HERBERT EISENREICH

"ERLEBNIS WIE BEI DOSTOJEWSKI": HERBERT EISENREICH'S REWORKING OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S "A CUP OF TEA"

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ABSTRACT

This thesis begins with a brief account of the lives of Katherine Mansfield and Herbert Eisenreich, and with a description of the state of the German short story after World War II. The theme of misunderstanding is traced through Eisenreich's novels, radio plays and short stories, and it is shown that the story, "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski", contains the preoccupations which appear in these other works as well. This story is then compared with its "Vorlage", Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea". Particular attention is paid to techniques used by Eisenreich but not used by Mansfield. Finally, there is a translation of Eisenreich's story into English.

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This thesis is concerned with Herbert Eisenreich's reworking of a short story by Katherine Mansfield. It will attempt to show why this particular story interested Eisenreich, and to prove that such an "adaptation" is a valid creative undertaking.

I

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923) was a much travelled woman. She left her native New Zealand at the age of fourteen to study music in England for four years, and she was thereafter never again to feel perfectly comfortable in her own homeland. She returned to London in 1908, aged twenty, in order to start a career as a writer. With her lover and later husband, J. Middleton Murry, she eventually found a home of sorts in England, but she continued to spend much of her time on the continent, especially in France, Italy and Germany, usually for reasons of health. She moved to France in 1922 in the hope that she would find a final cure for her consumption. But she never recovered and died there early in 1923.[1]

According to Hans Bender[2] it was in a German pension, where she was recovering from a miscarriage in 1909, that

she first read Chekhov, and his stories stimulated her to write her own. Bender considers her a seminal influence for the short story in England: "Sie verwirklichte Tschechows Programm als sensibles Mädchen, und sie reichte das Programm weiter nach England, wo die Schriftsteller ein Story-Fieber packte, das nach Irland übergriff."[3]

Most of her best and best-known stories were written in the last few years of her life. The story, "A Cup of Tea", is one of these, and its composition can be exactly dated because Katherine Mansfield's journal entry for January 11th, 1922, reads as follows:

> In bed again. Heard from Pinker The Dial has taken The Doll's House. Wrote and finished A Cup of Tea. It took about 4-5 hours . . . There is no feeling to be compared with the joy of having written and finished a story. I did not go to sleep, but nothing mattered. There it was, new and complete.[4]

Her stories were read with interest in other countries besides England, but in Germany, during Herbert Eisenreich's youth, it was not usual for writers to model their stories on those of English or American authors. It was not until the fifties that Eisenreich read "A Cup of Tea" and formed the idea of writing his "adaptation" of it, "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski". In spite of Mansfield's travels, and in spite of her interest in the literature of other countries, she can hardly have suspected that three years after she wrote "A Cup of Tea" and two years after her own death a writer would be born in Austria who would

rework this story, which had taken her such a short time to complete, and make of it something quite different.

Herbert Eisenreich was born on February 7th, 1925, in Linz, Austria. He attended a Realgymnasium in Linz, and was, according to his own account, a "Schüler von unendlicher Faulheit"[5]. But a composition assignment which he was given when he was fifteen awakened in him an interest in how stories could be written. This interest never left him - in fact, it became intensified.

Many critics have pointed out that Eisenreich belongs to a generation whose education was interrupted by the war, a generation, says Hermann Friedl, whose education was only scraped together with difficulty from the ruins of the past.[6] Eisenreich was called up in 1943, began his service on the western front in 1944, and returned to Austria, wounded, from a military prison, at the end of 1945. He obtained his Matura in 1946, the same year in which he won the Erzählerpreis des Linzer Volksblattes for one of his first stories. He began to study Germanistik and classical languages at the University of Vienna, but he soon left university and took up occasional jobs. He made the acquaintance of other Austrian writers, notably Heimito von Doderer, of whom he is a great admirer, and Albert Paris Gütersloh. His early writings - poems, short narratives, book reviews and essays - appeared in anthologies and

Viennese periodicals.[7]

The years 1952 to 1956 were his Wanderjahre. After the publication of his first novel, Einladung, deutlich zu leben (1952), he spent two years in Hamburg and two in Stuttgart working for the radio and for magazines. He published his second novel, Auch in ihrer Sünde, in Hamburg in 1953, and he experimented with the dialogue form in Sebastian (1952) and Die Ketzer (1953). In 1954 he won the Erzählerpreis des Süddeutschen Rundfunks, and in 1955 the Hörspielpreis des Radio Bremen for his radio play, Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben, broadcast in 1955 and published later in 1958. (This play also received the Prix Italia in 1957.)

After his experiences in radio and television Eisenreich returned to Vienna for a brief stay, then moved with his family out to the country. He spent several years as a freelance writer in Sandl in Oberösterreich and later in Istrien. In Böse schöne Welt, a collection of short stories which he published in 1957, the critic, Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, sees for the first time the influence of both Hemingway and Maupassant.[8] This volume was followed by: Carnuntum: Geist und Fleisch (1960) and Große Welt auf kleinen Schienen (1963), two essays; Der Urgroßvater (1964), a short novel; Reaktionen (1964), a collection of essays and criticism; Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten (1965) and Die Freunde

meiner Frau (1966), two more collections of short stories; and Ich im Auto (1966), an essay.

Since the autumn of 1967 Eisenreich has divided his time between Vienna and Tamsweg in the vicinity of Salzburg. He has published: Das kleine Stifterbuch (1967), a monograph on Adalbert Stifter; Ein schöner Sieg (1973) and Die blaue Distel der Romantik (1976), two short story collections; Verlorene Funde (1976), a collection of early poems; and Das Leben als Freizeit (1976), an essay. He has won numerous prizes besides those mentioned above, and his works have been translated into many different languages. In 1970 Peter Demetz made the comment that Eisenreich was a "highly gifted" writer whose "substantial promise has yet to be realized in a full performance."[9] Presumably he still holds this view, if by "a full performance" he means a novel, since Eisenreich has not produced a novel since Der Urgroßvater, although he is reported to be working on a three-volume work entitled Sieger und Besiegte.[10]

Herbert Eisenreich first read Katherine Mansfield's story several years after the end of the Second World War. In 1945, as Hans Bender states, Germany was in the right frame of mind for the short story form. As an expression of the mood of the time he quotes Jorge Luis Borges as saying that the optimistic belief of the 19th century that the world could be contained in five hundred pages was lacking,

and for that reason people were turning to the short form.[11] The American short story had been introduced to Germany in the thirties, but, as Heinz Piontek points out, there had then been few German imitators - the dictatorship of the Third Reich was not favourable to such experimentation.[12] Chekhov had also been read, but postwar German writers were most influenced by the English and American authors whose stories they read in translation in the first German periodicals printed after the war. Hans Bender describes the impression these stories made:

> Sie beeindruckten uns als Davongekommene, als lange Zeit Abgeschirmte; wir literarischen Vegetarier öffneten uns dem fremdartigen Reiz und Raffinement, der Dissonanz, der Kühle, dem Understatement, dem Freibeuterischen, dem Bitter-Süßen, all dem, was diese Geschichten uns bieten konnten. 13

Hemingway especially was a model for such writers of short stories as Wolfgang Borchert and Heinrich Böll.[14]

It was in one of the most influential journals for young writers after the war, the periodical <u>story</u>, that Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea", translated by Herberth von Herlitschka as "Eine Tasse Tee", appeared in 1951. This translated version is what Herbert Eisenreich read and used.[15]

Eisenreich's story, "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski", was first printed in a 1956 issue of the Austrian journal <u>Wort in der Zeit</u>. It can also be found in Eisenreich's collections, <u>Böse schöne Welt</u> (1957) and <u>Die Freunde meiner</u>

Frau (1966), and in the anthology of German short stories edited by Benno von Wiese, Deutschland erzählt: Von Arthur Schnitzler bis Uwe Johnson (1962).

II

What attracted Eisenreich to Mansfield's story was no doubt the misunderstanding between the two women involved. Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler has pointed out that misunderstanding is a preoccupation of Eisenreich's.[1] Eisenreich seems fascinated by the barriers that exist between people, by the impossibility of getting inside another person's mind. According to Schmidt-Dengler: "Dieses Mißverständnis und im weiteren Zusammenhang auch Verkennen, Versehen und Verfehlen entspringen einer Auffassung, die jedes Handeln als grundsätzlich ambivalent deutet."[2]

Eisenreich has said that his preoccupation with misunderstandings, and with storywriting in general, originated in an assignment he was given in school - to take a Tagesbuchnotiz by Hebbel about a case of mistaken identity and develop it into a story. Eisenreich was too lazy ever to do this assignment, but the problem, how such a story could be written, continued to occupy his mind, until it became a kind of obsession with him.[3]

Many critics have mentioned Eisenreich's affinity with Marcel Proust, for his style and for his close examination of sensations, and this preoccupation with mis-

understandings is also something which he shares with Proust. Proust's work is memorable for the way in which he expresses the impossibility of knowing another person completely. There are certain situations which are beyond the control of one person because, since these situations may be interpreted differently by different people, they are also at the mercy of the complex workings of other people's minds. Misunderstandings, though regrettable or even tragic, are shown to be inevitable.

Eisenreich himself might say that this preoccupation on his part is typically Austrian, for an Austrian is to be seen as "das personifizierte Mißtrauen"[4], someone who is not satisfied with the given facts but probes further to discover the true meaning of a situation. In 1959, in his essay, "Das schöpferische Mißtrauen oder Ist Österreichs Literatur eine österreichische Literatur?", he elaborated on what it means to be Austrian:

> Österreichisch ist, alles in allem, eine spezielle Art von Mißtrauen; ein Mißtrauen in alles, was gemeinhin für wichtig und richtig, was gemeinhin für existent und in seiner Faktizität für unbezweifelbar gilt; vor allem in die eigene Person und in deren Eigenschaften, Fähigkeiten, Kenntnisse und Probleme. Ein Mißtrauen also, das sich nicht gegen Erscheinungen der Oberfläche, etwa gegen das so genannte Konventionelle, richtet, sondern gegen die Grundtatsachen, ja gegen das Leben selbst; nicht der Schein, sondern das Sein wird angezweifelt; nicht jener, sondern dieses wird verdächtigt, die Wahrheit zu verschleiern, und nicht jener wird reduziert, sondern dieses . . . ja, als das Unbehagen in der bekannten, als das Ungenügen an der erkannten Wirklichkeit erweist es sich als ein

> schöpferisches Prinzip . . . im Verlauf dieser Tendenz schält es den innersten Wahrheits-Kern bloß, der im üppigen, doch vergänglichen Fleisch der Tatsachen verborgen liegt. Statt Wahrheiten zu konstituieren, werden Irrtümer beseitigt. 5

It was this wish, "Irrtümer zu beseitigen", that prompted Eisenreich to write, for example, his monograph on Stifter, Das kleine Stifterbuch (1967). Most readers assume that the characters who practise the golden mean in Stifter's books are projections of the author himself, but Eisenreich knows better and he sets out to show:

> daß ein Resultat nie identisch ist mit den Voraussetzungen - etwa: Maß im Werk und Maß im Leben -, sondern immer nur die Folge dessen, was einer mit seinen Voraussetzungen anfängt . . . Mein Fazit: Wir sind keine Engel, und wir sind keine Teufel, doch jeder von uns hat englischen und teuflischen Teil in sich. Und das hat grade auch Stifter . . . sehr wohl gewußt. 6

Stifter may have admired the moderation which he describes in his books, but he never actually achieved it himself.

