triumph for the Steppenwolf. I was sent flying and beaten from the field, bankrupt in my own eyes, dismissed without a shred of credit or a ray of humor to comfort me. I had taken leave of the world in which I had once found a home, the world of convention and culture, in the manner of the man with a weak stomach who has given up pork. In a rage I went on my way beneath the street lamps, in a rage and sick unto death. What a hideous day of shame and wretchedness it had been from morning to night, from the cemetery to the scene with the professor. For what? And why? Was there any sense in taking up the burden of more such days as this or of sitting out any more such suppers? There was not. This very night I would make an end of the comedy, go home and cut my throat. No more tarrying.

I paced the streets in all directions, driven on by wretchedness. Naturally it was stupid of me to bespatter the drawing-room ornaments of the worthy folk, stupid and ill-mannered, but I could not help it; and even now I could not help it. I could not bear this

tame, lying, well-mannered life any longer. And since it appeared that I could not bear my loneliness any longer either, since my own company had become so unspeakably hateful and nauseous, since I struggled for breath in a vacuum and suffocated in hell, what way out was left me? There was none. I thought of my father and mother, of the sacred flame of my youth long extinct, of the thousand joys and labors and aims of my life. Nothing of them all was left me, not even repentance, nothing but agony and nausea. Never had the clinging to mere life seemed so grievous as now.

I rested a moment in a tavern in an outlying part of the town and drank some brandy and water; then to the streets once more, with the devil at my heels, up and down the steep and winding streets of the Old Town, along the avenues, across the station square. The thought of going somewhere took me into the station. I scanned the time tables on the walls; drank some wine and tried to come to my senses. Then the specter that I went in dread of came nearer, till I saw it plain. It was the dread of

returning to my room and coming to a halt there, faced by my despair. There was no escape from this moment though I walked the streets for hours. Sooner or later I should be at my door, at the table with my books, on the sofa with the photograph of Erica above it. Sooner or later the moment would come to take out my razor and cut my throat. More and more plainly the picture rose before me. More and more plainly, with a wildly beating heart, I felt the dread of all dreads, the fear of death. Yes, I was horribly afraid of death. Although I saw no other way out, although nausea, agony and despair threatened to engulf me; although life had no allurement and nothing to give me either of joy or hope, I shuddered all the same with an unspeakable horror of a gaping wound in a condemned man's flesh.

I saw no other way of escape from this dreadful specter. Suppose that today cowardice won a victory over despair, tomorrow and each succeeding day I would again face despair heightened by self-contempt. It was merely taking up and throwing down the knife till at last it was done. Better today

then. I reasoned with myself as though with a frightened child. But the child would not listen. It ran away. It wanted to live. I renewed my fitful wanderings through the town, making many detours not to return to the house which I had always in my mind and always deferred. Here and there I came to a stop and lingered, drinking a glass or two, and then, as if pursued, ran around in a circle whose center had the razor as a goal, and meant death. Sometimes from utter weariness I sat on a bench, on a fountain's rim, or a curbstone and wiped the sweat from my forehead and listened to the beating of my heart. Then on again in mortal dread and an intense yearning for life.

Thus it was I found myself late at night in a distant and unfamiliar part of the town; and there I went into a public house from which there came the lively sound of dance music. Over the entrance as I went in I read "The Black Eagle" on the old signboard. Within I found it was a free night—crowds, smoke, the smell of wine, and the clamor of voices, with dancing in a room at the back, whence issued the frenzy of music. I stayed

in the nearer room where there were none but simple folk, some of them poorly dressed, whereas behind in the dance hall fashionable people were also to be seen. Carried forward by the crowd, I soon found myself near the bar, wedged against a table at which sat a pale and pretty girl against the wall. She wore a thin dance-frock cut very low and a withered flower in her hair. She gave me a friendly and observant look as I came up and with a smile moved to one side to make room for me.

"May I?" I asked and sat down beside her.

"Of course, you may," she said. "But who are you?"

