, not everyone is a Faust,” I said curtly.

He looked at me, somewhat taken aback.

Then he laughed with his old freshness and superiority.

“Well, why argue about it? In any case, the life of a drunkard or a libertine is presumably more alive than that of the irreproachable citizen. And then—I read this once—the life of the libertine is one of the best preparations for the mystic. It’s always people like Saint Augustine, after all, who become seers. He too was a man of pleasure and a man about town before.”

I was suspicious and had no wish to let him lecture me. So I said in a blasé way: “Yes, each to his own taste! To be honest, I have no interest at all in becoming a seer or anything of the kind.”

Demian flashed a knowing look at me from his slightly narrowed eyes.

“My dear Sinclair,” he said slowly, “it wasn’t my intention to say anything unpleasant to you. Besides—to what end you are drinking your glasses of wine now, neither of us knows, after all. That in you which makes your life knows it already. It’s so good to know that: that inside us there is someone who knows everything, wants everything, does everything better than we ourselves.—But forgive me, I have to go home.”

We took a brief leave of each other. I stayed sitting there in a very bad mood, drank my bottle to the bottom, and found, when I wanted to leave, that Demian had already paid for it. That annoyed me even more.

My thoughts now stopped again at this little incident. They were full of Demian. And the words he had said in that inn outside the town came back up in my memory, strangely fresh and not lost.—“It’s so good to know that inside us there is someone who knows everything!”

I looked at the picture, which hung at the window and had gone completely dark. But I could still see the eyes glowing. That was Demian’s look. Or it was the look of the one who was inside me. The one who knows everything.

How I longed for Demian! I knew nothing of him; he was out of my reach. I knew only that he was presumably studying somewhere and that after he had finished at the Gymnasium his mother had left our town.

I searched out all my memories of Max Demian, back to my story with Kromer. How much of what he had once said to me rang out again, and all of it still had meaning today, was urgent, concerned me! Even what he had said at our last, so unpleasant meeting about the libertine and the saint suddenly stood bright before my soul. Wasn’t that exactly how it had gone with me? Hadn’t I lived in drunkenness and filth, in stupor and lostness, until with a new impulse of life the very opposite had come alive in me, the desire for purity, the longing for the holy?

So I went on following my memories; it had long since grown dark, and outside it was raining. In my memories, too, I heard it raining; it was the hour under the chestnut trees when he had once questioned me about Franz Kromer and guessed my first secrets. One after another they came up, talks on the way to school, the confirmation lessons. And at last my very first meeting

with Max Demian came back to me. What had it been about, now? I did not get it at once, but I took my time; I was completely absorbed in it. And now it came back, that too. We had been standing in front of our house after he had told me his opinion about Cain. Then he had spoken of the old, worn coat of arms that sat over our front door, in the keystone that widened from bottom to top. He had said that it interested him and that one ought to pay attention to such things.

That night I dreamed of Demian and of the coat of arms. It kept changing; Demian held it in his hands; often it was small and gray, often enormous and many-colored, but he explained to me that it was still always one and the same. In the end, though, he forced me to eat the coat of arms. When I had swallowed it, I felt with tremendous terror that the swallowed bird of the coat of arms was alive in me, filling me and beginning to devour me from within. Full of mortal fear, I started up and woke.

I came fully awake; it was the middle of the night, and I heard the rain coming into the room. I got up to close the window, and as I did so I stepped on something light-colored that lay on the floor. In the morning I found that it was my painted sheet. It lay on the floor in the wet and had buckled into ridges. I put it to dry between sheets of blotting paper in a heavy book. When I looked at it again the next day, it was dry. But it had changed. The red mouth had faded and grown somewhat narrower. It was now exactly Demian's mouth.

I now set about painting a new sheet, the bird of the coat of arms. What it actually looked like I no longer knew clearly, and some of it, as I knew, could no longer be made out well even from close up, since the thing was old and had often been painted over. The bird stood or sat on something, perhaps on a flower, or on a basket or nest, or on the top of a tree. I did not trouble about that and began with what I had a clear idea of. Out of an obscure need I

began at once with strong colors; the bird's head on my sheet was golden yellow. I went on with it as the mood took me and finished the thing in a few days.

Now it was a bird of prey, with a sharp, bold sparrow hawk's head. Half its body was stuck in a dark globe of the world, out of which it was working its way up as out of a giant egg, against a background of blue sky. The longer I looked at the sheet, the more it seemed to me to be the many-colored coat of arms as it had appeared in my dream.

It would not have been possible for me to write a letter to Demian, even if I had known where to send it. But I decided, in the same dreamlike intuition with which I did everything at that time, to send him the picture with the sparrow hawk, whether it reached him or not. I wrote nothing on it, not even my name, trimmed the edges carefully, bought a large paper envelope, and wrote my friend's former address on it. Then I sent it off.

An examination was approaching, and I had to work harder than usual for school. The teachers had taken me back into their good graces since I had suddenly changed my disgraceful ways. I was probably not a good pupil even now, but neither I nor anyone else still remembered that half a year before my expulsion from the school as a punishment had seemed likely to everyone.

My father now wrote to me again more in the tone of the old days, without reproaches or threats. But I had no urge to explain to him or anyone how the change in me had come about. It was a coincidence that this change agreed with the wishes of my parents and teachers. This change did not bring me to the others, brought me closer to no one, made me only lonelier. It was aimed somewhere, toward Demian, toward a distant fate. I did not know it myself, for I was standing in the middle of it. It had begun with Beatrice, but for some time now I had been living with my painted sheets and my thoughts of Demian in so entirely unreal a world

that I had lost even her completely from sight and from thought. I could not have said a word to anyone about my dreams, my expectations, my inner transformation, not even if I had wanted to.

But how could I have wanted to?

Chapter Five: The Bird Fights Its Way Out of the Egg

My painted dream bird was on its way, looking for my friend. In the strangest manner an answer came to me.

In my classroom, at my seat, I once found a note stuck in my book after the break between two lessons. It was folded exactly the way we usually folded the notes that classmates now and then passed to one another secretly during a lesson. I only wondered who could be sending me such a note, for I never had dealings of that kind with any classmate. I thought it would be an invitation to some schoolboy prank in which I would not take part anyway, and I put the note, unread, in the front of my book. Only during the lesson did it happen to come into my hand again.

I played with the paper, unfolded it absently, and found a few words written in it. I glanced at them, my eye caught on one word, I was startled, and I read, while my heart contracted before fate as if in a great cold:

“The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Whoever would be born must destroy a world. The bird flies to God. The name of the god is Abraxas.”

After reading these lines several times, I sank into deep reflection. There could be no doubt; it was an answer from Demian. No one could know of the bird but he and I. He had received my picture. He had understood and was helping me to interpret it. But how did it all fit together? And—this was what tormented me most

—what did Abraxas mean? I had never heard or read the word. “The name of the god is Abraxas!”

The hour went by without my hearing anything of the lesson. The next began, the last of the morning. It was given by a very young assistant master, who had only just come from the university and whom we liked for the very reason that he was so young and assumed no false dignity with us.

Under Dr. Follen’s guidance we were reading Herodotus. This reading was one of the few school subjects that interested me. But this time I was not with it. I had opened my book mechanically but did not follow the translating and stayed sunk in my thoughts. Besides, I had already found out several times how right it was, what Demian had told me back then in religion class. What you wanted strongly enough came about. If during a lesson I was very intensely occupied with thoughts of my own, I could be sure that the teacher would leave me in peace. Yes, if you were absent-minded or sleepy, then all at once he would be standing there: that had happened to me too. But if you were really thinking, really absorbed, then you were protected. And I had tried the business of the fixed look as well and found that it worked. Back in Demian’s time I had not succeeded with it; now I often felt that a great deal could be accomplished with looks and thoughts.

So I sat now, too, far away from Herodotus and from school. But then, without warning, the teacher’s voice struck into my consciousness like lightning, so that I woke up in terror. I heard his voice; he was standing close beside me; I thought he had already called my name. But he was not looking at me. I breathed again.

Then I heard his voice again. Aloud it said the word: “Abraxas.”

In an explanation whose beginning I had missed, Dr. Follen went on: “We must not imagine the views of those sects and mystical societies of antiquity as naive as they appear from the standpoint of a rationalist consideration. Antiquity did not know science

in our sense at all. Instead there was a preoccupation with philosophical and mystical truths that was very highly developed. Out of it there arose, in part, magic and mere play, which no doubt often led to fraud and crime as well. But magic too had a noble origin and profound ideas. So it is with the doctrine of Abraxas, which I cited a moment ago as an example. This name is mentioned in connection with Greek magic formulas and is often taken to be the name of some sorcerer's devil, such as savage peoples still have today. But it seems that Abraxas means a great deal more. We can think of the name as that of a deity whose symbolic task was to unite the divine and the devilish."

The little learned man went on speaking, finely and eagerly; no one was paying much attention, and since the name did not come up again, my attention soon sank back into myself.

"To unite the divine and the devilish," it echoed in me. Here I could take up a thread. This was familiar to me from my talks with Demian in the very last period of our friendship. Demian had said then that we did have a God whom we worshiped, but that he represented only an arbitrarily separated half of the world (it was the official, permitted, "bright" world). But one must be able to worship the whole world; so one must either have a God who was also a devil, or one must institute a service of the devil alongside the service of God.—And now, then, Abraxas was the god who was both God and devil.

For a time I went on searching along this trail with great zeal, without getting any further. I also combed through a whole library for Abraxas, without success. But my nature was never much disposed toward this kind of direct and conscious searching, in which you mostly find only truths that stay in your hand like stones.

The figure of Beatrice, with whom I had been so much and so deeply occupied for a certain time, now gradually sank down, or rather she slowly drew away from me, came nearer and nearer to

the horizon, and grew more shadowy, more distant, paler. She no longer satisfied the soul.

In the existence I now led, peculiarly spun in upon myself, like a sleepwalker, a new formation began to arise. The longing for life blossomed in me, or rather the longing for love, and the sexual urge, which for a while I had been able to dissolve into the worship of Beatrice, demanded new images and goals. Still no fulfillment came to meet me, and it was more impossible than ever for me to deceive my longing and expect anything from the girls with whom my classmates sought their happiness. I dreamed intensely again, and more by day than by night. Ideas, images, or wishes rose up in me and drew me away from the outer world, so that I had more real and lively dealings with these images in me, with these dreams or shadows, and lived with them more, than with my real surroundings.

One particular dream, or a play of fancy that kept coming back, became full of meaning for me. This dream, the most important and lasting of my life, went something like this: I was coming back to my father's house—over the front door the bird of the coat of arms shone yellow on a blue ground—in the house my mother came toward me—but when I came in and wanted to embrace her, it was not she but a figure I had never seen, tall and powerful, like Max Demian and my painted sheet, yet different, and in spite of its power wholly and entirely female. This figure drew me to itself and took me into a deep, shuddering embrace of love. Bliss and horror were mingled; the embrace was divine service, and it was just as much a crime. Too much memory of my mother, too much memory of my friend Demian haunted the figure that held me. Its embrace offended against every reverence and yet was blessedness. Often I woke from this dream with a deep feeling of happiness, often with mortal fear and the most tormented conscience, as if from a terrible sin.

Only gradually and unconsciously did a connection come about between this wholly inward image and the hint that had reached me from outside about the god to be sought. But then it grew closer and more intimate, and I began to sense that it was precisely in this dream of premonition that I was calling on Abraxas. Bliss and horror, man and woman mingled, the holiest and the most hideous woven into each other, deep guilt quivering through the tenderest innocence—such was my dream image of love, and such too was Abraxas. Love was no longer an animal, dark urge, as I had felt it in fear at the beginning, nor was it any longer piously spiritualized worship, as I had offered it to the image of Beatrice. It was both, both and a great deal more; it was angel's image and Satan, man and woman in one, human and animal, highest good and utmost evil. To live this seemed my destiny, to taste it my fate. I longed for it and was afraid of it; I dreamed after it and fled from it; but it was always there, always above me.

The following spring I was to leave the Gymnasium and go on to the university; I did not yet know where or to study what. A little mustache was growing on my lip; I was a grown man, and yet completely helpless and without goals. Only one thing was firm: the voice in me, the dream image. I felt the task of following this guidance blindly. But it came hard to me, and every day I rebelled. Perhaps I was mad, I thought not seldom; perhaps I was not like other people? But I could do everything that others did; with a little diligence and effort I could read Plato, could solve trigonometry problems or follow a chemical analysis. There was only one thing I could not do: tear out the goal darkly hidden in me and paint it up somewhere in front of me, as others did, who knew exactly that they wanted to be professors or judges, doctors or artists, how long it would take and what advantages it would have. That I could not do. Perhaps I too would become something of the kind someday, but how was I to know. Perhaps I would have to

search and go on searching, for years, and become nothing, and reach no goal. Perhaps I would reach a goal after all, but it would be an evil, dangerous, terrible one.

All I wanted was to try to live what was trying to come out of me of its own accord. Why was that so very hard?