In his novels, radio plays and short stories Eisenreich deals with "Verwechslung" (misapprehension) and "Mißverständnis" of many kinds. In his short stories he deals chiefly with love - the barriers between men and women which often prevent them from finding happiness. In his novels, particularly the early ones, and in his dialogues and radio plays his major concern seems to be the quality of life - what contributes to it and what does not. An often recurring theme is that what is first perceived as loss is actually gain, and vice versa. His view of all

action as ambivalent is evident in the titles he chooses. Marcel Reich-Ranicki makes the following comment on the titles, Auch in ihrer Sünde and Böse schöne Welt: "Seine Helden verschulden oft Schlimmes, ohne Freveltäter zu sein. Sie sündigen, obwohl sie keine Sünder sind. Die Welt, in der sie umherirren, ist abstoßend und anziehend, böse und schön zugleich."[7]

In Eisenreich's first novel, Einladung, deutlich zu leben (1952), the theme of misunderstanding is not as apparent. This novel describes a railway conductor's last trip on duty before his retirement. In the course of the trip a young soldier jumps off the train, but a woman in another compartment gives birth to a baby, so that the number of passengers remains the same. This replacement of one person by another is a kind of "Verwechslung". But what is more typical of Eisenreich is his use of opposites - for one person the trip is a beginning and for another it is an ending. The "Bahnhof" is both "Anfang" and "Endstation" for the aptly named conductor, Alphons Omega. The idea of the ambivalence of all actions can be found in a speech given by the doctor who handles the birth. He says that his suicide attempt at nineteen taught him among other things, "daß wir nichts Rechtes tun können ohne eine Beimischung von Falschem, nichts Ganzes ohne Brüche, nichts Helfendes ohne Verletzung."[8]

Eisenreich's preoccupation with misunderstanding is more obvious in his second novel, Auch in ihrer Sünde (1953), a novel about the interwoven lives of several individuals trying to eke out an existence in the thirties, and especially about one woman, Viktoria Baumann, who is a victim of many misunderstandings. Another victim, Otto May, demonstrates a typically Austrian distrust of what others take for granted. He is considered a hero in the recent Burgerkrieg, but he is uncertain whether he can regard himself as one, and he does not believe that the victory really was a victory. He says: "Ich weigere mich zu glauben, daß wir gesiegt haben."[9] Later, when he is wrongly accused of having tried to ruin Viktoria, whom he loves, he knows that, although he could protest his innocence, his only recourse is to leave the country, since most people will be content to accept what appears to be the truth and will not bother to actually think about the matter: "Er wird wissen, daß die wenigsten Menschen imstande sind, wider den Schein zu handeln und zu denken."[10] He knows that even Viktoria will give in to the persuasive force of appearances:

> sie freilich muß dann mit all den anderen glauben, daß er gewichtige Gründe hatte, das Land zu verlassen, und weil sie es glauben muß, begreift sie nicht, was sie weiß; daß alles ganz anders ist, als sie zu glauben gezwungen ist. 11

The idea of loss perceived as gain is present in the drama with the reporter who badly needs the opportunity to

write a good story, and who tries to investigate the story behind Viktoria's attempted suicide. He meets with resistance at first, but then when he is finally taken into Otto's confidence, he begins to suspect the secret behind everything, and he feels that the insight he is given into the lives of these people is worth more than any story he might write about them. He thinks that he will not be able to bring himself to write the story, but he does not regret missing this opportunity:

> Er hatte seinen Beruf verloren in diesem Gespräch mit dem Mann, der ihn niedergeboxt hatte, und er begann, ihm dankbar zu sein. Er hatte ihm etwas genommen, und er selber hatte begonnen, mehr zu besitzen, indem er mehr sah. Das war's. Er sah das Geheimnis. 12

In 1953 Eisenreich also wrote a Dialog entitled <u>Die Ketzer: oder Mehrere Arten der Wahrheit behilflich zu sein</u> (Ein Lehrstück). In it Eisenreich discusses to what extent man is able to possess "the truth", if he can at all. As the forces of the Inquisition are advancing upon a little town in an undetermined country at an undetermined time in history, the town is divided as to whether to yield to these forces or to meet them with armed resistance. One young man, Jean, is in favour of fleeing to the mountains and from there fighting "for the sake of truth". But the town's mayor, Michel, does not believe that any man can possess the truth as he does his house or his cattle, and he refuses to give the order either to take up arms or to evacuate the

town - he can only pray that each person in the town will be true to the truth, whatever that may be. He himself only claims to possess a small share of the truth. He says:

> Wir sind von nichts so tief überzeugt wie von unseren Irrtümern; ob wir sie nun, im einzelnen, als Irrtümer schon erkennen oder nicht; denn wir sind von der Tatsache des Irrens überzeugt . . . Unsere Wahrheiten aber, diese Splitter von Wahrheit, die wir kennen, mit denen wir denken und handeln: das ist eine Wahrheit auf Widerruf. Jede bessere Einsicht saugt sie auf, löscht sie aus, tilgt sie in ihrer neuen Folgerung. 13

Michel's son, Bernard, is torn between the arguments of his father and those of his friend, Jean. He finally follows Jean, but he has hesitated too long to be of much help. Tormented by guilt because he could not save more people, but anxious to serve the truth, he takes flight alone, saying:

> Nun verlasse ich, um zu finden; verliere, um zu besitzen . . . Ich bin allein, um es nicht mehr zu sein . . . Ich glaube, daß sich mein Anteil an der Wahrheit vermehrt. Ich hoffe, daß ich nie aufhören werde, der Wahrheit behilflich zu sein. Auf meine Art. Andere Menschen tun's auf die ihre. 14

The theme of loss perceived as gain is more strongly emphasized in Eisenreich's prize-winning radio play, <u>Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben</u> (1955). The title contains a characteristic juxtaposition of opposites, and the irony of it lies in the fact that what we think we live on is really what we die of. The play describes the malaise of the affluent postwar society, the society of the Wirtschaftswunder, afflicted with the "panische Angst"[15] that the years

of deprivation during and directly following the war could return. It therefore seeks happiness in material acquisition and worldly success. The heroine, Karin, comes to the realization that the "bad" years, when she knew her husband needed her, were really the best, since the "good" years, those in which her husband experienced "ein dumpfes Gehetztwerden von der Verpflichtung, Erfolg zu haben"[16], wore her out internally. In material terms they lived comfortably, but "was aussah wie Überfluß, war in Wahrheit eine entsetzliche Dürre."[17] Felix' job as a writer of advertising copy is to awaken needs for actually unnecessary products, for products which ten years ago were not considered necessities or were not even heard of. Karin concludes:

> Was ich sehe in unserem Leben, das ist eine große Verwechslung; das ist der falsche Glaube, daß einmal geweckte Bedürfnisse sich auch anders . . . befriedigen ließen als durch den freiwilligen Verzicht. 18

Although he has been working on a novel entitled Sieger und Besiegte since the mid-sixties, Eisenreich's only other published novel since Auch in ihrer Sünde is Der Urgroßvater (1964). It is possible to see the theme of misunderstanding in this work as well. In Der Urgroßvater the narrator sets out on a search for clues as to his great-grandfather's identity, and it is only after he has come to a stalemate in this search that he realizes that he has missed his true mission in life - that he should return to the mother of his child so that his child will be able to say

that he knew his father. He rejects the past which has obsessed him for so long, and turns to the present and the future. This is like the tale of the Blue Bird of Happiness, in which two children set out on a journey to find happiness, not realizing that it is waiting for them at home. It is vaguely reminiscent too of Hans Castorp's rejection of his sheltered life on the Magic Mountain in favour of the world of action outside. Robert Blauhut comments on the relationship with Proust's À la recherche du temps perdu. The novella, Der Urgroßvater, "ist deshalb so interessant, da sie eine echt österreichische Auseinandersetzung mit Marcel Prousts Lebenssicht darstellt, dessen 'In der Vergangenheit suchen' aber 'die Gegenwart nicht haben'."[19]

In most of Eisenreich's short stories, misunderstandings are dealt with on a smaller scale - they are usually "ironic twists in the lives of his modest Austrian contemporaries" (Demetz)[20]. The short story, "Am Ziel", in the first collection, Böse schöne Welt (1957), has a theme in some respects similar to that in Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben. On the eve of an important meeting with his colleagues Oberinspektor Leisiger believes that he has reached the goal of all his striving: he is sure that he is about to be named Direktor. But now he suddenly feels the burden of all those years of toil pressing on him to such an extent that he suffers a stroke and dies. He is

probably happier to die at this point, because in actual fact the meeting has been called to discuss a raise in salary for his arch rival.[21]

Another story in the same volume, "April im Mai", is more characteristic of the majority of Eisenreich's short stories, in which he concentrates on relationships between individuals - especially between men and women - and the difficulties they have at coming to an understanding. Eisenreich likes to reveal the causes of their inhibitions. Robert Blauhut has said: "Es geht Eisenreich darum, die Wurzel des Übels zu treffen. Sie muß in uns selbst liegen. Er findet sie in unserer Denkarbeit, die uns den Zugang zum Leben versperrt."[22] The barriers which separate his men and women are more often than not imagined ones.

In "April im Mai" a young man hesitates to invite his girlfriend home with him because he is sure that she is afraid to be alone with him. But actually she is disappointed when he doesn't ask her home. Unwittingly he has missed his opportunity with her.[23]

Many of the short stories in Eisenreich's subsequent collections have a similar theme. The story, "Ein Mißverständnis", begins in characteristic fashion: "Frauen können sich schwerlich vorstellen, wie in Männergesellschaften geschweinigelt wird."[24] On his first excursion with his new office colleagues a young man is ashamed to

hear nothing but "Schweinereien" about women from the other men. But later he does with his girlfriend, "was er noch nie mit ihr getan hatte."[25] Instead of getting angry she is pleased. The young man goes to a Bordell, which he has often frequented, and here he can only laugh at how mistaken he was. The suggestion in the first sentence that men and women live in utterly different worlds is proven to be wrong.

