

## The Crying Pomegranate

1

Ferdinand was shaking violently in his sleep; he rolled around rapidly, his body cringed and his fingers cramped in the creases of the bedspread. Big drops of sweat were burning up his forehead. He sighed and groaned in his sleep, his lips half open, and his throat completely dry. He reached out his hand as if to catch something in the air, to hold it so ever tightly. He was short of breath, and his heart was trembling with unease and a peculiar fear.

Yes, Ferdinand wanted to catch the images and hold them tightly, so that he wouldn't have to forget or lose them again. But his hand fell back onto the bed like a lifeless bird, when he exhaustively opened his eyes. It felt as if he had just had a fight, a fight against the powerful images that once again defeated him.

Without turning on the light he sat up in his bed, with his fingers searching for the cigarette box. He loved the gentle darkness; he found solace in it. Like a mother or a lover. Yet, Ferdinand Tauber had neither a mother nor a lover.

He wiped off the sweat from his forehead with the sleeve of his nightshirt, lit a cigarette and smiled musingly at the fact how fast the dream world was disentangling.

He never had such encumbering dreams as those of tonight, although he was to be considered a master of dreams. In fact he lived more in a dream world than in the real one. Reality, to him, was only a surface, a mere transparent skin over the higher, unreal world.

He became angry because of his inability to remember the particular dream he has been having every night for quite some time now. For how long? He didn't know for sure.

Only a few fragments were hanging on to his memory and he was now trying exhaustively to put them together like pieces of a mosaic.

---

\*Alev Tekinay. *Der weinende Granatapfel*. Phantastische Bibliothek: Band 249  
(Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990).

When he woke up his teeth were clenched and his body felt like a gigantic log. But then his body began to loosen little by little and an indescribable feeling rushed through his heart. He felt how an unknown something moved in his inmost soul and triggered that familiar sweet ache, the one that he was unable to describe.

When he finally managed to put together some of the mosaic pieces the images began to gain a stunning clarity, one that surpassed each real moment of his life thus far. It seemed to be a hasty racing sequence without a central point. But, no! There was one. It's only that...as soon as the stream of images began to flow toward it, everything was turning non-transparent like a piece of murky glass, finally becoming dark, pitch-dark. In fact, only the last few images remained bright and alive now, those that Ferdinand wanted to touch before he woke up soaked in sweat:

With the help of milky white sails he was moving in a sea that looked like a violet-colored mirror, as a full moon had lit it up. Although the waves hitting against the ship were gentle, they suddenly tilted it and it slowly began to sink. Ferdinand fell deeper and deeper into the abyss until all his senses vanished, until everything was dissolved and wiped out.

What was there before, though? What was there before the mysterious sailing?

With his brows tightened Ferdinand forced his memory to play back the film. Before, there was - a reddish glow before and a - his memory flickered like a shooting star and - then it extinguished again. Still, for an instant Ferdinand felt very close to the central point; half a heart beat long!

At that moment, he remembered his recent conversation with Klaus at the university cafeteria. Klaus, a student at TU, to whom Ferdinand actually would not have credited this much of an imagination, spoke of a video camera that presumably was designed to film people's dreams. Then, the next day, one would be able to play the tape, forwarding or rewinding it as often as one desired.

Of course, Klaus did not know anything about Ferdinand's nightly torments. Not even his roommate Rudi, Ferdinand's best friend knew anything about them. Rudi only knew that Ferdinand was a dreamer from birth. He kept his nightly dreams a secret from Rudi for he himself could not remember them with their exact details. He was, indeed, protecting his secret also because he wanted to keep it for himself.

If one such video camera should ever be invented one day...With seriousness and a total concentration Ferdinand stared at the ceiling, as if that were a television screen. Then he pressed on an imaginary button, forward and backward, further forward, until the reddish glow appeared.

Several figures were moving around in the hazy redness, in obscured shapes and in slow motion. Were they people? Trees? Buildings?

Then the figures became blurrier until they disappeared completely, and everything remained dead silent inside Ferdinand. He got up, exhausted and shaking, went to the window, opened it and took in the freshness of the night through long breaths. Actually, it wasn't night anymore. Pale streaks of light were crossing the horizon. The day was already dawning over the mountains that were visible in clear weather from the windows of their apartment on Clemens Street.

The mountains in the blue distance always awakened a desire in Ferdinand to travel and at the same time gave him a sense of freedom, of unrestrained freedom.

Not too long ago, when he was still preparing for his exams, his longing for this freedom had become almost unbearable. But now that the exams were over, that everything was over, his studies, the graduation...yes, Doctor Tauber...He felt paralyzed. He didn't know what he was supposed to do with his new self, the graduated Orientalist, the doctor of philosophy.

The coolness of the morning ran through all of his body.

The alarm clock would be going off soon. Out of old habit, he was still setting his alarm always to seven o'clock, as if he had to be punctual for a test at nine o'clock. And the sun would just rise higher and higher and warm the city with increasing intensity.

From his attic-window he looked at the city that lay in front of him, getting ready to wake up to a noisy life. It started to take its usual shape in front of him and seemed stunningly more magnificent with its high towers glowing in the golden dust of the morning. Here and there Venetian blinds were being pulled so that the houses, the beautiful old buildings with their delicate early period façades, with wide windows could dream away quietly. First, the city's trash collection car drove by, then the milk car passed by with its clanking white bottles. It is my turn today, thought Ferdinand, to pick up the breakfast rolls and newspapers, or am I wrong? Since I am already awake, it

makes no difference whose turn it is today, Rudi's or mine. I can quickly run over to the grocer and the newsstand. Besides, I need cigarettes anyway.