I often made the attempt to paint the powerful figure of love from my dream. But it never succeeded. Had it succeeded, I would have sent the sheet to Demian. Where was he? I did not know. I knew only that he was bound to me. When would I see him again?

The friendly calm of those weeks and months of the Beatrice time was long past. Back then I had thought I had reached an island and found a peace. But it was always so—hardly had a state of mind grown dear to me, hardly had a dream done me good, when it was already withering and going blind. It was useless to mourn after it! I lived now in a fire of unappeased desire, of tense expectation, which often made me completely wild and crazed. I often saw the image of the beloved of my dreams before me with an overly vivid clarity, much more clearly than my own hand; I spoke to it, wept before it, cursed it. I called it mother and knelt before it in tears; I called it beloved and sensed its ripe, all-fulfilling kiss; I called it devil and whore, vampire and murderer. It lured me to the tenderest dreams of love and to wild shamelessness; nothing was too good and precious for it, nothing too bad and low.

That whole winter I lived through an inner storm that I can hardly describe. I had long been used to solitude; it did not oppress me; I lived with Demian, with the sparrow hawk, with the image of the great dream figure that was my fate and my beloved. That was enough to live in, for everything looked out into the great and the wide, and everything pointed to Abraxas. But none of these dreams, none of my thoughts obeyed me; I could summon none of them; to none could I give its colors as I liked. They came and took me; I was ruled by them; I was lived by them.

Outwardly, to be sure, I was secure. I had no fear of people; my classmates had learned that too and showed me a secret respect that often made me smile. If I wanted to, I could see through most of them very well and occasionally astonish them with it. Only I seldom or never wanted to. I was always occupied with myself, always with myself. And I longed ardently at last to live a little myself, to give something of myself out into the world, to enter into relation and struggle with it. Sometimes, when I ran through the streets in the evening and was too restless to go home before midnight, sometimes I thought then that now, right now, my beloved must meet me, walk past at the next corner, call to me from the next window. Sometimes, too, all this seemed unbearably tormenting to me, and I was prepared to take my own life someday.

I found a peculiar refuge at that time—through “chance,” as people say. But there are no such chances. When someone who needs something urgently finds what he needs, it is not chance that gives it to him; it is he himself; his own desire and need lead him to it.

Two or three times on my walks through the town I had heard organ music coming from a smaller church on the outskirts, without stopping. The next time I passed by, I heard it again and recognized that Bach was being played. I went to the door, which I found locked, and since the lane was almost empty of people, I sat down beside the church on a curbstone, wrapped my coat collar around me, and listened. It was not a large organ, but a good one, and it was strangely played, that is, well and almost like a virtuoso, but with a peculiar, highly personal expression of will and persistence that sounded like a prayer. I had the feeling: the man playing there knows that a treasure is locked up in this music, and he is wooing and knocking and laboring for this treasure as for his life. In the technical sense I do not understand very much about music,

but it is exactly this expression of the soul that I have understood instinctively from childhood on, and I have felt what is musical as something natural in me.

After that the musician played something modern as well; it might have been by Reger. The church was almost completely dark; only a very thin gleam of light came through the nearest window. I waited until the music was over and then walked up and down until I saw the organist come out. He was still a young man, though older than I, square-built and stocky, and he hurried away with powerful and as it were unwilling strides.

From then on I sometimes sat in front of the church in the evening hours, or walked up and down. Once I even found the door open and sat for half an hour in a pew, shivering and happy, while the organist played up above by scanty gaslight. In the music he played I heard not only him himself. It also seemed to me that everything he played was related, had a secret connection. Everything he played was believing, was devoted and pious, but not pious like churchgoers and pastors, but pious like pilgrims and beggars in the Middle Ages, pious with a reckless devotion to a feeling of the world that stood above all creeds. The masters before Bach were played diligently, and old Italians. And they all said the same thing, they all said what the musician too had in his soul: longing, the most intimate grasping of the world and the wildest parting from it again, a burning listening to one's own dark soul, the intoxication of devotion, and a deep curiosity about the marvelous.

Once when I secretly followed the organist after he left the church, I saw him go into a little tavern far out at the edge of town. I could not resist and went in after him. Here for the first time I saw him clearly. He sat at the table in a corner of the little tap-room, his black felt hat on his head, a glass of wine in front of him, and his face was just as I had expected. It was ugly and somewhat

wild, searching and obstinate, willful and full of will, and yet soft and childlike around the mouth. All the masculine and strong sat in his eyes and forehead; the lower part of his face was delicate and unfinished, uncontrolled and in part soft; the chin, full of indecision, stood out boyishly like a contradiction of forehead and gaze. I liked his dark brown eyes, full of pride and hostility.

I sat down opposite him without a word; there was no one else in the tavern. He glared at me as if he wanted to drive me away. But I held my ground and looked at him steadily until he growled crossly: "What are you staring at so damned sharply? Do you want something from me?"

"I don't want anything from you," I said. "But I've already had a great deal from you."

He knitted his brow.

"Oh, so you're a music enthusiast? I find it disgusting to go into raptures over music."

I did not let myself be put off.

"I've often listened to you, in the church out there," I said. "I don't mean to bother you, by the way. I thought I might perhaps find something with you, something special, I don't really know what. But better not listen to me at all! I can listen to you in the church, after all."

"But I always lock up."

"The other day you forgot, and I sat inside. Otherwise I stand outside or sit on the curbstone."

"Oh? You can come in another time, it's warmer. You'll just have to knock on the door. But hard, and not while I'm playing. Now go on—what were you going to say? You're a very young man, probably a schoolboy or a student. Are you a musician?"

"No. I like listening to music, but only the kind you play, music that's absolute, the kind where you feel that a man is shaking heaven and hell. I love music very much, I think because it's so lit-

tle moral. Everything else is moral, and I'm looking for something that isn't. I've only ever suffered from what's moral. I can't express myself well.—Do you know that there must be a God who is at once God and devil? There's supposed to have been one; I heard about it.”

The musician pushed his wide hat back a little and shook the dark hair from his big forehead. As he did, he looked at me piercingly and leaned his face toward me across the table.

Softly and tensely he asked: “What is the name of the god you're speaking of?”

“I'm afraid I know almost nothing about him, really only the name. His name is Abraxas.”

The musician looked around as if suspicious that someone might be listening to us. Then he moved up close to me and said in a whisper: “I thought so. Who are you?”

“I'm a pupil at the Gymnasium.”

“How do you know about Abraxas?”

“By chance.”

He struck the table so hard that his wineglass overflowed.

“Chance! Don't talk sh... rubbish, young man! You don't know about Abraxas by chance, remember that. I'll tell you more about him yet. I know a little about him.”

He fell silent and pushed his chair back. When I looked at him full of expectation, he made a face.

“Not here! Another time.—Here, take these!”

As he spoke he reached into the pocket of his coat, which he had not taken off, and pulled out a few roasted chestnuts, which he tossed to me.

I said nothing, took them, ate, and was very content.

“Well!” he whispered after a while. “How do you know about—Him?”

I did not hesitate to tell him.

"I was alone and at a loss," I said. "Then I thought of a friend from years ago who I believe knows a great deal. I had painted something, a bird coming out of a globe of the world. I sent it to him. After a while, when I no longer really believed in it, a piece of paper came into my hands, and on it was written: The bird fights its way out of the egg. The egg is the world. Whoever would be born must destroy a world. The bird flies to God. The name of the god is Abraxas."

He made no reply; we peeled our chestnuts and ate them with the wine.

"Shall we have another glass?" he asked.

"No, thank you. I don't like drinking."

He laughed, a little disappointed.

"As you like! It's different with me. I'll stay here a while. Off you go now!"

The next time I went with him after the organ music, he was not very communicative. In an old lane he led me up through an old, stately house and into a large, somewhat gloomy and neglected room, where apart from a piano nothing pointed to music, while a large bookcase and a desk gave the room something scholarly.

"How many books you have!" I said admiringly.

"Some of them are from the library of my father, whom I live with.—Yes, young man, I live with my father and mother, but I can't introduce you to them; the company I keep isn't held in high regard in this house. I'm a prodigal son, you know. My father is a fabulously honorable man, an important pastor and preacher in this town. And I, so that you know at once where you stand, am his gifted and promising young gentleman of a son, who has, however, gone off the rails and become somewhat mad. I was a theologian and left that worthy faculty shortly before my state examinations. Although I'm actually still in the trade, as far as my private studies

are concerned. What sort of gods people have thought up for themselves at one time or another is still extremely important and interesting to me. For the rest, I'm a musician now and, it seems, will soon get a small post as an organist. Then I'll be back with the church again, after all."

I looked along the backs of the books and found Greek, Latin, and Hebrew titles, as far as I could see in the weak light of the little table lamp. Meanwhile my acquaintance had lain down on the floor in the dark by the wall and was busy with something there.

"Come here," he called after a while, "now we'll practice a little philosophy, that is, keep our mouths shut, lie on our bellies, and think."

He struck a match and set paper and logs alight in the fireplace in front of which he lay. The flame shot up; he stoked and fed the fire with exquisite care. I lay down beside him on the threadbare rug. He stared into the fire, which drew me too, and we lay silent on our bellies for perhaps an hour in front of the flickering wood fire, watched it blaze and roar, sink down and writhe, flicker out and twitch, and at last brood on the hearth in a quiet, sunken glow.

"Fire worship wasn't the stupidest thing ever invented," he murmured to himself once. Otherwise neither of us said a word. With fixed eyes I hung on the fire, sank into dream and stillness, saw figures in the smoke and pictures in the ashes. Once I started. My companion threw a little piece of resin into the embers; a small, slender flame shot up, and in it I saw the bird with the yellow sparrow hawk's head. In the dying glow of the fireplace golden, glowing threads ran together into nets; letters and pictures appeared, memories of faces, of animals, of plants, of worms and snakes. When, waking, I looked across at the other man, he was staring into the ashes, his chin on his fists, rapt and fanatical.

"I have to go now," I said softly.

"Yes, then go. Goodbye!"

He did not get up, and since the lamp had been put out I had to grope my way with difficulty through the dark room and the dark passages and stairs out of the enchanted old house. In the street I stopped and looked up at the old house. No light was burning in any window. A small brass plate gleamed in the light of the gas lamp by the door.

“Pistorius, Senior Pastor,” I read on it.

Only at home, when I sat alone in my little room after supper, did it occur to me that I had learned nothing about Abraxas or anything else from Pistorius, that we had hardly exchanged ten words at all. But I was very content with my visit to him. And for the next time he had promised me a quite exquisite piece of old organ music, a passacaglia by Buxtehude.



Without my knowing it, the organist Pistorius had given me a first lesson when I lay with him on the floor in front of the fireplace of his dreary hermit's room. Gazing into the fire had done me good; it had strengthened and confirmed inclinations in me that I had always had but never really cultivated. Gradually some of this became clear to me.

Even as a small child I had now and again had a tendency to look at bizarre forms of nature, not observing them, but surrendered to their own magic, their tangled, deep language. Long roots of trees turned to wood, colored veins in stone, patches of oil floating on water, cracks in glass—all such things had at times held great magic for me, above all water and fire, smoke, clouds, dust, and most especially the circling spots of color I saw when I closed my eyes. In the days after my first visit to Pistorius this began to come back to me. For I noticed that a certain strengthening and joy, a heightening of my feeling of myself, which I had felt since

then, I owed solely to the long staring into the open fire. It was curiously soothing and enriching, doing that!

To the few experiences I had so far gained on the way toward my real goal in life, this new one was added: contemplating such forms, surrendering to irrational, tangled, strange forms of nature, produces in us a feeling of the agreement of our inner selves with the will that let these forms come into being—we soon feel the temptation to take them for our own whims, our own creations—we see the boundaries between ourselves and nature tremble and dissolve, and we come to know the mood in which we do not know whether the images on our retina come from outer impressions or from inner ones. Nowhere so simply and easily as in this exercise do we discover how much we are creators, how much our soul constantly takes part in the continual creation of the world. It is rather the same indivisible deity that is active in us and in nature, and if the outer world were to perish, any one of us would be capable of building it up again, for mountain and river, tree and leaf, root and blossom, everything formed in nature lies preformed in us, comes from the soul, whose essence is eternity, whose essence we do not know, but which makes itself felt to us mostly as the power of love and the power of creation.

Only many years later did I find this observation confirmed in a book, namely by Leonardo da Vinci, who speaks somewhere of how good and deeply stimulating it is to look at a wall that many people have spat on. Before those stains on the damp wall he felt the same thing that Pistorius and I felt before the fire.

At our next meeting the organist gave me an explanation.

“We always draw the boundaries of our personality much too narrowly! We count as part of our person only what we recognize as individually distinct, as deviating. But we consist of the whole stock of the world, each one of us, and just as our body carries within it the genealogical tables of evolution back to the fish and

much further still, so we have in our soul everything that has ever lived in human souls. All the gods and devils there have ever been, whether among the Greeks and Chinese or among the Zulus, all of them are in us too, are there, as possibilities, as wishes, as ways out. If mankind died out except for a single halfway gifted child who had received no instruction of any kind, this child would rediscover the whole course of things; it would be able to produce gods, demons, paradises, commandments and prohibitions, Old and New Testaments, everything, all over again."