In "Abschied zur Liebe" a young man, about to depart for a work assignment in another town, is left alone in the apartment in which he has been living with a girlfriend for several months. He lingers, because he is unwilling to go, but he finally leaves the apartment earlier than he needs to, because he is sure that his girlfriend does not like saying goodbye, and anyway will not have time to see him off. But she does come to the airport - too late, because he is already on the plane.[26]

Another story about a kind of missed opportunity is "Die ganze Geschichte". W. Schmidt-Dengler has drawn attention to the fact that this story is an adaptation and a continuation of Guy de Maupassant's story, "Garçon, un bock!"[27] Maupassant relates what apparently led up to a young man's nervous breakdown - his horror at seeing his father strike his mother. Eisenreich goes further to tell "the whole story". He describes the young man later striking

his own wife. This young man is then shaken to think that this is a common failing, because it means that he has wasted his youth hating his father for his cruelty, and despising his mother for her weakness.[28]

In "Rendezvous auf dem Reiterlein" two lovers, who have to spend a week apart, promise each other that they will look at a certain star at midnight on a certain day and think of each other. Neither of them is true to the promise, but each one believes that the other has been true to it. Since their consciences trouble them they lie to each other about the matter. But now their love is no longer as pure as it once was.[29]

A story about a similar promise is "Mißglückte Rache". After a beautiful holiday together two lovers part, nevertheless making a pact to give up smoking from that point on. But the man is used to being the one who ends a relationship, and in revenge, to show how little importance he attaches to the promise, he lights up a cigarette as soon as he has dropped the girl off at her home. He thinks that he is the only one of them cynical enough to do this. But actually she has been just as faithless.[30]

In "Die nackte Wahrheit" a man, who is particularly sensitive about his relationship with a woman, is afraid that if he does not say the right thing at a party he will give himself away and be forced to stop seeing the woman.

In his anxiety and in his desire to distract people from the truth he makes the remark that a man and a woman can never really know each other. But it is just this remark that alienates the woman and makes him lose her. As a matter of fact he has only spoken the truth, for he had no idea how this remark would affect her.[31]

Occasionally a misunderstanding leads to good. In "Der Segen eines schlechten Rufs" a misunderstanding changes the life of a servant girl, Klara. She is barely considered a person by the other tenants of the house in which she is a servant. But one night a bomb partially destroys the house and afterwards some charred bones are discovered. None of the tenants know to whom the bones could have belonged, and the only conclusion they can come to is that Klara has been hiding a boyfriend. They look at her now with new eyes and new respect, since so much value is placed on being attractive to the opposite sex. This new warmth changes her too, and eventually one of the tenants falls in love with her and proposes marriage to her. Meanwhile the narrator finds out that the bones are the relics of a Celt who died 2500 years ago - they were once the property of a professor who lived in the house. But the narrator keeps this secret to himself, because he knows that because of their mistake the tenants now consider Klara a woman.[32]

In "Lob des Handwerks" a poor journeyman carpenter

is not granted the hand of the master's daughter because his work is not considered good enough. He decides to commit suicide and in secret he works on the instrument of his own destruction. Since it never meets with his satisfaction he continues adding to it and refining it. But one day the master discovers him with it and he is astonished by the beauty of the workmanship. He gives the journeyman his daughter after all. The instrument that the young carpenter intended to lead to his destruction actually brings him happiness.[33]

In one of the few stories about children, "Eine Geschichte vom Freudemachen", a mother and an aunt, who are placing gifts on the Weihnachtstisch, decide that the little boy in the family does not deserve to receive as much as his sisters. The mother does not really want to disappoint her little boy, but the aunt insists that this is the only way to teach him a lesson. When they are almost finished the mother hastily adds to the table a little wooden man which she had considered giving away. It is just this little man that pleases the little boy more than if the table had been heaped with toys for him. Here is again the theme of loss and gain.[34]

A few stories are merely brief comic anecdotes about misunderstandings which bring happiness. In "Ein Umweg zum Glück" a man loses interest in his wife because

he finds her too thin. She is forced to take up with another man, but having lunch at home plus a lunch with her lover makes her fat. Her husband falls in love with her all over again, and since she no longer needs her new lover, she gets rid of him.[35] In "Eine gelungene Überraschung" a woman's lover leaves behind a piece of paper on which he has written: "I love you." But the woman's former lover finds it and thinks it is meant for him. It makes him happy and he makes the woman happy. The man who actually wrote the message never sees the woman again.[36]

Other misunderstandings have dire consequences. In "Das Horoskop" a young man hangs himself because he believes he has manipulated his girlfriend the wrong way through a horoscope which he placed in a newspaper. But actually, ironically, she had not even read that particular horoscope.[37]

There is one other story which, like "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski", has to do with misplaced generosity. In "Falsche Adresse" a well-to-do salesman drops an excessively generous amount of money into a beggar's hat. He is surprised at himself for doing it, but he likes to think that he has given pleasure to someone, perhaps a child. The beggar is astounded to receive this sum. He considers hiding some of it from his wife, but he is so sure that she will find him out that he finally shows her all of it. But

even he is not prepared for her reaction. She is furious that he has acquired this money through begging or stealing, and she tries to burn it. The daughter grabs at some of the money, and struggles with her father, breaking his glass eye. The poor man goes out into the streets again, is arrested, and then hangs himself in his cell.[38]

In one story it is despair over being constantly misunderstood that leads one man to suicide. In "Ein Opfer des Nonkonformismus" a man who has become utterly bored with the social gatherings of his little circle decides to be openly critical of them - to assume the role of a non-conformist or iconoclast. But this does not repel his friends, it attracts them. They come to value him for his provocative statements, and they consider it a game when he contradicts them. They seek him out all the more and continue to invite him to their boring parties. He sees that his attempts to rebel are futile, since they are misunderstood, and in despair of ever being understood he hangs himself.[39]

The story, "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski", is the best known of Eisenreich's stories. It is the story which Benno von Wiese chose to represent Eisenreich in the third volume of his anthology series, Deutschland erzählt. Unlike most of the short stories there is not merely an "ironic twist", but the theme of misunderstanding is worked in at

several levels. There is a misunderstanding in love - a young girl's attempts to meet her lover and explain things to him are thwarted by her selfish and tyrannical father - but this is a digression from the main issue. The central misunderstanding is between two women who want to communicate but who cannot, because of the inhibiting nature of their "Denkarbeit". There is also a misapprehension on the part of the wealthy woman alone as to what will make her happy. There are many echoes from Eisenreich's early works. As in Einladung, deutlich zu leben the heroine experiences that she can do "nichts Helfendes ohne Verletzung"[40] - she wants very much to help but she only succeeds in hurting. And as in Auch in ihrer Sünde and Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben what first appears to be a loss turns out to be a gain. Eisenreich saw these possibilities in the situation presented by Katherine Mansfield's story: the confrontation of two women of totally different backgrounds and with different goals.

This confrontation is dealt with in the following chapter.

III

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler has pointed out that both "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski" and "A Cup of Tea" are similar to an earlier story by Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach (1830-1916). This story, "Der Muff", was written sometime before 1893. Eisenreich was not familiar with it, and Katherine Mansfield is unlikely to have read it.[1] In "Der Muff" a General's wife gives her muff to a poor old woman whom she sees cowering in the cold in a doorway waiting for her daughter. The General's wife is almost ashamed of this action, because she knows that her family and friends will not approve, yet she cannot resist the impulse to relieve someone's sufferings. But her plan backfires, because she has forgotten that she has left an empty purse in the muff. The poor woman is picked up by the police, who suspect her of stealing both the muff and the money in the purse. The General's wife must offer the poor woman compensation for this unconsidered act of charity.[2]

What chiefly sets this story apart from Mansfield's and Eisenreich's is the fact that Ebner-Eschenbach's woman is living in a world in which it is not uncommon to meet destitute people in the street. It is so common that the General's wife has been warned how to behave towards such

people. For both twentieth-century heroines a meeting with a beggar is an adventure of the kind they have only read about. They have become remote from a life they would like to experience, and instead of doing the little they are asked to do, they are eager to experience more. They go farther than the Generalin in "Der Muff", not realizing that in doing this they are thinking more about themselves than about the persons they believe they are helping.

In "A Cup of Tea" (1922) Katherine Mansfield tells of Rosemary Fell, a spoiled, rich young woman whose experience with the poor is only second-hand, from books; she jumps at the opportunity to invite a poor girl home to tea with her. It seems to her such an adventure - an adventure as in a novel by Dostoyevsky. She enjoys playing the role of the benefactress - until her husband arrives on the scene and remarks how "pretty" the poor girl is. This alters the situation considerably - Rosemary's generous impulses vanish, as her vanity takes over. Once she has sent the girl away with a small present of money, all she is interested in is whether her husband thinks <u>she</u> is "pretty".[3]

The elements which Eisenreich borrowed from this story for "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski" (1956) are at first striking. His heroine is also pampered and rich and

has a taste for Russian authors. At the beginning of the story she also goes on a shopping trip that includes a visit to an antique shop, and instead of a little box it is a Japanese tea-service which she wants to buy. For her too the price is just a little too high, and she decides against buying it. For this reason she also feels miserable when she is outside in the drizzling rain. A young woman who asks her for some money for a bit of bread distracts her from her feeling of misery, and she is also fascinated and sees the encounter as an experience out of Dostoyevsky.[4] If Eisenreich had continued in this way, his story would have been merely an interesting adaptation of Mansfield's. However it is at this point that he begins to depart quite drastically from his "Vorlage". Before this point some differences can already be noted.

The two stories differ greatly in style. As Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler says: "Schon vom Erzähleinsatz an ist man bei Eisenreich in einer stilistisch anderen Atmosphäre."[5] Katherine Mansfield's style is appropriate to the impulsive and rather superficial character she describes. C. K. Stead, the editor of her letters and journals, has said that Katherine Mansfield's real gift is a comic gift - she is an artist "who pounces quick and sharp on funny details."[6] Just as Rosemary's thoughts flit from one thing to another, so the story skips along.

Eisenreich's sentences seem to swell as they progress, so that the rhythm of his story is completely different from the sprightly, almost staccato rhythm of "A Cup of Tea". Eisenreich is a more leisurely and a more painstaking writer. Unlike Katherine Mansfield he is not content to describe brief impressions to convey an atmosphere - he expands on some scenes which he finds in "A Cup of Tea".