He closed the window and started to look for clean socks. He didn't have any test today at nine o'clock, but had another appointment, he just realized. No exam, but an appointment at the same location where the exams had taken place; namely, at the Institute for the History and Culture of the Near East and Turkish Studies.

The institute that towered over the colorful bustle of the university district like a silent, somber ghost fort was closed during the semester break. Only the dedicated kept a key. The dedicated were the instructors, the secretary and only a few students writing their dissertations. Since Ferdinand had passed his doctoral exam having handed in his Ph.D. work long ago, Huber, his doctoral advisor's assistant, asked him to return his keys. Now, like a stranger, he had to beg for an appointment and ring the doorbell.

He felt like a stranger while he was walking through the university campus, his sandals hitting the pavement.

He, Ferdinand Tauber, with his melancholic, bright, dark green eyes and long chestnut brown beard that dropped over his slim chest like a waterfall, was passing through these familiar streets like an unnoticed stranger, feeling distressed, miserable and abandoned. Then he spotted the metal sign of the fort: Institute for the History and Culture of the Near East and Turkish Studies.

Huber received a grant for a lengthy stay in Turkey in order to decode the Ottoman chronicles in the library of the Topkapi Palace. He was going to take off in a few days, a reason why Ferdinand envied him so.

Rudi argued that there had to be a position opening at the Institute, at least, temporarily after Huber's departure.

"You are the candidate," he told Ferdinand, "This is a chance of a life time, Ferdi. You must grab it. You must hand in your application to your doctoral advisor Professor Altmann."

"All right, fine," replied Ferdinand, "I'll grab it."

While he was waiting outside the fort gate staring at the metal sign with blank looks in his eyes, he heard keys clinking and rattling from the inside.

Mrs. Wörle, the secretary, first opened the door only slightly, carefully, peeking out to determine which courageous knight dared to appear before the fort in such an early hour of the morning.

“Oh, it is you, Mr. Tauber - Dr. Tauber.”

“I have an appointment with Professor Altmann,” stuttered Ferdinand with unease, his hands sweating.

“The professor will be a little late. Please have a seat in the library.”

The library...with its dusty book smell that blanketed so many fairy tales.

A weak smile spread over Ferdinand's face. It would have been very difficult, he thought, to put into words what he felt exactly when he entered the library.

After all, I have spent five years of my life here, he thought. He pressed onto a bookshelf as if he wanted to crawl onto it.

It was comfortably warm in the library. All windows were open and the sunshine radiated in a green-goldish color through the branches of the large chestnut tree in the backyard onto the wide desk at which Ferdinand sat for years. Here he learned Turkish and Ottoman Turkish, also some Arabic and Persian. He loved these books, these thick books with mysterious, graceful characters.

Although Ferdinand Tauber was able to decode the script, he sensed that he had not yet been able to decipher the actual codes concealed behind these letters, that he had not yet unveiled the secret. He knew that he hadn't yet found the key he needed; he also knew that the secret was real and that he could not unravel it yet. This uncertainty weighed heavily upon his heart, like physical pain.

While he was looking at the books with a gentle gaze, everything in them came alive: the Janissary, with their colorful turbans and their loud timbrels, the sultans with their eagle-like noses, looking fierce, palaces with their mother of the pearl domes, dancing Dervishes and Caravanserais...

Yet, Ferdinand didn't dare to pull out and page through one of these works from the long line of books on the shelf for he had to behave like a stranger now, discreet and shy. His head was spinning. On one hand, he was still searching for the missing pieces of the mosaic to reconstruct last night's dream. On the other hand, however, he was

asking himself whether he could obtain anything from his appointment with Professor Altmann.

An assistantship with Professor Altmann...That would mean mastering the governing apparatus, the war affairs and the tax system of the Ottomans, something that did not interest Ferdinand at all. As Rudi noted, though, it would still mean secure employment, and a secure salary. Ferdinand knew that Rudi wanted what was good for him. Yet, for him, Oriental Studies meant neither the warfare nor the tax system of the Ottomans, or a secure salary but rather -. The voice of the secretary took him away from his anxiety: "Professor Altmann is expecting you, Dr. Tauber." Ferdinand trembled and turned quickly away from the shelf in front of which he was standing.

"Thank you," only a whisper came from his dry throat, "thank you, Mrs. Wörle."

"The assistantship position must first be outlined," said the old man who had edited many Ottoman grammars and life stories of Sultans. Now, he was sitting behind his wide desk, coughing and visibly exhausted. He had already made the transition to retirement leaving the entire work to his zealous assistant Huber. Huber's departure would be a big loss for him. While the professor quietly sized Ferdinand Tauber with his probing, or better yet, mistrusting eyes, his facial expression revealed that this young man could not be a Huber-substitute for him.

"The position will be announced nationwide. When the applications from all candidates are in, a decision will be made. Either way, you earned your doctoral degree on a literary topic; you primarily studied literature, haven't you."

Indeed, thought Ferdinand. He was interested in Turkish literature, Turkish art in general. Stone tiles with intricate leaf motives in turquoise surfaced in front of his eyes.