"Yes, fine," I objected, "but then what does the value of the individual consist in? Why do we still strive, if we already have everything ready-made in us?"

"Stop!" Pistorius cried vehemently. "There's a great difference between merely carrying the world within you and knowing it as well! A madman can produce thoughts that recall Plato, and a pious little schoolboy at a Moravian school creatively thinks through deep mythological connections that occur among the Gnostics or in Zoroaster. But he knows nothing of it! He's a tree or a stone, at best an animal, as long as he doesn't know it. But then, when the first spark of this knowledge dawns, then he becomes a human being. You surely don't take all the two-legged creatures walking about in the street there for human beings just because they walk upright and carry their young for nine months? You can see how many of them are fish or sheep, worms or leeches, how many are ants, how many bees! Now, in each of them the possibilities for becoming human are there, but only as he senses them, as he even learns to make them partly conscious, do these possibilities belong to him."

Such, roughly, were our conversations. Seldom did they bring me anything entirely new, anything wholly surprising. But all of them, even the most banal, struck with soft, steady hammer blows on the same point in me; all of them helped to form me, all helped

to strip skins from me, to break eggshells, and out of each one I raised my head a little higher, a little more freely, until my yellow bird thrust its beautiful bird-of-prey head out of the shattered shell of the world.

We often told each other our dreams, too. Pistorius knew how to give them an interpretation. A curious example comes to mind just now. I had a dream in which I could fly, but in such a way that I was flung through the air, as it were, by a great surge of momentum that I was not master of. The feeling of this flight was exhilarating, but soon turned to fear when I saw myself carried off helplessly to dangerous heights. Then I made the redeeming discovery that I could regulate my rising and falling by holding my breath and letting it stream out.

To this Pistorius said: "The surge that makes you fly is our great human possession, which everyone has. It's the feeling of connection with the roots of all power, but you soon grow frightened by it! It's damned dangerous! That's why most people so gladly give up flying and prefer to walk on the sidewalk, guided by the regulations of the law. But not you. You go on flying, as befits a capable young fellow. And look, then you discover the strange thing, that you gradually become master of it, that to the great general force that sweeps you away there is added a fine, small force of your own, an organ, a rudder! That's splendid. Without it you'd go off into the air helplessly; that's what madmen do, for example. They're given deeper intuitions than the people on the sidewalk, but they have no key and no rudder for them, and they hurtle into the bottomless. But you, Sinclair, you're managing it! And how, if you please? You probably don't even know yet? You do it with a new organ, with a breath regulator. And now you can see how little 'personal' your soul is in its depths. For it doesn't invent this regulator! It isn't new! It's a loan; it has existed for thousands of years. It's the balancing organ of fish, the swim bladder. And in fact there

are still a few strange and conservative kinds of fish today in which the swim bladder is at the same time a kind of lung and can, under certain circumstances, really serve for breathing. So, exactly like the lung that you use in your dream as a flying bladder!”

He even brought me a volume of zoology and showed me the names and illustrations of those old-fashioned fish. And with a strange shudder I felt a function from early epochs of evolution come alive in me.

Chapter Six: Jacob Wrestling

What I learned about Abraxas from the strange musician Pistorius I cannot retell briefly. But the most important thing I learned from him was a further step on the way to myself. At that time, at about eighteen, I was an unusual young man, precocious in a hundred things and very backward and helpless in a hundred others. When I compared myself with others now and then, I had often been proud and conceited, but just as often downcast and humiliated. Often I had regarded myself as a genius, often as half mad. I did not manage to join in the pleasures and the life of the boys my age, and often I had consumed myself in reproaches and worries, as if I were hopelessly cut off from them, as if life were closed to me.

Pistorius, who was a full-grown eccentric himself, taught me to keep my courage and my respect for myself. By always finding something of value in my words, my dreams, my fantasies and thoughts, by always taking them seriously and discussing them seriously, he set me the example.

“You told me,” he said, “that you love music because it isn’t moral. All right. But then you yourself mustn’t be a moralist either! You mustn’t compare yourself with others, and if nature has made you a bat, you mustn’t try to make yourself an ostrich. You sometimes think yourself strange; you reproach yourself for going other ways than most people. You must unlearn that. Look into the fire, look into the clouds, and as soon as the intuitions come and the voices in your soul begin to speak, give yourself over to them, and whatever you do, don’t ask first whether it suits or pleases Mr. Teacher or Mr. Papa or some dear God or other! That’s how you

ruin yourself. That's how you end up on the sidewalk and become a fossil. My dear Sinclair, our god is called Abraxas, and he is God and he is Satan; he has the bright world and the dark world in him. Abraxas has no objection to any of your thoughts, to any of your dreams. Never forget that. But he leaves you once you have become irreproachable and normal. Then he leaves you and looks for a new pot to cook his thoughts in."

Of all my dreams that dark dream of love was the most faithful. Often, often I dreamed it: I stepped under the bird of the coat of arms into our old house, wanted to draw my mother to me, and instead of her held in my arms the tall woman, half male, half motherly, of whom I was afraid and to whom the most ardent longing nonetheless drew me. And this dream I could never tell my friend. This one I kept back when I had opened everything else to him. It was my corner, my secret, my refuge.

When I was depressed, I would ask Pistorius to play me old Buxtehude's passacaglia. In the dark church in the evening I would sit lost in this strange, heartfelt music, sunk in itself, listening to itself, which did me good every time and made me more ready to grant the voices of the soul their due.

Sometimes we stayed sitting in the church for a while after the organ had died away, and watched the faint light shine through the high, pointed windows and fade.

"It sounds funny," Pistorius said, "that I was once a theologian and almost became a pastor. But it was only a mistake of form I made there. To be a priest is my calling and my goal. Only I was content too soon and put myself at Jehovah's disposal before I knew Abraxas. Ah, every religion is beautiful. Religion is soul, no matter whether you take a Christian Communion or make a pilgrimage to Mecca."

"In that case," I said, "you could really have become a pastor after all."

"No, Sinclair, no. I'd have had to lie. Our religion is practiced as though it weren't one. It acts as though it were a work of the intellect. I could be a Catholic, perhaps, if need be, but a Protestant priest—no! The few real believers—I know some—like to hold to the literal; I couldn't tell them, for instance, that for me Christ isn't a person but a hero, a myth, a tremendous shadow picture in which mankind sees itself painted on the wall of eternity. And the others, who come to church to hear a clever word, to fulfill a duty, so as not to miss anything and so on, well, what should I have said to them? Convert them, you think? But I don't want that at all. The priest doesn't want to convert; he wants only to live among believers, among his own kind, and to be the bearer and expression of the feeling out of which we make our gods."

He broke off. Then he went on: "Our new faith, for which we now choose the name of Abraxas, is beautiful, my dear friend. It's the best thing we have. But it's still an infant! Its wings haven't grown yet. Ah, a solitary religion, that isn't the real thing yet. It has to become communal; it must have cult and intoxication, festivals and mysteries..."

He mused and sank into himself.

"Can't one celebrate mysteries alone too, or in the smallest circle?" I asked hesitantly.

"One can," he nodded. "I've been celebrating them for a long time. I've performed rites for which I'd have to serve years in the penitentiary if anyone knew about them. But I know it isn't the right thing yet."

Suddenly he slapped me on the shoulder so that I jumped. "My boy," he said urgently, "you have mysteries too. I know you must have dreams you don't tell me. I don't want to know them. But I tell you: live them, these dreams, play them out, build altars to them! It isn't perfection yet, but it is a way. Whether one day, you and I and a few others, we will renew the world remains to be seen. But

inside ourselves we have to renew it every day, or else there's nothing to us. Think about that! You're eighteen years old, Sinclair; you don't run after streetwalkers; you must have dreams of love, wishes of love. Perhaps they're of such a kind that you're afraid of them. Don't be afraid! They're the best thing you have! You can believe me. I lost a great deal by doing violence to my dreams of love when I was your age. You mustn't do that. Once you know about Abraxas, you mustn't do that anymore. You mustn't fear anything or consider anything forbidden that the soul in us desires."

Startled, I objected: "But you can't do everything that comes into your head! You can't kill a person because you find him repugnant."

He moved closer to me.

"Under certain circumstances you can do that too. Only it's usually a mistake. And I don't mean that you should simply do everything that crosses your mind. No, but you shouldn't make these ideas, which have their good meaning, harmful by driving them away and moralizing at them. Instead of nailing yourself or someone else to a cross, you can drink wine from a chalice with solemn thoughts and think of the mystery of the sacrifice as you do. Even without such acts, you can treat your urges and so-called temptations with respect and love. Then they show their meaning, and they all have meaning.—The next time something really wild or sinful occurs to you, Sinclair, if you'd like to kill someone or commit some gigantic obscenity, then think for a moment that it's Abraxas fantasizing in you like that! The person you want to kill is never, after all, Mr. So-and-so; he's surely only a disguise. When we hate a person, we hate something in his image that sits in ourselves. What isn't in ourselves doesn't stir us up."

Pistorius had never said anything to me that struck me so deeply in my most secret place. I could not answer. But what had touched me most strongly and most strangely was the way this

counsel chimed with words of Demian's that I had carried within me for years and years. They knew nothing of each other, and both told me the same thing.

"The things we see," Pistorius said softly, "are the same things that are in us. There is no reality except the one we have in us. That's why most people live so unreally: because they take the pictures outside for the real thing and never let their own world inside them get a word in. You can be happy that way. But once you know the other, you no longer have the choice of going the way most people go. Sinclair, the way of most people is easy; ours is hard.—Let's go."

A few days later, after I had waited for him in vain twice, I came upon him late in the evening in the street as he came blowing around a corner, alone in the cold night wind, stumbling and completely drunk. I did not want to call out to him. He went past me without seeing me and stared ahead with glowing and lonely eyes, as if he were following a dark call from the unknown. I followed him the length of a street; he drifted along as if pulled on an invisible wire, with a fanatical and yet dissolved gait, like a ghost. Sadly I went back home, to my unredeemed dreams.

"So that's how he renews the world in himself!" I thought, and felt in that same moment that this was a low and moralizing thought. What did I know of his dreams? Perhaps in his drunkenness he was going a surer way than I in my anxiety.



During the breaks between lessons I had sometimes noticed that a classmate I had never paid attention to was seeking my company. He was a small, weak-looking, slight youth with thin, reddish-blond hair, who had something of his own in his look and behavior. One evening, when I was coming home, he was lying in wait for me

in the lane, let me pass him, then ran after me again and stopped in front of our front door.

“Do you want something from me?” I asked.

“I’d just like to talk to you once,” he said shyly. “Be so kind as to walk a few steps with me.”

I went with him and sensed that he was deeply agitated and full of expectation. His hands were trembling.

“Are you a spiritualist?” he asked quite suddenly.

“No, Knauer,” I said, laughing. “Not in the least. What gives you an idea like that?”

“But you’re a theosophist?”

“Not that either.”

“Oh, don’t be so secretive! I can feel quite well that there’s something special about you. You have it in your eyes. I’m sure you have dealings with spirits.—I’m not asking out of curiosity, Sinclair, no! I’m a seeker myself, you know, and I’m so alone.”

“Go on and tell me!” I encouraged him. “I don’t know anything at all about spirits; I live in my dreams, and you’ve sensed that. Other people live in dreams too, but not in their own; that’s the difference.”

“Yes, perhaps that’s how it is,” he whispered. “It all depends on what kind of dreams they are that you live in.—Have you ever heard of white magic?”

I had to say no.

“That’s when you learn to master yourself. You can become immortal, and work magic too. Have you never done exercises like that?”

When I asked curiously about these exercises, he was mysterious at first, until I turned to go; then he brought it all out.

“For example, when I want to fall asleep or to concentrate, I do one of these exercises. I think of something, for instance a word or a name, or a geometric figure. Then I think it into myself as hard as

I can; I try to picture it inside my head until I feel that it's in there. Then I think it into my throat, and so on, until I'm completely filled with it. Then I'm quite firm, and nothing can upset me anymore."

I understood more or less what he meant. But I sensed clearly that he had something else on his mind; he was strangely agitated and hurried. I tried to make it easy for him to ask, and soon enough he came out with his real concern.

"You're abstinent too, aren't you?" he asked me anxiously.

"What do you mean? Do you mean sex?"

"Yes, yes. I've been abstinent for two years now, since I learned about the doctrine. Before that I practiced a vice, you know what I mean.—So you've never been with a woman?"

"No," I said. "I haven't found the right one."

"But if you found the one you thought was the right one, then you would sleep with her?"

"Yes, of course.—If she has no objection," I said with a little mockery.

"Oh, but then you're on the wrong path! The inner powers can be developed only if you remain completely abstinent. I've done it, for two years. Two years and a little more than a month! It's so hard! Sometimes I can hardly stand it anymore."

"Listen, Knauer, I don't think abstinence is so terribly important."

"I know," he protested, "everyone says that. But I didn't expect it from you. Whoever wants to go the higher spiritual way must stay pure, absolutely!"