A good example is the description of the heroine's state of mind after she has left the antique shop. In "A Cup of Tea" the corresponding passage contains a series of visual impressions (the rain, the dark, the lamps, people under their umbrellas), negatively described to reflect Rosemary's mood, but the only explicit statement of what she is feeling is the sentence: "Rosemary felt a strange pang." (410) In his story Eisenreich analyses the nature of this pang over and over, as if he can never adequately render its complexity (270-71). Heinz Piontek mentions this technique of Eisenreich's in his article, "Graphik in Prosa":

> Das Aufdecken und Analysieren seelischer Zustände, wie es Eisenreich in seinen Kurzgeschichten praktiziert, gemahnt von fern an das präzise, unendlich geduldige Mikroskopieren der Gefühle, das wir bei Proust bewundern. 7

In a further passage Eisenreich examines the layers and divisions of thought as if under a microscope. The woman's impressions on first meeting the girl come so thick and

fast that one of her thoughts is not given a chance to develop, because it is soon buried under other thoughts:

> Doch ehe dieser Gedanke, gedacht zwar, doch noch keineswegs auf seine Richtigkeit hin erlebt, zu voller Erlebbarkeit sich hätte erheben, sich hätte auswachsen können, legten sich andre Gedanken darüber, jenen ersten begrabend. (271)

Another difference that can be noted at the beginning is that Eisenreich's heroine is typically nameless. Katherine Mansfield delights in names. There is a significance, for example, in the name Rosemary has chosen for her little boy: "No, not Peter - Michael." (408) From the context it is clear that though both names are fashionable, Rosemary has chosen the less fashionable one. In Eisenreich's story we are dealing only with "die Frau", "das Mädchen" and "der Kellner". This is a peculiarity of most of Eisenreich's stories: he seems to believe that the anonymous third person is easier to identify with, perhaps since names are a reminder of the individual and particular existence of the characters they belong to. In his Nachwort to the book, Böse schöne Welt, ("Eine Geschichte erzählt sich selbst"), Eisenreich distinguishes between the "Erzählung" and the "Geschichte". The "Erzählung", in his view, is related to the novel, in that the object is to reach a goal through action. The "Geschichte", on the other hand, is related to the poem - it is not concerned with facts, but rather with identification with the object -

with "Intimität". And so the "Geschichte" does not need to have named characters: "Sie hat es nicht nötig, etwas zu erklären; sie nennt keine Namen, keine Daten."[8]

Katherine Mansfield's portrait of Rosemary is a sharply ironic one. Eisenreich retains this irony towards his heroine, but his irony is more subtle and it seems to have been lost on some critics. The critic, F. Geyrhofer, thinks that the opening paragraph contains evidence of Eisenreich's own snobbishness. He thinks that Eisenreich describes his heroine "mit einem heidnischen Respekt vor allem Vornehmen."[9] But Eisenreich is not in awe of this woman. He is very careful to point out the contradictions in her nature - for example, with the reference to her "proud modesty", which is the reason for the distinction made between the "wealthy person" and the "mere possessor of money":

> so ließ sie doch nie jene stolze, des Maßes eingedenke Bescheidenheit vermissen, die den reichen Menschen von dem bloßen Geldbesitzer, mag dessen Konto vielleicht auch größer sein, ganz augenfällig unterscheidet. (269)

Because of this "proud modesty" the woman rejects her private chauffeured car for her trips to town in favour of the train - the form of transportation used by the masses. But she does not really rub shoulders with the masses, because it never occurs to her to travel any less comfortably than first class. The final sentence of this opening

paragraph is especially ironic: "Da, in dem Zuge, belegte sie freilich, wie es ihr zustand, die Polsterklasse." (269)

Nevertheless it is just this desire not to be too different from the masses which distinguishes Eisenreich's heroine from Rosemary. Rosemary revels in the luxuries of her way of life, and until her encounter with Miss Smith she is not shown to be socially conscious. But the social conscience of Eisenreich's heroine, as Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler has said, gives a stronger motivation for her actions: "Die sozialen Neigungen der vornehmen Frau . . . motivieren auch ihre Handlungen im entscheidenden Moment."[10] She is not as egotistical as Rosemary - she wants the Japanese tea-service because it will give pleasure to her husband, whereas Rosemary wants the little box for herself alone. Neither does she observe herself playing a role as much as Rosemary does. Rosemary does not gain any insight into her behaviour towards Miss Smith. The heroine of Eisenreich's story is almost brutally forced to face the fact that what she has done has not helped the girl at all. In fact, as the reader discovers, it has been a hindrance to her.

Eisenreich changes the setting of the main part of the story from a living room to a restaurant. (The significance of its being a train station restaurant will be mentioned later.) The restaurant is a favourite setting of

Eisenreich's, as it is of other short story writers, such as Hemingway[11]. It is a setting favourable either to dialogue or to silent reflection about the other person. The confrontation of these two women is what interests Eisenreich, and once he has them sitting across from each other he can move from one to the other, alternating his point of view. In "A Cup of Tea" the point of view never changes, it is always Rosemary's; the girl is only observed. But, as Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler has noted, "bei Eisenreich . . . ergibt sich der Erzählinhalt jeweils erst aus dem Gegenüber zweier Gestalten."[12] It is typical of his stories that one notices "eine ständige Zweigleisigkeit in der Führung des Geschehens."[13]

This double point of view is important because it enables Eisenreich to show how easy it could be for two people to communicate, but how difficult it really is. Although the woman is eager to know the details of the girl's story, she believes that she knows in a general way what the life of the poor is like. She takes the girl's request at face value, and since she is sure that this is a painful experience for her, she doesn't encourage her to speak: "'Wirklich, Sie brauchen sich nicht zu entschuldigen, Sie brauchen mir nichts zu erklären, so kann es schon gehen im Leben . . . '" (272). She thinks that the girl will tell her her story when she is ready to (274), and she

hesitates to press her for it ("Man darf sie nicht drängen . . ." - 276). When the girl attempts to explain and ends up sobbing, the woman, again wanting to save her some pain, interrupts and tries to distract her with the menu (274-75). The woman also checks herself from saying the words which she would like to say:

> Sie hätte dem Mädchen gerne etwas Ermunterndes gesagt, aber die Worte, die ihr in den Sinn kamen, fühlten sich abgeschmackt an, sowie sie sie formulierend auf die Zunge legte; so schwieg auch sie. (275)

And finally, instead of speaking or encouraging the other to speak, she decides that it is no use and that she should leave the girl alone (276).

The girl is a victim of more than one failure in communication. At home her father has intercepted her letters, causing a misunderstanding with her lover. But now, when she might change all that by meeting her lover and explaining things to him, she finds that the barrier is in herself. She finds herself incapable of admitting the truth to this woman - she is aware of what the woman must be thinking and she doesn't want to disappoint her. At the same time she is held back by guilt because of the untruthfulness of her request - "schwieg, als habe eine übergroße Schuld ihr den Mund vernäht." (275) When at last she speaks, it is too late, and her outburst: "Jetzt jetzt jetzt!" (276) is just as mystifying to the woman as

her silence was.

The striking thing about the conclusion of the story is that it is split - first the departure of the girl is described (277-78), then the simultaneous departure of the woman (278-79). Heinz Piontek has compared this technique with the work of a film cutter: "Das erzählerische Verfahren, Zeit zu schneiden, könnte man auch mit Cutterarbeit vergleichen. Es ist eine Technik, die Eisenreich wahrscheinlich bei William Faulkner studiert hat."[14]

Since Eisenreich, unlike Mansfield, also gives the point of view of the girl, there is often a mirroring of the girl's feelings in the feelings of the woman. In both cases guilt or embarrassment has the effect of making them feel like thieves, although neither of the two has committed a theft. The girl feels that her pitiable story is like a bag full of stolen goods: "Sie fühlte sich außerstande, ihre Gönnerin zu enttäuschen, vor ihr nun alles aufzudecken als wie den Inhalt eines Beutels voll von Diebsgut" (273). The woman, after pushing a little parcel of money under the girl's plate, has the extraordinary impression that she has taken, rather than given: "die Hand zurückziehend wie nach ertapptem Diebstahl" (276).

Eisenreich uses the inner monologues of both women to make the point that instinctive knowledge is actually superior to any knowledge gained through the process of

thinking. The girl is certain about what has caused her dilemma, but she does not really know - she only suspects: "noch nicht wissend, aber mit einer alles Wissen übersteigenden Sicherheit ahnend . . . " (275). This statement is echoed in the case of the woman, although with variations on the words, "Sicherheit", "Wissen" and "übersteigen": on the train she realizes exactly what it is that she has experienced, not through thinking and analysing, but through her senses: "spürte mit der unbezweifelbaren Gewißheit ihrer alle Gedanken übertreffenden Sinne . . ." (279).

Eisenreich also makes conscious use of repetition to achieve another effect. His story is much more symmetrical than Katherine Mansfield's. It begins and ends with a train journey, and the train station is the axis around which everything revolves. Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler considers this device a particularly effective one:

> Vor allem die Konzentration auf einen Ort, auf den Bahnhof, erweist sich als Kunstgriff, der die Einleitung mit dem Hauptteil verbindet. Schon am Anfang ist das Uhrwerk aufgezogen, das dann folgerichtig zum Ablaufen gebracht werden kann. 15

Many statements made in the first part of the story are echoed in the concluding passage. In the passage about the woman's thoughts as she stands outside the antique shop in the fog (270-71) there are several statements which are picked up again at the end after the "unsuccessful adventure". For instance, there is a repetition

in the concluding passage of her consideration as to how to tell the shopkeeper that she has changed her mind (270; 278), as well as of the feeling that something has hollowed her out (270; 271; 278), a feeling which she attributes to hunger. One statement which is echoed at the end undergoes a transformation. In the earlier passage, when the woman is standing outside in the fog, she hesitates to go home because she is afraid that her family will be able to read in her eyes the fact that she has done something unworthy of her:

> als müsse sie sich schämen und müsse befürchten, daß man zu Hause ihre Beschämung entdecken, ihr blamables Verhalten ihr aus den Augen würde lesen können gleichwie aus der Schlagzeile einer Abendzeitung. (271)

In the concluding passage, when she is on the train, she <u>knows</u> that they will notice that she has wept, but this time it does not matter to her: "weinte und wußte, daß man's zu Hause ihr anmerken würde, aber sie weinte leise und schließlich lautlos weiter" (279).

Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler finds that some of the women's casual remarks to the girl on first meeting her are also a preparation for what follows.[16] He points out the irony in the woman's choice of the train station restaurant, a place where she is sure that they will not attract attention (272). But this is the very place to cause the girl the most anguish, and as it turns out they do attract a lot

of attention (276).

