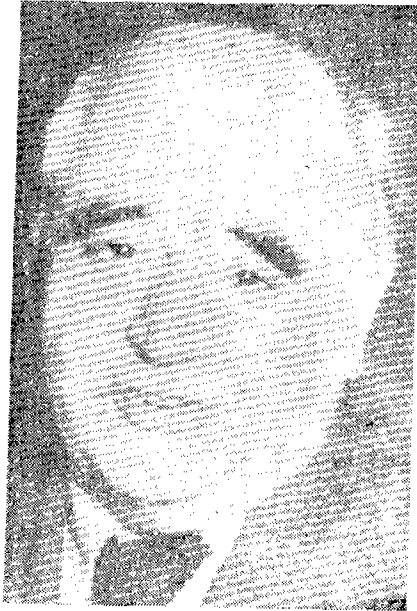




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MIROSLAV KRLEŽA — Born in Zagreb on July 7, 1893. His poems, short stories, novels, plays, essays and articles marked the beginning of modern Croatian literature and exercised an essential influence on the formation of Croatian left intelligentsia in the period between the two world wars. He is the director of the Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb, member of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb. He is still one of the most active and topical writers. His books have been translated into many languages.

The Collected Works of Miroslav Krleža, from his first poem »Pan« (1917) to the novel *The Banners* (a passage from which is included here) on which he is still working, number already more than twenty books.

MIROSLAV KRLEŽA

Joja to Glina and Kamilo to the Hungaricum

FROM THE NOVEL »THE BANNERS«

ONE OF THE MOST exciting and upsetting events of Kamilo's childhood was Joja's exile to Glina, after planting a bomb in the Zagreb office of the Hungarian National Railways. He had meant to blow up the entire building in the street which proudly bears the name of the author of the Croatian national anthem.

No-one sang the anthem »Our Beautiful Fatherland« with more devout and sincere feeling than Joja — that famous pastorate which does not exalt banners and cannon but describes tranquil humble herds grazing idyllically in the meadows of a Croatian Arcadia, and no-one was more willing than Joja to lay down his head on the »Altar« of that same anthem as at that time one used to die with

pathos and a certain element of gory sadism in martyromanic verses »for Croatian national ideals« (in the main and in general), and against financial Agreements with the Hungarians and particularly hysterically since 1868...

Kamilo had met his dear Joja, his only friend (to whom he was to remain touchingly true to the bitter end) in his first year at grammar school, when the pupils were arranged at their desks in alphabetical order: Emerički Kamilo and Dijak-Zigman Joachim, and when one sunny September morning they found themselves side by side they loved each other passionately at first sight, with a love that was not to be extinguished even in time of crisis, when Joja was »banned for all time from all secondary schools in the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia« and when he disappeared, exiled to Glina. This innocent love was to last, a faithful and devoted friendship, throughout the various peregrinations of this chronicle, through which flows the growth of this long and bloody decade like a dangerous torrent, ominously threatening whole generations, states, cities, peoples and numerous piteous human destinies.

Joja really stood out from the grey average of Kamilo's class: he had natural gifts which raised him in every way above the faceless mob of upper class progeny, all sons of government advisers, doctors, provincial lawyers and wealthy traders. When the boys used to act out dramatic scenes in class, Joja with his monologues as Coriolanus or Hannibal (always a consistent assiduous enemy of Rome and imperial power) would be unanimously declared beyond doubt the best reciter in the class. Unsurpassed as Petar Zrinski in Wiener Neustadt bidding farewell to the broken, weeping Krsto Frankopan, Joja refused to play Caesar, convinced that he was a tyrant who had been legitimately removed from the political stage, but when his voice trembled describing Senoa's moonlight over the lagoon, or when it thundered from »Ozalj Castle« it would make a patriotic heart beat even in such cold breasts as those crocodile souls of the phlegmatic government advisers' magyar-sympathizing sons.

Joja was the stepson of the firework maker Zigman, a man equally surprisingly out of the ordinary in every way, so to speak, who kept a fair-sized team of cab nags in one of the canonical palaces on Kaptol. He used his mares to ferry both soda water and the dead with a particularly ceremonial disposition of bishops' or generals' obsequies. At Christmas Zigman sold Christmas decorations in Ban Jelačić Square, at city and church festivals he rented two or three booths, and on important popular feast days and imperial jubilees he gave firework displays in the Bishops' Park or Maksimir park. A strange fellow, this Mr. Zigman, of whom it was said that he had once long ago been a private detective in Trieste (some kind of Sherlock Holmes) but that »he'd got sick of chasing robbers« and devoted himself to arranging marriages; fireworks, funerals and dispensing soda-water, and he himself would sometimes sit down on the side of his rattling soda-water cart with his favourites Joja and Kamilo and clank down the street with his little pastel blue and green bottles of soda-water clinking and jingling like xylophones in a circus when clowns pick out jolly airs on them.

The brilliance of Joja's magnetic charm was in fact partly heightened by the reflection of Zigman's mysterious and in every way

attractive presence, but Joja, himself, by virtue of his own gifts, his Viennese mother and her fantastic ancestry, his mother who had turned up in our little town quite by chance, by virtue of the fact that he »played the guitar like Paganini«, that he recited Petar Zrinski in Wiener Neustadt (»with genius« as Father Benjamin Benko, the Prior of the Franciscan monastery fully recognized), but above all and particularly because in class he held forth loudly at the head of the wavering mass of indifferent pro-Hungarian compromisers as the only True Croat, and as such, Joja enjoyed the unchallenged authority of an outstanding personality, and in the high school he was »someone« in every sense of the word, and not only because he spoke Italian, German and French, but above all because he had never studied anything and five excellents was his average mark in school reports. No-one croaticized at school as Joja did, and no-one dared flaunt the beloved tricolour on his breast at Holy Mass as Joja did, despite the fact that it was forbidden to display the national colours in church (for »the Holy Blessed Mass was the communion of pious souls at God's table and not a place for provocative demonstrations.«), in a word: No-one in the class was as gifted in so many ways and as passionately patriotic as Joja, although his mother Eleanor, geborene von Schönau, was Viennese, born in our little town one day in what could certainly be called bizarre circumstances.

Joja's mother's father, Joja's grandfather, Ferdinand von Schönau, a surveyor, came to Zagreb in the autumn of 1859, under ban Šokčević, as an Imperial Surveyor, appointed District Surveyor by Supreme Imperial Decree, and he arrived with his young wife Flora one foggy October evening by carriage from Varaždin, and put up at the »Anker« hotel, below the Bishop's palace, at the top of Vlaška Street, immediately next to St. Martin's church. The newly-appointed Imperial District Surveyor was suddenly taken ill and just after he had been carried unconscious up to his hotel room, before his young wife could pull herself together, Ferdinand von Schönau passed silently away in Flora's arms, so that the young woman, who was then five months pregnant, was left in Agram as the District Surveyor's widow, and on St. Valentine's day, the fourteenth of February of the following year, 1860, she gave birth to a baby girl, Eleanor, who was married twenty five years later to Gašpar Dijak, the Zagreb Magistrate's secretary, and as Mrs. Dijak, in the sixth year of her marriage, became the mother of our Joachim Dijak, known as Joja.

»What lousy luck, to appear in this world on St. Joachim's day, on precisely the sixteenth of August! I was christened the same day for fear that I might die, because the midwife had predicted that I would not even survive the Hail Mary, and one wonders, dear colleagues, just who was this Joachim, father of St. Anne, the mother of the Holy Virgin Mary, her grandpa in other words, who had the honour of experiencing such a great family joy when his grand-daughter gave birth to an illegitimate baby, congratulations, well-done... But still, if you think about it, it would not have been much cleverer if they had christened me the following day, I would have been called Hyacinth, and the day after that, the eighteenth of August, Franz Joseph's birthday, they would have christened me with name of St. Agapetus which would have been even more ridiculous than Joachim, but they could have waited another two or three days and

called me Bernard, I would have had a suitable patron at least, Bernardo was one of the night guards at Elsinore that is how »Hamlet« begins: »Who's there... Bernardo...?«, or were I at least Bernard de Clairvaux, he has a huge portrait on the wall of the archbishop's sacristy, he was French, a philosopher, but no, of course, they were in a hurry so they branded me for life, Joja scratched himself lengthily to scratch out his name, like a dog with an itch, which has already made its ears bleed but simply cannot stop the irritation.

He was wonderful, our Joachim Dijak-Zigman, known as Joja (whose father Gašpar had died suddenly just like his grandfather Ferdinand von Schönau, of apoplexy, in an inn what is more, in Dolac, over his eight glass of wine), and Eleanor, »geborene von Schönau« was married to the match-maker Zigman and that is how Joja, Zigman's stepson, became in Kamilo Emerički's eyes the epitome of an uncompromising fanatic follower of Starčević, an atheist, a social-democrat, because Zigman, the firework maker, owner of funeral horses and dealer in Christmas fire-crackers, was a »socialist«, but this fact was kept strictly secret and could only be passed on by an intimate friend to his closest confidant, with the utmost mutual discretion.

As though leading him into fantastic places out of magical thousand and one night tales, every movement and every idea of Joja's opened up new, unheard of worlds of ideas and enchanting prospects to Kamilo and it was one summer evening in Maksimir, on the lake, in a little boat, in the midst of general amusements with fireworks and a tombola, that Joja confessed to Kamilo that Zigman was a »socialist«, and that those young women playing tamburas in a boat with blood red sashes over their white silk dresses, who were playing so beautifully a barcarolle from the Tales of Hoffmann croaticized and adapted for the tambura — these young women were »socialists« »class-consciously« organized in battle lines of the Croatian working people in their struggle for freedom.

The Zigman's flat above the old Medveščak which still trickled over Splavница at that time was in fact a sort of powder-magazine, chemical laboratory or bazar, a ware-house stocked with saltpetre, phosphorous, rockets, fire-crackers and children's toys, and Joja too was a dab hand at making up firework shot and charges; he was not only a guitarist and actor, firework displayer and composer, but also an expert in making bishops' monograms in different coloured rockets, in the evening sky of the Bishops' Park on Ribnjak. Seeing as at that time, ever since 1903, there was a fair amount of firing all over the place and as a muffled explosion sometimes in the Upper Town and sometimes from the Hungarian Railway Station or under the windows of some betrayed Magyar sympathizer would resound somewhere almost every quiet night, Joja revealed to Kamilo, from whom he could not keep any secret, that Zigman was the main supplier of anti-magyar explosives, for Zigman was a Pure-Croat and Socialist at the same time, and when one day the Great Day of Freedom dawned, the world would see that there had not been a greater Croatian patriot in the world than Zigman since Petar Zrinski.