"Well, then do it! But I don't understand why someone who suppresses his sex should be 'purer' than anyone else. Or can you shut sex out of all your thoughts and dreams too?"

He looked at me in despair.

"No, that's just it! Lord God, and yet it has to be. At night I have dreams I couldn't even tell myself! Terrible dreams, I tell you!"

I remembered what Pistorius had said to me. But however much I felt his words to be right, I could not pass them on; I could not give advice that did not come from my own experience and that I did not yet feel equal to following myself. I fell silent and felt humiliated that someone was seeking advice from me when I had none to give.

"I've tried everything!" Knauer wailed beside me. "I've done whatever can be done, with cold water, with snow, with gymnastics and running, but nothing helps. Every night I wake up from dreams I mustn't even think about. And the horrible thing is: because of it I'm gradually losing everything I had learned in spiritual things. I almost never manage anymore to concentrate or put myself to sleep; often I lie awake the whole night. I won't be able to stand it much longer. If in the end I can't carry the fight through after all, if I give in and make myself unclean again, then I'm worse than all the others who never fought at all. You understand that, don't you?"

I nodded but could say nothing to it. He was beginning to bore me, and I was frightened at myself that his obvious distress and despair made no deeper impression on me. I felt only: I can't help you.

"So you have nothing at all for me?" he said at last, exhausted and sad. "Nothing at all? There must be a way! How do you do it, then?"

"I can't tell you anything, Knauer. People can't help one another there. No one helped me either. You have to look into yourself, and then you must do what really comes out of your nature. There is nothing else. If you can't find yourself, then you won't find any spirits either, I think."

Disappointed and suddenly gone mute, the little fellow looked at me. Then his look blazed up in sudden spite; he made a face at me and shouted furiously: "Ah, you're a fine saint! You have your

vice too, I know it! You act like a sage, and secretly you're stuck in the same filth as I am and everyone! You're a pig, a pig, like me. We're all pigs!"

I went off and left him standing there. He took two or three steps after me, then fell back, turned around, and ran off. I felt sick from a feeling of pity and disgust, and I could not get free of the feeling until, at home in my little room, I set my few pictures up around me and gave myself over with the most longing intensity to my own dreams. At once my dream came back, of the front door and the coat of arms, of my mother and the strange woman, and I saw the woman's features so overly distinctly that I began to draw her picture that same evening.

When this drawing was finished after a few days, brushed in, as if unconsciously, in dreamlike quarter hours, I hung it on my wall in the evening, moved my study lamp in front of it, and stood before it as before a spirit with whom I had to wrestle to the end. It was a face like the earlier one, like my friend Demian, in some features like myself as well. One eye stood conspicuously higher than the other; the gaze went out over me in absorbed rigidity, full of fate.

I stood in front of it and grew cold down into my chest from inner strain. I questioned the picture, I accused it, I caressed it, I prayed to it; I called it mother, I called it beloved, called it whore and harlot, called it Abraxas. In between, words of Pistorius's—or of Demian's?—came to me; I could not remember when they had been spoken, but I thought I heard them again. They were words about Jacob wrestling with the angel of God, and the "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

The painted face in the lamplight changed with every invocation. It grew bright and shining, grew black and gloomy, closed sallow lids over dead eyes, opened them again and flashed glowing looks; it was woman, was man, was girl, was a little child, an ani-

mal, blurred into a smudge, grew large and clear again. At last, following a strong inner call, I closed my eyes and now saw the picture within me, stronger and more powerful. I wanted to kneel down before it, but it was so deep inside me that I could no longer separate it from myself, as if it had become nothing but me.

Then I heard a dark, heavy roaring as of a spring storm and trembled with an indescribably new feeling of fear and experience. Stars flashed up before me and went out; memories back to my first, most forgotten childhood, yes, back into previous existences and early stages of becoming, streamed past me in a throng. But the memories, which seemed to repeat my whole life to me down to its most secret places, did not stop with yesterday and today; they went on, mirrored the future, tore me away from today and into new forms of life whose images were tremendously bright and dazzling, but none of which I could properly remember later.

In the night I woke from deep sleep; I was in my clothes and lying across the bed. I lit a light, felt that I had to remember something important, knew nothing anymore of the hours before. I lit a light; memory came gradually. I looked for the picture; it no longer hung on the wall, nor did it lie on the table. Then I seemed to recall dimly that I had burned it. Or had it been a dream that I had burned it in my hands and eaten the ashes?

A great, twitching restlessness drove me. I put on my hat and went through the house and down the lane as if under compulsion; I ran and ran through streets and across squares as if blown by a storm, listened outside my friend's dark church, searched and searched in a dark urge without knowing for what. I came through a suburb where there were brothels; here and there a light was still burning. Farther out lay new buildings and heaps of bricks, partly covered with gray snow. As I drifted through this wasteland like a sleepwalker under some alien pressure, I remembered the new building in my hometown into which my tormentor Kromer

had once drawn me for our first reckoning. A similar building lay before me here in the gray night, yawning at me with a black doorway. It drew me in; I wanted to avoid it and stumbled over sand and rubble; the urge was stronger; I had to go in.

Over boards and broken bricks I staggered into the desolate space; it smelled dismally of damp cold and stones. A heap of sand lay there, a pale gray patch; otherwise everything was dark.

Then a horrified voice called out to me: "For God's sake, Sinclair, where did you come from?"

And beside me someone rose up out of the darkness, a small, thin fellow, like a ghost, and while my hair was still standing on end I recognized my schoolmate Knauer.

"How did you get here?" he asked, as if crazed with agitation. "How could you find me?"

I did not understand.

"I wasn't looking for you," I said, dazed; every word cost me effort and came laboriously over dead, heavy lips that seemed frozen.

He stared at me.

"Not looking for me?"

"No. Something drew me here. Did you call me? You must have called me. What are you doing here? It's night."

He threw his thin arms around me convulsively.

"Yes, night. It must be morning soon. Oh, Sinclair, that you haven't forgotten me! Can you forgive me?"

"For what?"

"Oh, I was so ugly!"

Only now did I remember our conversation. Had that been four or five days ago? It seemed to me a lifetime had passed since. But now I suddenly knew everything. Not only what had happened between us, but also why I had come here and what Knauer had meant to do out here.

“So you meant to take your life, Knauer?”

He shuddered with cold and with fear.

“Yes, I meant to. I don’t know whether I could have. I wanted to wait until it was morning.”

I drew him out into the open. The first horizontal streaks of daylight glimmered unspeakably cold and cheerless in the gray air.

I led the boy a little way by the arm. Something spoke out of me: “Now you go home and say nothing to anyone! You went the wrong way, the wrong way! And we aren’t pigs, as you think. We are human beings. We make gods and wrestle with them, and they bless us.”

In silence we walked on and parted. When I got home it was day.



The best thing that time in St. still brought me was the hours with Pistorius at the organ or in front of the fire. We read a Greek text about Abraxas together; he read me passages from a translation of the Vedas and taught me to speak the sacred “Om.” Yet it was not this learning that advanced me inwardly, but rather the opposite. What did me good was finding my way forward within myself, the growing trust in my own dreams, thoughts, and intuitions, and the growing knowledge of the power I carried within me.

With Pistorius I was in tune in every way. I needed only to think of him strongly, and I was sure that he or a greeting from him would come to me. I could ask him something, just as with Demian, without his being there himself: I needed only to picture him firmly and direct my questions to him as intense thoughts. Then all the power of soul that had gone into the question returned to me as an answer. Only it was not the person of Pistorius that I pictured, nor that of Max Demian, but it was the

image I had dreamed and painted, the man-woman dream image of my daemon, that I had to invoke. It lived now no longer only in my dreams, and no longer painted on paper, but in me, as an image of desire and a heightening of myself.

Peculiar and sometimes comical was the relationship into which the failed suicide Knauer had entered with me. Since the night when I had been sent to him, he clung to me like a faithful servant or a dog, tried to tie his life to mine, and followed me blindly. He came to me with the strangest questions and wishes, wanted to see ghosts, wanted to learn the Kabbalah, and did not believe me when I assured him that I understood nothing of all these things. He credited me with every power. But the strange thing was that he often came to me with his peculiar and stupid questions just when some knot in me needed untying, and that his whimsical notions and requests often gave me the cue and the impulse for the solution. He was often a nuisance to me and was sent away imperiously, but still I felt: he too had been sent to me; from him too what I gave him came back to me doubled; he too was a guide to me, or at least a way. The crazy books and writings he brought me, in which he sought his salvation, taught me more than I could see at the moment.

This Knauer later slipped away from my path without my noticing. With him no reckoning was necessary. But with Pistorius it was. With this friend I went through one more peculiar experience toward the end of my school days in St.

Even harmless people are hardly spared coming into conflict once or several times in their lives with the fine virtues of filial piety and gratitude. Everyone must at some point take the step that separates him from his father, from his teachers; everyone must feel something of the hardness of solitude, even if most people can bear little of it and soon creep back under shelter again.—From my parents and their world, the “bright” world of my beauti-

ful childhood, I had not parted in violent struggle, but had slowly and almost imperceptibly grown more distant from them and become more of a stranger. I was sorry about it; it often gave me bitter hours on my visits home; but it did not go to my heart; it could be borne.

But where we have offered love and reverence not out of habit but out of our very own impulse, where with our very own hearts we have been disciples and friends—there it is a bitter and terrible moment when we suddenly think we recognize that the guiding current in us means to lead us away from the one we love. Then every thought that rejects the friend and teacher turns its poisoned sting against our own heart; then every blow of defense strikes our own face. Then, for one who believed he carried a valid morality within himself, the names “faithlessness” and “ingratitude” rise up like shameful catcalls and brands; then the frightened heart flees anxiously back into the dear valleys of the virtues of childhood and cannot believe that this break too must be made, that this bond too must be cut.

Slowly, over time, a feeling in me had turned against acknowledging my friend Pistorius so unconditionally as my guide. What I had lived through in the most important months of my youth had been my friendship with him, his advice, his comfort, his nearness. Through him God had spoken to me. From his mouth my dreams had come back to me, clarified and interpreted. He had given me the courage to be myself.—Ah, and now I felt resistance to him slowly growing. I heard too much instruction in his words; I felt that he understood only one part of me fully.

There was no quarrel, no scene between us, no break, and not even a reckoning. I said only a single word to him, a harmless one really—but it was all the same the moment in which an illusion between us fell apart into colored shards.

The foreboding had been weighing on me for a while; it became a distinct feeling one Sunday in his old scholar's room. We were lying on the floor in front of the fire, and he was speaking of mysteries and forms of religion that he studied, that he pondered, and whose possible future occupied him. But to me all this seemed more curious and interesting than vital; what came across to me from it sounded like erudition, like weary searching among the ruins of former worlds. And all at once I felt an aversion to this whole manner, to this cult of mythologies, to this mosaic game with handed-down forms of belief.

"Pistorius," I said suddenly, with a malice that broke out of me, surprising and frightening even me, "you ought to tell me a dream again sometime, a real dream that you've had at night. What you're talking about there is so—so damned antiquarian!"

He had never heard me talk like that, and in the same moment I myself felt, with a flash of shame and fright, that the arrow I had shot at him, which struck him in the heart, had been taken from his own armory—that I was now maliciously throwing back at him, in pointed form, self-reproaches I had occasionally heard him utter in an ironic tone.

He felt it instantly, and he fell silent at once. I looked at him with fear in my heart, and saw him turn terribly pale.

After a long, heavy pause he put fresh wood on the fire and said quietly: "You're quite right, Sinclair. You're a clever fellow. I'll spare you the antiquarian stuff."

He spoke very calmly, but I could hear the pain of the wound well enough. What had I done!

Tears were close; I wanted to turn to him warmly, wanted to ask his forgiveness, to assure him of my love, my tender gratitude. Touching words occurred to me—but I could not say them. I stayed lying there, looked into the fire, and said nothing. And he said nothing either, and so we lay there, and the fire burned down

and sank together, and with every fading flame I felt something beautiful and intimate glow out and fly away that could not come back.

"I'm afraid you misunderstand me," I said at last, very strained, in a dry, hoarse voice. The stupid, senseless words passed my lips as if mechanically, as though I were reading aloud from a newspaper serial.

"I understand you quite correctly," Pistorius said softly. "You're right, after all." He waited. Then he went on slowly: "As far as one person can be right against another."

No, no, something cried in me, I am wrong!—but I could say nothing. I knew that with my one little word I had pointed him to an essential weakness, to his distress and his wound. I had touched the point where he had to mistrust himself. His ideal was "antiquarian"; he was a seeker turned backward; he was a romantic. And suddenly I felt deeply: precisely what Pistorius had been to me and had given me, he could not be and give to himself. He had led me along a path that must go beyond him too, the guide, and leave him behind.

God knows how such a word comes about! I had not meant it badly at all, had had no inkling of a catastrophe. I had said something that at the moment of saying it I myself did not know at all; I had given way to a little, somewhat witty, somewhat malicious notion, and it had turned into fate. I had committed a small, careless rudeness, and for him it had become a judgment.