"But" said Professor Altmann, "I need - we need someone who is a specialist - "

"In the governing structure and the tax system of the Ottomans," Ferdinand helped him complete his sentence.

Professor Altmann nodded in agreement and with relief. Behind him there was a poster. Istanbul. The Blue Mosque in the sunset. With a fiery evening sky reflected upon the windows, burning in full blaze. The splash of the fountain in the mosque at the Arcadian court was vivid.

“Thank you” whispered Ferdinand. He didn’t mean it sarcastically. He truly was thankful to Professor Altmann for not wanting him as his assistant, not to mention that he never felt the desire to assist Professor Altmann. Suddenly, he thought of the mountains in the blue distance and said “thank you” one more time, this time loudly and clearly.

Then the unnoticed stranger, weightless as if on a cloud, once again walked through the narrow streets of the university campus passing cellar-turned student pubs. Although the excitement of last night still made him shiver, Ferdinand felt somewhat relieved and wonderful feelings took over the tension he so strongly felt before.

The sun was pouring a glowing flood of light over the city; but then a dark chill drowned this faint light when Ferdinand stepped on the metro escalator.

“Does the weak heart not break

Under foreign skies?

Will I ever set my eyes upon

The hope of a faint shimmer?”

Did the woman sitting across Ferdinand at the metro, in fact, speak like this?

A guest worker. Turkish. Young, pretty, her dark hair braided on top of her head in pigtails; full, soft lips; blue veins in her slim neck, pale cheeks. Sleep deprived eyes, broken fingernails with peeling fingernail polish. One more night shift before she could go back home. Home?

“Can I still imagine home?

Like a river, my tears tumble down,

Until my heart breaks in grief.”

She, however, wasn’t talking at all. Her lips did not move once. Her eyes were closed and she had leaned her head lightly against the window.

“In grief, in grief,” she seemed to echo like a puppet without moving her lips. It was the metro driver’s voice that was heard through the microphone instead: “Next stop, Marian Square, tramway connection.” Ferdinand loved to let people speak in his fantasies, having them say what they would have said if only they could.

Ferdinand sympathized with these people who lived in a foreign country, who had to live on foreign land for he had similar emotions even though he was born in this city, even though he had spent his entire life here.

He didn't know why he was suddenly reciting the verses of an 18th century romantic poet. He had minored in Germanic Studies and loved the field as much as he did Oriental Studies. He, too, was writing poems. He had compiled enough poems to publish a volume. Yet, the publishing companies that received his manuscript for review usually replied: We regret to inform you, etc.

Still some of the poems were published in literary journals.

Sometimes he would read a new poem to Rudi during breakfast. Rudi, a student of law, would find Ferdinand's poem to be good each time, while he would admit that he didn't understand much from poetry. Then he would add that literature was an unprofitable art: "If you do it as a hobby, then all right, Ferdi." Poetry as a hobby... when writing was the essence of Ferdinand's life.

He knew that his poems were only mediocre. He also knew that he would write the most beautiful poems only if he could decipher the mystery. The puzzle, the dream, the codes...

Ferdinand, too, now had his eyes closed like the woman across from him.

It didn't work out with the assistantship position, he thought; I have to find myself something else. Temporarily I can job-hunt. Just like the time during my studies.

On one hand it pained him that he no longer was a student. The institute, the cafeteria, the state library, the tavern-like cafés and student pubs on campus all had been essential to his life, and now, none of them belonged to him anymore. He was surrounded by something that appeared to be a gigantic endless void.

On the other hand, he was happy that he no longer had to write a paper, or give a speech. One thing was for certain: He couldn't grasp the fact that he was free now.

I must find something else. Any job, doesn't matter what, he said to himself on the metro on his way to the employment office. Next stop: Goethe Square.

When he stepped out of the metro elevator, he pressed his eyes together until they could re-adjust to the bright colors of the summer. Then he studied the "foreign skies" of the

guest worker on the metro. Scattered clouds passed under the sunshine, at times, like gigantic mountains with staggering depths and frightening peaks, at other times, like monsters with long wings. The clear blue of the sky was now rubbed away by the fiery copper-color of the sun.

“So, Oriental studies,” said the clerk at the employment office and made a worrisome face. His fingers ran through the record cards casually with familiar speed.

“What was it that you said, Dr. -“

“Tauber.”

“Well, Mr. Tauber. You speak good Turkish and some Arabic and Persian. Well, well, Turkish is quite popular these days but unfortunately I don’t have anything there for you at the moment. Oh, I see right here. A company urgently needs a translator in Hungarian. Would you be interested in that?”

“I can’t speak Hungarian.”

“What a pity, well, you speak good Turkish and some Arabic and Persian. What else can you do? Could you, could you, for instance, wash cars?”

“I can.”

“Then I have something for you, my dear Doctor. Fast Car Service Beck. Are you writing down the address?”

“Yes.”

“Gabelsberger Street 51. You may start tomorrow.”

“That’s fine.”

Ferdinand Tauber didn’t go home immediately. Since he didn’t have to write a term paper or to hang about the institute’s library or the state library he mulled over how he could be spending his time on this wonderful August afternoon.

He hung around the people masses that were flooding the streets back and forth. The sun was shooting scorching rays to the pavement.

Ferdinand sought refuge in the park that actually wasn’t a park but rather an actual forest of some kind. As soon as he entered this forest through Gisela Street the entire uproar of the big city suddenly stopped ringing in his ears.