In one case Eisenreich picks up an image which Katherine Mansfield has used, and repeats it, using it in many ways - the image of captor and captive. This is only used once in "A Cup of Tea" - when Rosemary and Miss Smith are both in the car: "She could have said, 'Now I've got you,' as she gazed at the little captive she had netted" (411). Eisenreich's wealthy woman also sees the poor girl as something precious that she has captured and does not want to frighten away. She thinks:

> daß es unbezahlbar schade wäre, wenn sie mit irgend einem ungeduldigen Leichtsinn, dem bestgemeinten sogar, diesen seltenen, köstlichen Fang, den ein glücklicher Zufall ihr gradewegs in die Arme trieb, vorzeitig verscheuchte. (272)

When she does lose the girl she feels the loss painfully - as if she has lost a prize that she had fished out of dark waters: "je verbissener sie an diesem Gedanken festhielt, desto schmerzlicher fühlte sie sich betrogen um die eigentliche Beute ihres Fischzugs im Ungewissen" (278). The girl also feels that she is a captive when she is in the taxi: "zwischen den Regenfäden an den Wagenfenstern stierte das Mädchen hinaus wie ein Gefangener zwischen den Gitterstäben" (273). She knows that she has not become a prisoner only through someone else's meddling, but also through a fault of her own - her tiny white lie. At one point her predicament is described as a trap:

> und dachte, . . . daß sie hier nun gefangensaß, gefangen in einer Falle, deren Gehäuse aus ihrer unwahrhaftigen Bitte gebildet war, und deren hinter ihr zugeschnapptes Türchen in der übermäßigen Erfüllung dieser Bitte bestand. (275-76)

Later it is described as a vise:

> Hatte sich nicht mehr befreien können aus dem Zugriff der Zange, deren eine Backe ihre unwahrhaftige Bitte, und deren andere Backe die übermäßige Erfüllung dieser Bitte war. (277)

Eisenreich's repeated references to fingers and his use of the verb "fingern" are also interesting. Katherine Mansfield only mentions Rosemary's fingers in order to point out her vanity:

> She couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet. The shopman . . . may have dared to think so too. For he took a pencil, leant over the counter, and his pale, bloodless fingers crept timidly towards those rosy, flashing ones. (409)

Any other references to fingers in "A Cup of Tea" are not at all significant. But Eisenreich uses fingers consciously for effect. He refers to them throughout the story so that his final reference to "fingertips of the soul" contains many echoes. Right in the early part of the story the heroine feels fabrics at her tailor's, "knitterte sie zwischen den Fingern" (269), and this anticipates the moment at the end when she will pull the girl's kerchief out of her purse, and be so moved by the contact with the coarse woollen cloth:

> Sie fingerte aus ihrer Tasche das Kopftuch hervor . . . Und da, als ihre Fingerspitzen in den rauhen

> wollenen Stoff griffen . . . da spürte sie . . . wieder die ganze unzerstörte Wirklichkeit der abendlichen Begegnung. (278-79)

The word "fingers" is used in an abstract sense at one point in the story before the reference to "fingertips of the soul" - to describe the young girl's feverish deliberation as to when and how to explain her situation to the other woman:

> Und als sie noch, gleichsam mit fiebrigen Fingern in ihren Gehirnkasten kramend, überlegte, wann und vor allem wie sie es ihr begreiflich machen sollte, da lenkte der Chauffeur bereits. (273)

But the other more concrete references are also calculated to make the final one more effective. At the restaurant the girl takes up her cutlery "wie mit steifgefrorenen Fingern" (275). The woman "fingers" her calling card out of her purse (276), and when the girl clutches it and the bills she does so "mit zitternden Fingern" (276). All of this culminates in the concluding passage about the woman's contact with something concrete, which is a contact with something abstract as well:

> spürte endlich, je inniger ihre Finger vertraut wurden mit dem Gegenstand ihrer Berührung . . . die Trauer aller wirklichen Erfahrung, von der sie gemeint hatte, daß man sie nur mit den Fingerspitzen der Seele macht. (279)

It is in the treatment of the outcome that the two writers differ most. Materialism is an issue in both stories. Both heroines believe that they can assuage their discontent by acquiring something material, concrete.

In "A Cup of Tea" Rosemary thinks of the little box, after she has sent the girl away, and asks Philip if she may have it. The only hint that this is not what she needs to make her happy is the last line: "'Philip, . . . am I pretty?'" (416). There is something that is stronger than her desire for an object, but it is merely vanity. In Eisenreich's story the belief in the value of material things is extended to the girl as well. Schmidt-Dengler has said:

> Für beide [Frauen] ist eine Fehlspekulation verwandter Art schuld an der unglücklichen Verstrickung. Die Dame glaubt, mit materieller Unterstützung wäre es getan. Ebenso meint das Mädchen, daß es mit der Bitte um Brot am ehesten Erfolg haben könne. 17

Like Rosemary Eisenreich's heroine's first reaction on her trip home is to think of an object as the solution to her uneasiness. She cannot understand why she has failed in this "adventure" since she has spared neither time, money, nor trouble (278), but when she touches the kerchief she realizes that life is not that simple. She comes into contact with

> dem unbegreiflichen Geschick des Menschen selber, welches ihn, tiefer als irgend eine Armut und irgend ein Elend, beklagenswert macht, da nicht einmal die Güte, selbst wenn ihr alle Mittel der materiellen Welt zur Verfügung stehen, immer und unbedingt imstande ist, zu helfen, zu heilen, zu retten. (279)

In spite of her loss this realization of man's helplessness is a gain. Eisenreich ends on a paradoxical note

that is characteristic of him: the woman arrives home "mit leeren Händen und um so reicher." (279)

IV

In an essay entitled "Portrait und Erfindung" (1960) Eisenreich discussed the development of a creative work, and he pointed out that, although many readers consider one of his stories to be an exact representation of one of his own experiences in Russia during the war, the story was actually only suggested to him by a friend, and the details which went into the finished product came from many various sources. He says:

> Oft dient das Objekt, der Naturgegenstand, gleichsam nur als eine Angel, an deren Haken hängen bleibt, was der Autor eigentlich zu Tage fördern, zur Sprache bringen wollte. 1

In the case of "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski" it was the plot of an already existing story which served as a "fishhook" for the author's own concerns. Eisenreich is not alone in doing this - other famous borrowers and adaptors have been Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Brecht[2], to name only a few.

In the author's mind the borrowed story undergoes some significant changes. In Eisenreich's "adaptation", for instance, the heroine becomes anonymous and less vivid visually than her counterpart in Mansfield's story, but at the same time she is deeper in character, more introspec-

tive, and less egotistic. She has less of an audience - her experience is kept separate from her home life, and it is therefore in the end a very private experience, and has a more profound and lasting effect on her life. The focus in Mansfield's story is on one flighty young woman; and two secondary characters serve to form a triangle. But Eisenreich, who always sees two or more sides to every situation, splits the focus so that it is on two women and their very different lives. Eisenreich's "secondary" heroine, the beneficiary of the charitable act, is given thoughts of her own and a problem-filled background, and it is clear that her view of life is fundamentally different from the other woman's. The course of the story is altered in Eisenreich's version, with an intermediate stop at a restaurant instead of a trip to the wealthier woman's home - in this way the two women are isolated together on neutral ground. This change is also no doubt the result of conscious shaping on the part of the author, since the story, beginning and ending with a train journey, is more symmetrical than Mansfield's. Whereas Katherine Mansfield uses the meeting of the two women solely to allow Rosemary to reveal her character more completely, Eisenreich makes the situation an illustration of the blindness of most people to the motives and true wishes of others.

In the story "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski" there

can be seen many of the preoccupations which Eisenreich has exhibited in his other works as well - for instance, the issue of materialism, the inevitability of misunderstandings, and man's helplessness when he wants most to help. It is clear to anyone who compares Eisenreich's story with Katherine Mansfield's that the elements which he borrowed are only the framework for his story, and the fabric worked on this framework is of his own design.

V - TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. Eisenreich often omits the pronoun "sie" (she) before a verb. This causes a problem for the translator, since an English verb by itself is more ambiguous than a German verb by itself. The German verb "dachte", for example, can only be the imperfect form for the first and third persons singular. But "thought" in English can be the imperfect form for any of the persons, or it can be the past participle. (The verb "thought" can also be confused with the noun "thought".) In this translation the pronoun has usually been omitted where Eisenreich does so in the interests of fidelity to his style.

2. Eisenreich often makes use of long, encapsulated sentences which are difficult to render in English. In one passage (marked with an asterisk) the phrase "She thought of . . . " was considered a necessary insertion.

3. Eisenreich does not always indent for dialogue. However in this translation dialogue has been broken up into separate paragraphs, since this is what English readers are used to. Thoughts enclosed in quotation marks have not been indented. Eisenreich uses double quotation

marks for speech and single quotation marks for thoughts. This practice has been followed in the translation as well.

4. Some words could not be translated literally. "Gehirnkasten", for instance, is literally "brain box", but this would be a bit grotesque in English.

5. At the bottom of each page of the translation there are page and line references (e. g. - p. 268, l. 1) which indicate the point that has been reached in the original German text, reproduced in Appendix A.

VI - EXPERIENCE AS IN DOSTOYEVSKY

She came from a wealthy family, had married into one that was just as wealthy, and now lived with her husband and children in a two-storey country house on a lake, a half hour by car outside the city, lived according to a rhythm which had been passed down for generations - the rhythm of a life of true prosperity. Developed her mind and soul by daily reading great authors - just now particularly the Russians - and her body with various typed of sport, for the practice of which the expansive park behind the house and the lake in front of it offered sufficient space. Was lovingly devoted to the bringing up of her children, and was her husband's dearest friend and most loyal adviser, alert and active. And although she was spoiled, both by nature and by her way of life, still she was never lacking in that proud modesty, conscious of moderation, which quite conspicuously distinguishes the wealthy person from the mere possessor of money, whether the latter's bank account is greater or not. And so when she went into town once a week to get one thing or another for her personal needs she seldom took the car, although a car of her own was at her disposal, even with a chauffeur, if she wished;
(p. 269, l. 10)

instead she usually boarded the train which shuttled back and forth along its one track many times a day between the place where they lived and the town, transporting workers, officials and high school students, as well as those who, whether because of their official duties or their businesses, or to seek out the theatre, a concert or simply a dance, betook themselves from the country to the town. Needless to say, once she was on the train she travelled first-class, as was her due.