Oh, how I wished then that he had grown angry, that he had defended himself, that he had shouted at me! He did none of that; all of that I had to do myself, inside me. He would have smiled if he could have. That he could not was what showed me best how hard I had hit him.

And by taking the blow from me, from his forward and ungrateful pupil, so soundlessly, by keeping silent and letting me be right,

by acknowledging my word as fate, Pistorius made me hateful to myself and made my rashness a thousand times greater. When I struck, I had thought I was hitting someone strong and able to defend himself—now it was a quiet, patient man, a defenseless man, who surrendered without a word.

For a long time we stayed lying before the dying fire, in which every glowing figure, every curling stick of ash called happy, beautiful, rich hours back to my memory and piled up the debt of my obligation to Pistorius higher and higher. At last I could bear it no longer. I got up and went. For a long time I stood outside his door, for a long time on the dark stairs, for a long time outside the house, waiting to see whether he might come and follow me. Then I went on and walked for hours and hours through town and suburbs, park and forest, until evening. And it was then that I first felt the mark of Cain on my forehead.

Only gradually did I come to reflect. All my thoughts intended to accuse me and defend Pistorius. And all of them ended in the opposite. A thousand times I was ready to regret my hasty word and take it back—but it had been true all the same. Only now did I succeed in understanding Pistorius, in building up his whole dream before me. This dream had been to be a priest, to proclaim the new religion, to give new forms of exaltation, of love and worship, to set up new symbols. But this was not his strength, not his office. He lingered too warmly in what had been; he knew the past too exactly; he knew too much about Egypt, about India, about Mithras, about Abraxas. His love was bound to images the earth had already seen, and yet in his innermost self he no doubt knew that the new had to be new and different, that it had to spring from fresh soil and not be drawn from collections and libraries. His office was perhaps to help lead people to themselves, as he had done with me. To give them the unheard-of, the new gods, was not his office.

And here the insight suddenly burned me like a sharp flame:—there was an “office” for everyone, but for no one an office he could choose, define, and administer as he pleased. It was wrong to want new gods; it was completely wrong to want to give the world anything at all! There was no, no, no duty for awakened people but the one: to seek themselves, to become firm in themselves, to grope their own way forward, no matter where it led.—That shook me deeply, and that was the fruit of this experience for me. I had often played with pictures of the future; I had dreamed of roles that might be meant for me, as a poet perhaps or as a prophet, or as a painter, or something. All that was nothing. I was not here to write poetry, to preach, to paint; neither I nor any other human being was here for that. All that came about only incidentally. The true calling for everyone was only this one thing: to come to himself. He might end up as a poet or as a madman, as a prophet or as a criminal—that was not his business; indeed, in the end it was of no importance. His business was to find his own fate, not just any fate, and to live it out in himself, wholly and unbroken. Everything else was half-measures, was an attempt to escape, was flight back into the ideals of the masses, was conformity and fear of one’s own inner self. Terrible and holy, the new image rose before me, sensed a hundred times, perhaps often spoken already, and yet only now lived. I was a throw of nature, a throw into the uncertain, perhaps toward something new, perhaps toward nothing, and to let this throw from the primal depths take effect, to feel its will in me and make it wholly my own, that alone was my calling. That alone!

I had already tasted much solitude. Now I sensed that there was a deeper kind, and that it was inescapable.

I made no attempt to reconcile with Pistorius. We remained friends, but the relationship had changed. Only a single time did we talk about it, or really it was only he who did. He said: “I have

the wish to become a priest, you know that. Most of all I would have liked to become the priest of the new religion of which we have so many intimations. I'll never be able to be that—I know it, and I've known it for a long time without entirely admitting it to myself. I'll just perform other priestly services, perhaps at the organ, perhaps some other way. But I must always be surrounded by something I feel to be beautiful and holy, organ music and mystery, symbol and myth; I need it and don't want to give it up.—That is my weakness. For I know sometimes, Sinclair, I know at times, that I shouldn't have such wishes, that they are luxury and weakness. It would be greater, it would be more right, if I simply stood at the disposal of fate, without any claims. But I can't do that; it's the only thing I can't do. Perhaps you'll be able to someday. It's hard; it's the only really hard thing there is, my boy. I've often dreamed of it, but I can't; it makes me shudder: I can't stand so completely naked and alone; I too am a poor, weak dog who needs a little warmth and food and would like now and then to feel the nearness of his own kind. Whoever really wants nothing at all but his fate no longer has any others of his kind; he stands quite alone and has only cold space around him. You know, that's Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. There have been martyrs who gladly let themselves be nailed to the cross, but they weren't heroes either, weren't set free; they too wanted something that had grown dear and homelike to them; they had models, they had ideals. Whoever wants only his fate has neither models nor ideals anymore; he has nothing dear, nothing comforting! And that is the way one really ought to go. People like you and me are lonely enough, but we still have each other; we have the secret satisfaction of being different, of rebelling, of wanting the unusual. That too has to fall away if someone wants to go the whole way. He mustn't want to be a revolutionary, either, or an example, or a martyr. It's beyond imagining—"

No, it was beyond imagining. But it could be dreamed, it could be felt in advance, it could be sensed. A few times I felt something of it, when I found a wholly quiet hour. Then I looked into myself and looked into the open, staring eyes of the image of my fate. They could be full of wisdom, they could be full of madness, they could beam love or deep malice; it was all the same. None of it could one choose; none of it could one want. One could want only *oneself*, only one's fate. To this point Pistorius had served me for a stretch of the way as a guide.

In those days I ran about as if blind; a storm roared in me; every step was danger. I saw nothing but the abysmal darkness before me, into which all the paths so far ran out and sank down. And within me I saw the image of the guide, who resembled Demian and in whose eyes my fate stood.

I wrote on a piece of paper: "A guide has left me. I am standing in complete darkness. I cannot take a step alone. Help me!"

I meant to send it to Demian. But I left it undone; every time I meant to, it looked silly and senseless. But I knew the little prayer by heart and often said it inwardly. It went with me every hour. I began to sense what prayer is.



My school days were over. I was to take a trip during the vacation; my father had thought this up; and then I was to go to the university. To which faculty I did not know. I had been granted one semester of philosophy. I would have been just as content with anything else.

Chapter Seven: Frau Eva

During the vacation I went once to the house in which Max Demian had lived with his mother years before. An old woman was walking in the garden; I spoke to her and learned that the house belonged to her. I asked about the Demian family. She remembered them well. But she did not know where they lived now. Sensing my interest, she took me into the house, searched out a leather album, and showed me a photograph of Demian's mother. I could hardly remember her anymore. But now, when I saw the little portrait, my heart stopped beating.—That was my dream image! That was she, the tall, almost masculine figure of a woman, like her son, with features of motherliness, features of severity, features of deep passion, beautiful and alluring, beautiful and unapproachable, daemon and mother, fate and beloved. That was she!

It went through me like a wild miracle when I learned in this way that my dream image lived on earth! There was a woman who looked like that, who bore the features of my fate! Where was she? Where?—And she was Demian's mother!

Soon afterward I set out on my journey. A strange journey! I traveled restlessly from place to place, following every whim, always searching for this woman. There were days when I met nothing but figures that reminded me of her, echoed her, resembled her, that lured me through the lanes of strange towns, through railroad stations, into trains, as in tangled dreams. There were other days when I saw how useless my searching was; then I sat idle somewhere in a park, in a hotel garden, in a waiting room, and looked into myself and tried to make the image come alive in

me. But it had now grown shy and fleeting. I could never sleep; only on train journeys through unknown country did I nod off for a quarter of an hour at a time. Once, in Zurich, a woman ran after me, a pretty, somewhat brazen woman. I hardly saw her and walked on as if she were air. I would rather have died on the spot than have given another woman so much as an hour's attention.

I felt that my fate was drawing me; I felt that fulfillment was near; and I was mad with impatience that I could do nothing toward it. Once at a station, in Innsbruck I believe, I saw at the window of a train just pulling out a figure that reminded me of her, and I was unhappy for days. And suddenly the figure appeared to me again one night in a dream; I woke with an ashamed and dreary sense of the senselessness of my hunt, and I went straight back home.

A few weeks later I enrolled at the university in H. Everything disappointed me. The lectures on the history of philosophy that I attended were just as insubstantial and factory-made as the doings of the young students. Everything was so much according to pattern, one did as the other did, and the heated merriment on the boyish faces looked so dismally empty and ready-made! But I was free; I had my whole day to myself, lived quietly and pleasantly within old walls outside the town, and had a few volumes of Nietzsche lying on my table. I lived with him, felt the loneliness of his soul, scented the fate that drove him relentlessly on, suffered with him, and was blissful that there had been someone who had gone his way so inexorably.

Late one evening I was strolling through the town in the gusting autumn wind and heard the student fraternities singing in the taverns. Tobacco smoke poured out in clouds from open windows, and with it, in a thick surge, the singing, loud and taut, but uninspired and lifelessly uniform.

I stood at a street corner and listened; from two taverns the punctually performed jollity of youth rang out into the night. Everywhere togetherness, everywhere huddling together, everywhere the unloading of fate and flight into the warm nearness of the herd!

Behind me two men walked slowly past. I heard a piece of their conversation.

“Isn’t it exactly like the young men’s house in an African village?” said one of them. “Everything fits; even tattooing is still in fashion. You see, that is young Europe.”

The voice sounded strangely admonishing to me—familiar. I followed the two of them down the dark lane. One of them was Japanese, small and elegant; under a streetlamp I saw his yellow, smiling face light up.

Then the other spoke again.

“Well, it’s probably no better with you in Japan. People who don’t run after the herd are rare everywhere. There are some here too.”

Every word went through me with joyful alarm. I knew the speaker. It was Demian.

Through the windy night I followed him and the Japanese man through the dark lanes, listened to their conversation, and relished the sound of Demian’s voice. It had its old tone; it had the old, beautiful assurance and calm; and it had the old power over me. Now everything was well. I had found him.

At the end of a street on the edge of town the Japanese man took his leave and unlocked a front door. Demian came back the way they had come; I had stopped and was waiting for him in the middle of the street. With a pounding heart I watched him come toward me, upright and supple, in a brown rubber raincoat, a thin cane hooked over his arm. Without changing his even stride, he came right up to me, took off his hat, and showed me his familiar

bright face with the resolute mouth and the peculiar brightness on the broad forehead.

“Demian!” I cried.

He held out his hand to me.

“So there you are, Sinclair! I’ve been expecting you.”

“Did you know I was here?”

“I didn’t exactly know, but I was certainly hoping. I only saw you this evening; you’ve been following us the whole time, after all.”

“So you recognized me right away?”

“Of course. You’ve changed, it’s true. But you have the mark.”

“The mark? What mark?”

“We used to call it the mark of Cain, if you still remember. It’s our mark. You’ve always had it; that’s why I became your friend. But now it has grown clearer.”

“I didn’t know. Or actually I did. Once I painted a picture of you, Demian, and was astonished that it looked like me too. Was that the mark?”

“That was it. Good that you’re here now! My mother will be glad too.”

I was startled.

“Your mother? Is she here? But she doesn’t know me at all.”

“Oh, she knows about you. She’ll recognize you even without my telling her who you are.—You haven’t let me hear from you in a long time.”

“Oh, I often wanted to write, but I couldn’t. For some time now I’ve felt that I must find you soon. I’ve been waiting for it every day.”

He slipped his arm through mine and walked on with me. Calm went out from him and passed into me. Soon we were chatting as in the old days. We recalled our school days, the confirmation lessons, that unhappy meeting during the vacation too—only of the

earliest and closest bond between us, the story with Franz Kromer, there was no talk even now.

Before we knew it we were in the midst of strange and portentous conversation. Taking up the talk between Demian and the Japanese man, we had spoken of student life and had come from there to other things that seemed to lie far off; yet in Demian's words they joined into a close connection.

He spoke of the spirit of Europe and the signature of this age. Everywhere, he said, alliance and herd formation prevailed, but nowhere freedom and love. All this togetherness, from the student fraternity and the singing club up to the states, was a forced formation; it was a community born of fear, of dread, of embarrassment, and it was rotten and old within and close to collapse.

"Togetherness," Demian said, "is a fine thing. But what we see flourishing everywhere isn't that at all. It will arise anew, out of individuals knowing about one another, and for a while it will reshape the world. What there is of togetherness now is only herd formation. People flee to one another because they're afraid of one another—the gentlemen by themselves, the workers by themselves, the scholars by themselves! And why are they afraid? You're only afraid when you're not at one with yourself. They're afraid because they've never owned up to themselves. A community of nothing but people who are afraid of the unknown in themselves! They all feel that the laws they live by aren't valid anymore, that they're living by old tablets; neither their religions nor their morality, none of it is suited to what we need. For a hundred years and more Europe has done nothing but study and build factories! They know exactly how many grams of powder it takes to kill a man, but they don't know how to pray to God; they don't even know how to be cheerful for an hour. Just look at a students' tavern like that! Or worse, a pleasure resort where the rich people go! Hopeless!—My dear Sinclair, nothing serene can come of all that. These people

who band together so anxiously are full of fear and full of malice; no one trusts anyone else. They cling to ideals that are no longer ideals, and they stone anyone who sets up a new one. I sense that there will be conflicts. They will come, believe me, they'll come soon! Of course they won't 'improve' the world. Whether the workers kill their factory owners, or whether Russia and Germany shoot at each other, it will only mean a change of owners. But it won't be in vain all the same. It will show up the worthlessness of present-day ideals; there will be a clearing away of Stone Age gods. This world as it is now wants to die, it wants to perish, and it will."