Only a bleak ray of sunshine was shimmering here through the green net of foliage. Cork oak and birch trees framed the narrow paths. Under the wide leaves the river was flowing in a soft shade of green. Ferdinand loved everything here; the long ghostlike poplar trees with their wide stretched shadows and the fish smell of the river water whose shore was filled with a soft brownish moss.

He threw himself onto the grass and the grass and the meadow flowers began to sway back and forth as if they wanted to web bizarre dreams. Meanwhile, a bee that Ferdinand couldn't see was buzzing nonstop. He looked at a butterfly that soared over the meadow with its delicate lemon yellow tulle wings and Ferdinand's heart began to race with delight and anticipation. Among the pines, a warm wind rustled and Ferdinand inhaled the many incomprehensible mystifying noises of the forest.

"You are not just somebody," shouted Rudi, "you are a doctor of Orientalist Studies, Ferdi, and you want to wash cars."

Ferdinand didn't react. He was sitting on a chair in the large kitchen of the old building with his long legs stretched and was listening to the ticking of the pan-shaped kitchen clock. He actually hated this clock and would have loved to break it. Since it belonged to Rudi he had no other choice but to tolerate it.

"Washing cars," yelled Rudi who was pacing the kitchen floor with haughty steps, "when you told me this a minute ago, first I thought I wasn't hearing right."

Rudi could not be calmed down anymore. This lawyer-to be, this high achiever, careerist who very much valued High German could not hide his Lower Bavarian dialect in such moments. During such times Ferdinand knew that he had to behave well and keep quiet like a child in front of his angry father.

Evening time was approaching. Over the roofs and towers a coppery dusk was hovering with might. Soon the city slowly sank into the dissolving evening glow.

Rudi sat on a chair and covered his chin with his hands.

"Explain yourself," he then ordered Ferdinand from his judge throne.

"I am innocent, Your Honor," Ferdinand laughed.

“I am listening,” said Rudi and, with a dramatic gesture, bent one ear with his hand toward Ferdinand while he threw an inquisitorial look at him. He waited, raising his eyebrows.

“It is like this,” began Ferdinand Tauber his defense, “I told you already that the Altmann doesn’t want anything to do with me. I have to live from something, right? Since I am no longer getting the federal grant..., and I have so many debts with you and don’t want to burden you. Besides, I don’t intend to work for Mr. Beck my entire life. I am only getting a job because I need the money.”

Ferdinand lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair. Rudi looked at him with a doubtful look in his eyes.

“All right,” he said then, “in that case, as a temporary solution, until you find something better. I mean something that suits your education. In the meantime, we’ll keep scanning job ads in the paper.”

“No,” replied Ferdinand with a soft voice and a nostalgic glow in his dark green eyes.

The two had not yet turned on any light in the kitchen yet; the dusk of a blue summer night was spreading slowly, and it was still quite dark in the old building on Clemens Street. Ferdinand’s eyes appeared even darker, even more melancholic than during any other time. At that moment, Rudi felt like it was a stranger sitting across from him instead of his friend whom he thought he knew.

It was as if Ferdinand had dissolved into the shadow of the night, a night that was magical, full of wonder and secrets. “No,” repeated Ferdinand after some hesitation in the quiet darkness. Only the kitchen clock ticked loudly and quickly; in the pan on the kitchen wall Roman numerals sizzled.

While Ferdinand felt his way to the ash tray, a piece of his cigarette’s ash fell onto the kitchen carpet but Rudi--surprisingly--didn’t scold at him, but rather continued to stare at his friend, speechless.

Scattered stars appeared between the silhouettes of towers while the moon moved higher in the sky.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Rudi asked finally and got up and turned on the light. The kitchen suddenly became bright as if hit by lightning.

“No job ads, no job applications. No, Rudi, don’t worry. I don’t intend to work for Mr. Beck forever. I only want to earn enough money to pay off my debts and save a little.”

“Save?” pressed Rudi Ferdinand again with his questions “What on earth for?”

“For a trip to the Orient,” it slipped out of Ferdinand. Then he suddenly went quiet as if he had revealed a big secret, one that he should not have exposed.

He himself didn’t know of his intention to travel to the Orient until he answered his friend.

How relieved he felt now. He wanted to get up, hug his friend and then dance and dance although he could not dance. In the meantime, Rudi had become a little restless. He couldn’t take his searching eyes away from Ferdinand’s face.

“What kind of a trip? When? Where to?” Rudi asked.

“Most preferably from Istanbul to India,” answered Ferdinand, “but I will definitely not get that far in the world. It is enough for me if I could travel to Turkey but through the entire country; all the way across, from Istanbul to Erzurum.”

Ferdinand’s eyes were now glowing with childlike joy. How often could these eyes transform! Sometimes, they sparkled wild like the eyes of an Indian magician; sometimes, they smiled contently and peacefully, like those of a Dervish. They also could, however, appear melancholic and glassy; even without an expression and distant.

“Listen,” Rudi rudely interrupted, “I don’t like this idea of a trip to Turkey at all. What am I supposed to do with your room for the time you are in your dreamland? I don’t even know how long you want to disappear.”

“I don’t know that myself” admitted Ferdinand, “but for the time being you won’t need to lease my room. If I should stay there for a long time, I’ll let you know.”

“Well, I really don’t know about this,” Rudi mumbled, annoyed.

The moon seemed far away and faded inside the blue darkness. There began a light breeze.