"Thanks," I replied. "I cannot possibly go home, cannot, cannot. I'll stay here with you if you'll let me. No, I can't go back home."

She nodded as though to humor me, and as she nodded I observed the curl that fell from her temple to her ear, and I saw that the withered flower was a camellia. From within crashed the music and at the buffet the waitresses hurriedly shouted their orders.

"Well, stay here then," she said with a voice that comforted me. "Why can't you go home?"

"I can't. There's something waiting for me there. No, I can't—it's too frightful."

"Let it wait then and stay here. First wipe your glasses. You can see nothing like that. Give me your handkerchief. What shall we drink? Burgundy?"

While she wiped my glasses, I had the first clear impression of her pale, firm face, with its clear grey eyes and smooth forehead, and the short, tight curl in front of her ear. Good-naturedly and with a touch of mockery she began to take me in hand. She ordered the wine, and as she clinked her glass with mine, her eyes fell on my shoes.

"Good Lord, wherever have you come from? You look as though you had come from Paris on foot. That's no state to come to a dance in."

I answered "yes" and "no," laughed now and then, and let her talk. I found her charming, very much to my surprise, for I had always avoided girls of her kind and

regarded them with suspicion. And she treated me exactly in the way that was best for me at that moment, and so she has since without an exception. She took me under her wing just as I needed, and mocked me, too, just as I needed. She ordered me a sandwich and told me to eat it. She filled my glass and bade me sip it and not drink too fast. Then she commended my docility.

"That's fine," she said to encourage me. "You're not difficult. I wouldn't mind betting it's a long while since you have had to obey any one."

"You'd win the bet. How did you know it?"

"Nothing in that. Obeying is like eating and drinking. There's nothing like it if you've been without it too long. Isn't it so, you're glad to do as I tell you?"

"Very glad. You know everything."

"You make it easy to. Perhaps, my friend, I could tell you, too, what it is that's waiting for you at home and what you dread so much. But you know that for yourself. We needn't talk about it, eh? Silly business! Either a man goes and hangs himself, and

then he hangs sure enough, and he'll have his reasons for it, or else he goes on living and then he has only living to bother himself with. Simple enough."

"Oh," I cried, "if only it were so simple. I've bothered myself enough with life, God knows, and little use it has been to me. To hang oneself is hard, perhaps. I don't know. But to live is far, far harder. God, how hard it is!"

"You'll see it's child's play. We've made a start already. You've polished your glasses, eaten something and had a drink. Now we'll go and give your shoes and trousers a brush and then you'll dance a shimmy with me."

"Now that shows," I cried in a fluster, "that I was right! Nothing could grieve me more than not to be able to carry out any command of yours, but I can dance no shimmy, nor waltz, nor polka, nor any of the rest of them. I've never danced in my life. Now you can see it isn't all as easy as you think."

Her bright red lips smiled and she firmly shook her waved and shingled head; and as I looked at her, I thought I could see a

resemblance to Rosa Kreisler, with whom I had been in love as a boy. But she had a dark complexion and dark hair. I could not tell of whom it was she reminded me. I knew only that it was of someone in my early youth and boyhood.

"Wait a bit," she cried. "So you can't dance? Not at all? Not even a one step? And yet you talk of the trouble you've taken to live? You told a fib there, my boy, and you shouldn't do that at your age. How can you say that you've taken any trouble to live when you won't even dance?"

"But if I can't—I've never learned!"

She laughed.

"But you learned reading and writing and arithmetic, I suppose, and French and Latin and a lot of other things? I don't mind betting you were ten or twelve years at school and studied whatever else you could as well. Perhaps you've even got your doctor's degree and know Chinese or Spanish. Am I right? Very well then. But you couldn't find the time and money for a few dancing lessons! No, indeed!"

"It was my parents," I said to justify myself. "They let me learn Latin and Greek and all the rest of it. But they didn't let me learn to dance. It wasn't the thing with us. My parents had never danced themselves."

She looked at me quite coldly, with real contempt, and again something in her face reminded me of my youth.