"And what will become of us then?" I asked.

"Of us? Oh, perhaps we'll perish along with it. People like us can be killed too, after all. Only that won't be the end of us. Around what remains of us, or around those of us who survive it, the will of the future will gather. The will of mankind will show itself, which our Europe has for a time shouted down with its fairground of technology and science. And then it will turn out that the will of mankind is never and nowhere the same as that of present-day communities, of states and peoples, of associations and churches. Rather, what nature wants with man is written in individuals, in you and me. It was written in Jesus; it was written in Nietzsche. For these currents, which alone matter—and which can of course look different every day, there will be room when the present-day communities collapse."

Late, we stopped in front of a garden by the river.

"This is where we live," Demian said. "Come and see us soon! We're very much expecting you."

Joyfully I walked the long way home through the night, which had grown cool. Here and there students on their way home were making a racket and staggering through the town. I had often felt the contrast between their comical kind of merriment and my soli-

tary life, often with a feeling of deprivation, often with mockery. But never before had I felt as I did today, with calm and secret strength, how little it concerned me, how distant and vanished this world was for me. I remembered officials of my hometown, dignified old gentlemen who clung to the memories of their semesters spent in taverns as to keepsakes of a blissful paradise, and who made a cult of the vanished “freedom” of their student years, such as poets or other romantics otherwise devote to childhood. The same everywhere! Everywhere they looked for “freedom” and “happiness” somewhere behind them, out of sheer fear that they might be reminded of their own responsibility and admonished about their own way. For a few years there was boozing and carousing, and then you crept under cover and became a serious gentleman in the civil service. Yes, it was rotten, rotten among us, and this student foolishness was less foolish and less bad than a hundred other things.

But when I had reached my remote lodgings and was looking for my bed, all these thoughts had flown, and my whole mind hung waiting on the great promise this day had given me. As soon as I liked, tomorrow even, I was to see Demian’s mother. Let the students hold their drinking bouts and tattoo their faces, let the world be rotten and wait for its downfall—what did it matter to me! I was waiting only for my fate to come toward me in a new image.

I slept soundly until late in the morning. The new day dawned for me as a solemn holiday, such as I had not known since the Christmas celebrations of my boyhood. I was full of the deepest restlessness, but without any fear. I felt that an important day had dawned for me; I saw and felt the world around me transformed, waiting, full of meaning and solemn; even the softly falling autumn rain was beautiful, still, and festive, full of grave and joyful music. For the first time the outer world rang purely together with my

inner one—then it is a holiday of the soul; then it is worth living. No house, no shop window, no face in the street disturbed me; everything was as it had to be, but wore not the empty face of the everyday and familiar; it was nature waiting, standing reverently ready for fate. That was how I had seen the world as a little boy on the mornings of the great holidays, on Christmas Day and at Easter. I had not known that this world could still be so beautiful. I had grown used to living inward and to resigning myself to the fact that I had simply lost the sense for what was out there, that the loss of the shining colors was inevitably bound up with the loss of childhood, and that in a sense one had to pay for the freedom and manhood of the soul by renouncing this lovely glow. Now I saw with delight that all this had only been buried and darkened, and that it was possible, even as one who had become free and had renounced a child's happiness, to see the world shine and to taste the heartfelt thrills of a child's seeing.

The hour came when I found again the garden on the edge of town where I had said goodbye to Max Demian the night before. Hidden behind tall, rain-gray trees stood a small house, bright and inviting, tall flowering plants behind a great glass wall, dark walls of rooms with pictures and rows of books behind gleaming windows. The front door led straight into a small, warmed hall; a silent old maidservant, in black with a white apron, showed me in and took my coat.

She left me alone in the hall. I looked around, and at once I was in the middle of my dream. High on the dark wooden wall, over a door, there hung under glass in a black frame a picture I knew well, my bird with the golden-yellow sparrow hawk's head, swinging itself out of the shell of the world. I stood still, deeply moved—my heart was as glad and as sore as if at this moment everything I had ever done and lived through were coming back to me as answer and fulfillment. Quick as lightning I saw a host of pictures

run past my soul: my father's house at home with the old stone coat of arms over the archway, the boy Demian drawing the coat of arms, myself as a boy, entangled in fear in the evil spell of my enemy Kromer, myself as a youth, painting the bird of my longing at the quiet table in my little room at school, my soul caught confused in the net of its own threads—and everything, everything up to this moment rang out in me again, was affirmed in me, answered, approved.

With eyes grown wet I stared at my picture and read in myself. Then my gaze sank down: beneath the picture of the bird, in the open door, stood a tall woman in a dark dress. It was she. I could not say a word. From a face that, like her son's, was without time or age and full of ensouled will, the beautiful, venerable woman smiled at me kindly. Her look was fulfillment; her greeting meant homecoming. Silently I held out my hands to her. She took them both in firm, warm hands.

"You are Sinclair. I knew you at once. Welcome!"

Her voice was deep and warm; I drank it like sweet wine. And now I looked up into her still face, into the black, unfathomable eyes, at the fresh, ripe mouth, at the free, princely forehead that bore the mark.

"How glad I am!" I said to her, and kissed her hands. "I believe I've been on the way my whole life long—and now I've come home."

She smiled like a mother.

"One never comes home," she said kindly. "But where friendly paths run together, the whole world looks like home for an hour."

She was saying what I had felt on my way to her. Her voice, and her words too, were very like her son's, and yet quite different. Everything was riper, warmer, more natural. But just as Max long ago had given no one the impression of a boy, so his mother did not look at all like the mother of a grown son, so young and sweet was the breath over her face and hair, so firm and unlined was her

golden skin, so blooming her mouth. More regal still than in my dream she stood before me, and her nearness was the happiness of love; her look was fulfillment.

This, then, was the new image in which my fate showed itself to me, no longer stern, no longer isolating, no, ripe and full of joy! I made no resolutions, took no vows—I had come to a goal, to a high point on the way, from which the road ahead showed itself wide and glorious, striving toward lands of promise, shaded by the tree-tops of happiness close at hand, cooled by the nearby gardens of every delight. Let it go with me as it would, I was blissful to know that this woman was in the world, to drink her voice and breathe her nearness. Whether she became mother to me, beloved, goddess—if only she was there! if only my way was near to hers!

She pointed up at my sparrow hawk picture.

“You never gave our Max a greater joy than with this picture,” she said thoughtfully. “Nor me either. We had been waiting for you, and when the picture came, we knew that you were on your way to us. When you were a little boy, Sinclair, my son came home from school one day and said: There’s a boy there who has the mark on his forehead; he must become my friend. That was you. You haven’t had it easy, but we trusted you. Once, when you were home for the vacation, you met Max again. You were about sixteen then. Max told me about it—”

I broke in: “Oh, that he told you that! It was my most wretched time, back then!”

“Yes, Max said to me: now Sinclair has the hardest part ahead of him. He’s making one more attempt to escape into the common life; he’s even become a tavern crony; but it won’t work. His mark is veiled, but it burns him in secret.—Wasn’t that so?”

“Oh yes, that’s how it was, exactly. Then I found Beatrice, and then at last a guide came to me again. His name was Pistorius. Only then did it become clear to me why my boyhood was so

bound to Max, why I couldn't get free of him. Dear lady—dear mother, back then I often thought I would have to take my own life. Is the way so hard for everyone?"

She passed her hand over my hair, light as air.

"It is always hard to be born. You know, the bird has a hard time getting out of the egg. Think back and ask yourself: was the way really so hard?—only hard? Wasn't it beautiful too? Would you have known a more beautiful one, an easier one?"

I shook my head.

"It was hard," I said as if in my sleep, "it was hard until the dream came."

She nodded and looked at me piercingly.

"Yes, one must find one's dream; then the way becomes easy. But there is no everlasting dream; each is replaced by a new one, and one must not try to hold on to any."

I was deeply startled. Was that already a warning? Was that already a fending off? But no matter, I was ready to let her guide me and not to ask about the goal.

"I don't know," I said, "how long my dream is to last. I wish it were eternal. Under the picture of the bird my fate received me, like a mother, and like a beloved. I belong to it and to no one else."

"As long as the dream is your fate, so long you should stay faithful to it," she confirmed gravely.

A sadness seized me, and the ardent wish to die in this enchanted hour. I felt the tears—how endlessly long it had been since I had wept!—welling up irresistibly in me and overwhelming me. I turned violently away from her, stepped to the window, and looked out with blind eyes over the potted flowers.

Behind me I heard her voice; it sounded composed and yet was as full of tenderness as a cup filled to the brim with wine.

"Sinclair, you are a child! Your fate loves you, after all. One day it will belong to you wholly, just as you dream it, if you stay

faithful.”

I had mastered myself and turned my face to her again. She gave me her hand.

“I have a few friends,” she said, smiling, “a very few, very close friends, who call me Frau Eva. You too shall call me that, if you like.”

She led me to the door, opened it, and pointed into the garden. “You’ll find Max out there.”

Under the tall trees I stood dazed and shaken, more awake or more dreaming than ever, I did not know which. The rain dripped gently from the branches. I walked slowly into the garden, which stretched a long way along the bank of the river. At last I found Demian. He was standing in an open summerhouse, stripped to the waist, practicing boxing in front of a small punching bag hung up there.

I stopped in astonishment. Demian looked magnificent; the broad chest, the firm, manly head, the raised arms with their taut muscles were strong and capable; the movements came out of hips, shoulders, and wrists like playing springs.

“Demian!” I cried. “What are you doing there?”

He laughed cheerfully.

“I’m practicing. I’ve promised my little Japanese friend a wrestling match; the fellow is as quick as a cat, and of course just as treacherous. But he won’t get the better of me. It’s a very small humiliation I owe him.”

He put on his shirt and coat.

“You’ve already been to see my mother?” he asked.

“Yes. Demian, what a glorious mother you have! Frau Eva! The name suits her perfectly; she’s like the mother of all beings.”

He looked thoughtfully into my face for a moment.

“You know her name already? You can be proud, my boy! You’re the first she’s ever told it to in the very first hour.”

From that day on I went in and out of the house like a son and brother, but also like a lover. When I shut the gate behind me, indeed, as soon as I saw the tall trees of the garden rise up in the distance, I was rich and happy. Outside was “reality”; outside were streets and houses, people and institutions, libraries and lecture halls—but here inside was love and soul; here the fairy tale and the dream lived. And yet we by no means lived shut off from the world; in thought and conversation we often lived right in the midst of it, only on a different field; we were separated from the majority of people not by boundaries but only by a different way of seeing. Our task was to represent an island in the world, perhaps a model, but in any case the announcement of another possible way to live. I, who had been lonely so long, came to know the community that is possible between people who have tasted complete solitude. Never again did I long to go back to the tables of the happy, to the feasts of the merry; never again did envy or homesickness come over me when I saw the togetherness of others. And slowly I was initiated into the secret of those who bore “the mark.”

We who bore the mark might rightly seem strange to the world, even mad and dangerous. We were awakened ones, or ones awakening, and our striving was toward an ever more complete wakefulness, while the striving and pursuit of happiness of the others went toward binding their opinions, their ideals and duties, their lives and happiness ever more closely to those of the herd. There too was striving; there too was strength and greatness. But while, as we saw it, we who were marked represented nature’s will toward the new, the individual, and the future, the others lived in a will to persist. For them mankind—which they loved as we did—was something finished that had to be preserved and protected. For us mankind was a distant future toward which we were all on our way, whose image no one knew, whose laws were written nowhere.

Besides Frau Eva, Max, and me, there belonged to our circle, nearer or farther, a number of seekers of very different kinds. Some of them followed special paths, had set themselves separate goals, and clung to particular opinions and duties; among them were astrologers and cabalists, also a follower of Count Tolstoy, and all sorts of delicate, shy, vulnerable people, adherents of new sects, practitioners of Indian exercises, vegetarians, and others. With all of these we really had nothing in common spiritually except the respect each of us granted the other's secret dream of life. Others were closer to us, who pursued mankind's search for gods and new wish images in the past, and whose studies often reminded me of those of my Pistorius. They brought books with them, translated texts from ancient languages for us, showed us pictures of ancient symbols and rites, and taught us to see how the whole stock of ideals that mankind had possessed so far consisted of dreams of the unconscious soul, dreams in which mankind groped after the intimations of its future possibilities. So we ran through the marvelous, thousand-headed tangle of gods of the ancient world up to the dawning of the Christian turn. The confessions of the solitary devout became known to us, and the transformations of religions from people to people. And from everything we gathered there emerged for us the critique of our time and of present-day Europe, which with tremendous efforts had created mighty new weapons for mankind, but had in the end fallen into a deep and at last screaming desolation of the spirit. For it had gained the whole world only to lose its soul in the bargain.