“And when should the party begin? I mean your Safari? When you saved enough?”

“That too. But -“

“But what?”

Far away in the horizon a thunderstorm was now approaching slowly. It was a clear summer night, almost transparent, like glass.

“I’ll know when the time comes.”

“Can’t you be more specific?” Rudi moaned. Then he went to the refrigerator to get beer.

Calmly smoothing off his waterfall beard, Ferdinand began to laugh:

“Please don’t get mad at me, Rudi. I am so happy that you should share my joy instead of scolding at me. I am so excited that I feel like dancing.”

“You and dancing?” Rudi suppressed a chuckle.

The summer storm was nearing fast. While Rudi lifted the beer bottle, he threw a friendly look at Ferdinand:

“Well, if it’s like that, then save your dancing urge for Saturday evening. We are going to the university’s summer ball.”

“Wasn’t that in July already?”

“You have no idea about anything, do you?” said Rudi, “due to bad weather the university administration postponed the ball. I hope they won’t have to put it off once again! It very much looks like a storm out there.” He then began to close the windows of the entire apartment.

The night, the sweet, glass-like clear, gently smelling night...Ferdinand threw himself onto his bed immersing into his dreams, shivering as if feverishly ill.

When he woke up at the break of dawn, a rosy, luminous ray of light was trapped in his attic room window.

Although his facial expression showed calmness, it was storming in his soul. He slowly opened his tightly clenched fists in which he was holding onto the images. He knew more now, more than last night. He knew that he had dreamt of dark green, lonely terrains where creeks rushed. Trees and flowers grew there with might, nature seemed alive, speaking and singing. Ferdinand plunged into the cool water that at first carried him gently away but then suddenly pulled him down. A terrible fear robbed him of his consciousness. He sank and sank into a deep, achingly sweet faint from which he awoke in shivers.

What about before? What was there before, before he sank into the blue abyss of the unconscious? He now saw the reddish glow again, much more clearly than last night; also, the figures had become a little clearer. People and trees, yes, buildings too, but small buildings. Cottages? Small houses? But what kind of small houses? Garden houses? And then? Ferdinand asked himself, his face cramped, his temples pounding painfully. His heart trembled with a turbulent feeling.

Then, there came darkness again, only darkness, nothing but darkness.

It was very hard for him to free himself from the threads of these dreams; those that enwrapped him like a second skin. It was very hard to perceive the reality, the world outside. For instance, the alarm clock, ticking hastily, or the bells of the Erlöser Church.

Although the weather didn't change into high summer after the last heat wave, the university ball was not postponed. Not only the courtyard but also the university garden was decorated colorfully. There were flower baskets on every table and wine bottles wandered between glasses like a stream of fire. Different bands were playing outside in the garden, inside at the courtyard as well as in the auditoriums, and the music swam into every lecture hall like the waves of a magical sea. The courtyard was the most beautiful of it all: the chandeliers were turning like rings of stars; countless numbers of students, dressed in bright colors and moving about carelessly. It all seemed like a magical shadow theatre.

The liveliness of the lights and colors provided a heavenly sight, and the university fountain, brightly lit up, completed the entire splendor. It was not spraying streams of water, but rather rays of light that were dissolving into a thousand pearls after gathering in the big bowl below.

Rudi and Ferdinand stood in a lecture hall where a band was playing Beatles' songs. Dragged by the commotion of the crowd, they had ended up in that room unintentionally. They ran into their peers there, so they stayed on, although Ferdinand preferred most to be alone. Furthermore, he wanted to stroll about aimlessly through the human mayhem and look inside each hall.

"I thought you wanted to dance," Rudi teased him and threw a side-glance at him. Still scanning the lecture halls, Ferdinand didn't react.

“Once again the Beatles are in,” Klaus, someone from the university, noted. “I think it’s great,” yelled Monika Rupky, “The songs remind us of our youth. We are the Beatles youth and should actually be proud of ourselves that we are none other but the Beatles youth.”

I want to hold your hand...

Ferdinand knew Monika Rupky from the Germanic Studies Institute. All her peers who had started their studies at the same time with her had been done for a long time. Some became clerks in a low office; some settled in the spacious rooms of a publishing house. Hanna Raabe, for instance, was very proud that she was hired as a journalist by the editor’s office of a Franconia local paper. She was scared to death before the exam about finding a position. “So, what are you writing about?” Gerd Knobel asked her, “That, for example, a farmer lost two pigs to theft? Or, that Mr. Mayor caught a cold?” His small eyes sparkled victoriously behind his round Schubert glasses.

“Oh, yeah,” Hanna Raabe gave a sound of laughter.

It is a hard day’s night...

Ferdinand thought of his work with Mr. Beck and suddenly felt very tired.

“If you are hinting at the generation of our parents with that remark of the ‘other youth,’ I’ve had it with being the bad German,” Norbert Leisering attempted to reply to Monika Rupky in the midst of the chitchat that echoed the lecture hall. The band had begun a new song.

“Help,” yelled the singer now.

“I’ve had it with everything,” Barbara Steinhauser screamed.

(Wasn’t she a political science major? She participated in every demonstration, always marched at the very front and yelled, “Fellow students, fellow students... we are not going to have any of this anymore...”)

“I am sick of everything,” she repeated and her voice took on a hysterical tone. She made a dramatic pause, in order to continue with more energy:

“The entire Southern Bavaria is like a volcano. Nuclear reactors everywhere, and not as nuclear power plants, mind you!”