"So your parents must take the blame then. Did you ask them whether you might spend the evening at the Black Eagle? Did you? They're dead a long while ago, you say? So much for that. And now supposing you were too obedient to learn to dance when you were young (though I don't believe you were such a model child), what have you been doing with yourself all these years?"

"Well," I confessed, "I scarcely know myself—studied, played music, read books, written books, traveled—"

"Fine views of life, you have. You have always done the difficult and complicated things and the simple ones you haven't even learned. No time, of course. More amusing things to do. Well, thank God, I'm not your

mother. But to do as you do and then say you've tested life to the bottom and found nothing in it is going a bit too far."

"Don't scold me," I implored. "It isn't as if I didn't know I was mad."

"Oh, don't make a song of your sufferings. You are no madman, Professor. You're not half mad enough to please me. It seems to me you're much too clever in a silly way, just like a professor. Have another roll. You can tell me some more later."

She got another roll for me, put a little salt and mustard on it, cut a piece for herself and told me to eat it. I did all she told me except dance. It did me a prodigious lot of good to do as I was told and to have some one sitting by me who asked me things and ordered me about and scolded me. If the professor or his wife had done so an hour or two earlier, it would have spared me a lot. But no, it was well as it was. I should have missed much.

"What's your name?" she asked suddenly.

"Harry."

"Harry? A babyish sort of name. And a baby you are, Harry, in spite of your few

grey hairs. You're a baby and you need some one to look after you. I'll say no more of dancing. But look at your hair! Have you no wife, no sweetheart?"

"I haven't a wife any longer. We are divorced. A sweetheart, yes, but she doesn't live here. I don't see her very often. We don't get on very well."

She whistled softly.

"You must be difficult if nobody sticks to you. But now tell me what was up in particular this evening? What sent you chasing round out of your wits? Down on your luck? Lost at cards?"

This was not easy to explain.

"Well," I began, "you see, it was really a small matter. I had an invitation to dinner with a professor—I'm not one myself, by the way—and really I ought not to have gone. I've lost the habit of being in company and making conversation. I've forgotten how it's done. As soon as I entered the house I had the feeling something would go wrong, and when I hung my hat on the peg I thought to myself that perhaps I should want it sooner than I expected. Well, at the professor's

there was a picture that stood on the table, a stupid picture. It annoyed me—"

"What sort of picture? Annoyed you—why?" she broke in.

"Well, it was a picture representing Goethe, the poet Goethe, you know. But it was not in the least as he really looked. That, of course, nobody can know exactly. He has been dead a hundred years. However, some artist of today had painted his portrait as he imagined him to have been and prettified him, and this picture annoyed me. It made me perfectly sick. I don't know whether you can understand that."

"I understand all right. Don't you worry. Go on."

"Before this in any case I didn't see eye to eye with the professor. Like nearly all professors, he is a great patriot, and during the war did his bit in the way of deceiving the public, with the best intentions, of course. I, however, am opposed to war. But that's all one. To continue my story, there was not the least need for me to look at the picture—"

"Certainly not."

"But in the first place it made me sorry

because of Goethe, whom I love very dearly, and then, besides, I thought—well, I had better say just how I thought, or felt. There I was, sitting with people as one of themselves and believing that they thought of Goethe as I did and had the same picture of him in their minds as I, and there stood that tasteless, false and sickly affair and they thought it lovely and had not the least idea that the spirit of that picture and the spirit of Goethe were exact opposites. They thought the picture splendid, and so they might for all I cared, but for me it ended, once and for all, any confidence, any friendship, any feeling of affinity I could have for these people. In any case, my friendship with them did not amount to very much. And so I got furious, and sad, too, when I saw that I was quite alone with no one to understand me. Do you see what I mean?"

"It is very easy to see. And next? Did you throw the picture at them?"

"No, but I was rather insulting and left the house. I wanted to go home, but—"

"But you'd have found no mummy there to comfort the silly baby or scold it. I must

say, Harry, you make me almost sorry for you. I never knew such a baby."