Here too there were believers and confessors of particular hopes and doctrines of salvation. There were Buddhists who wanted to convert Europe, and disciples of Tolstoy, and other creeds. We in the inner circle listened and accepted none of these doctrines except as symbols. We who were marked felt no concern for the shaping of the future. To us every creed, every doctrine of

salvation, seemed dead and useless in advance. And we felt this alone to be our duty and our fate: that each of us should become so wholly himself, should do such justice to the working seed of nature in him and live so at its will, that the uncertain future would find us ready for anything and everything it might bring.

For this was clear to the feelings of all of us, spoken and unspoken: that a new birth and a collapse of the present were near and could already be felt. Demian sometimes said to me: "What is coming is beyond imagining. The soul of Europe is an animal that has lain bound for an endlessly long time. When it gets free, its first movements won't be the gentlest. But the ways and detours don't matter, as long as the true need of the soul comes to light, which people have been lying away and drugging again and again for so long. Then our day will come; then we'll be needed, not as leaders or new lawgivers—we won't live to see the new laws—but rather as the willing, as those who are ready to go along and to stand where fate calls. Look, all people are ready to do the incredible when their ideals are threatened. But no one is there when a new ideal, a new, perhaps dangerous and uncanny stirring of growth comes knocking. The few who are there then and go along will be us. That is what we are marked for—as Cain was marked to arouse fear and hatred and to drive the mankind of his day out of a narrow idyll into dangerous distances. All the people who have had an effect on the course of mankind, all without exception, were capable and effective only because they were ready for fate. That holds for Moses and Buddha; it holds for Napoleon and for Bismarck. Which wave a man serves, from which pole he is governed, is not his to choose. If Bismarck had understood the Social Democrats and adjusted himself to them, he would have been a clever gentleman, but not a man of fate. So it was with Napoleon, with Caesar, with Loyola, with all of them! You always have to think of it biologically, in terms of evolution! When the upheavals

on the surface of the earth threw the water animals onto land and land animals into the water, it was the specimens ready for fate that could carry out the new and unheard-of and save their species by new adaptations. Whether these were the same specimens that had stood out before in their species as conservative and preserving, or rather the oddballs and revolutionaries, we don't know. They were ready, and so they could save their species over into new developments. That we know. That's why we want to be ready."

Frau Eva was often present at such conversations, but she did not join in them in this way herself. For each of us who expressed his thoughts she was a listener and an echo, full of trust, full of understanding; it seemed as if all the thoughts came from her and returned to her. To sit near her, to hear her voice now and then, and to share in the atmosphere of ripeness and soul that surrounded her was happiness for me.

She sensed at once whenever some change, some clouding or renewal, was under way in me. It seemed to me as if the dreams I had in my sleep were inspirations from her. I often told them to her, and they were understandable and natural to her; there was no strangeness she could not follow with clear feeling. For a time I had dreams that were like replicas of our daytime conversations. I dreamed that the whole world was in turmoil and that I, alone or with Demian, was waiting tensely for the great fate. The fate remained veiled, but somehow it bore the features of Frau Eva—to be chosen or rejected by her, that was fate.

Sometimes she would say with a smile: "Your dream isn't complete, Sinclair; you've forgotten the best part—" and it might happen that it came back to me then and I could not understand how I could have forgotten it.

At times I grew discontented and tormented by desire. I thought I could no longer bear to see her beside me without tak-

ing her in my arms. She noticed that too at once. Once, when I had stayed away for several days and then came back distraught, she took me aside and said: "You should not give yourself up to wishes you don't believe in. I know what you wish. You must be able to give these wishes up, or else wish them wholly and rightly. Once you are able to ask in such a way that you are entirely certain of fulfillment within yourself, then fulfillment is there too. But you wish, and then regret it again, and are afraid as you do. All that has to be overcome. I'll tell you a fairy tale."

And she told me of a youth who was in love with a star. He stood by the sea, stretched out his hands, and worshiped the star; he dreamed of it and turned his thoughts toward it. But he knew, or thought he knew, that a star cannot be embraced by a human being. He held it to be his fate to love a heavenly body without hope of fulfillment, and out of this thought he built a whole poem of a life of renunciation and silent, faithful suffering that was to improve and purify him. But all his dreams went to the star. Once he stood again by night beside the sea, on the high cliff, and looked into the star and burned with love for it. And in a moment of the greatest longing he leaped and hurled himself into the void, toward the star. But in the very moment of leaping he thought, quick as lightning: it's impossible, after all! There he lay on the shore below, shattered. He had not known how to love. Had he had, in the moment he leaped, the strength of soul to believe firmly and surely in fulfillment, he would have flown upward and been united with the star.

"Love must not beg," she said, "nor demand either. Love must have the strength to come to certainty within itself. Then it is no longer drawn but draws. Sinclair, your love is drawn by me. Once it draws me, I will come. I don't want to give presents; I want to be won."

But another time she told me another fairy tale. There was a lover who loved without hope. He withdrew entirely into his soul and thought he would burn up with love. The world was lost to him; he no longer saw the blue sky and the green forest; the brook did not murmur for him; the harp did not sound for him; everything had sunk away, and he had become poor and wretched. But his love grew, and he would much rather die and go to ruin than give up possessing the beautiful woman he loved. Then he felt how his love had burned up everything else in him, and it became powerful and drew and drew, and the beautiful woman had to follow; she came; he stood with arms spread wide to draw her to him. But when she stood before him, she was entirely transformed, and with a shudder he felt and saw that he had drawn the whole lost world to himself. She stood before him and gave herself to him; sky and forest and brook, everything came toward him in new colors, fresh and glorious, belonged to him, spoke his language. And instead of merely winning a woman, he had the whole world at his heart, and every star in the sky glowed in him and sparkled joy through his soul.—He had loved, and in doing so had found himself. But most people love in order to lose themselves in it.

My love for Frau Eva seemed to me to be the only content of my life. But every day she looked different. Sometimes I believed I felt with certainty that it was not her person toward which my being was drawn and striving, but that she was only a symbol of my inner self and wanted only to lead me deeper into myself. Often I heard words from her that sounded to me like answers of my unconscious to burning questions that stirred me. Then again there were moments when I burned beside her with sensual desire and kissed objects she had touched. And gradually sensual and nonsensual love, reality and symbol, slid over each other. Then it happened that I would think of her at home in my room, with quiet intensity, and believe I felt her hand in mine and her lips on mine. Or I was

with her, looked into her face, talked with her, and heard her voice, and yet did not know whether she was real and not a dream. I began to sense how one can possess a love lastingly and immortally. I came to a new insight while reading a book, and it was the same feeling as a kiss from Frau Eva. She stroked my hair and smiled her ripe, fragrant warmth at me, and I had the same feeling as when I had made some progress within myself. Everything that was important and fate for me could take on her form. She could transform herself into any of my thoughts, and each of them into her.

I had dreaded the Christmas holidays, which I spent with my parents, because I thought it must be a torment to live away from Frau Eva for two weeks. But it was no torment; it was glorious to be at home and think of her. When I came back to H., I stayed away from her house for two more days in order to enjoy this certainty and independence from her physical presence. I also had dreams in which my union with her was accomplished in new, allegorical ways. She was a sea into which I flowed and emptied. She was a star, and I myself was on my way to her as a star, and we met and felt ourselves drawn to each other, stayed together, and turned blissfully around each other for all time in near, resounding circles.

I told her this dream when I first visited her again.

"The dream is beautiful," she said quietly. "Make it come true!"

In early spring there came a day I have never forgotten. I stepped into the hall; a window stood open, and a mild current of air rolled the heavy scent of hyacinths through the room. Since no one was to be seen, I went up the stairs to Max Demian's study. I knocked lightly on the door and went in without waiting for an answer, as I was used to doing.

The room was dark, the curtains all drawn. The door to a small adjoining room, where Max had set up a chemistry laboratory,

stood open. From there came the bright, white light of the spring sun shining through rain clouds. I thought no one was there and drew back one of the curtains.

Then I saw Max Demian sitting on a stool near the curtained window, huddled and strangely changed, and like lightning a feeling went through me: you've lived through this once before! His arms hung motionless, his hands in his lap; his face, bent slightly forward, with open eyes, was sightless and dead; in the pupil a small, glaring reflection of light gleamed lifelessly, as in a piece of glass. The pale face was sunk in itself and without any expression but that of a tremendous rigidity; it looked like an ancient animal mask on the portal of a temple. He did not seem to breathe.

Memory sent a shudder over me—so, exactly so, I had seen him once before, many years ago, when I was still a little boy. The eyes had stared inward like that, the hands had lain lifeless side by side like that, a fly had walked across his face. And back then, perhaps six years before, he had looked just as old and as timeless; not a line in his face was different today.

Overcome by a fear, I went softly out of the room and down the stairs. In the hall I met Frau Eva. She was pale and seemed tired, which was something I did not know in her; a shadow flew across the window; the glaring white sun had suddenly vanished.

"I was with Max," I whispered quickly. "Has something happened? He's asleep, or sunk in himself, I don't know; I saw him like that once before."

"You didn't wake him?" she asked quickly.

"No. He didn't hear me. I went right out again. Frau Eva, tell me, what's the matter with him?"

She passed the back of her hand across her forehead.

"Don't be alarmed, Sinclair; nothing will happen to him. He has withdrawn. It won't last long."

She stood up and went out into the garden, although it was just beginning to rain. I sensed that I was not to come with her. So I walked up and down in the hall, smelled the intoxicatingly fragrant hyacinths, stared at my bird picture over the door, and breathed in with oppression the strange shadow that filled the house that morning. What was this? What had happened?

Frau Eva soon came back. Raindrops hung in her dark hair. She sat down in her armchair. Weariness lay over her. I stepped beside her, bent over her, and kissed the drops out of her hair. Her eyes were bright and still, but the drops tasted to me like tears.

“Shall I go and look in on him?” I asked in a whisper.

She smiled faintly.

“Don’t be a little boy, Sinclair!” she admonished aloud, as if to break a spell in herself. “Go now, and come back later; I can’t talk with you now.”

I went and walked away from house and town toward the mountains; the slanting, thin rain came toward me; the clouds drove by low under a heavy pressure, as if in fear. Down below there was hardly any wind; up high it seemed to be storming; several times the sun broke for moments, pale and glaring, out of the steely gray of the clouds.

Then a loose yellow cloud came drifting across the sky; it piled up against the gray wall, and within a few seconds the wind shaped out of the yellow and the blue a picture, a gigantic bird that tore itself free of the blue confusion and vanished into the sky with wide wingbeats. Then the storm became audible, and rain mixed with hail clattered down. A short clap of thunder, improbable and frightening in its sound, crashed over the lashed landscape; immediately afterward a glimpse of sun broke through again, and on the nearby mountains above the brown forest the pale snow shone wan and unreal.

When I came back after hours, wet and windblown, Demian himself opened the front door for me.

He took me up with him to his room; a gas flame was burning in the laboratory; papers lay about; he seemed to have been working.

"Sit down," he invited me; "you must be tired; it was dreadful weather; anyone can see you've been out in it properly. Tea will be here in a minute."

"Something is up today," I began hesitantly; "it can't just be that little thunderstorm."

He looked at me searchingly.

"Did you see something?"

"Yes. For a moment I saw a picture clearly in the clouds."

"What kind of picture?"

"It was a bird."

"The sparrow hawk? Was it? Your dream bird?"

"Yes, it was my sparrow hawk. It was yellow and gigantic and flew into the blue-black sky."

Demian drew a deep breath.

There was a knock. The old maidservant brought tea.

"Help yourself, Sinclair, please.—I don't suppose you saw the bird by chance?"

"By chance? Does one see such things by chance?"

"All right, no. It means something. Do you know what?"

"No. I only feel that it means an upheaval, a step in fate. I think it concerns all of us."

He paced violently up and down.

"A step in fate!" he cried aloud.

"I dreamed the same thing last night, and my mother had a premonition yesterday that said the same.—I dreamed I was climbing a ladder, up a tree trunk or a tower. When I was at the top, I saw the whole country; it was a great plain, with towns and villages, burning. I can't tell it all yet; it isn't all clear to me yet."

“Do you take the dream as being about yourself?” I asked.

“About myself? Of course. No one dreams what doesn’t concern him. But it doesn’t concern me alone, you’re right there. I distinguish fairly precisely between the dreams that show me movements in my own soul and the others, very rare ones, in which the fate of all mankind is intimated. I’ve seldom had such dreams, and never one of which I could say that it had been a prophecy and had come true. The interpretations are too uncertain. But this I know for sure: I dreamed something that doesn’t concern me alone. For the dream belongs with others, earlier ones, that I had and that it continues. These are the dreams, Sinclair, from which I have the premonitions I’ve already spoken to you about. That our world is pretty rotten, we know; that would be no reason yet to prophesy its downfall or anything of the kind. But for several years I’ve had dreams from which I conclude, or feel, or however you like—from which, then, I feel that the collapse of an old world is drawing near. At first they were quite faint, distant premonitions, but they’ve grown steadily clearer and stronger. As yet I know nothing more than that something great and terrible is on the way, something that concerns me too. Sinclair, we are going to live through what we have sometimes talked about! The world wants to renew itself. There’s a smell of death. Nothing new comes without death.—It’s more terrible than I had thought.” Frightened, I stared at him.