This time also she had made the trip by train. Had paid a visit in the morning to her husband's town office, had delivered directives from him and had inspected the latest correspondence, then had dined at Spitzer's with the two gentlemen who were employed to look after her husband's far-flung business interests. Took her leave and wove her way through the downtown section, tried without success to phone her girlfriend from boarding school days, a very famous singer at the Opera (famous with good reason, according to those in a position to judge). Then went to her tailor's to ask to be measured for a winter coat, felt fabrics, crumpled them between her fingers, had this and that bolt brought out to the daylight which, as if filtered a hundred times by the sluggish, satiated autumn air, now shone only very dully through the panes of the display window into the room dimly lit by neon tubes. Afterwards,
(p. 269, l. 33)

wandering farther, caught up among the late afternoon strollers, viewed shop windows in the sidestreets between the cathedral and the Exchange, until it was time for the hairdresser's; and when she left the salon an hour later, the business completed, she could feel the cold, damp autumn air creeping from the nape of her neck and from her temples up under her treated hair. A few blocks further on, in one of the big stores where workers' wives buy electric trains and Indian costumes, just like the ones in films, for their brood, she purchased a tiddly-winks set for her children, later called the singer once again and again failed to reach her, and finally ended up, as so often on these really aimless strolls, at the shop of the old antique dealer, a business man with taste and the manners of a gallant, who had provided the furniture for her boudoir and delivered many another expensive trifle to her house; and here she discovered, with the gentle but hardly necessary help of the dealer who was well acquainted with her tastes, a Japanese tea-service, delicately made and doubtless very old. She thought of* her husband who had been born in Japan, and who had been active there for almost two decades, cleverly administering and increasing the fortune which his family had acquired in East Asian trade; in Europe he was now considered one of the pre-eminent connoisseurs of the culture of that part of the world, so that ministers, bankers

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milieu simply by not buying the tea-service after all. And suddenly felt miserable, immeasurably miserable, and reproached herself for being petty, stingy, unloving; and was already making a mental about-face in order to return to the antique dealer's. Nevertheless, she stood as if glued to the ground, for to tell him now of her change of heart seemed to her all too embarrassing; rather she would write to him in a few days, phone him, or, simplest of all, wait a week until her next visit to town. ("Well, I've thought it over - I'll take it . . .") But the misery, really a nothingness, that within that space of time had hollowed out her body, had spread itself out as an emptiness throughout her whole being, so that she felt as if everything inside her were falling inward, indeed collapsing - this pit of misery could no longer be filled with arguments, with considerations, with mental schemes for setting things right; and now more than undecided: at her wit's end, she stood like mummified uneasiness in front of the shop door, which the owner had pulled shut behind her, making a final measured bow which he completed by turning around and withdrawing with a stiffened spine - at which point the little click of the lock snapping shut abruptly silenced the soft, Christmassy sound of the bell which tinkled as from a music box whenever the door was opened or shut. She stood there, as if in a trance, paralyzed in soul, and incapable now, at

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the very end of her visit to town, of directing her steps towards the train station for the trip home. It was if she felt embarrassed and were afraid that at home they would discover her embarrassment - would read her disgraceful conduct from her eyes, as if from the headline of an evening newspaper. But to go back into the shop again: she could not make herself do that either. So she stood, irresolute, completely filled with the feeling - as if it were an immutable force of gravity - that whatever she now did would be wrong, would be embarrassing for her, unworthy of her, no matter what she might do.

At this moment she heard beside her, as near as if it were inside her ear, a whispering voice, almost a mere breath:

"Excuse me, would you please give me some money - just for a bit of bread?"

With an ease that came from a sense off release she turned her head and found herself looking into a young woman's face which was narrowly framed by a dark blue kerchief; and she noticed that it was raining, that it must have been raining for several minutes now: a few strands of hair had escaped from under the girl's kerchief and they straggled down as if pasted to her white forehead. These strands were a glistening black, they were so wet, and there were tiny pearls of water on the fibres of the woollen ker-

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chief, and others on the girl's eyebrows, and others yet just under her eyes on her downy cheeks, so that it looked as if tears had run down them. And she could feel the wetness on her own face. She looked at the girl, and the girl's softly and hastily spoken words were in her ear, as if revolving there, and it occurred to her that she had not eaten anything since noon, and that it was hunger that had gouged a hole in her, the hole into which she had felt she was falling - hunger and nothing more! But before this thought - which had indeed been thought, but which had not yet really been experienced - before this thought could have raised itself to the level of experience, could have developed fully, other thoughts overlapped it, burying that first one; she thought: 'Yes, this is the chance! The chance to make up in a roundabout way for what she had just forfeited in the antique shop; and the chance as well to avoid going home immediately, without having completely got rid of this feeling of shame.' And thought at the same time: 'And what an experience! Not only to have an experience palpably before her, but to act herself, to be involved in it, to have been drawn into something which she had never yet experienced, but had so far only read about, into an experience as in a novel by Dostoyevsky.' And over this there flitted like a shadow the thought of how excited her friend, the singer, would be when she finally told her about it! And said to the girl:
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"Listen, come and have supper with me. Be my guest, in some nice little restaurant."

And she thought: 'No, not to Spitzer's, that's too grand, she might feel embarrassed. She probably isn't wearing anything more than a cheap rag under that worn out coat. And not to the Regina either - the best place would be the station restaurant. There the food is good and not too expensive, and one doesn't attract attention.'

The girl whispered: "For God's sake, no!" And as if she had been made the most abominable proposition, stared into the face of this strange lady to whom she had dared to speak - this tall, beautiful woman with the voice, the confident tone of a sister; who had just waved down a taxi, and had directed the girl towards it with a gentle pressure on her upper arm, now steered her in, gave the cab driver directions in a few words which the girl inside the car could not hear, and now sat down beside her in the back of the car and said:

"Don't be at all embarrassed. Tonight you are my guest!"

And when the girl, not so much with her voice as rather with her whole thin, bent body, seemed about to put up resistance:

"Really, there's no need to apologize, you don't need to explain anything to me. Life can be like that.
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Just be nice now, and do me the favour of having supper with me."

And she felt tempted to put her arm around the girl's bird-like, angular shoulders; but then decided that such a gesture would make the girl even more bashful rather than free her from her shyness, even if with it she should succeed in expressing her absolute sincerity, and let it be; thought further that it would be an inestimable pity if out of impatience she should commit any indiscretion which, in spite of the best intentions, would prematurely frighten off this rare, precious capture which a fortunate accident had driven straight into her arms; but felt at the same time that to follow such a train of thoughts was to roam in forbidden areas, and said, in order as well to bring herself back onto the right track:

"We'll have a nice cosy supper together, just the two of us, shall we?"

The girl realized that the driver had taken the route to the train station, the route which she had hurried along from home just a while ago, hesitating in deep shame in front of each woman whom she felt bold enough to address (only, however, to abandon the idea again), and she decided that the nearer they got to the train station the better it was for her. And as she was still, as it were, groping with feverish fingers in her brain, considering when, and above

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all how, she was to explain everything to the woman, the driver was already turning onto the train station square, as he had been ordered; he entered, curving in a wide sweep, and drove up under the eave which jutted forth over the pavement in front of the ticket office; the girl stared out between the threads of rain streaming down the windows, like a prisoner looking between iron bars.

"Drive on to the restaurant!"

There the chauffeur stopped, jumped out, tore open the door, took the fare handed to him, and when his passenger indicated to him with a gesture that it was all right, let his purse disappear in a flash into the pocket of his windbreaker. The girl thought that now was the moment to tell her. However she already felt a light and compelling touch on her arm; her hostess had hooked her own arm under it and was guiding her up the steps to the restaurant, then inside and over to one of the few unoccupied tables in front of the large windows, which afforded a view of the platforms below and the tracks between them where several trains stood ready to depart.

"Now we'll have a lovely evening together, won't we?"

The girl, who so far had not yet uttered a word, still said nothing, took off neither kerchief nor coat, merely stared down at the platforms under whose flat, faintly inward sloping roofs with the raintrough in the middle
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there could be seen some suitcases and the legs of waiting travellers, moving nimbly about in the very narrow space - but, because of the angle of vision, no faces.

"Do take off your things, Miss - "

The girl thought: 'Oh no, oh no, oh no!' Felt at the same time under her chin where she had tied the kerchief, undid the knot and removed the kerchief from her hair, hanging it over the back of the chair. Thought: 'Oh, if only she weren't so disgustingly friendly - how on earth can I ever tell her?' She felt utterly incapable of disappointing her benefactress, of revealing everything to her like the contents of a bag of stolen goods; took off then also her raindrenched coat, since the strange lady was helping her with it, and submitted to being pressed into the armchair which had been brought up to the table.

"First we should have a cognac. That will warm us up."

And when the girl was still silent:

"You would, after all, like a cognac, wouldn't you?"

"No," began the girl softly, hesitantly, her eyes lowered, sick at the thought of a drink; but then, at the thought that the cognac would give her the courage which she now needed to set herself straight on her course again, after things had been brought to an impasse by the strange lady's kindness, a courage which she now needed as never

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before in her life, said:

"Well - if you think so, madam?"

"There!" said the other, gratified by her first success at breaking the ice with the silent, frozen-in being across from her; and ordered the cognacs from the waiter who had just brought two menus to the table.

"French cognac, please," she said.

And turned to the girl again:

"But don't say 'madam' to me any more. Just call me by my name."

And gave it. And thought: 'What a pretty girl! Not a stupid face, not a bad face! Heaven knows how she has reached the end of her rope! Perhaps someone at home is sick, or she is herself. She's likable - just so incredibly withdrawn! This is probably the first time she has gone begging - and I, perhaps I can manage things so that this first time is also the last! I only need to know exactly what is the matter with her! But she'll surely tell me her story, I'm sure she will.'

The waiter brought the cognacs.

"Have you already decided, ladies?"

"Just give us a few minutes."

The waiter withdrew. She raised her glass and smiled encouragingly at the girl. The girl groped for her glass, lifted it to her mouth, sipped, sipped a second time,

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then, with a violently awkward gesture, tipped the glass right back. Breathing deeply in and out with the noticeable contraction of her throat, and straightening her head, checked the movement suddenly as she noticed the clock on the wall - actually only white wall with twelve black strokes and forty-eight black dots between them, and two black hands circling over these - and thought: 'Now there are not even ten minutes left, but there is still enough time to run through the whole train, to look into every compartment!' And thought: 'If I don't say it now, it will be too late!' And said:

"I'd like - I'd like to tell you something - "

And for the second time was overcome by her own audacity, and her voice, which she was struggling to control, immediately got lost in such a confused stammering, close to a tormented sobbing, that her companion interrupted her softly and said:

"First we'll just relax and have our meal, shall we? After a good meal it's much easier to talk, that's certain! Just pick something. Pick whatever you like."