Like Joja in Kamilo's eyes, Zigman was a kind of Superman in Joja's, more: a Demigod, and for his part it suited Zigman, for some unknown reason, that his stepson, whom he loved as his own child, should be such close friends with the only son of an »Honourable«

functionary, while again Joja's Viennese mother, »geborene von Schönau«, always received Kamilo with the same formality, the same ceremonial respect as though he were a Spanish grandee, so that Kamilo spent almost all his spare time at the Zigmans, feeling more at home there than under his own parents' roof in Jurjevka Street.

What a wonderful boy Joja was! He knew all the secrets of the Kaptol, all the cellars and all the catacombs, all the sacristies and all the belfries, all the doves' nests, all the canons, clerics, friars and tarts from the tanners' brothels whom he called »our little dears«, and he never did any school work, and that impressed everyone, how on earth could he reel off Greek irregular verbs so fluently without ever sitting down with a book? He used to make a little money as an acolyte at early morning mass or organizing firework displays and spent it all on books, and when the boys vied with each other over their collections Joja's was the biggest because Zigman had given him a series of Italian classics, with gold engraved bindings, and these Italians shone in Joja's bookshelves -- hors concours. Joja read tirelessly, and avidly, including nonsense of various kinds, political literature and detective stories, and so one day he gave Kamilo a Viennese brochure about the French Revolution, for him to see how kings' heads were cut off...

»Well then, kiddo, what do you think, did Marie-Antoinette deserve to die?« he asked this delicate question of Kamilo the following day in the tone of a relentless Jacobin, examining the conscience of a politically doubtful blue-blooded *ci-devant*, or in Zigman's socialist jargon, a popinjay and fop.

»Well, yes, she did and she didn't, it depends how you look at it«, Kamilo replied to his Jacobin mentor in an equally exalted tone, for he had read some kind of romanticized history in instalments in a German illustrated magazine of his mother Hortense's a year before, about the idyllic love between Marie Antoinette and a Swedish count, Fersen, who lost his life fearlessly and faultlessly, like a true knight, saving his tragic royal Dulcinea.

»What do you mean she didn't, man! Think carefully, she was Austrian, she was Maria Theresa's daughter and the Habsburgs killed Petar Zrinski, they are our national enemies, the Viennese gentry, and besides this whore was in the pay of the Austrian court during the war, and she still didn't deserve to die, come now, really, be sensible...«

»Well yes, if you look at it that way, she was guilty certainly, I'm not saying she wasn't, but then again she could be said to be innocent because she didn't know what it was all about...«

»What on earth do you mean she didn't know what it was all about, she must have known!«

»Why must she? She wasn't a Jacobin, she hadn't a clue what was going on, Joja, don't you see: Marie Antoinette couldn't read Jacobin leaflets about it all as we can nowadays, the Bastille meant something different to her than to the Jacobins, she thought the Bastille was something positive she herself was convinced she was dying innocent...«

»Do you think so,« Joja mused, and this possibility seemed to confuse him completely, »why yes, if you put it like that, I hadn't even thought of it, and you can look at it like that, everything's

relative after all... Well, yes, of course, but still we're not here to defend kings, kings are our enemies, aren't they, we're against the royal Magyar Bastille, we've got to blow it up, we're agreed on that, Milo, aren't we, word of honour?»

»Word of honour!«

»Allons enfants?«

»Allons enfants!«

»Let's shake on it.«

»Right!«

»Milo, you're great, I'd give my life for you, take it, just tell me when and where, you can count on it, I give you my word, and I'm so happy, that we're together, that we've got our secrets, you and I, it's really great...«

But how did it happen that Eleanor geborene von Schönau, the mother of Joachim Dijak-Zigman, went away to Vienna, dramatically suddenly, one dark evening, and Joja came for his only friend in tears, announcing that his mamma was leaving that evening, and he begged to come with him, to see his mamma off, he was afraid, he did not know, but he was afraid, something had happened to mamma, mamma was leaving for Vienna from the South Station, but she was going alone, and Joja was afraid that she was never going to come back...

Kamilo loved Joja's mother, he loved her very much, even more than his own at times, because she was the mother of his idol, Joja, and so he burst into tears along with Joja, and so they saw Joja's mamma off at the South Station, and that last, dramatic drive by cab, under the dark, thick chestnut trees in the rain, had been fixed in Kamilo's memory all these years as an unforgettable adventure, and it had made his heart ache to think of that endlessly long, ominously terrifying journey down that black avenue, ever since...

The cab was lined with black paper, absolutely black like the black box of old-fashioned cameras, as black, in this darkness within darkness, as in a black trunk, on the opposite seat are huddled two silent figures in the black gloom, two ghostly apparitions, two death masks, one of Mrs. Eleanor Zigman, Joja's mamma, and the other of Mr. Zigman, and so the cab trundles through the dense darkness of the avenue, so it journeys into the night, into the hopeless, deep, dark, incomprehensible night, so this mysterious black carriage bears Joja's mother off into the darkness, into the ominous, hazardous darkness, and the greenish gas-light of the street lamps illuminates this spectacle with a mild silver light at regular temporal intervals, these spectres are eerily extinguished and lit in the darkness like real ghosts, and not a single word is heard, for all four of the passengers are keeping a dramatically heavy silence, deaf-mute so to speak, in the rhythmic spilling of the phosphorous gas lamp-light, accompanied by the muffled beat of the iron horse-shoes on the granite, under the arch of old chestnut trees, in front of the South Station, to reach which one had to travel interminably far outside town, where there were no more by-passers, as though all the inhabitants were lying on biers in their grey flats behind the misty leaden windows.

Mr. Zigman leant on the silver handle of his elegant black lacquered stick, folded both hands over the silver handle, and as the gas light fell over Mr. Zigman's hand, over that hand which seemed to have been carved out of white chalk, Kamilo was overcome by a strange

horror, a liquid, burning, pricking terror, he felt condemned and outlawed for life, alone, without Joja, without his mother, and so from this overwhelming instinctive need to touch something living, something warm, to hold out his hand to something that could help both Joja and himself, he touched Joja's mother's sleeve with the tip of his forefinger, feeling under the soft tip of his finger the sharpness of the cotton threads, stunned at how bony and cold as a skeleton Joja's mother's fingers were under the thin black web of threads, like the silver of the Archbishop's silver crucifix in the empty Cathedral.

»This hand is as icy as the marble of an altar slab, this hand will never be warm again.« Kamilo's eyes welled forlornly with tears at this thought and he hugged Joja desperately, both boys weeping bitterly, and Mr. Zigman, breathing tensely as though wounded, clapped his right palm without a word against the back of his left hand, which was resting peacefully on the silver handle, engraved in Russian style of the province of Tula.

Joja's mother did not in fact come back. She expired in Vienna in the course of an operation, a week or two after that dramatic cab ride, but what was surprising about her death was that it was transformed in Joja's eyes into the unexpected delight of a trip to Vienna. Mr. Zigman and Joja went to Vienna for the funeral, already excited by the mere fact of going to Vienna, and so the funeral of Mrs. Eleanor Zigman, geborene von Schönau, was transformed into a joyful opportunity for visiting the Viennese aunts and altogether: mamma's unknown and mysterious family, and when Joja returned from Vienna stuffed full of Stolwerck chocolate, with books, with an expensive air pistol, mamma somehow unexpectedly vanished with the utmost discretion into the background of this adventure, which was taken over by Vienna with its Rings, its indescribable illuminations, cavalry, carriages, shop displays, cakes, pastries and books.

»There are more chocolates and sweets in Vienna than maize here, Milo, and they have books in the street-stalls and shop windows like we have mud... Zigman took us to a socialist printer's, why dear boy, there the socialists print their own newspaper on their own press, they sell books in their own shops, and what they print is sold quite openly in the streets, can you imagine, Milo, what socialism is in Vienna today, what a force it is, why it's a dream, brother, Vienna is a wonderful city, you can feel socialism on its way...

Kamilo had been to Vienna several times already, including that spring on his way back from Budapest with his father, when the latter set off to collect Hortense to take her home from Semmering, but Vienna did not mean socialism to Kamilo, to him it meant parties at mamma's friends' houses, it meant the Opera, mamma took him round the galleries, there are a lot of pictures in Vienna, he had even taken part in a festive Christmas service on the Helden Platz, military parades, music, horses, trumpets, in a word, parades, cavalry, generals, flags, drawn sabres in the sun, clear skies, fountains, the roar of cannon, there are a lot of generals in Vienna, a lot of counts, arch-dukes, ice-cream, Schönbrunn, at all events, obviously, the old nobility, there is no doubt about it...

»They stole it all from us, it's ours, they took it all away from the Zrinskis, we've got to get it all back from them, and that's what socialism is, the triumph of justice, only you must fight, are you with me, word of honour, Milo, swear, there: we will fight, I swear by my mother's grave, on my honour, allons enfants, we all know what that means...«

What with his mother's »gold« drawing room, in the middle of the de Emerički's unspeakably boring flat in Jurjevska Street, where Kamilo slept in his room under the roof (from where a piano could be heard playing the waltz from »Traviata« in the tanners' brothel all night long), what with mamma's parties and papa's whist on Tuesdays and Fridays, season tickets to the theatre and concerts in the Institute of Music, and altogether in monotonously performed, always equally inexpressibly boring variations on the same theme, according to always the same, inexpressibly boring, always consistently inalterable order at lunch and dinner in his parents' house, Kamilo lived (to use the regnicular-administrative style of his respected father) torn »bilaterally« -- in two directions: on the one hand, according to the precisely regulated programme of everyday occupations, according to well-drilled precepts laid down by Mr. de Emerički, the Government Praesidium Pedant, and on the other hand, increasingly intensively, with increasingly devoted sympathy for all that began to develop as a new motif at the Zigmans' after Eleanor's death, a motif of immeasurably greater interest than the noble Mrs. Emerički's excursions to Römmerbad or Rohitsch-Sauerbrunn, mathematics or French irregular verbs could ever possibly be.