“Can’t you tell me the rest of your dream?” I asked shyly.

He shook his head.

“No.”

The door opened, and Frau Eva came in.

“So here you are sitting together! Children, you’re surely not going to be sad?”

She looked fresh and not at all tired anymore. Demian smiled at her; she came to us like a mother to frightened children.

“We aren’t sad, Mother; we’ve only been puzzling a little over these new signs. But it doesn’t matter. Suddenly what wants to come will be there, and then we’ll find out what we need to know.”

But my heart was heavy, and when I said goodbye and walked alone through the hall, the scent of the hyacinths seemed to me withered, flat, and like a corpse’s. A shadow had fallen over us.

Chapter Eight: The Beginning of the End

I had managed to get permission to stay in H. for the summer semester as well. Instead of in the house, we were now almost always in the garden by the river. The Japanese, who by the way had fairly and squarely lost the wrestling match, had gone, and the Tolstoy man was missing too. Demian kept a horse and rode day after day with perseverance. I was often alone with his mother.

At times I wondered at the peacefulness of my life. I had been used for so long to being alone, to practicing renunciation, to struggling laboriously with my torments, that these months in H. seemed to me like a dream island on which I was allowed to live, at ease and enchanted, only among beautiful, pleasant things and feelings. I sensed that this was the prelude to that new, higher community we thought of. And every now and then a deep sadness came over me in the midst of this happiness, for I knew well that it could not last. It was not my lot to breathe in abundance and comfort; I needed torment and being driven. I felt: one day I would wake from these beautiful images of love and stand alone again, quite alone, in the cold world of the others, where for me there was only solitude or struggle, no peace, no life shared with others.

Then I nestled with double tenderness into the nearness of Frau Eva, glad that my fate still bore these beautiful, quiet features.

The summer weeks passed quickly and easily; the semester was already drawing to its close. The parting would soon be at hand; I must not think of it, and I did not, but clung to the beautiful days like a butterfly to a honeyed flower. This had been my time of hap-

piness, the first fulfillment of my life and my reception into the fellowship—what would come then? I would fight my way through again, suffer longing, have dreams, be alone.

On one of these days this premonition came over me so strongly that my love for Frau Eva suddenly flared up painfully. My God, how soon, and I would no longer see her, no longer hear her firm, good step through the house, no longer find her flowers on my table! And what had I achieved? I had dreamed and rocked myself in comfort instead of winning her, instead of fighting for her and tearing her to me forever! Everything she had ever said to me about true love came back to me, a hundred fine, admonishing words, a hundred soft enticements, promises perhaps—what had I made of them? Nothing! Nothing!

I planted myself in the middle of my room, gathered my whole consciousness together, and thought of Eva. I wanted to collect the powers of my soul in order to make her feel my love, in order to draw her to me. She must come and long for my embrace; my kiss must burrow insatiably into her ripe lips of love.

I stood and strained myself until I grew cold from my fingers and feet inward. I felt that power was going out from me. For a few moments something in me drew together firm and tight, something bright and cool; for a moment I had the sensation that I was carrying a crystal in my heart, and I knew that this was my self. The cold rose up to my chest.

When I woke from the terrible strain, I felt that something was coming. I was exhausted to death, but I was ready to see Eva come into the room, burning and enraptured.

Hoofbeats came hammering up the long street, sounded near and hard, suddenly stopped. I sprang to the window. Below, Demian was getting off his horse. I ran down.

“What is it, Demian? Nothing has happened to your mother, has it?”

He did not listen to my words. He was very pale, and sweat ran from both sides of his forehead down over his cheeks. He tied the reins of his overheated horse to the garden fence, took my arm, and walked down the street with me.

“Have you heard anything yet?”

I had heard nothing.

Demian pressed my arm and turned his face to me with a dark, pitying, strange look.

“Yes, my boy, now it’s starting. You knew about the great tension with Russia—”

“What? Is there going to be war? I never believed it.”

He spoke softly, although there was no one anywhere near.

“It hasn’t been declared yet. But there will be war. You can count on it. I haven’t bothered you with the matter since then, but since that time I’ve seen new signs three times. So it won’t be the end of the world, or an earthquake, or a revolution. It will be war. You’ll see how it strikes home! It will be a delight to people; even now everyone is looking forward to the fighting. That’s how flat life has become for them.—But you’ll see, Sinclair, this is only the beginning. Perhaps it will be a great war, a very great war. But that too is only the beginning. The new is beginning, and the new will be horrible for those who cling to the old. What will you do?”

I was dismayed; it all still sounded strange and improbable to me.

“I don’t know—and you?”

He shrugged.

“As soon as they mobilize, I’ll report. I’m a lieutenant.”

“You? I didn’t know a word about that.”

“Yes, it was one of my adaptations. You know I’ve never liked to stand out on the surface and have always done rather too much, if anything, to be correct. In a week, I think, I’ll already be in the field —”

“For God’s sake—”

“Now, my boy, you mustn’t take it sentimentally. At bottom it won’t be any pleasure for me to order rifle fire on living people, but that will be beside the point. Each of us is going to be caught up in the great wheel now. You too. You’ll certainly be called up.”

“And your mother, Demian?”

Only now did I remember again what had happened a quarter of an hour before. How the world had changed! I had gathered all my strength to conjure up the sweetest image, and now fate suddenly looked at me anew out of a threatening, horrifying mask.

“My mother? Oh, we needn’t worry about her. She’s safe, safer than anyone in the world is today.—You love her so much?”

“You knew, Demian?” He laughed brightly and quite freely.

“Little boy! Of course I knew. No one has ever yet called my mother Frau Eva without loving her. By the way, how was it? You called her or me today, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I called— I called for Frau Eva.”

“She felt it. She suddenly sent me away; she said I must go to you. I had just been telling her the news about Russia.”

We turned back and spoke little more; he untied his horse and mounted.

Only up in my room did I feel how exhausted I was, by Demian’s message and still more by the strain before it. But Frau Eva had heard me! I had reached her heart with my thoughts. She would have come herself—if not—How strange all this was, and how beautiful at bottom! Now a war was to come. Now what we had talked about so often was to begin to happen. And Demian had known so much of it in advance. How strange that the stream of the world was no longer to run past us somewhere—that now it was suddenly going right through our hearts, that adventure and wild fates were calling us, and that now or soon the moment had come when the world needed us, when it wanted to transform

itself. Demian was right; it was not to be taken sentimentally. The only curious thing was that I was now to live through the so lonely business of “fate” together with so many, with the whole world. Well, then!

I was ready. In the evening, when I walked through the town, every corner was roaring with the great excitement. Everywhere the word “war”!

I came to Frau Eva’s house; we had supper in the summerhouse. I was the only guest. No one said a word about war. Only late, shortly before I left, Frau Eva said: “My dear Sinclair, you called me today. You know why I didn’t come myself. But don’t forget: you know the call now, and whenever you need someone who bears the mark, then call again!”

She rose and went ahead through the twilight of the garden. Tall and princely, the mysterious woman walked between the silent trees, and over her head the many stars glimmered small and delicate.

I am coming to the end. Things took their swift course. Soon there was war, and Demian, strangely unfamiliar in uniform with the silver-gray greatcoat, went away. I took his mother back home. Soon I too took leave of her; she kissed me on the mouth and held me for a moment against her breast, and her great eyes burned close and steady into mine.

And everyone had become like brothers. They meant the fatherland and honor. But it was fate into whose unveiled face they all looked for a moment. Young men came out of barracks and climbed into trains, and on many faces I saw a mark—not ours—a beautiful and dignified mark that meant love and death. I too was embraced by people I had never seen, and I understood it and returned it gladly. It was an intoxication in which they did it, not the will of fate, but the intoxication was holy; it came from their all having cast this short, rousing look into the eyes of fate.

It was already almost winter when I went to the front.

At first, despite the sensations of the shooting, I was disappointed by everything. I had often thought before about why a human being is so extremely seldom able to live for an ideal. Now I saw that many, indeed all people are capable of dying for an ideal. Only it must not be a personal, not a free, not a chosen ideal; it had to be one shared and taken over.

In time, though, I saw that I had underestimated people. However much the service and the common danger put them into uniform, I still saw many, living and dying, come magnificently close to the will of fate. Many, very many had, not only in the attack but at all times, that firm, distant, somewhat possessed look that knows nothing of goals and means complete surrender to the tremendous. Let these men believe and think whatever they liked—they were ready, they were usable, out of them a future could be formed. And however rigidly the world seemed set on war and heroism, on honor and other old ideals, however distant and improbable every voice of apparent humanity sounded, all that was only the surface, just as the question of the outward and political aims of the war remained only surface. In the depths something was coming into being. Something like a new humanity. For I could see many, and more than one of them died at my side—to whom the insight had come through feeling that hatred and rage, killing and destroying, were not tied to their objects. No, the objects, like the aims, were wholly accidental. The primal feelings, even the wildest, were not directed at the enemy; their bloody work was only a radiation of what was inside, of the soul divided against itself, which wanted to rage and kill, destroy and die, in order to be born anew. A gigantic bird was fighting its way out of the egg, and the egg was the world, and the world had to go to ruin.

In front of the farmstead we had occupied I stood guard one night in early spring. A slack wind blew in fitful gusts; armies of clouds rode across the high Flemish sky, somewhere behind them an inkling of the moon. All day I had been restless; some worry or other was troubling me. Now, at my dark post, I thought with intensity of the images of my life so far, of Frau Eva, of Demian. I stood leaning against a poplar and stared into the moving sky, whose secretly flickering brightnesses soon turned into great, welling sequences of pictures. From the strange thinness of my pulse, from the insensitivity of my skin to wind and rain, from the sparkling inner wakefulness, I sensed that a guide was near me.

In the clouds a great city could be seen, out of which millions of people streamed and spread in swarms over wide landscapes. Into their midst stepped a mighty divine figure, sparkling stars in her hair, as big as a mountain range, with the features of Frau Eva. Into her the columns of people disappeared as into a gigantic cave, and were gone. The goddess crouched down on the ground; the mark on her forehead shone bright. A dream seemed to have power over her; she closed her eyes, and her great face twisted in pain. Suddenly she cried out aloud, and out of her forehead sprang stars, many thousands of shining stars, which swung in glorious arcs and half circles across the black sky.

One of the stars came roaring with a bright sound straight toward me and seemed to be looking for me.—Then it burst with a roar into a thousand sparks; I was lifted up and thrown back to the ground; thundering, the world collapsed on top of me.

They found me near the poplar, covered with earth and with many wounds.

I lay in a cellar; guns rumbled over me. I lay in a wagon and jolted over empty fields. Mostly I slept or was unconscious. But the deeper I slept, the more intensely I felt that something was drawing me, that I was following a power that was master over me.

I lay in a stable on straw; it was dark; someone had stepped on my hand. But my inner self wanted to go on; it drew me away more strongly. Again I lay on a wagon, and later on a stretcher or a ladder; more and more strongly I felt myself ordered somewhere; I felt nothing but the urge to get there at last.

Then I was at my goal. It was night; I was fully conscious; a moment before I had felt the pull and urge in me powerfully. Now I lay in a hall, bedded on the floor, and felt that I was where I had been called to. I looked around; right next to my mattress lay another, and someone on it, who leaned forward and looked at me. He had the mark on his forehead. It was Max Demian.

I could not speak, and he too could not or would not. He only looked at me. On his face lay the glow of a lamp that hung on the wall above him. He smiled at me.

For an endlessly long time he kept looking into my eyes. Slowly he brought his face closer to mine, until we almost touched.

“Sinclair!” he said in a whisper.

I gave him a sign with my eyes that I understood him.

He smiled again, almost as if in pity.

“Little boy!” he said, smiling.

His mouth was now very close to mine. Softly he went on speaking.

“Do you still remember Franz Kromer?” he asked.

I winked at him, and was even able to smile.

“Little Sinclair, listen! I’ll have to go away. Perhaps you’ll need me again someday, against Kromer or something else. If you call me then, I won’t come riding so crudely on a horse or by train. You will have to listen within yourself, and then you’ll notice that I am inside you. Do you understand?—And one more thing! Frau Eva said that if things ever went badly for you, I was to give you the kiss from her that she gave me to take along... Close your eyes, Sinclair!”

Obediently I closed my eyes; I felt a light kiss on my lips, on which there was always a little blood that would never grow less. And then I fell asleep.

In the morning I was woken; I was to have my wounds dressed. When at last I was properly awake, I turned quickly toward the next mattress. A stranger lay on it whom I had never seen.

The dressing hurt. Everything that has happened to me since has hurt. But sometimes, when I find the key and climb all the way down into myself, to where the images of fate slumber in the dark mirror, I need only bend over the black mirror, and I see my own image, which now wholly resembles Him, Him, my friend and guide.

Colophon

Demian

The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth

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