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author Michael Roes

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English sample translation

translated by Gary Schmidt

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the translation Gary Schmidt

contact Anke Grahl
phone: +49 69 92 07 87 15
anke.grahl@schoeffling.de

Schöffling & Co.
Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH
Foreign Rights
Kaiserstraße 79
60329 Frankfurt am Main
Germany

www.schoeffling.de

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If I asked myself what happened between me and the Prince in Leipzig, I would tell myself: nothing more than fleeting nocturnal encounters like those in the *Hasenstall*¹ in Glaucha. Yet, no one demands that I account for the nights we spent together. Therefore, I entrust our adventure to silence, for as long as no one utters a word about it there is nothing to remember.

If one feeling remains from this night, it is a shadowy one that warns me to be on my guard.

The more the Crown Prince looks for opportunities in the following weeks to meet and be together, the more I keep my distance from him, often even dismissing him gruffly in order to avoid encouraging him with imprudent signs of affection. Through the scrutinizing eyes of a naturalist I observe the virtues and weaknesses of the Prince, so that in the future I might sustain him in his weaknesses and be wary of his strengths.

Yet, the unhealthy arousal of these imprudent nights is not quickly forgotten. The ways of the flesh are inscrutable. The changes creep in slowly and almost unnoticed, tiny changes that, taken as a whole, signify a complete transformation. For the time being I don't know if it is my perception that has changed or if the things themselves have become brighter, clearer, more radiant.

Suddenly, all aspects of daily life appear upended and yet only now in their rightful place in this new order. It is as if my ears and eyes have been rinsed out and yet I am aware that this extraordinary clear-sightedness cannot last. For like all sharpness it dulls, grows weary. It is difficult for me to differentiate between flesh and spirit, between elation and melancholy. What is soft and nondescript refreshes me, what is loud and piercing evokes my physical disgust. And then I think I have gone mad from so much clear-sightedness and clairaudience.

¹ Literally, "rabbit pen," as the boys referred to their quarters in Francke's boarding school.

Zeithain, the tenth of June. Infantry maneuvers. Twenty-four battalions of infantry squares demonstrating how they beat their drums and fire by faces in a square, consecutively in a line, and in reverse.²

"Woe betide us, if my father sees us together like this!"

"Don't think of it!"

"He *always* thinks of it: when he sees his Langen Kerls³, when he sees you or Keith with me. For him, it is as if he has already sinned by thinking of it."

"That's why Pastor Francke has such an easy time with him."

"Indeed, he considers himself dirty, so he must wash himself constantly and yet never gets clean, because he has not once touched what day and night he longs to touch. He believes that God sees everything and that his sinful desires already suffice to condemn him to eternal damnation."

"And you? Do you also think what we are doing is a sin?"

"I rejoice in it because my father forbids it to himself and the whole world!"

"That does not sound very flattering for me."

"I would not have thought that you were susceptible to flattery, Katte!" I have always considered you to be the least vain person whom I have ever encountered and have learned to love you above all for that."

Scores of riff-raff are bustling around in neighboring hamlets. Yet, great effort is being made to ensure order and cleanliness on the grounds of the encampment. Just today, eight vagabonds who had snuck into the camp were delivered by the village soccage⁴ to the authorities at Großenhain. One of them carries a valuable watch, which he must have stolen, although no-one has reported the theft of a watch.

² Military terms: *Carre-feuer*, *Lauffeuer*, and *Heckfeuer*.

³ Potsdam Giants (also referred to in the text by Poschenrieder).

⁴ Amtsfron

A few days after my visit to his apartment I receive the first letter from Friedrich, sent from Wusterhausen. He writes that he finds himself in the most inane company imaginable. He could surely say another thing or two about the people his father surrounds himself with, but he had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and only now, at midnight, can he finally write to me.

"You know Wusterhausen," he writes. "If there is a hell, then it will look like this, at least for me: my very own hell, created just for me. At the entrance to the palace courtyard two bears are standing watch: wild, maleficent beasts that can only lumber around on their hind legs because the paws of their forelegs have been hacked off. Regardless of the weather we eat our noonday meal outside under a tent pitched under the large linden tree. When it rains heavily, we sit in water up to our calves, since our dining quarters are in a small hollow. There are always more than twenty of us at the table, three quarters of whom fast, for there are never more than six bowls served, and their contents have been cut so small that even a person who is only semi-hungry could empty them all by himself. And you know that my father, the king, is a heavy eater with an insatiable hunger. If the king is in a bad mood, the already paltry fare is reduced even further, and if he considers me worthy of punishment I not infrequently sit before an empty plate. On all the autumn days that have led us annually to this bleak place, which is only good for my father's hunting pleasure, I have lived on nothing but bread and water. As a child I was always hungry. Although we are part of the royal family, my siblings and I often almost died of hunger.