“This is not a life but rather a fight for survival.” (Was that Rudi?)

We can work it out, we can work it out...

Ferdinand searched for a lighter in his pockets for the cigarette that was hanging between his lips. Gerd Knobel gave him his, then shouted his question (he had to shout because the music was very loud): "Is migration an alternative?"

"Where to?" Monika Rupky sighed, "to New Zealand? To Australia?"

"We won't be able to break this ring of fire." (This time it definitely was Klaus.)  
"We are all on the same boat."

We all lived in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine...

"Our Ferdi, however, is going to make tracks," Rudi remarked with a loud laughter.

"Really?" Hanna Raabe giggled, "Where on earth to, Doctor?"

"Yes, where to?" Norbert Reisering and Gerd Knobel also wanted to know, no matter what.

"I am going to Turkey," Ferdinand answered with a soft voice, casually.

Yesterday, oh, I believe in yesterday...

Ferdinand wasn't sure how he managed to sneak out of that lecture hall without being noticed. He reached one of the long hallways and, feeling content, let a river of people drag him away. In the Senate room a Dixieland band was playing "Down by the riverside, down by the riverside." Ferdinand walked down the marble stairs that led to the courtyard, and then bolted out into the garden to breathe in the night air.

The garden was almost empty, with all lights almost completely dimmed. Only a few lamps were still flickering like Jack-o'-lanterns, sending a silvery shine onto the foliage that was shaking restlessly.

While he inspected the garden that spread before him under the pale light of the moon, he suddenly paused. Painstakingly, he dove into the imagery world of his dream because this half-dark garden seemed very familiar to him at this very moment. His facial muscles contracted erratically. Feeling dizzy, he leaned against a column. Then, he noticed the music getting nearer again, quietly and powerfully. The melodies reached into the depths of his heart and awoke all songs sleeping inside him, springs and flowers and ancient old memories. Only a few minutes ago, when he was in the company of his

friends and peers, Ferdinand Tauber had felt so lonely and strange. Yet now, he felt neither lonely nor strange here in the pale, nightly glow of the almost empty garden.

“Where are you?” he wanted to yell into the darkness, “Who are you...?”

He strongly felt that there was someone in this garden, someone who was calling him toward himself through the magical music. Or, rather the music was their shared language. His legs shaking, he set out to trace the music that seemed to be coming from a remote corner of the abandoned garden, the music that probably never was.

After the university ball, time passed as if in flight. Now, it was Rudi’s turn to study for the exam. So, both roommates, Ferdinand and Rudi, saw each other only occasionally. When Ferdinand came home, exhausted from his work at Fast Car Service Beck, he threw himself onto the couch in the kitchen, stretched his legs, and his head fell upon his chest. Rudi didn’t even dare once to disturb his friend in these hours of meditation.

Following the university ball, a rain spell had settled in the city, one that also brought along the cold. The alleys and the forest were shining wet. The rain washed the forest in such a way that its dark emerald foliage sparkled. During this time, Ferdinand walked more and more often on the narrow forest paths where the tips of the yew grew together into a dense roof. While his breath carried him through the tunnel of the trees, he could sense how much closer he was getting to the gate of the secret.

After the second half of August had passed with periods of gloomy, the sun was beaming again like a metallic bloom behind the towers of the city. It was a September of post-summer glow. The city was sparkling quietly under the yellow sunlight, and Ferdinand was swimming in a bottomless ocean of dreamy visions, fears and realizations. More and more strongly he felt the deep longing in his inner being. That unexplainable something was now frighteningly near and yet endlessly distant.

It was a Thursday. Ferdinand came home from work, fell onto the couch, and surrendered to exhaustion. Rudi was not at home yet. Evening was settling in behind the windows and houses that were drowned under the increasing blue of the dusk. This was the time when the light dissolved into the darkness and the darkness into the light in

different shades of colors. All of a sudden, he sat up, prompted by an instinct, then, he noticed the letter on the refrigerator.

Since he usually didn't get any mail, he thought the letter to be for Rudi. On the other hand, he thought, if it had been for Rudi, he would have opened it already.

He got up slowly and walked toward the refrigerator. Those few steps turned into a road of infinity. His legs felt like lead; this situation was exactly like in his dreams. He wanted to move but couldn't. He was gliding down dark green, lonesome, slippery grounds. He tried hold on to something with both hands but his fingers hurt. The lilac-colored cave was taking him in, deeper and deeper into the reddish shimmer, to the mystery, to the secret.

Before he touched the letter, he felt as if an unknown hand opened a curtain before his eyes, but only a little, as if for Ferdinand to recognize the figures inside this reddish ocean of light somewhat more clearly. Silhouettes of people were shaping before his eyes, only two people, a man and – also trees, the reddish light came from them, and now the small buildings took the shape of a summerhouse and –

The bells of the Erlöser Church interrupted the immeasurable sense of quiet, pulling Ferdinand away from his visions while their sound pounded at him like thunderous rubble. Startled as if a shot was charged nearby, he found himself standing next to the refrigerator, feeling the letter.

Although he saw that he was the addressee, he continued to stare at the envelope with blank eyes and only much later, noticed the stamps: stamps that were showing him the face of Kemal Atatürk. Only a while later did it dawn on him to look at the name and the address of the sender:

Murat Gürkan, Sümbül Street, No. 56/7, Levent-Istanbul/Turkey

When Rudi came home, he found a Ferdinand Tauber who was impossible to recognize. A Ferdinand Tauber who was neither lying on the couch nor meditating. A Ferdinand Tauber who didn't ask him, "How is the law business?" while trying to overcome the indifference in his manner.