The setting below the Kaptol wall, where maids and washerwomen and their bastards rumble and grunt half-drunkenly, where in the blind throng no-one really knows who is sleeping with whom and who is whose offspring, and where furious and so often bad-tempered dish-washers, seamstresses and whores mingle with chamber-maids, police constables, clerks and with all the town's domestic personnel, and their natural children read brochures about the Bastille, preparing themselves for their historical role in the Jacobin liberation of »Our Beautiful Fatherland«, all this crude, uneducated and clumsy milling of coarse and half-sober life under decaying roofs, was for Kamilo the source of the most unbelievable discoveries, as though he were reading an extraordinary book, a garbled mixture of mamma's cook Kristina's Egyptian dream-book and the fantastic history of the terrible, murky, grey and repulsive Bloody Bridge over which, under the old Kaptol mills, cabs would carry the drunken gentry from the lower town to brothels all night long.

»This is where Cime's Lenka broke her leg when she stole the ham from the attic at the canon Lovra's and the children at the Radotić's or the Šoštara's or the Grobotek's have got scarlet fever, and at Vincenc's, Vincenc's grandmother is making doughnuts, their Lota is marrying the Peršins' son tomorrow, he's a waiter in the Budapest restaurant-car, they're all in a state because of the wedding, and Šipek's Micika has had a baby, no-one knows who the father is, but old Šipek has broken some of Jeršič's apprentice's ribs, because it's

thought that Jeršić's apprentice could have been the one who dishonoured his only hope... The police came and arrested Julčika, the provost Bukovečki's cook, because she stole a bracelet from Miss Ludmila, the bishop's niece, and Julčika argued with the constables that the bishop's niece was the mistress of that old pig of a priest, because once when Julčika burst accidentally into His Eminence's room, she had found His Eminence on top of the bishop's niece, on top of Miss Ludmila, and the old man could not forgive her for that and now he was getting her arrested as a thief, and so it was that out of this hotch-potch of infernal rumours Marta Kuzmićeva emerged one day, appearing at the Zigmans' as a servant, Marta's mother Fanika, a waitress at the »Croatian Café« was well known for her famous voice and Marta, a seventeen year old »slut« as she was referred to when it was all in the papers, had »fallen victim to the lecherous lust« of a Zagreb dandy, a gentleman from the so-called »upper crust«, and it was all hushed up by the court, of course, but nonetheless Marta was hustled into the convent at Klinčac where she licked the altars, her head shaved to the skin, in the strictest novitiate routine for two full years before she finally managed to wrench herself away from temptation and settle down at the Zigmans', and she baked -- non plus ultra pancakes, and these non plus ultra pancakes of Marta's were a little work of art, soused in currant jam, divine ambrosia...

That those Reginas and Carolinas and Micikas were coquettish bits of fluff, that they were bristly and prickly as sea-weed in just the place where woman's greatest secret is hidden, slippery and moist as a ripe fig, and that love smelled like a tin of sardines, all this Joja knew from his own intrepid experience, for he had already »slept« with Marta Kuzmićeva, and as far as Joja was concerned, he could tell Kamilo, honest to God, that the whole thing was not all that particularly interesting, and Kamilo could have a go at it with Marta, because he had fixed it all with her, and when on that fateful Thursday, so decisive in the life of Kamilo Emerički, Marta, glowing all over with living fire, was making her famous non plus ultra pancakes, and when the boys arrived from school, Joja had pestered Marta so much that she promised him she would show Kamilo her breasts, and so Marta, ostensibly passively, to satisfy her lover's clamouring, but in fact with sophisticated coquetry, with a smoky pancake in the frying pan in her right hand, hoisted her breast out of her blouse with her left, and yelled at Kamilo, as though he were an idiot, to stop standing there like an idiot and come and kiss it, because her pancake, which was sizzling away on the orange glow of the fire like a little volcano, was going to go up in smoke. So as not to make a fool of himself, Kamilo touched the swelling white flesh with his lip and, quite dazed with the sweetish vanilla of bazar soap, he felt the salt-stale taste of her flesh, the taste of oysters or »Franz Joseph« Epsom Salts, and when, like a hen drinking water, he raised his head and ran his eyes over the ceiling, the whole kitchen with Marta, the red fire and the windows, clouded over and spun perilously and when he felt that he was going to collapse on the floor in a heap, Marta shut his mouth with a hot pancake and so with the aid of the greasy dough returned him to the world where Joja, shrieking with laughter, teased him for being a fool who could not kiss woman's breasts even when they were offered him.

»Here, watch how it's done, you clown.« Joja took the hot smoking pan from Marta and threw it onto the stove, and pushing the girl onto the bed began to kiss her, while Marta shrieked for help as though she were in some kind of danger, and as Kamilo threw himself blindly and passionately into mêlée, physically excited like a young ram, in the midst on the boys' laughter and giggles the figure of old Betika appeared like a ghost in the doorway, and seeing them in such diabolical heap, she cried out — you filthy little swine, what in God's name are you up to, the Holy Cross confound you, what kind of a Sodom and Gomorrah is this, what has Satan put into you, you wretched hell-hounds, have you no fear of God?«

»Hush your noise, Betika, there's nothing wrong, here's a pancake, look at her on her high horse, as if everyone didn't know that you were an army landlady, that you could bed a whole regiment of Hussars...«

The scene of the pancakes and Marta's generous favour took place on Thursday about midday, and Kamilo, distracted by the jolt to his senses, did not calm down until late that night. He did not put in an appearance at the Zigmans' the whole of the next day, Friday, because of a vague, gloomy feeling of shame and guilt, and Joja had told him that on Saturday he was going with Zigmou to the market in Sisak and so that fateful Sunday dawned -- destined to remain throughout Kamilo's life a date which gave an unexpected direction to the whole course of his development.

It rained the whole of that Sunday and in order to tear himself away from his absorbing daydreaming about Marta's bosom, Kamilo devoted himself to his not all that unimportant worries over Greek verbs and the piano, since of late he had been involved in various adventures and since Thursday, for two whole days, he had not been able to free his thoughts from the vision of that infernal temptation with the pancakes and Marta's décolleté, that flat pear which peeped out of her white battiste blouse like a soft banana, and Joja had fixed it all with Marta and they were most likely waiting for him and he would perhaps have risked going back, if that wretched Betika had not come in, for if the old bitch reported them, the whole thing would end in the most dreadful scandal and disgrace...

During dinner, during the tedious Sunday dinner, à trois, when the Emeričkis ate together alone en famille, because Sunday was the maid's day off, His Honour, Mrs. Emerički and Kamilo, cold ham, hard-boiled eggs, potato salad with mayonnaise, cold cheese dumplings left over from lunch, peaches, Kamilo acted as though he were taking part in the conversation, his thoughts wandering from Marta and Betika to Joja and Zigman in Sisak, he replied and played his part passively, the conversation trickled softly, familiarly, and even when it stopped as though according to the writer's directions (wine is poured out, and water, silver clinks, plates are passed, someone goes to the sideboard, knives for the cheese are taken, yes, yes, and no, no, His Honour De Francisci said that at any rate things should somehow be organized, and His Honour Isidor does not agree, and so forth, and I said forgive me, magnifice, but if I may say so, you are a blockhead), Kamilo, physically present and apparently con-

concentrated, roamed far afield, round the Kaptol wall, round the Zigmans' kitchen, an imaginary, quite unreal Marta hovered before his eyes, and try as he might he could not drive away the vision of her bare breasts and Joja had not been in touch with him which was strange, he had expected him all afternoon, and he had not come, Sunday was usually Joja's day, Joja visited Jurjevska Street regularly on Sundays, when the bell rang down on the old-fashioned door.

Drrring, drrring, someone was pulling determinedly on the bell rope at the door, as though the massive bell in the Cathedral were ringing, to remind people of what it was like on Good Friday, when the same murderous bell bayed like a hysterical, aroused bitch, accompanying the procession to the scaffold when the infidels drove our Saviour beaten and bleeding to Good Friday, and whoever it was down there kept on ringing and it did not sound as though he were going to stop, and it could not be a visitor, who could possibly turn up at the Emeričkis at this hour without warning?

»It must be an urgent telegram from Budapest,« old Emerički nodded, peeling his peach carefully, completely indifferently and calmly, as though it were the most normal thing in the world for the door bell to be rung so urgently on a Sunday evening.

»Why they would have telephoned from the Praesidium, if it were a telegram from Budapest,« Mrs. Emerički ventured to comment.

How, why should they telephone, and who could have telephoned anyway, if it's a telegram from Reviczki, it must be something confidential, Reviczki always brings confidential information to Jurjevska very discreetly, doesn't he, Hortense, if it is something that requires discretion, Reviczki always telegraphs me at my private address, it has been like that for a good twelve years now, Hortense, hasn't it, please go and have a look son, it will be a telegram, you would have thought the house was on fire, the way that fool is ringing...«

Kamilo went downstairs and opened the chained and bolted door with the huge old key, but instead of a telegram, he found a policeman.

»Police, with a warrant for the arrest of the fourth-year high-school student, Kamilo Emerički,« announced a gentleman in a pork pie hat, accompanied by two others also in pork pie hats.

»That's me, what can I do for you?«

»Aha, it's you is it, good, but we've got a warrant to search your things, where's your flat, you impudent monkey, you've got it coming to you, my fine young gentleman!«

So that's that, thought Kamilo, I can see old Betika's hand in this. Immorality, someone has reported us, really we should never have done that with the pancakes, and now here we are, the police, the vice squad, there'll be one hell of a scandal, »excuse me, I must warn my father!«

»Go on, then, hurry up, we haven't got much time, but hang on, you're not giving us the slip, we're coming with you, young man!«

»By all means!«

He went upstairs to the first floor accompanied by the gentlemen in pork pie hats and opened the door of the dining room very quietly, »I'm sorry, father, I don't know why, but these gentlemen have come, they're looking for me...«

»„Looking for you?“ how, I don't understand, who is „looking for you“,« His Honour was taken aback, and, stopping peeling his peach,

he sat staring, his knife in his right hand and the peach in the left, dumbfounded, »what „gentlemen”, who is „looking for you”?«

»The Police!«

»The Police (the „Police” in the house of His Honour Kamilo Emerički, what „Police” in God’s name, in his house, in the house of the chief of Political Administration, the house of the chief of police in fact — the „Police”), and what do they want?« His Honour rose nervously from the table and opened the dining-room door to see what it was all about.