While the king takes his afternoon nap after dinner, the whole family must sit gathered around him completely still. Only on beatings does the king not skimp; he always has his cane at hand.

"The rooms in Wusterhausen resemble cells more than chambers," he writes, "and the whole crude facility is more of a barrack than a palace, so it is my father's favorite place. His sleeping quarters are right behind the guardroom of the artillery, his guardsmen closer to him than his lawfully wedded wife, who is lodged on a different floor in her own cloistral cell. And my sister and I are housed like doves in narrow attic garrets of this royal penitentiary.

I am so weary of these things, dear Hans! Every day here I experience the most abominable scenes; I am so tired of it that I would rather beg for my bread than to keep living in this condition."

Zeithain, the 11th of June. Camp service. - In contrast to St. Augustine or the Eleatics I am convinced that only the external world is the essential path that allows us to advance to the internal world. Maybe they will prove to be one and the same at the end of the journey.

Last night the Saxon Uhlans⁵ tried to play a trick on us, most certainly not without the permission of their king. They sneak into the Prussian camp in order to steal the Prussian flag raised before Friedrich Wilhelm's tent but are discovered by the vigilant guards and repelled with appropriate force. His majesty takes it in stride and calls the bloody incident a nice military jest.

On the way back to my lodging in Riesa, shortly before the banks of the Elbe and the nearby barrel bridge over the river, I run into an enormous swarm of mosquitoes, so bizarre that it almost resembles an infernal nightmare. It is as if they filled in every bit of air, flying up from the dank meadows into my mouth, eyes, ears, and nose, not maliciously, since they did not bite, but in such a dense swarm that they threatened to suffocate me.

I swat at them and manage to grab one of these beasts, small as a kernel of corn, in my fist, but I can hardly recognize what kind of a winged bug it might be, let alone am I able to describe it. Even the good Orfraie⁶ feels plagued and threatened by the suffocating swarms and steers her hooves without further guidance from me toward the river, diving in along with her rider in order to fend off the invading army by immersing herself completely.

When I tell my roommates about this diabolical attack they shake their heads in disbelief and say it must have been a swarm of June bugs gone wild. Whatever the case may be, my mare and I should be happy that they didn't bite.

⁵ Light cavalry common in central and eastern European armies.

⁶ Katte's horse.

"Hans? Are you asleep already?" Fritz awakens me in the middle of the night.

"Well, not anymore."

"Sorry." We have arrived safely back in Wust. Our leave is over, tomorrow my valet, Lieutenant Keith, and I must escort the Crown Prince in all haste back to Potsdam, so that his stern father does not make him pay for exceeding the leave he was granted.

"What is it?"

"One day I will no longer be afraid of anyone!"

"Maybe, one day. But I don't know if that is really so desirable."

"Fear destroys us, eats us up, makes life into a living hell!"

"And sometimes, albeit seldom, it saves us."

"The only thing that I still want to fear is that someday you will could grow tired of me."

"You are talking nonsense."

"One day I will build us a house with many windows that face south, so that it is always bright in the beautiful, large rooms. Und no servant will be allowed to wait on us, for I myself will be the one who removes your coat and rapier and pours your wine."

"Of which you have drunk too much today, undoubtedly! Try to sleep or I will bring you back to Potsdam tonight."

"Do you think we will still know each other in heaven? Or in hell?"

"In heaven there are probably so many distractions and so little misery that one has no need of friends."

"If hell were the price for our being together, I would prefer it to heaven."

"Yet at the moment you can't escape it quickly enough!"

"Heaven or hell, it's all the same to me. The main thing is that the judge does not send me where my dear departed father is."

"He is still alive. Go to sleep now!"

Zeithain, the 12th of July. Uninterrupted rain since early morning. Regardless of this, the artillery maneuver is taking place with forty-eight canons and two regiments of infantry cover. The rain has long since saturated everything, yet the cannoneers succeed in firing quickly.

Friedrich Wilhelm commands us officers to observe the maneuver from start to finish. He himself perseveres in the rain in spite of his gout and his cold. He says he has not brought us along to feast and gawk but, above all, to carefully study the military techniques of the Saxons and learn from them.

The next letter from Fritz reaches me via messenger from Potsdam: "You will not believe it, Hans, but the king strikes me daily and treats me like a slave. And never does he let me rest or grant me the least possible recreation. He has forbidden reading, music, and instruction. I am hardly allowed to speak with anyone anymore and am constantly surrounded by spies and overseers. God knows when and in what circumstances we will see each other again!