On the one hand, he was like a stuffed Ferdinand Tauber, settled on the couch, motionless, staring into the air. On the other hand, however, this was a Ferdinand

Tauber, who was beaming with joy, spreading calm and warmth. A Ferdi Tauber who was floating through the rooms of the old apartment, skipping and speaking at the speed of a waterfall, but neglecting to ask as his standard question.

Rudi was dying to report about his day with a big smile on his face, one that he always managed to produce so successfully, with a row of white teeth of a proud non-smoker.

He was wearing a dark blue suit that matched the grey stripes of his tie very well.

“What got into you, Ferdi?” he yelled. He had to yell in order to drown out Ferdinand’s voice, because he was speaking non-stop, and just didn’t seem to be able to stop talking. Before Ferdinand could tell him why he was in this mood, Rudi fired away, “Hey man, you may congratulate me. I had the last test today.”

“Again, a one?”

“But of course.”

Dr. Rudolf Segmüller. Attorney-at-law.

He could already see the door sign at the chancellery, of a luxuriously arranged chancellery in his Lower Bavarian hometown, with computers, etc. He was already walking imperiously on the rumbling floors of courtrooms.

Yet, that time was still far away. True, he completed the exam successfully, but still had to write his thesis in order to be able to become Dr. Rudolf Segmüller.

“That’s fantastic,” Ferdinand yelled, “In that case we have two reasons to celebrate.”

“Two?” Rudi was surprised.

Ferdinand nodded, “Your exam and my trip.”

“Your what?”

“My trip. Its time.”

“How do you know that? I mean how can you tell that its time? Did you save enough?”

“As you know, I paid back my debts. True, I didn’t save much but that doesn’t matter. It is an invitation. It is like a call that I have been waiting for, consciously or unconsciously.”

“Tell me, Ferdi, aren’t you going to explain to me what this is all about?”

“I have been trying to do that the whole time. But you weren’t listening.”

“I’m sorry, I had the exam, and-“

“I know today was an important day for you, but also for me.”

Ferdinand hugged Rudi, who kept staring at him in bewilderment, and then began to explain.

He started detailing the case of the letter and saved his friend the kilometer-long walk from the couch to the refrigerator through a bottomless abyss.

“Murat Gürkan,” he said with a soft voice, “My friend Murat, you must remember him.”

“Yes, yes,” Rudi replied, “I remember him.”

Murat Gürkan. Murat...The blond Turk with blue eyes. Whenever Ferdinand and Murat sat in the university cafeteria, everyone thought Ferdinand to be the Turk and Murat the German.

Murat studied industrial management. He was from a rich family in Istanbul. After his studies, he wanted to head the factory that belonged to his father.

Ferdinand and Murat had gotten to know one another in a student bar. Ferdinand was trying to decipher the headlines of a Turkish newspaper. Back then he couldn’t speak Turkish yet; he had just begun his Turkish studies. Murat was sitting next to him, sipping his coffee with delight, when he asked on impulse, “Can I help you?”

“Can you speak Turkish that well?”

“I am Turkish.”

“You don’t say!”

This café acquaintance (Rudi invented this expression) had transformed into a real friendship soon after this exchange. Rudi had felt neglected at that time.

After completing his studies, Murat had to go to Turkey immediately because the factory was waiting for him. His father was ill and frail, and was longingly waiting for the return of his only son. Murat and Ferdinand corresponded with one another (Ferdinand in Turkish, Murat in German), first intensively, but then more and more rarely. Of course, this by no means meant any lack of friendly feelings between the two.

It is just that everyone went their own way. Murat Gürkan was the head of a soft drink business, and Ferdinand Tauber was translating rare letters, consumed by the dusty smell of the books at the Institute library.

For almost half a year, Murat had not written any more letters, and Ferdinand had almost forgotten his Turkish friend; first of all, due to the pressure of the exam, and secondly, because he had problems. Problems with himself. The mystery, that unexplainable something, and the dream. The fine dream threads have been holding him prisoner.

Murat Gürkan was now announcing his upcoming wedding to him. Ferdinand read Rudi the letter:

I'd like to cordially invite you. I would like you to attend my wedding no matter what. You can stay with us as long as you'd like. My parents and Nalan (that must be the bride, Ferdinand thought) are already looking forward to meeting you...

"I definitely must go," Ferdinand told Rudi, "I will stay at Murat's place for a while. Then I'll move on. Into the interior of the country."

"How long do you plan to stay there?" Rudi asked, displeased.

"A year or so, perhaps longer, perhaps only a few months."

"That's not a clear answer," Rudi muttered.

"I know that," Ferdinand muttered, lost in thought.

"What should I do with your room?"

"Oh yes, you asked me that before. No leasing for the time being. I'll pay you a month's rent in advance. After that, we'll see."

"How do you picture all this? What will you live by over there?"

"I'll try to find a job. Don't worry, I won't starve."

"You certainly are naive," Rudi moaned, "but that's your business. So, in that case, have a good trip, my friend."

"First, we'll celebrate," Ferdinand said with a joyous hint in his voice but also with a sense of farewell. He stood by the window looking at the moon that never before

seemed this magnificent to him. It wasn't the moon, but rather a ball of amber barely clearing off the roofs. Far away, the violet night sky was resting.