»Excuse me, please, Your Honour, we’re sorry to trouble you, sir, allow me to introduce myself, Royal Police Constable Dr. Lukačić of Lukavečki, I have come with a warrant from the Directorate of the Royal Constabulary for the arrest of the fourth year high-school student Kamilo Emerički, and before taking him away to make a thorough search of his personal effects.«

»What do you mean take my son away under arrest, that means you will have to deprive him of his freedom first, by what right and on what grounds, may I ask? He is a minor, he’s still a school-boy, he lives under my personal supervision, and this flat is my private flat! And, why, officer, I do not understand, why this search warrant and arrest of a fourth year school boy, these are severe measures and I must confess that I am surprised, or rather, I simply do not understand a thing...«

»I’m sorry, Your Honour, that’s the warrant I’ve been given, and however awkward it may be for me to come to you in this capacity, I have no alternative but to abide by my mandate, I could go into the reasons in private, may I say with the utmost respect, Mr. President, Sir, the affair is highly confidential.« Dr. Lukačić of Lukavečki, Royal Police Constable, soothed His Honour the President with his warm, dog-like gaze as though wanting to say -- I cannot talk in front of the accused of the merits of the act itself, because such are your personal regulations, which we received from the office for Political Administration...

»All right, if that’s how it is, all right, then let these gentlemen wait here, and you stay with them, Kamilo, with your mother, and wait here till I come back, excuse me, Hortense, as you see this is quite beyond my powers to stop, I am perfectly confident that it is a question of some quid-pro-quo, why it is simply incomprehensible, it’s an unspeakable scandal, the worst possible scandal in fact, and really, the most unlikely scandal, is it not, excuse me, Hortense, be so good as to wait for us, because as you can see, I have no alternative but to go and see what it is all about, this way, please, come in to my study, and you wait here with these, gentlemen, Kamilo, Hortense, please keep calm, for the love of God, I would rather drop down dead, forgive me, it is absolutely incomprehensible I simply do not understand a thing...«

Mrs. Emerički, silent as though paralysed, remained sitting at the head of the table, dumb-founded, as though in a fit of momentary idiocy, quite beside herself, and then she drew her only son towards her, and, kissing the boy’s burning cheeks and hugging him, burst into loud and helpless tears.

The Police Constable, Dr. Lukačić of Lukavečki, informed His Honour the President that on Saturday at dusk, the Police had caught

the fourth year high-school student Joachim Dijak, in the courtyard of the Directorate of the Hungarian National Railways, as he came rushing down from the first floor where he had placed a fair sized bomb in the General Director's office, and had it somehow exploded the dynamite charge was so strong that it would undoubtedly have destroyed the whole of the first floor, if not that whole wing of the building. This fourth year school boy Joachim Dijak was the stepson of someone called Zigman, at present employed as a cab contractor, but otherwise a fundamentally suspicious character, in all probability an agent of the Trieste Socialist Movement, and this tutor of the young Dijak was suspected of being the initiator of this monstrosity, and as such had also been arrested. Zigman had been put away because the accused admitted that he was an accessory in this criminal act, and all evidence pointed to Zigman having given his stepson the explosive, and as His Honour's son was one of Dijak's closest friends, in fact his only friend (in the class they were known as Castor and Pollux) there was valid reason for suspecting that part of the explosive might be concealed in Kamilo's flat, and this assumption was recognized by the Directorate of the Royal Constabulary as well-founded, and the warrant to cross-examine Kamilo and search all his belongings, was therefore perfectly justified.

»Has the accused admitted anything in this connection and has he said anything in his statement that might have given rise to these extreme measures?« interested in this formality as one who knew the procedure backwards, His Honour endeavoured to display an ostensibly indifferent attitude so that he would not appear to this stupid constable too much like a father, personally involved in the affair...

»In other words, I am asking you as a matter of sheer formality, because if the accused has not implicated the suspect, the whole thing could be settled by a simple summons to a cross-examination, without such bravado and without mobilizing the whole apparatus as though it were a question of a gangster.«

The constable was not in charge of the investigation, he was not familiar with the details, but he presumed that the Chief of Police would not conceivably have decided on what were, he admitted, drastic measures if there were not serious reason for them, and the best proof that this was the case was the fact that the investigation had been going on for twenty four hours already, and it was not until this evening that it had been decided to arrest His Honour's son. The Police Constable was conscious of the delicate nature of his mission and he begged His Honour to allow him to proceed with carrying out his instructions and examining Kamilo's things, which he would do, with His Honour's permission, in His Honour's presence, if he so wished, in private, with His Honour's permission...

Resigned, His Honour went up to Kamilo's room with the constable. It did not seem at first glance that the job of searching was going to be at all complicated. There was no furniture in the room apart from the wardrobe, metal bedstead, table, divan and arm-chair. A lacquered bookcase (in the style of the nineteenth century's Mauvais Gout) with little balustrades, crammed with books, but there was nothing among them that might particularly have caught the attention of a guardian of Law and Order.

Books, a large number of books: »The Last Abencerrages« by Chateaubriand, translated by Prince Nikola of Montenegro, the libretto of Karl Marie Weber's »Der Freischutz«, a Monograph of the town of Zagreb by Adolph of Mošinski, Jules Verne: »Twenty Thousand Miles under the Sea«, Jules Verne: »Journey to the Moon«, Josip Eugene Tomić: »Melita«, Zagorka: »Vladimir«, Ante Tresić Pavić: »Waves of Thought and Sensation«, Starčević: »Letters of Magyarophiles«, Kraujčević: »Selected Poems«, some Hungarian books, Mikszáth, Jókai, Petöfi, Vörösmarti, »The Pickwick Papers« bound in red, Ferenc Molnár...

»There, that's reading matter for you, as you can see it could not be said that the boy does not read, but none of that is going to give us a lead.«

»There is another shelf of books in the wardrobe, if you'll allow me, Your Honour.«

»And what good will books do you, is it your duty to examine books, you are supposed to be finding explosives, not books...«

»Forgive me, Your Honour, I am going to search everything that could help explain whole episode, to explain other people's connection with the accused, and that might be books and letters, and besides these aren't the only books here, there is another shelf in the wardrobe. Excuse me, Your Honour.«

He was right. More books now appeared in the hands of this unfortunate constable, whole piles of books: »Manual for Midwives« (with a large number of photographs and diagrams from various phases of birth), inside the »Manual for Midwives« was a bundle of colour photographs, cut out of various monographs: naked earthly figures of goddesses and biblical characters: Rachel, Susannah bathing, Europa, Giorgione, Rubens, Boticelli, Goya, Manet, then: »Die seelischen Shadigungen der Selbstbefleckung«, Zola: »Nana« (in German translation), Sade: »Les Crimes de l'Amour«, illustrated...

»That's not all, excuse me, Your Honour, let us look once more in this wardrobe, I believe there is a secret compartment in it...«

The Police Constable, all zeal, in order that his President should see him in the role of a virtuoso (if stupid) spy, opened the wardrobe once more, shuffled the coats and suits around, and, knocking on a hollow wall, moved a small board aside, and in the darkness at the back of the wardrobe his fingers felt out some shapes in parcels.

»There are some books here, and quite a lot of them too, there are whole packets of printed matter...«

And a smallish pile of various brochures was revealed: »General Election Secret Voting Rights« in seven copies, »What is the Dictatorship of the Proletariat?« in three, »How an Ordinary Crook Retains his Seat in the Ban's Palace« in three copies, »The Rijeka Resolution« in twenty »The Bloody Year of 1903« in two copies, »Die magyarische Prepotenz« in three, »The 1868 Settlement, death sentence to the Croatian people«, »Typescript of the minutes of the meeting of the Croatian Assembly, 1906«, »What is Socialism?«, »Forward, sons of the Fatherland«, a whole bundle of Frano Supilo's »The New Rijeka Daily«, and finally »God is man's creation« in three copies...

»There, Your Honour, now we have searched this wardrobe and I can say with a perfectly clear conscience that we have not found anything, that is that the assumption that there could be a store of explosives here is, it seems, unfounded.«

»Why yes, I wondered from the start what good these books would do, they are not 'corpora delicti', they are private reading matter.«

»Private reading matter', yes, yes, 'private reading matter', but nevertheless, it does throw some light on the moral character of these boys, who have been terrorizing us for several years already, Your Honour. And if it were anyone but your son I should say that on the basis of this evidence we should undertake a thorough search of the whole house for I am convinced that we would come across various other surprises.«

Numb, unable to think, as though drugged, enervated by this idiot of a constable, who was conscientiously playing his role of naïve fool, while in fact virtually blackmailing him, taken aback by this literature of Kamilo's try as he might, His Honour could not find the right words to free the »suspect character« who read »Manual for Midwives« and »God is man's creation« from albeit legitimate suspicion, but on the other hand it did not seem opportune under the circumstances to fall passively in with this police spy's logic...

»If you please, I am not attempting to evade the consequences, I too know where my duty lies, my dear young man, I give you my word that first thing in the morning I shall search the whole house from attic to cellar with the utmost care, immeasurably more pedantically than we could do it now, at this moment, and I shall personally place a report on whatever may be disclosed, of whatever nature it might be, before those in charge of the investigation. Straight into the hands of your chief himself, that is sufficient, for now, is it not, have you any more requirements, I imagine that all formalities here have been completed now, have they not?«

»All right, Your Honour, as far as I am concerned, I am ready, and I think it is time we went, if we may...«

»Yes, by all means, do go, who is preventing you?«

»That is right, Your Honour, but in order to avoid possible regrettable consequences, I must handcuff the boy.«

»What do you mean! Why, nothing has been proved yet, sir, that is a preventative measure, he is under suspicion, these are circumstances classified by law, why handcuff him straight away, you are dealing with a minor whom you are taking to a straightforward police hearing, we are not Tartars!«

»We are not Tartars, Your Honour, but this is normal practice, and those were my instructions, you can never tell what such a character could provoke — an unexpected scandal, an ostentatious disturbance in the street...«

»Did you come by car?«

»Cab.«

»Open?«

»Closed.«

»Then why bind him if you came by cab!«

»Those are the regulations.«

»What regulations, who could possibly have laid down such a meaningless regulation, pure formality, I shall not allow him to be bound, wait. I'll speak to your superior.«

They went down to the study, The Director of the Royal Constabulary answered the telephone and the curtains over this exhausting

story opened like a white-headed vulture tearing at the remains of its carrion, ever more cruelly.