I lack even the most basic clothes necessary. And then the last scene I had with my father in the palace: he has me summoned in the morning and as soon as I enter he grabs me by the hair, throws me to the floor, and mauls me with his fists and boots. Then he drags me to the window, loops the curtain chord around my neck, and pulls it taut.

Luckily, I am able to grab both his hands and call for help with my last bit of strength. Old Gummersbach rushes up and frees me from the king's grip, only himself to feel my father's cane.

I still do not know the reason for his murderous rage. I have no other way to explain it but to say that madness has taken hold of him!"

Zeithain, the 13th of June. Lance throwing at straw pyramids and wrestling. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery maneuvers.

The field hospital is located two hours away on foot from the encampment, in Kreinitz. The devil only knows why it was set up so far off the beaten path, for the doctors do not lack for work. After the presentation of the artillery today, the powder residue left in the tube exploded in the face of the artillery master while he was cleaning the barrel, and three other cannoneers were also injured. In addition, a few sparks hit a munitions cartridge and caused it to blow up, injuring nine more soldiers.

Perhaps they placed the field hospital so far away so that less seriously indisposed soldiers are reluctant to report sick, preferring to stay on duty rather than hobbling for two hours all the way to Kreinitz because of a sprained ankle or an upset stomach. Yet, for those who are gravely injured like the artillery master, the long transport to succor can end fatally.

Late in the evening, shortly before ten o'clock when the gates to the Potsdam Court are shut, I slip into the garden and wait until the guard strides past. My gaze falls on the dark window pane. The king has long since gone to bed. It is his custom to rise already at five o'clock and he compels all family members who are present to conform to his rhythm. It is no wonder that the queen always yearns for her summer relocation to Monbijou Palace.⁷

Friedrich inhabits two modest rooms in an isolated wing of the palace. Never before had I been in the palace at such a late hour. Moreover, I have come without the knowledge of the Crown Prince, even though in his letter he had urged me to visit him soon.

The Crown Prince's rooms lie at the end of the unlighted corridor. When I knock quietly the heavy door is opened by Lieutenant Keith, who looks at me in astonishment. "Oh, Lieutenant von Katte!"

"Good evening, Keith. Is the Crown Prince not present?"

⁷ A Rococo palace that was located in what is now central Berlin on the north bank of the Spree River, now the site of a park with the same name.

"No, Lieutenant. He accompanied the king this morning to Berlin."

"And why are you here then?"

"Actually, he wanted to return this evening to Potsdam. Is there a special reason for your visit?"

"No, nothing special. Just a surprise. I will let you go back to sleep now."

"Where will you sleep? You have your apartment in Berlin, don't you?"

"Yes, indeed."

"It is much too late for you to return to Berlin now."

"I'll hunker down at Wietersheim's or Ingersleben's."

"I can let you stay overnight here if you don't betray me to anyone."

"To whom?"

Keith is silent for a moment and turns red. Then he quickly says: "The Prince will scold me if I just send you out into the night."

I look around in Friedrich's small chamber and wonder what all has been discussed here and—even more—what all here has been concealed or kept secret. A table, a chair, a smoking candle, a narrow bed.

"Friedrich is a most lovable boy," says Keith. I say nothing in response to this unseemly judgment, for Keith is barely older than the Crown Prince. "But when you have to spend longer periods of time with him then sometimes you have enough for a while."

"Have you no fear that the Crown Prince could learn of your loose statements?"

"No, Fritz knows and loves my loose lips."

I rise from the narrow cot, grab my hat and rapier and take my leave. "I must go now. Thank you for your openness, Herr Lieutenant. But do not overdo it!"

Tired and somewhat indignant I walk down the dark corridor, then I hear footsteps coming toward me. I stop at a window, through which a little bit of moonlight falls into the corridor, so that whoever is coming toward me notices my presence and is not startled.

"Katte?" - It is the voice of the Crown Prince.

"Yes, it is I, your Highness."

"At this hour?"

"A spur of the moment idea."

"You weren't leaving already?"

"I was told you were in Berlin."

"I informed Keith that I wished to return this evening at all costs."

We retrace the few steps back to Friedrich's apartment. Keith casts a dirty look at us when we cross through the anteroom, continuing immediately into Friedrich's parlor. I feel my stomach churn as if I had consumed rotten food.

Friedrich makes a light, then fans the almost extinguished flame in the fireplace.

"Should Keith prepare a coffee for us?"

"It's a bit late for coffee."

"Then he should bring us beer!"

The Prince looks tired. I cannot possibly stay.

In the morning, my body awakens at the usual time but my head does not want to follow suit. It harkens inward, my heart beats blithely, unburdened.

Next to me lies Friedrich, now no longer a child but a seventeen-year-old man. I let him rest, dress silently, and leave the Prince's spartan apartment.

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