"Listen," he heard Rudi's authoritative voice, "you can't go to Turkey like this. With the way you look, you won't make a good impression on your friend or his family."

Ferdinand was aware that he looked somewhat bad lately, that he let himself go. After all, he was under the immense power of his dream and thus had only a loose contact with reality. Yet now, he felt awakened, although the dream was still holding him captive, though not with force anymore. Now it was only a gentle embrace.

"Cut your hair and beard," Rudi said, "and buy yourself a few new clothes before you go down there."

"You're right, Rudi," Ferdinand agreed and blew out the flame of the match that he was still holding in his hand, although he had already lit his cigarette with it.

In the next few days Ferdinand had so much to do. He had to give notice to Mr. Beck, extend his passport, visit the barber, buy wedding presents, etc. etc.

When he sat in front of the mirror at the Werner Barber Shop, another Ferdinand Tauber was looking at him. The length of his hair was normal now, and from his waterfall beard, only a short beard remained on his chin. There was also something in his eyes that felt different, it seemed, and either their usual wild sparkle or their sad, glassy appearance was absent now. Their shine appeared now to be due to childlike joy and anticipation.

He also looked much younger now. It was not so much the external changes, however; not the new hairstyle, or the new shirt that turned him into a different Ferdinand Tauber but rather something else. Quietly he observed his new self in the mirror and turned to Werner:

"Thanks. It's good like this."

"Attention please, Turkish Airlines...flight number...passengers to Istanbul and Ankara..."

The airport was like a temple with ceilings consisting of echoes. German and English announcements were constantly interrupting the maze of multiple languages.

Ferdinand wasn't walking; he was floating in the air. Rudi, who gave him a ride to the airport with his VW, hugged him at the passport counter. Like a bad actor, he played along; the entire episode seemed like a senseless adventure to him.

“Take good care of yourself, my boy.”

At the passport check, the human storm swallowed Ferdinand. After several minutes, being still intact, he was sitting on the belly of the gigantic steel bird that, ready for take off, stretched its wings meters long.

The flight attendant was a young, small, and graceful woman with thick eyelashes. No matter which language she spoke, Turkish, German or English, the tone of her voice was monotonous, unintelligible, as if she had a chronic cold:

“Welcome aboard the...hos geldiniz. Please fasten your seat-belts and...put out your cigarette...the captain and the crew...size iyi yolculuklar diler.”

Then, the pressure in the ears; the sweet but aching feeling of being weightless, and the vanishing of all senses.

“We will now be demonstrating the safety measures...for your safety...emniyet tedbirleri...”

Moving like a puppet she placed the oxygen mask over her mouth and nose and walked through the aisle of the aircraft with her round hips in the tight skirt of her red and white uniform.

Outside, there were the mountains, only the mountains. Ferdinand Tauber saw himself on the threshold of the distance that now seemed very close to him.

Occasionally, the bare peaks sparkled in the bright sunlight, and then an army of clouds took over like panting dragons. Then they transformed into castles of foam with big fragments of shadows. Through these fragments Ferdinand first recognized mirror-clear villages and green fields scattered around, then a prairie landscape. They were all squeezed between a stranger's elbows displaying a tray (the flight attendant with the bushy eyelashes was serving lunch). Then the steel bird roared through the sky like thunder.

Although the holiday season was over, the plane was almost full. When Ferdinand was able to take his eyes away from the window, he looked around. Most flight passengers were Turks; tired guest workers behind widely spread newspapers but

there were also German tourists who were flying to Istanbul with the anticipation of a 1001 Night experience. Through the small windows they were trying to take pictures of the cloudy landscape outside. The cameras buzzed endlessly.

The first pictures for the slide show when they are back home again. Ferdinand smiled mockingly. The neighbors nibbling on their salty sticks, cheap red wine to accompany. Of course, much information about the trip to Turkey.

Here we are still inside the airplane, Mr. Meier, but that one is already Istanbul.

Fantastic directing, Ferdinand smiled when he returned his tray to the flight attendant. He barely touched the roasted chicken; neither did he touch the mixed salad or the dessert. He wasn't hungry. Meanwhile Mrs. Meier's raving voice, "Mind you, the picture is an original!"

"Yes, yes, these are the water carriers. One calls them saka over there, also sucu." Mrs. Meier again, "Is that gibberish?"

Then the host again, "There, the pigeons around the fountain of the mosque." The hostess: "Wait a minute. But that is already Cappadocia. How did that one get into the Istanbul slides? You didn't organize them correctly, darling."

The "darling" then shrugging his shoulders with indifference.

Quite content with his self-directed play, Ferdinand turned toward the window again and, through the clouds, noticed the sea below. It was an endless blue, a diamond-like glitter, and he felt like he wasn't looking at a sea below but rather having a vision deeper into himself through a hidden window or through a secret door.

The officer at the passport counter had an apathetic expression on his face. He was stamping the passes with hands as fast as a machine: Trick-Track.

Now, Ferdinand was standing before him. With a strict look in his eyes the officer compared the picture and the face.

Tauber

Ferdinand

Special traits: None.

Then, the Trick-Track again; a magical sound that confirmed the beginning of the trip. After Ferdinand passed the customs, he felt like he passed a momentous barrier in his inner being. The expedition into the unknown had begun.