It appeared that the wretched youth's stepfather had been arrested too, a well-known character from Trieste, an Italian agent, irredentist, he had already worked with bombs in Trieste, now he was an undertaker, cab-owner, firework maker, an individual who had spent more than two years in various prisons for different offences, as a smuggler, forger of documents, socialist agitator, thief, proved such and punished; in a word, Mr. Žigman, the soda water seller, was a fine fish, with all respect, and it was not at all surprising that the boy had turned out this way, like father like son, it was that favourite of the bishops who was the initiator of this scandal. And that little whipper-snapper had already all the makings of a hardened criminal, he refused to give anyone away, was ready to die for his tutor, in twenty four hours he had not said a single word, he admitted to the crime, he further admitted that he had himself set up the explosive in the doorway of the Provost Bukovečki's mansion and the one at the corn merchant Wohlgemuth's, but that he had done it all on his own initiative, without anyone knowing and in particular without the knowledge of his stepfather, that he had stolen the explosive, and he looked after that Žigman like his own right hand, a born gipsy, he was not going to give the old imposter away no matter what the cost, for you can imagine, Your Honour, we have not allowed him to close his eyes for a full twenty four hours, and when all is said and done, flogging is an argument ad hominem, for these young puppies . . .

»Do you mean to say you beat him?«

»Oh no, illustrissime, but flogging has always been a useful pedagogic device, we were brought up by the stick, illustrissime, we don't beat him, just a cane across the palms, as at school, and he knelt for five hours on maize seeds, we are treating him with vaseline, the soles of his feet are a bit swollen, but there we are, he won't talk . . .«

»How do you mean, the soles of his feet?«

»Why, for God's sake, it's nothing so terrible, Your Honour, these are more psychological methods, to impress the kid, but he's tough, there's nothing doing, he's tough, a real criminal, altogether a fine trio, that Marta is involved as well, if remember, illustrissime, she was the one who blackmailed young Fabian, it was a public scandal in the papers if you haven't forgotten, two years ago, the girl was then fourteen, and that, in a word, is the atmosphere, if you'll forgive me saying so, Your Honour, but I doubt whether you know it, that is the milieu in which your son has been living, and that criminal is his closest friend, yes, yes, the terrorist can boast to the whole world that he was received under your roof, but he won't even admit that, we learn that from his class mates, that he even found his way into your house, Your Honour . . .«

»Yes, that's true, he is friends with my Kamilo, they've been classmates since the first year, and for my part, magnifice, you see, I don't think the boy has really criminal tendencies, he's bright boy, perhaps misled, perhaps a tool in some other hands, we both know how pliable a child's psychology is, the boy never knew his father, he became very attached to this one, and he is not his father, his mother was Viennese by birth a respectable woman, modest, extremely well-bred, eine geboren von Schönau, and the youngster, as far as I could

judge, is undoubtedly exceptionally gifted, oh yes, yes, without doubt, when I say »exceptionally« I know what I am saying, he speaks two or three languages, perfectly, a born poly-glot, one of the best pupils in his class, if not the best, and I simply cannot understand how these things could have gone on and do go on in the heads of these boys, they are talented lads, above average.«

»You'll soon have our heads aching with all this talent, Your Honour, it would be better if they were mediocre, under strict control...«

»I don't know, I'm simply stupefatto, there have always been and there still are lost children, but the main thing is to put them back on the right path.« His Honour felt the need to resist the police logic of the worthy Director of the Royal Constabulary, out of sheer impulse of affection for Joachim, whom he had loved from the outset as a bright, honest mind, and now, from what this policeman said, he could see how determined Joachim was, how reliable, what integrity he had, and he realized that if Joja could have attributed any of the blame to Kamilo (and, knowing his son, this was not out of the question) he would not do it, since he had held out under blows for the first twenty-four hours without uttering a sound.

»All right, but could you tell me on what basis you have undertaken the drastic measure of arresting my son, have you any real motive for so doing?«

»We've had statements from witnesses, Your Honour, I have examined several pupils in the class, and besides that this Marta has confirmed that as far as she knows she thinks it is quite out of the question that your son was not involved in the affair, since he spent the whole of Saturday with Joachim until the evening, when they both went out together for a walk, consequently...«

»I see, this »prostitute« has »confirmed« it, and that is an authentic supposition on the basis of which you are now arresting my child?«

»To my mind, yes, it is sufficient, certainly, and in any case I want to talk to the young gentleman in the interests of the investigation and if possible this very evening, and I hope that you will sympathise with my argument, because it would not be opportune for your son to be passed over in these concrete circumstances simply because he is your son, Your Honour, the affair is known at the school, it has become public knowledge and besides, I don't think you'll object to the assumption that I've got the whole thing well in hand...«

»All right, but this constable of yours wants to bind him.«

»What do you mean, bind him?«

»Handcuff him like a criminal...«

»Regulations, Your Honour.«

»What regulations?«

»The Regulations of our Praesidium, if I am not mistaken, in view of the repeated use of explosives we received this directive from the Praesidium, with your signature, Your Honour.«

»Oh? Ah well, all right, but would it not be enough if I came with the boy tomorrow morning?«

»No, Illustrissime, I think it is in the interests of the investigation that he be confronted with this whore this evening, because the situation is such that the investigation must be continued tonight, Budapest has asked twice that we let them know how things are going, it's a question

of the Directorate of The Hungarian National Railways, Your Honour and that comes directly under the Minister of Transport, and I am extremely sorry, but had the girl not mentioned your son's name I would not have troubled you, despite the fact that the entire class unanimously points to your son...»

»All right, if it must be, all right, but I will not let him be handcuffed, do you understand, I will not let him be handcuffed because I am convinced that he is innocent, and I am not saying so as a father, but as your superior, do you understand, I am not influencing the course of the investigation, quite obviously, naturally, but I will not let him be handcuffed, and I'll bring him down to you myself, and now, be so kind as to let your constable know!«

And so it was. Dr. Lukačić with his escort went quietly away and father and son got into the cab alone.

In the cab, in the dark (in that same darkness in which Eleanor, geborene von Schönau, had set off to her death, with the funeral retinue of Zigman, Joja and Kamilo, then too the light of the gas-lamps washed over their pale faces), sitting beside his father, the son answered his questions in a brief staccato, how had it happened and why had things not been as they should have been, and when Kamilo learned that it was a question of explosives in the Railway Office and not Marta's bosom, an enormous boulder rolled off his heart and he even began to whistle a tune for joy: why, that was wonderful! old Betika had not reported them, it was not immorality but bombs, and that was definitely less dreadful...

»I'm asking you a question, when did you last see Joja?«

»On Thursday.«

»When?«

»On Thursday, after school, in other words about eleven thirty (that was those wretched pancakes), I went to Joja's place after school.«

»And what did you do there?«

»We made pancakes.«

»I see, you made pancakes, who made them and what sort?«

»Marta...«

»Ah, I see, Marta, a well-known prostitute and blackmailer, makes pancakes with you, for God's sake how did Marta come to be making pancakes with you, who is this Marta?«

»She's a maid at the Zigmans', she's been working there since Mrs. Zigman died.«

»Aha, so Marta made pancakes and you made them with her, and then where did you go after that, when you finished making those pancakes of yours, on Thursday, as we are talking about Thursday?«

»I came home to lunch as usual, we had guests, von Ronay and His Honour Salamon with his wife were there as usual, lunch was as usual, guests, I sat with the guests, then we had black coffee on the terrace, His Honour went on about St. Francis of Assissi, as usual, I don't remember much I was certainly at lunch...«

»All right, that was Thursday, when you made pancakes, and what did you do in the afternoon on Thursday, you tell me that, what did you do on Thursday afternoon, after lunch, where were you on Friday, on Saturday, when did you leave Joja, when did you see him last, because that is extremely important for the course of the investigation, since you must have an alibi for Friday and Saturday, that you weren't

with Joja, do you understand, didn't you see him on Friday or Saturday?»

»I told you, I left Joja on Thursday, after we made the pancakes, and I haven't seen him since...«

»What about Friday, how is it you didn't meet on Friday?»

»There was no school, Dies Directoris, and Joja said he was going to Sisak with Zigman to the market to buy horses, and so we didn't arrange to meet, because I was sure he had gone to Sisak...«

»All right, Sisak, good, that was Friday, and what happened on Saturday, how is it you didn't meet on Saturday, because Saturday is the critical day, and that creature of a maid has made a written statement to the effect that you were at their place on Saturday, that you spent the whole day with Joja and that you both went out for a walk together in the evening.«

»No, that's untenable, that's a mistake, I stayed at home on Saturday, I had indigestion from too much ice-cream, mother told me to stay at home, I didn't feel well, I had a temperature.«

»So, on Saturday, you stayed at home, yes, of course, I remember, ah yes, you had a temperature of a hundred and one on Saturday.«

»That's right, a hundred and one, why all these questions?»

»Because that young lady of yours, with whom you make pancakes, has stated expressis verbis that you were there on Saturday, that you went into town with Joja in the afternoon, and, listen carefully to what I say, this written statement of hers is the prime reason for the whole investigation as far as you are concerned, do you understand, you must prove that you weren't with Joja on Saturday, because that's important, you blockhead, do you understand, Saturday, that's the day of the affair, Joja was arrested on Saturday, at about seven p. m., but Joja is not implicating you, he is not implicating you with a single word, he hasn't mentioned you at all, Joja is holding his tongue, they've beaten him, do you understand, but that wretched Marta...«

His Honour did not take part in the conversation between Kamilo and the Director of the Royal Constabulary; the examination lasted until a quarter past two, it was already beginning to be light when father and son returned from the police station, Kamilo had held to his original statement that he knew nothing whatsoever, that he had not seen Joja since Thursday, and that Joja had never ever said a single word to suggest that he might be toying with the idea of blowing up the Railway Directorate, and since not even the accused Joja Zigman had ever said anything in this respect, on the basis of which it could be presumed that the intentions of the accused were known to Kamilo Emerički, and since it had been established beyond all doubt that Marta's statement was unfounded, because Joja and Kamilo had not met since Thursday, the Director let Kamilo return home until further notice, and to remain there under his parents' supervision...