So it seemed to me, I must own. She gave me a glass of wine to drink. In fact, she was like a mother to me. In a glimpse, though, now and then I saw how young and beautiful she was.

"And so," she began again, "Goethe has been dead a hundred years, and you're very fond of him, and you have a wonderful picture in your head of what he must have looked like, and you have the right to, I suppose. But the artist who adores Goethe too, and makes a picture of him, has no right to do it, nor the professor either, nor anybody else—because you don't like it. You find it intolerable. You have to be insulting and leave the house. If you had sense, you would laugh at the artist and the professor—laugh and be done with it. If you were out of your senses, you'd smash the picture in their faces. But as you're only a little baby, you run home and want to hang yourself. I've understood your story very well, Harry. It's a funny story. You make me laugh. But don't drink so fast. Burgundy

should be sipped. Otherwise you'll get hot. But you have to be told everything—like a little child."

She admonished me with the look of a severe governess of sixty.

"Oh, I know," I said contentedly. "Only tell me everything."

"What shall I tell you?"

"Whatever you feel like telling me."

"Good. Then I'll tell you something. For an hour I've been saying 'thou' to you, and you have been saying 'you' to me. Always Latin and Greek, always as complicated as possible. When a girl addresses you intimately and she isn't disagreeable to you, then you should address her in the same way. So now you've learned something. And secondly—for half an hour I've known that you're called Harry. I know it because I asked you. But you don't care to know my name."

"Oh, but indeed—I'd like to know very much."

"You're too late! If we meet again, you can ask me again. Today I shan't tell you. And now I'm going to dance."

At the first sign she made of getting up, my heart sank like lead. I dreaded her going and leaving me alone, for then it would all come back as it was before. In a moment, the old dread and wretchedness took hold of me like a toothache that has passed off and then comes back of a sudden and burns like fire. Oh, God, had I forgotten, then, what was waiting for me? Had anything altered?

"Stop," I implored, "don't go. You can dance of course, as much as you please, but don't stay away too long. Come back again, come back again."

She laughed as she got up. I expected her to be taller. She was slender, but not tall. Again I was reminded of some one. Of whom? I could not make out.

"You're coming back?"

"I'm coming back, but it may be half an hour or an hour, perhaps. I want to tell you something. Shut your eyes and sleep for a little. That's what you need."

I made room for her to pass. Her skirt brushed my knees and she looked, as she went, in a little pocket mirror, lifted her eyebrows, and powdered her chin; then she

disappeared into the dance hall. I looked round me; strange faces, smoking men, spilled beer on marble-tops, clatter and clamor everywhere, the dance music in my ear. I was to sleep, she had said. Ah, my good child, you know a lot about my sleep that is shyer than a weasel! Sleep in this hurly-burly, sitting at a table, amidst the clatter of beer steins! I sipped the wine and, taking out a cigar, looked round for matches, but as I had after all no inclination to smoke, I put down the cigar on the table in front of me. "Shut your eyes," she had said. God knows where the girl got her voice; it was so deep and good and maternal. It was good to obey such a voice, I had found that out already. Obediently I shut my eyes, leaned my head against the wall and heard the roar of a hundred mingled noises surge around me and smiled at the idea of sleep in such a place. I made up my mind to go to the door of the dance hall and from there catch a glimpse of my beautiful girl as she danced. I made a movement to go, then felt at last how unutterably tired out I was from my hours of wandering and remained seated;

and, thereupon I fell asleep as I had been told. I slept greedily, thankfully, and dreamed more lightly and pleasantly than I had for a long while.

I dreamed that I was waiting in an old-fashioned anteroom. At first I knew no more than that my audience was with some Excellency or other. Then it came to me that it was Goethe who was to receive me. Unfortunately I was not there quite on a personal call. I was a reporter, and this worried me a great deal and I could not understand how the devil I had got into such a fix. Besides this, I was upset by a scorpion that I had seen a moment before trying to climb up my leg. I had shaken myself free of the black crawling beast, but I did not know where it had got to next and did not dare make a grab after it.