In his room, under the roof, in the armchair by the window, Kamilo felt at the end of his strength. Out of the May night, full of the scent of acacia and roses, a mild breeze from the hills was shifting the net curtains under the pelmet, and the waltz from »Traviata«, and

then again the waltz from »Traviata« played on an old untuned piano wafted up from Kozarska Street.

The room was in utter chaos. The worthy constable had left everything scattered about, books, suits, underclothes. Kamilo picked up »Manual for Midwives«, it was all revolting, those straddled frogs' legs of women in labour, as though they were bringing forth tadpoles, a really infernal abomination, and out of the »Manual for Midwives« fluttered the whole bundle of colour reproductions of naked goddesses, Europa, Venus, Primavera, Susannah, Maya, and so Kamilo took Velasquez' Venus to the mirror, those shoulders, those hips, those breasts, Marta's breasts, Marta's silken ringlets fell like that onto her white shoulders, the thought of those shining greasy curls of Marta's dispersed the nervous disgust of »Manual for Midwives« like a mist, and Marta's hips, Marta's waist, the pure hundred percent Velasquez fata morgana, the supernatural vision once more took control of his imagination.

So, after all, they had discovered his secrets, his mask had been removed, there was no doubt, nor could there be any, that he had been unmasked. Now they knew everything, who he was and what he thought, but as far as Joja was concerned, Kamilo was calm. Joja had told him about canon Šandor's door. Joja had admitted that he personally had engineered the bomb attack on Bukovečki's mansion, and the fire crackers at Wohlgermuth's but that was a game, he had helped Joja with that: they had gone to buy chocolate at old Wohlgermuth's and while Kamilo was talking in German to old Wohlgermuth (and he was a pathological chatterbox), Joja set up the fire crackers, and it was just as well Betika was an idiot and had not reported that hellish »copulu carnis« for if she had, the scandal would have burst infinitely more loudly than the bomb at the Railway Directorate, and now the fact that the masks had fallen was not so tragic, it had to happen sooner or later, and as for the plan to attack the Royal Imperial Army Headquarters, it seemed that for the time being no-one knew a thing about it, Joja was sticking to his position, the Railways were not so terrible in actual fact, and consequently things were not absolutely hopeless, they could breathe freely, for the attack on the Corpskomand would have been infinitely more serious; for no immediately apparent reason, generals were more important than railway men.

Reflecting about the different possible consequence, Kamilo put Velasquez' Venus on a stool in front of him near the bed, and illuminating her with two candles like a holy image, he turned towards the naked goddess, lying on his left side, and in this Velasquezian reverie closed his eyes, musing on Marta's décolleté, on how strangely warm the flesh of her bosom was, and at the same time clammy, smooth as wax, silky as a rubber balloon, almost cadaverously waxen, when someone colossal, like a supernatural Police Constable, approached the bed. It was His Honour Kamilo de Emerički — the esteemed father in persona.

»For goodness' sake, son, do you want to burn the house down, can't you see that the candles have burned out«, he snuffed out the smoking wax candles, which were dripping onto the polish of the stool, »isn't it enough for you to go around setting up bombs all over the place without wanting to set fire to your own home, and now you

go lulling yourself to sleep with this rubbish, you seem to have nothing else in your head at the moment but naked women, really I don't know for the life of me what to call this pathological iconolatriy, or whatever, shall I send you your precious Marta, to make you some pancakes, do you realize that this Marta of yours is a well-known common whore, you can't have forgotten yourself with her, can you, you foolish child, I don't know, and that Joja of yours, he's made a statement, good for him, but listen to me, young man, answer me, answer me on your word of honour, if you still have any sense of honour that is, is this everything, are there any more surprises in store for me in connection with this scandal of Joja's? Joja has not said a word, but they're beating him, he might talk, can I sleep calmly, have you got anything else compromising in the house?»

»No, I haven't...«

»Really, on your honour?»

»No! What can I say, on my life, on your life, is that enough, I swear, there is nothing under this roof that you should be afraid of in connection with this investigation!»

»Listen to me, be sensible, please, just for one single minute, can I really be quite calm that this rubbish here in this room is all that was hidden under my roof? Is there anything else besides this scandalous insolence here that should be put away, think, answer me, if there is, it's better that you tell me rather than that someone else discovers it because it could have disastrous consequences, do you understand, you insolent ass, it's in my interest just as it is in yours! I'm asking you, is there anything under this roof that should be put away apart from this rubbish here, I'm asking you seriously, Kamilo, because I don't know if you're mad or feeble-minded, don't you realize that this game is dangerous?»

»No.«

»Really not?»

»No, I said.«

»Listen, are you aware of the far-reaching consequences of your statement, can I really trust you? Because if you have any kind of explosives or dynamite under this roof, you had better hand them over to me, do you see, it would be better for me to get rid of them than to let the authorities find them, because those people from the Police Station could come back at any minute, should Joja talk, it's a question of survival, not only yours, but mine as well, is that quite clear?»

»Yes, quite clear, I understand, I've told you there is nothing compromising in this house.«

»Truly, Kamilo, tell me!»

»Nothing...«

»Good, that's one thing, I shall be brief, just enough for there not to be any mistake! After everything that has happened, I ask you how do you envisage life under this common roof of ours?»

»Father, please, I don't know anything at the moment, really I don't know anything just now, I can't know, I appreciate your position, of course, but I honestly think I am not myself, I'm not in a state to listen your lectures about punishment, I accept everything and agree to everything ad notam...«

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»All right, you don't know anything, you can't know anything at this moment, that's really witty on your part, but unlike you I do know and that's why I've come to tell you: I shall telephone the headmaster this morning, I shall remove you from the school, do you hear, you can't go back to that class, you'll have private lessons, you'll go with Amadeus to Ladanje, and you'll stay there till the beginning of September, in September you'll take your exams as a private pupil, and then you'll go to Budapest, to the Hungaricum, there, that is my decision, and now, until you go to Ladanje you'll remain in the house, in your room what is more, until further notice, you can have the garden and the deck-chair downstairs between two and three in the afternoon, but you may not go out into the street or anywhere out of the house, not for a second, until you go to Ladanje, and I shall ask Amadeus to go with you to the country, but we'll talk about it all this afternoon, have you understood?»

»Yes.«

»Then, goodnight.«

»Goodnight.«

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His Honour, Kamilo's esteemed father disappeared, and Kamilo automatically picked up the Velasquez Venus again, gazing at her devoutly as at Marta making paucakes, and as he mused he suddenly felt a blow on the back of his head, as though a fantastically sharp scimitar had split his skull, as he caught sight of Joja lying bleeding in the straw, crushed like a mad dog...

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What was he doing, daydreaming over this rubbish — Joja had been tortured till he bled, and he had not said a word... And if he admitted that they had been together at Wohlgenuth's, that he had stolen a dynamite fuse for the attack on the Corpskomand from the Directorate for Regulating the Sava, which comes under the Bureau of Political Administration, where Kamilo used to go so often and row in the boats belonging to the Sava Directorate, but Joja had not said a word, and Joja would not talk, Joja was a man, a real man, a god...

He knocked Velasquez' naked woman over with his hand and leapt to the window. It was almost light. The waltz from »Traviata« was sobbing up from Kozarska. Far away, below Jurjevska, in the plain, below the Kaptol towers in the grey morass of roofs, Joja was moaning like a bleeding dog, and Kamilo could not help him, and Joja's flat Under the Wall was deserted, as though everyone had died.

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»Joja, my dear, sweet Joja, I shan't ever leave you, Joja, word of honour, you know, here I am, we are together, allons enfants, it's not a secret any more, everyone knows now, we are marching at the head of the procession, we are the standard-bearers...«

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After this exciting, dramatic night everything happened as His Honour had stipulated as though according to the rules of some kind of presidential protocol comedy. After the harsh and closely watched house arrest, which lasted virtually two long weeks, Kamilo set off with Dr. Amadeus Trupac, His Honour's private secretary, in the family carriage to Upper Ladanje and spent the whole summer there until early September when he appeared before the examining board as a private pupil of the fourth year of secondary school, and passed the

examination with distinction: five 'very goods' and three 'excellents'. If he had not been the son of His Honour, who had succeeded in this way in rescuing his only child from the jaw of that first dangerous Scylla and Charibdis, he would have been expelled for all time from all the secondary schools of the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, as Joja had been, and he would have ended up in Glina Boarstel with his friend. As it was, however, the next day, September the tenth, at two seventeen p. m. accompanied by his father, he set off by the Budapest Express and arrived at the East Station at exactly eight forty-five, at the city of his exile, for the old man had insisted at all costs and without qualification that it was essential that he change his milieu, assuring him a place in the Hungaricum, a kind of strict remedial boarding school for the sons of the cream of Hungarian society.

Father and son had taken rooms in the old-fashioned »Fiume« hotel, on the right bank below Budim, where Kalman, the father of His Honour de Emerički had stayed during his last trips to Budapest in the eighties, when he became more and more the wronged Croatian aristocrat, hating Vienna and the Dual Monarchy as a national disaster and curse.

In order, finally, at least formally, at the end of the process, to somehow alleviate the disciplinary flavour of this indisputably penal expedition, His Honour had from the moment they got into the Budapest Express adopted an intimate friendly tone towards his »lost son«, more than that a tone of complete equality, of one colleague to another, ostensibly devoid of the slightest educational intent, an open tone, broad-minded, so liberal and broad-minded that he talked with his son of things about which in normal circumstances he would probably never have said a single word...

When the train clattered over the fateful Drava bridge near Đekenješ, the bridge over which two generations of Hungarians had already made their way to the Hungarian sea, after the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1868, setting off as if to the realization of Kossuth's great ideal, watching, as the wheels thundered, the mud-grey glacial morass of the Drava, swirling in rushing, dangerous whirl-pools, as though it were boiling under the wooden supports of the Đekenješ bridge, freshly painted with cadmium, His Honour Emerički talked about his ancient, long-since forgotten romantic longing for his Croatian homeland, when as a student first in Vienna and then in Budapest, travelling by coach into foreign lands, he had crossed this same grey, dangerous Drava water near Varaždin. In those days one travelled to Budapest via Pragerhof for Žakanj, or via Maribor to Graz, and every crossing over the Drava was for Croats then, as now, a crossing over a mysteriously charmed frontier, which, one had to admit, did divide two worlds; separate and remote in their most fundamental nature: the Mongol and the Slav...

»But still, but still our Adriatic is ours, our Croatian Sea, and this thousand year struggle is a divine punishment and trial for our unfortunate people, but that is our Turkish fate, our curse, and what can we do when we're weak and powerless, damned from the day we appeared in this land, in which any other people would have perished long ago.«

In his tenderest youth His Honour had been inspired by Illyrian fantasies, he did not deny it, of course, he even admitted that he had thought Strossmayer a genius and that had lasted for quite a long time, this belief in the ideal of Strossmayer, and in fact it was nothing other than some kind of intellectual puberty... His Honour used to have just such passionate, strained arguments with his late father Kalman, the same as those that had been going on for generations about the Croatian question, and just as blind as the discussions between his late father, a follower of Kossuth, and his grandfather, a Josephist and free mason, and His Honour did not want now to preach in retrospect, oh no, but life, my dear child, life, like everything made up of living components, unfortunately always concludes with a net resultant that is the direct opposite of our desires, for that is a Law of Nature, and Nature alone is still the only regulator and for the simple reason, that no-one has enough imagination to think of anything in this world beyond Nature and her obscure but profoundly logical resultants...

»Take our Hungarian-Croatian relations for example, often so hopelessly cursed, but stubborn, as the English saying puts it so well: 'Facts are stubborn things', they must surely be the resultant of something, for after all what was left to us Croats in this ghastly Turkish invasion than to give ourselves up to the protection of Austria in 1527. There was no third possibility, unfortunately, out of that Turkish catastrophe, and it was a monstrous attack! Either the Turks or the Habsburgs, and not even today, unfortunately, is there any third possibility, and today too, willingly or not, irrespective of our subjective will, some better and perhaps happier third possibility simply does not exist, and when you take things as a historical resultant you must be strong, I admit it, quite readily, strong enough to face the facts, because, unfortunately, we have no alternative...«

Yes, His Honour admitted that these facts were really desperate when all was said and done, they were, he admitted supremely awkward, they were simply insupportable, but, for God's sake, they were there, de facto, were they not, they were given us and there was nothing we could do about it, except to carry on a policy according to the principles of our forebears: *ad evitanda mala maiora*... A small peasant people against the all-powerful Hungarian aristocracy, against the Budapest magnates, against the enormous financial powers which credit these gentlemen with millions and millions, against our pitiful little tangent, why they are crocodiles, my child, and what could a man do bare-handed against a crocodile? And there were no ethics in this Hungarian crocodile pool, of course, there was only one rule which applied there: the survival of the fittest, and there were no other factors in Nature other than strength and resistance. The resistance that his generation had offered and continued to offer, the generation of His Honour that is, who regarded himself as a fighter for the realization of national rights, this resistance was, undoubtedly, weak, one could almost say more or less threadbare, perhaps even pitiful, he admitted it, so that it could be said that the resistance of his colleagues in the Assembly, in Delegations and the Regnicolar committees was to a certain extent, he realized and admitted, very often also corrupt, in the real sense of the word, reduced to the minimum, and even very often non-existent, but let us hope that when the new forces, as yet

untapped, the forces of Kamilo's generation took their place, they would have before them an open battlefield and it would be a question not of principles but of wise tactics, how to bring the conflict into being, in the people's best interests, the situation in Hungary now was such that the Croats, luckily for them, were not the only question facing the Budapest government. There were also Slovaks, Russines, Vlachs, millions of them in Rumania, they were primitive masses, extraordinarily resistant, and then there was the whole question of the Orthodox peoples, the Graeco-Eastern masses of Rascians and Serbians, and not a few of them either, and finally the Schwabs under the pan-Germanic influence from Transleithania and the Reich and these Germans and Pan-Germans were becoming a significant Austrian component, that damned Neo-pan-Germanism was growing all the time, it was definitely threatening the Dynasty, and finally there were the Croats, and there were not a few of us Croats either, we held the Sea and all these machinations were connected with the Adriatic, and as such, in fact, we had perfectly good prospects in this struggle, because the Adriatic coast was a valuable pawn in the game and it gave us a tremendous advantage as partners, for not even Cisleithania and Transleithania could have any connection with the sea, except exclusively through our territory, and that was of immeasurable value, finally, last but not least, there was Vienna, there was the Dynasty, there was the Court with its Pangermans and Czechs and all their worries, and there were a fair number of them, it was a question of different chauvinistic megalomaniacs, one megalomania, two, three, numerous megalomaniacs, all the Austrian peoples suffered from delusions of grandeur, and if we really wanted to call a spade a spade, in this complex game of megalomania, if it was necessary against Vienna, it was also necessary against the other nationalities to be a go-between in Austro-Hungarian relations, and similarly, according to the way things developed, we could come to some terms with the gentlemen of Transleithania, they invariably count on us, »Aula est pro nobis«, that was not a motto devoid of all meaning, we could, therefore, like Strossmayer, come to terms again with the Court, as Mažuranić wanted, but at the present time it was better to ally ourselves with the Hungarians, for the Hungarians would give us back Deak's »Carte blanche« of 1868, and the most important thing was to acquire some kind of »freedom«, for, as things stood today, it could not be said of Ungro-krobot affairs that all was well. He admitted, within the framework of financial machinations alone (and as an old regnicolar he had after all some insight into those »machinations«) a minimum of about ten million a year was booked to our deficit, and everything else connected with common expenditure could be doubled as a loss and that was after all an altogether respectable sum.

»The Rijeka Resolution«, for instance, is not so stupid. The Rijeka Resolution is a macchiavellian means of strengthening the influence of the Croatian coefficient in the Hungarian aristocratic spillikins game with the Viennese Court only what is the danger? If this policy is followed with vague, completely crazy irredentist concepts on the Italian model, and there are Dalmatian elements round Supilo who pull in that direction, and who, like Trieste irredentists, think that we would be better off outside the framework of the Monarchy, and there are certain signs that could certainly lead to such a conclusion, well then, of course,

all the aces we hold in our hands could be played out in Vienna and Budapest in twenty four hours flat, for neither Vienna nor Budapest are that cockeyed after all, and there is as much grey matter in Vienna as there is in the head of a Frano Supilo, for instance, an utterly primitive ruffian, a half-educated student with two years at some wine-growers' school, and of whom Baron Chlumetzky claims he paid him as his informer, and that such an illiterate bumpkin should be the political leader of a whole nation, is one of the indisputable scandals that can occur only in such provincial and from all points of view undeveloped conditions as ours.« (This allusion of His Honour's to Frano Supilo certainly referred to Kamilo's complete edition of »The New Rijeka Daily«, that the worthy constable had discovered in the wardrobe.)

»And that is why it is so good, you could say wise, that we have come to this friendly understanding that you continue your studies in Hungary... You speak the language, I'm glad to say, you won't have any problems there, and you will be in a position to observe various occurrences behind the Hungarian scenes, only, please, you must look behind the scenes with your eyes open, because there are very important elements, and when a man has mastered these elements, these background elements for his own personal orientation, then he can play his career like a virtuoso, as at a piano recital. All our forebears were Hungarian students, Vitez and Panonius and Brodarić and Berislavić, their names are legion, and which of us has not been a Magyar in Budapest, and a Croat south of the Drava, even in most recent times: Gaj, Kukuljević, Senoa, all of them were Hungarian students, and that's very sensible, Katančić studied in Budapest as well and Martinović stupidly lost his life there, losing our lives stupidly has been in our blood since the days of the Zrinskis, only you have to know what kind of territory you are living on, and to that end perhaps one could paraphrase Goethe's verse: »Wer die Feinde will verstehen, muss in Feindes Lande gehen...«

This is the balm after the beating, my Honoured father is trying to charm me in his well-known regnicolar style, thought Kamilo, looking at the billowing yellow slabs of maize along the infinitely long avenues of poplars lining the fields near Čurgov, and the waiter, to the accompaniment of clinking china and silver, served tea, Cointreau, sweet cream, tiny squares of toast, cakes, chocolate, everything gleamed with brass, linoleum, mahogany everything sang in the glow of the sunny September evening, with its orange sky and white clouds, as though he were not travelling into exile, but going on a wonderful outing.

Ever since their sentimental lunch in Jurjevaska Street, the three of them together, immediately before their departure, Mrs. Emerički, Mr. Emerički and Kamilo (mamma had been crying quietly since the soup course and two or three heavy tears, thick as glycerine had rolled down into the tomato sauce, and that was Kamilo's favourite sauce, and today, the last supper as it were, when he was leaving the family home, perhaps forever, when they had asked him what he wanted to eat, he had asked for tomato sauce with rice as garnishing), to the accompaniment of mother's painful sighs, His Honour had been solemn,

even sentimental, yes, in fact magnificently bountiful with the compliments which he showered on his only son. That he was aware (and he was not speaking as a father) that Kamilo was exceptionally gifted, he could say without exaggeration, yes, »exceptionally gifted«, and that it was natural that this type of child, who had grown beyond his surroundings, that this type of child, therefore, was frequently exposed to the temptation of rebelling against his mediocre surroundings, simply because of his often re-iterated ability, all right, that was reasonable, that was logical, that was absolutely natural, but nevertheless, we had to watch carefully to prevent such young people being swayed by extremes, and extremes included, first and foremost: an exaggeratedly effusive, highly-developed imagination, and then, of course, passion... Imagination and passion had to be curbed... There was a great deal going on in the world today that was not compatible with decent behaviour nor indeed with moral principles, that was true, and it would be unintelligent to deny it, just because it is like that, and because we are lawyers and know the history of Law, and because we are aware that all these numerous legal institutions have been unable, after thousands and thousands of years, to tame or alter human nature, why should we now be called upon to complete in twenty four hours something which others have not been able to in millenia? All credit to those who rebel against the various negative phenomena in human social and political relations, this fight, of course, was absolutely justified, but when man has decided to set the universe to rights one must certainly not lose sight of those words of Falstaff's: »Wer bessern will, macht oft aus Gutem schlimmer...«

Since his strict isolation in Ladanje, which had lasted mercilessly throughout the whole summer, apart from the last few days at Jurjevska, when he came for the private examination (and even for that single day he was under strict control, so that he could not move an inch without supervision), Kamilo had not had a chance of talking to his father in private for a moment, and now, in the train, all the way from Križevac the old man had been carried away in his rambling soliloquy talking about things and events in a most surprising way with the evident naïve intention of lulling Kamilo to sleep, in the last few minutes before the completion of the punishment, with the most utterly futile eloquence. For, in actual fact, this comedy in the railway carriage, on these velvet seats, despite the apparently genteel décor, was nonetheless a kind of political rustication and Kamilo was being escorted not by a constable but by His Honour the President of the Praesidium of the police force in person, therefore, again some kind of Royal Croato-Slavonian notary or footpad and this government detective was so naïf as to delude himself into believing that his rambling would drug his son's mind and that he would then be able to hand him over semi-conscious to the Magyar executioners in Hungary, where people vegetated feeble-mindedly and shamefully from every point of view.