Also I was not very sure whether I had been announced by a mistake to Matthisson instead of to Goethe, and him again I mixed up in my dream with Bürger, for I took him for the author of the poem to Molly. Moreover I would have liked extremely to meet Molly. I imagined her wonderful, tender,

musical. If only I were not here at the orders of that cursed newspaper office. My ill-humor over this increased until by degrees it extended even to Goethe, whom I suddenly treated to all manner of reflections and reproaches. It was going to be a lively interview. The scorpion, however, dangerous though he was and hidden no doubt somewhere within an inch of me, was all the same not so bad perhaps. Possibly he might even betoken something friendly. It seemed to me extremely likely that he had something to do with Molly. He might be a kind of messenger from her—or an heraldic beast, dangerously and beautifully emblematic of woman and sin. Might not his name perhaps be Vulpius? But at that moment a flunkey threw open the door. I rose and went in.

There stood old Goethe, short and very erect, and on his classic breast, sure enough, was the corpulent star of some Order. Not for a moment did he relax his commanding attitude, his air of giving audience, and of controlling the world from that museum of his at Weimar. Indeed, he had scarcely

looked at me before with a nod and a jerk like an old raven he began pompously: "Now, you young people have, I believe, very little appreciation of us and our efforts."

"You are quite right," said I, chilled by his ministerial glance. "We young people have, indeed, very little appreciation of you. You are too pompous for us, Excellency, too vain and pompous, and not outright enough. That is, no doubt, at the bottom of it—not outright enough."

The little old man bent his erect head forward, and as his hard mouth with its official folds relaxed in a little smile and became enchantingly alive, my heart gave a sudden bound; for all at once the poem came to my mind—"The dusk with folding wing"—and I remembered that it was from the lips of this man that the poem came. Indeed, at this moment I was entirely disarmed and overwhelmed and would have chosen of all things to kneel before him. But I held myself erect and heard him say with a smile: "Oh, so you accuse me of not being outright? What a thing to say! Will you explain yourself a little more fully?"

I was very glad indeed to do so.

"Like all great spirits, Herr von Goethe, you have clearly recognised and felt the riddle and the hopelessness of human life, with its moments of transcendence that sink again to wretchedness, and the impossibility of rising to one fair peak of feeling except at the cost of many days' enslavement to the daily round; and, then, the ardent longing for the realm of the spirit in eternal and deadly war with the equally ardent and holy love of the lost innocence of nature, the whole frightful suspense in vacancy and uncertainty, this condemnation to the transient that can never be valid, that is ever experimental and dilettantish; in short, the utter lack of purpose to which the human state is condemned—to its consuming despair. You have known all this, yes, and said as much over and over again; yet you gave up your whole life to preaching its opposite, giving utterance to faith and optimism and spreading before yourself and others the illusion that our spiritual strivings mean something and endure. You have lent a deaf ear to those that plumbed the depths and

suppressed the voices that told the truth of despair, and not in yourself only, but also in Kleist and Beethoven. Year after year you lived on at Weimar accumulating knowledge and collecting objects, writing letters and gathering them in, as though in your old age you had found the real way to discover the eternal in the momentary, though you could only mummify it, and to spiritualise nature though you could only hide it with a pretty mask. This is why we reproach you with insincerity."

The old bigwig kept his eyes musingly on mine, smiling as before.

Then to my surprise, he asked, "You must have a strong objection, then, to the *Magic Flute* of Mozart?"

And before I could protest, he went on:

"The *Magic Flute* presents life to us as a wondrous song. It honors our feelings, transient, as they are, as something eternal and divine. It agrees neither with Herr von Kleist nor with Herr Beethoven. It preaches optimism and faith."

"I know, I know," I cried in a rage. "God knows why you hit of all things on the

Magic Flute that is dearer to me than anything else in the world. But Mozart did not live to be eighty-two. He did not make pretensions in his own life to the enduring and the orderly and to exalted dignity as you did. He did not think himself so important! He sang his divine melodies and died. He died young—poor and misunderstood—"

I lost my breath. A thousand things ought to have been said in ten words. My forehead began to sweat.