Mit den Wolfen muss man heulen, as he had heard from old Magdalene Habelić, and now he had no alternative but to act a tame conformist creature, who had submitted to the inevitable, and to endeavour in this ostensibly conciliatory frame of mind to salvage some advantage for himself. And so after a long introduction he risked suddenly throwing out the essence of what he had in mind:

He agreed with everything his father said and had already stated solemnly that he agreed, and he repeated it now just as solemnly, because he thought that it was all very wise and apt, but now he had one personal favour to ask of his father, and he begged him if he could to tell him how Joja was, he suddenly interrupted his father's rhetoric in a perfectly calm tone, but at the same time relentlessly determined.

»Ah, yes, Joja, yes, yes, I expected that question, it's right that you haven't forgotten him, Joja is in Glina, as you know. He has been told that he can decide to go in for typography or lithography according to his free choice.«

»Why can't he go on with his studies?«

»It's not that he can't those are the regulations, Kamilo, and besides, he must after all undergo some kind of punishment, for you will agree, we haven't had a chance of exchanging views on this subject, but setting up bombs, blowing up whole offices, that's no trifling matter, in God's name, you will admit, it goes without saying, those are criminal acts which are punished according to the positive laws of the civilized world and when all is said and done, anyone who is at all intelligent must accept all the consequences of something like that, and Joja is intelligent, there's no doubt about that, Joja has reconciled himself absolutely to his fate, he will stay in Glina for a year and then we'll see what can be done, it's a temporary situation, you know I liked him from the first, you are both altogether bright, attractive lads, and Joja will grow up of course and I shan't let him out of my sight, you can be sure of that, and we've already talked about this, when he's completed his time in Glina he will be exiled to Rijeka because of his adoptive father, for that is his father's domicile, Rijeka is extra-territorial, the laws of Rijeka are not the same as Croatian laws, the decision to exclude him from secondary schools in Croatia does not apply to Rijeka, he can enter any school whatever there, and the fact that he has lost a year or two will not make the slightest difference to a mind like Joja's, I'm not worried about Joja, he will know how to turn the whole affair to his own advantage...«

»Thank you, I don't know how to express this thank you, as far as Joja is concerned, now, please, I shall be quite honest, please recognize — since that night when they came to arrest me, have I done anything at all that could lead you to accuse me of disloyalty to your directives or of conscious bad behaviour?«

»What do you mean, I don't understand, I had no intention whatsoever of saying a single word of accusation against you...«

»I don't mean that, but I'm asking you, have I been consistently obedient, have I done everything that you required of me?«

»Why yes, Kamilo, you have, I recognize it, all credit to you, I am quite satisfied with you, I told you so after your exam, you have been diligent, you have behaved correctly, but why do you ask?«

»Because things shouldn't have turned out like that, it could have been different...«

»What 'things'? I don't understand,« His Honour was disturbed, aware that Kamilo's voice was just a shade more excited.

»Well, look, it could have happened for instance, that I did nothing of what you required, that I did not go to Ladanje, that I did not

take my exam, that I did not agree to let you take me to the Hungaricum, that I did not get into this compartment with you today...«

»I don't understand, how could it have happened that you didn't do the only thing it was appropriate to do, the only thing you could have done, how could you not have obeyed?«

»Oh, I could, father, I could have done all kinds of things, there were an infinite number of possibilities, I could have compromised myself (and you as well to a certain extent) by some political statement, I could have confessed under my own signature...«

»What signature, what could you have to confess?«

»Well, a political statement, of course, others scratch along in the newspapers, why shouldn't I, and I could have got myself thrown out of all the secondary schools like Joja because of my statement, and I could have done it without thinking about it, in the twinkling of an eye, I could have joined Joja in Glina, on the basis of my own personal confession that I was guilty, just like Joja, that I knew all about the bomb attacks, and not only that but that I took part in some and planned other things...«

»I see, better and better, and then 'one or two other things', so there were 'one or two other things' still to admit besides the explosives and, please, tell me, irritate your father, surprise him, you know how much I like listening to this perverse song of yours, I don't know whether you understand exactly what I am trying to say, but it's pure sadism on your part...«

»I'm not saying those things to blackmail you, please, I am going over the open possibilities, and there were a lot of them, I could have run away from home, for instance, that's another.«

»What nonsense, it would have been a scandal, and I would have forced you to come home in the end!«

»How would you have 'forced me', in what way, when it would have been quite simply technically impossible...«

»By law, for God's sake, you are in your fiftieth year...«

»But, if I ran away to Serbia, for example?«

»Where?«

»Serbia!«

»Serbia! Whatever do you mean, how?«

»Quite simply, by train from Zemun to Belgrade...«

This open possibility of »flight« into Serbia quite threw His Honour, and his resistance wilted in a totally empty lack of ideas.

»To Serbia? Yes, it was true, he had not even thought of Serbia up to this moment, and it was a real danger, for this lunatic son of his was quite capable of risking everything, and consequently it was no empty threat, he was really mad enough to carry it out, and if there were any possible way of reacting it was simply to pretend he had been left coldly indifferent to all Kamilo's proposals connected with this unfortunate Serbia...«

»Serbia, for God's sake! and just you tell me what would have become of you in this Serbia of yours, there are after all some international agreements which are valid for Serbia as well, surely, as if they would not have sent you back at the request of our government, as if Serbia were extraterritorial, as though it were on the moon?!«

»They wouldn't have sent me back, it wouldn't have been in their interest.«

»They would have, they wouldn't have risked a scandal, there have been far too many lately...«

»They wouldn't have sent me back, because I would have told them everything.«

»You would have told them everything, and what may I ask would you have told them?«

»The truth, that I was an accessory in the bomb attacks, in Canon Bukovečki's palace, Wohlgemuth's shop, that I was in actual fact the initiator of the attack on the Railway Offices, and another plan, more important, more dangerous, that is, I think.«

»I see, you had another 'more dangerous plan' you mean there was something else planned?«

»Yes, there was, we had planned an attack on the Royal Imperial Corpskomand...«

His Honour had been holding his silver cigarette case in his left hand and with his right he had been placing some golden Bosno-Hercegovinian tobacco in the Rizabad cigarette paper, to roll the cigarette between the index and middle fingers of his left hand, but both his hands now dropped onto his knee and his gold ring with the famous De Emerički crest could be heard clinking against the silver of the box. He was defeated, at one blow. To calm his father, Kamilo bent down towards his father's hand, touching it gently, apparently with emphasized, decorative tenderness, feeling that he was touching a dead doll.

»Don't upset yourself, please, no-one but Joja knows, it's a secret, and Joja's kept it to himself, and what is more he has defended the principle and that is why Joja is someone one must admire, do you see, one must be grateful to him, for one single word from him could have ruined all your plans, couldn't it, and as far as Joja and I are concerned, that's our business, and it's unlikely that anyone will ever know, I give you my word. I have decided to carry out your wishes conscientiously, I have given myself up to you completely, I shall go on studying properly and you needn't worry about me at all till I finish school, till I do you can sleep peacefully, I swear on mother's life, trust me, but there's one thing I ask, will you do one thing for me, father, please, and I give you my word that I shan't ever bother you with it again.«

»What is it?« the father glanced at his son in nervous surprise, full of uncertainty, as loathsome evil monsters look helplessly at each other playing capriciously and cruelly as devils with human destiny.

»Please promise me, it's a question of life and death to me, more, it's a question of honour.«

»All right, if I can do it, I promise I shall!«

»I must get word to Joja, listen, Joja is abandoned and alone, he didn't utter a sound when they beat him, he could have rid himself of part of his burden, he could have confessed my part in it, and I wouldn't be sitting with you today in this train, I would have been somewhere in Glina as well, but thanks only to Joja I am alive and well, and Joja must not be allowed to suspect that I have forgotten him, you understand I'm sure, he could have talked but he didn't he is strong, he withstood their torture without a word, I must contact him to show him I have remained faithful to him, as he to me, it's

not only a question of honour, but a moral question father, and you can do it, it's not difficult for you, you can find someone going to Glina, to take two or three lines, just so that he sees my writing, because I shan't leave him, I can't, but this is a burden weighing on me, I can't sleep at night...«

»All right, I promise!«

«On your honour?«

»What's the use of that, I promise, right, that's my business, I really promise, if that's what you want, I understand, and on the one hand, Kamilo, I admit it's right you should feel like that, but on the other, if you persist in carrying on like this, you are taking the line of greatest resistance, but that's your affair after all, I promise you, on my word of honour, if you insist, I'll do all I can.«

»I shan't forget this to my dying day, father,« Kamilo softened, and as they were alone in the compartment, he took both his father's hands, silver cigarette case and all in his, and began to kiss them, hands, ring and cigarette case. This was the last moment in the lives of father and son of harmonious moral conjunction, when the bodily substances of the father and his offspring entered a magnetic circle of sympathy and it lasted for only an instant, dying out the same moment like a rocket in a slow glow trembling over the whole landscape like a little parachute sinking lyrically languidly.

Translated by Celia Williams