Goethe, however, said very amiably: "It may be unforgivable that I lived to be eighty-two. My satisfaction on that account was, however, less than you may think. You are right that a great longing for survival possessed me continually. I was in continual fear of death and continually struggling with it. I believe that the struggle against death, the unconditional and self-willed determination to live, is the motive power behind the lives and activities of all outstanding men. My eighty-two years showed just as conclusively that we must all die in the end as if I had died as a schoolboy. If it helps to justify me I should like to say this

too: my nature had much of the child in it, its curiosity and love for idleness and play. Well, and so it went on and on, till I saw that sooner or later there must be enough of play."

As he said this, his smile was quite cunning—a downright roguish leer. He had grown taller and his erect bearing and the constrained dignity of his face had disappeared. The air, too, around us was now ringing with melodies, all of them songs of Goethe's. I heard Mozart's "Violets" and Schubert's "Again thou fillest brake and vale" quite distinctly. And Goethe's face was rosy and youthful, and he laughed; and now he resembled Mozart like a brother, now Schubert, and the star on his breast was composed entirely of wild flowers. A yellow primrose blossomed luxuriantly in the middle of it.

It did not altogether suit me to have the old gentleman avoid my questions and accusations in this sportive manner, and I looked at him reproachfully. At that he bent forward and brought his mouth, which had now become quite like a child's, close to my

ear and whispered softly into it: "You take the old Goethe much too seriously, my young friend. You should not take old people who are already dead seriously. It does them injustice. We immortals do not like things to be taken seriously. We like joking. Seriousness, young man, is an accident of time. It consists, I don't mind telling you in confidence, in putting too high a value on time. I, too, once put too high a value on time. For that reason I wished to be a hundred years old. In eternity, however, there is no time, you see. Eternity is a mere moment, just long enough for a joke."

And indeed there was no saying another serious word to the man. He capered joyfully and nimbly up and down and made the primrose shoot out from his star like a rocket and then he made it shrink and disappear. While he flickered to and fro with his dance steps and figures, it was borne in upon me that he at least had not neglected learning to dance. He could do it wonderfully. Then I remembered the scorpion, or Molly, rather, and I called out to Goethe: "Tell me, is Molly there?"

Goethe laughed aloud. He went to his table and opened a drawer; took out a handsome leather or velvet box, and held it open under my eyes. There, small, faultless, and gleaming, lay a diminutive effigy of a woman's leg on the dark velvet, an enchanting leg, with the knee a little bent and the foot pointing downwards to end in the daintiest of toes.

I stretched out my hand, for I had quite fallen in love with the little leg and I wanted to have it, but just as I was going to take hold of it with my finger and thumb, the little toy seemed to move with a tiny start and it occurred to me suddenly that this might be the scorpion. Goethe seemed to read my thought, and even to have wanted to cause this deep timidity, this hectic struggle between desire and dread. He held the provoking little scorpion close to my face and watched me start forward with desire, then start back with dread; and this seemed to divert him exceedingly. While he was teasing me with the charming, dangerous thing, he became quite old once more, very, very old, a thousand years old, with hair as white

as snow, and his withered graybeard's face laughed a still and soundless laughter that shook him to the depths with abysmal old-man's humor.

When I woke I had forgotten the dream; it did not come back to me till later. I had slept for nearly an hour, as I never thought I could possibly have done at a café table with the music and the bustle all round me. The dear girl stood in front of me with one hand on my shoulder.

"Give me two or three marks," she said. "I've spent something in there."

I gave her my purse. She took it and was soon back again.

"Well, now I can sit with you for a little and then I have to go. I have an engagement."

I was alarmed.

"With whom?" I asked quickly.

"With a man, my dear Harry. He has invited me to the Odéon Bar."

"Oh! I didn't think you would leave me alone."

"Then you should have invited me yourself. Someone has got in before you. Well,