She pushed the open menu over in front of the lowered face.

"Do you like veal cutlet with mixed salad?"

The girl nodded just perceptibly, with the vacuous, totally uncomprehending submissiveness of one who is being

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read his death sentence.

"Or perhaps stuffed peppers with rice? . . . And this, this would also be nice: ragout with French fries!"

And when the girl continued to nod as if her head were that of a mechanical toy still wound up, the woman called the waiter over and ordered two portions of ragout with French fries and a small carafe of wine to go with it, and for the girl another cognac first. She would have liked to say something encouraging to the girl, but the words which entered her head seemed insipid as soon as she had formulated them and had them on her tongue, so she also said nothing. Outside in front of the window the train engines languidly sent soupy clouds of smoke into the foggy evening, and individual lights, green, red, blue and white lights swam in the wet darkness outside. The waiter brought the cognac, the girl didn't touch it. At tables all around them more and more people were sitting down, most of them travellers who had chosen a night train and were consuming their evening meal here before their departure, but also people from the town who had only come here because of the food. Trains were being announced with the irritably articulated throat-clearing of a railway official from the supervisor's office: workers' trains for the surrounding area. And then the express train "with a through carriage to LeHavre." The girl heard the announcement buzzing and crackling,

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stared in front of her at the white wall with the black strokes and dots and hands, as if her gaze could make time stand still, knew that this was her last chance, and was silent, as if her lips had been sealed by excessive guilt; not yet knowing, but suspecting with a certainty that surpassed any knowledge, that it hadn't been the request itself which she had made to the strange lady not half an hour ago that had consumed all her energies, but that it was rather the slight insincerity of this request that had completely drained the vessel of her will, a vessel which hardly half an hour ago had seemed inexhaustible. The waiter brought the food and poured the wine into the glasses.

"There," said her hostess, "and now don't think about anything at all but eating."

The girl took up her knife and fork awkwardly, as if her fingers were frozen stiff and all the blood had left them, applied the utensils, then let her arms, which she had scarcely lifted, sink weakly down again. And thought, while at the same time the other half of her thoughts was directed towards a single goal, so very near and yet so very unattainable, that she was now imprisoned here, caught in a trap whose cage had been formed by her untruthful request, and whose little door the extravagant fulfilment of this request had caused to snap shut! Meanwhile the other woman was thinking, she mustn't be forced, she must be allowed to

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come to herself slowly, and began, as unobtrusively as possible, to eat. Suddenly dropped her own knife and fork as she saw that the girl was looking past her with a deadly rigidity, with a face that seemed petrified as in a fit, so that she turned around as if responding to a danger sounding its alarm behind her back - but there was only the white wall with the black clock on it. Below from the tracks a whistle cut through the stillness, which lay softly murmuring over the whole station, then an engine snorted loudly, puffed violently and asthmatically, then found its rhythm at the same time as the rolling of the wheels increased to a resounding grind. The girl remained there, motionless, tense to the point of bursting. 'No,' thought her hostess. 'She is so bashful that it's best to leave her here alone.' Took a calling card out of her handbag, put three folded notes with it, pushed the little packet under the edge of the girl's plate and, summoning into her voice all the cordiality she could muster, said,

"I've just noticed that it's already very late for me." And withdrawing her hand as if she had been detected committing a theft: "Really, I don't want to - offend you. I only want to help you - as far as I can. Please write to me. I have influential friends. I'm very sure we'll find something for you." And rising: "Just be so good as to pay for all this, and not a word about the rest, all right?"
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Only now did the girl see the calling card and the three ten-mark notes, clutched at them with trembling fingers, lifted her head, and then, suddenly, it burst from her rage-distorted face, a darting flame of disappointment and despair:

"Now now now!"

Swept money and calling card across the table, jumped up, tore her coat from the hook, and rushed out, past the waiter, quietly astonished, and past the nearby tables, where people craned and strained their necks and stared after the girl, then looked over to where the woman who had been left so dramatically was hastily paying the waiter. Someone at a nearby table said, so loudly that she had to hear it:

"Well, she obviously wanted something from the girl!"

The woman gathered her things together and strode off, her head lowered, wondering at the same time whether she shouldn't have picked up the kerchief, which the girl had left lying on the chair, as a concrete reminder of this unsuccessful adventure. And just as she bluntly rejected this thought which had only now flashed into her mind, the waiter appeared beside her and handed her the kerchief. She took it without a word, only in order to avoid further complications. And hurried towards her station platform where,

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as she knew, the next shuttle train was to depart very soon. And after she had extinguished the light in the compartment, sank into the cushions,

all the while that outside the girl was dashing over the train station square, off and back along the route over which she had come in the taxi, nothing more in her head but him, the one she had been on the way to see once more, to see for the last time, and who now had left without her having been able to see him, without her first having been able to tell him that it hadn't been only her fault, by God in Heaven, it hadn't been her fault alone! Her father had intercepted that last letter too, because he couldn't stand him - this "foreign dandy", this "outlandish mug" - or simply because he didn't want to give up the daughter who brought his boozing money into the house; and when chance - a drinking binge which caused her father to fall into a wheezing, rattling sleep more rapidly than usual - brought into her trembling hands the letter with the news of his final departure, it was too late - or rather it would not yet have been quite too late if she had only had the money, the twenty-five pfennigs for the streetcar and the ten pfennigs for the platform ticket. But she hadn't had those thirty-five pfennigs. He father, even if she had succeeded in shaking him awake, would sooner have beaten her to death with his empty bottles than give her money for any purpose
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whatsoever, and there was no one around from whom she could have borrowed the money. So she had rushed off on foot, then had spoken to the strange beautiful woman, and then that had been the end of it. Had no longer been able to free herself from the grip of that vise whose one jaw was her untruthful request and whose other jaw was the excessive fulfilment of this request, had no longer been able to free herself from that grip in order to admit the truth - this simple, little, oh how understandable truth: that first she had to see him, him, him - see him not any more in order to keep him here, but rather, simply to tell him how everything had happened between them, tell him all that before he went away, so far away that she could not imagine it, away, never again to return - yes, she had to tell him how all that had happened between them, and really, it was no longer in order to keep him, to move him to change his mind, but rather just to make all this known to him, and to bury with this knowledge the quarrels and grief and ill-will which would separate them from now on more deeply than the deepest ocean between them, unless she succeeded in seeing him again after all, to tell him everything, and to make her peace with him: so that, if this was really the end of everything, it would not be different from their life as it was to have gone on. She had approached her, that strange beautiful woman, with a request for money for a bit of bread, because
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bread seemed to her to be the only thing in the world that has a value that people can comprehend, the lack of which people feel so acutely that they are ready and able to start a revolution about it, and for this reason they are perhaps even ready to help; and in this case the outcome had been so much better than one might have expected, and for that reason so much worse! She had simply got entangled, had no longer been able to free herself from this misguided helpfulness to which she had appealed from a helplessness which could not be summed up in a word like "bread", had got entangled, wedged in between her own tiny lie and the excessively great kindness of that strange beautiful grand rich woman,

who was now already sitting in the rattling train and thinking that it had only been hunger after all that had slowly hollowed her out, that had made her miserable, that had made her susceptible to adventures which by their nature could not be brought to any satisfactory conclusion; and that this had only been able to happen because she had not immediately done in the antique shop what she would have to make up for tomorrow by telephone. ("Well, I've thought it over - I've slept on the matter - and I'll take it . . . ") In spite of everything the thought of the tea-service gave her no comfort, and the more obstinately she clung to this thought the more painfully she felt cheated of the actual

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prize of her fishing in the waters of uncertainty. Wasted time, wasted money, wasted concern, a senselessly and uselessly squandered labour of love, and on top of all that, the embarrassment. Never, as far back as she could remember, had she failed in anything so completely, without having been able to find a reason for it in the matter itself or in some fault of her own! He heart and her mind were filled with the question as to what had actually happened and why she had not been able to prevail in this adventure, since she had truly spared neither time, money nor trouble, had left undone nothing she could have done: and so she meandered from irritation into anger, from doubt into indifference, from shame into the wish to forget. She saw herself as someone helplessly delivered up to the new experience of undeserved failure, she didn't know what to make of it, she wanted to be rid of it. And of the girl's kerchief as well. She wanted it to be as if nothing, but nothing at all, had happened - and so, nothing, not even the kerchief, was to remind her of anything. With the tips of her fingers she pulled the kerchief out of her purse in order to stuff it into the luggage net across from her. And then, as her fingertips grasped the coarse woollen cloth, in whose threadbare weave there was still some dampness, she felt once again, in the contact with this small, pitiable piece of reality which was left to her, the whole, intact reality
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of the evening's encounter, this encounter with the thin, pale girl in the drizzling rain in front of the doorway to the antique shop; felt, with the absolute certainty of her senses which surpassed in acuteness any thoughts, that she had encountered not just any poor and miserable creature from the half of the world that was unfamiliar to her, but rather the incomprehensible fate of mankind itself, which, more profoundly than any poverty and any misery, makes him worthy of pity, since not even kindness, even with all means of the material world at its disposal, is always and unfailingly capable of helping, curing, saving; felt further that experiences like this one, into which she had been drawn, could not simply be left behind to be forgotten like a stranger's kerchief in a luggage net; felt finally, the more intimately her fingers became acquainted with the object of their touch, the more purely the grief streamed from this contact, like the solution to everything that had really happened there, the grief of all true experience, experience which she had thought one could only have with the fingertips of the soul. She now sank back within this grief as far as the very foundations of life, where just this grief, if it bores right down to the depths, is transformed on impact into that incomprehensible courage, thanks to which man returns to the surface and lives. She had wanted to help and she had been helped, but in such a way! And when the

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train stopped at the town where she lived, she wept uncontrollably into the girl's coarse woollen kerchief - wept, knowing that at home they would notice she had wept, but she continued to weep softly and at last inaudibly all the way home, then at home, in bed, as she went to sleep, and on into a new day, into a new life, in which she found herself once again - empty-handed and all the richer.

"Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski"

by Herbert Eisenreich -

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Herbert Eisenreich

Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski

Sie stammte aus reicher Familie, hatte in eine eben so reiche hineingeheiratet, lebte nun mit Mann und Kindern eine halbe Autostunde außerhalb der Stadt, in einem zweigeschossigen Landhaus am See, lebte in dem generationenlang vererbten Rhythmus wahrer Wohlhabenheit dahin. Bildete Geist und Gemüt durch die tägliche Lektüre großer Autoren, derzeit der Russen vornehmlich, und ihren Körper durch mehrerlei Sport, wie ihn auszuüben der weitläufige Park hinterm Haus und der See davor genügend Raum boten; widmete sich mit Liebe der

Erziehung ihrer Kinder, war ihres Mannes zärtlichste Freundin und treuste Beraterin, reg und agil; und war sie auch, von Natur und Umwelt, verwöhnt, so ließ sie doch nie jene stolze, des Maßes eingedenke Bescheidenheit vermissen, die den reichen Menschen von dem bloßen Geldbesitzer, mag dessen Konto vielleicht auch größer sein, ganz augenfällig unterscheidet. So nahm sie, wenn sie einmal die Woche, dies und jenes für ihren persönlichen Bedarf zu besorgen, in die Stadt fuhr, selten den Wagen, wiewohl ein eigener ihr zur Verfügung stand, auf Wunsch sogar mit Chaffeur, sondern sie setzte sich meist in den Zug, der, vielmals am Tage, eingleisig zwischen dem Ort, wo sie wohnten, und der Stadt hin- und herpendelte, Arbeiter, Beamte und höhere Schüler befördernd sowie jene, die, sei's um Ämter oder Geschäfte, sei's das Theater, ein Konzert oder bloß ein Tanzlokal aufzusuchen, vom Lande in die Stadt sich verfügten. Da, in dem Zuge, belegte sie freilich, wie es ihr zustand, die Polsterklasse.

So war sie auch diesmal mit dem Zug gefahren. Hatte vormittags im Stadtbüro Visite gemacht, ihres Mannes Direktiven überbracht, Einsicht genommen in die jüngste Korrespondenz, hatte bei Spitzer gespeist mit den beiden Herren, die angestellt waren, ihres Mannes weitverzweigte Geschäfte wahrzunehmen. Verabschiedete sich, bummelte quer durch die Innenstadt, versuchte vergeblich, ihre Freundin aus gemeinsamer Internatszeit anzurufen, eine (dem Urteil der Fachwelt folgend: mit Recht) sehr berühmte Sängerin an der Oper. Trat sodann ein bei ihrem Schneider mit dem Auftrag, ihr einen Wintermantel anzumessen, befühlte Tuche, knitterte sie zwischen den Fingern, ließ sich den und jenen Ballen ans Tageslicht heben, welches jetzt schon nur mehr sehr matt, wie hundertfach von der trägen, gesättigten Herbstluft gefiltert, durch die Scheiben der Auslage in das von Neonröhren zwielichtig erhellte Gelaß fiel. Besah sich, weiterbummelnd, mitgeschwemmt von den Flaneuren des späten Nachmittags, die Schaufenster in den Gassen zwischen Dom und Börse, bis es Zeit war zum Friseur; und als sie eine Stunde später, nach beendeter Prozedur, den Salon verließ, spürte sie die naßkalte Herbstluft vom Genick und den Schläfen her ihr unters gelichtete Haar kriechen. Erstand, ein paar Häuserblocks weiter, in einem der großen Geschäfte, wo Arbeiterfrauen elektrische Eisenbahnen und filmgetreue Indianerkostüme kaufen für ihre Brut, ein Flohspiel für die Kinder, rief später noch einmal und wieder vergeblich die Sängerin an, und landete schließlich, wie so oft auf diesen recht eigentlich ziellosen Gängen, bei dem alten Antiquar, einem feinnervigen Geschäftsmann mit Liebhabermanieren, der ihr Boudoir möbliert und auch sonst manch teure Kleinigkeit ihr ins Haus

geliefert hatte; und dort entdeckte sie, bei kaum nötiger sanfter Nachhilfe des Antiquars, der ihren Geschmack ja zur Genüge kannte, eine japanische Teegarnitur von sehr feiner und zweifellos alter Machart, die ihrem Mann, der in Japan geboren und fast zwei Jahrzehnte lang, das von seiner Familie im Ostasienhandel erworbene Vermögen klug verwaltend und vermehrend, dort tätig gewesen war und jetzt, in Europa, als einer der vorzüglichsten Kenner jenes Weltteils galt, so daß nicht nur seiner Küche und seines Kellers wegen Minister, Bankiers und Gesandte gern bei ihm zu Mittag aßen, Konsuln und Industrielle zum Tee erschienen, Militärattachés ihn zu einem morgendlichen Rundflug übers Gebirge abholten, — sie entdeckte also diese Teegarnitur, die ihrem Manne, zumal er durch Kriegswirren vieler persönlicher Erinnerungsstücke aus seiner japanischen Zeit verlustig gegangen war, herzlichst willkommen sein mußte; indessen, dies wägend, schwankte sie noch, des keineswegs alltäglichen Preises wegen. Achthundert Mark: das war viel Geld für jemanden, der mit Geld umzugehen gewohnt war. Und sie entschloß sich endlich wider den Kauf und sagte, sie würde sich's überlegen.

Sie trat hinaus auf die Straße, wo der Spätherbstabend feucht, als sei ein Nieselregen klebrig in der Luft hängengeblieben, zwischen die stumpf brütenden Häuser sich niedersenkte; ein kompakter Trauerflor schwebte von dem tiefen Himmel herab, ballte sich vor den zag erhellten Fenstern, wickelte sich um die Straßenlaternen. Der jähe Gegensatz von mannigfacher Formenhaftigkeit, eng gestauter bunter Vielfalt drinnen bei dem Antiquar und im Nebel sich auflösender grober Massen, verschwimmender Konturen hier heraußen auf der Straße, dieser Gegensatz ließ sie fröstelnd erschauern; ungewollt, die Schultern hoch an die Kinnladen hebend, verhielt sie den Schritt, stand still. Als habe sie sich, weil sie das Teeservice nicht doch erstanden hatte, selber in ein dürftigeres Milieu hinabversetzt, so kam es ihr vor. Und fühlte sich plötzlich elend, maßlos elend, und schalt sich kleinlich, knickerig, lieblos; und machte in ihren Gedanken schon kehrt, um wieder einzutreten bei dem Antiquar. Indes, wie festgeklebt stand sie, denn nun ihm schon ihre Sinnesänderung mitzuteilen, erschien ihr allzu peinlich; lieber würde sie ihm in einigen Tagen schreiben, ihm telephonieren, oder, am einfachsten, warten bis zu ihrem nächsten Besuch in der Stadt, in einer Woche. (»Also, ich habe mir's überlegt, ich nehm' es . . .«) Aber das Elend, so recht ein Nichts, das mittlerweile ihren Leib höhlte, in ihrem ganzen Wesen sich als eine Leere breitgemacht hatte, so daß sie vermeinte, alles in ihr stürze nach innen, in sich zusammen, dieses Elendsloch ließ sich schon nicht mehr füllen mit Argumenten, mit Überlegungen, mit gedanklich planender Wiedergutmachung; und jetzt schon mehr als unschlüssig: tief ratlos, so stand sie, das mumifizierte Unbehagen, vor dem Portal des Ladens, das der Besitzer hinter ihr, eine letzte gemessene Verbeugung in die folgende Kehrtwendung hinüberziehend und ins versteifte Rückgrat zurücknehmend, wieder hatte ins Schloß gezogen, wobei der kleine Knackslaut des schnappenden Schlosses abrupt das leis-weihnachtlich gefärbte Klingelspiel, welches beim Schließen wie beim Öffnen der Türe als wie aus einer Spieldose ertönte, ihr aus dem Gehör getilgt hatte. Festgebannt stand sie da, von ihrer Seele her gelähmt und unfähig, ihre Schritte nun, am offenbaren Ende ihres Stadtbesuchs, zum Bahnhof zu lenken, nach Hause zu fahren: als müsse sie sich schämen und müsse befürchten, daß man zu Hause ihre Beschämung entdecken, ihr blamables Verhalten ihr aus den Augen würde lesen können gleichwie aus der Schlagzeile einer Abendzeitung. Aber noch einmal einzutreten in den Laden: auch dazu fehlte ihr jede Kraft. So stand sie willenlos, ganz und gar erfüllt — als sei dies eine unaufhebbare Schwerkraft — von dem Gefühl, daß, was auch immer sie nun täte, unrichtig sein würde, peinlich und beschämend für sie, unwürdig ihrer, wie auch immer sie's drehen mochte.

In diesem Augenblick hörte sie neben sich, so nahe, als spräch' es in ihrem Ohr, eine wispernde Stimme, ein Hauchen fast nur: »Bitte, würden Sie mir etwas Geld geben — nur für ein bißchen Brot?!« Sie wandte, in erlöster Leichtigkeit, den Kopf, und blickte in ein junges Frauenantlitz, schmal gerahmt von einem dunkelblauen Kopftuch, und sie merkte, daß es regnete, daß es minutenlang schon geregnet haben mußte: einige Locken unter dem Kopftuch des Mädchens waren hervorgequollen und hingen wie angeklebt in die weiße Stirne herein, und diese Locken glänzten schwarz vor Nässe, und kleine Wasserperlen saßen auf den Härchen des wollenen Kopftuchs, und andere saßen auf den Brauen des Mädchens, und wieder andere unter den Augen auf den flaumbewachsenen Wangen, so daß es aussah, als seien Tränen darüber hingeronnen. Und sie spürte die Nässe im eigenen Gesicht. Sie blickte das Mädchen an, hatte den von dem Mädchen leise und hastig gesprochenen Satz noch, als wie darin rotierend, im Ohr, und dachte, daß sie seit Mittag nichts gegessen hatte und daß es der Hunger sei, der ein Loch in sie gegraben habe, in das sie zu stürzen gewähnt, der Hunger und weiter nichts! Doch ehe dieser Gedanke, gedacht zwar, doch noch keineswegs auf seine Richtigkeit hin erlebt, zu voller Erlebbarkeit sich hätte erheben, sich hätte auswachsen können, legten sich andre Gedanken darüber, jenen ersten begrabend; sie dachte: ›Das, ja das ist die Chance! Ist die

Chance, auf einem Umwege wettzumachen, was sie eben, im Laden des Antiquars, eingebüßt hatte; und zu gleicher Zeit die Chance, nicht sofort, bei noch nicht völlig beseitigter Beschämung, nach Hause fahren zu müssen!‹ Und dachte in einem: ›Und was für ein Erlebnis! Handgreiflich nicht nur vor sich zu haben, sondern selber zu tun, mit hineingeraten, hineingerissen zu sein in etwas, das sie nie noch erlebt, sondern bisher nur gelesen hatte, in ein Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski.‹ Und drüberhin huschte schattengleich noch der Gedanke, wie begeistert ihre Freundin, die Sängerin, sein würde, wenn sie es ihr erst erzählte! Und sagte zu dem Mädchen: »Ach, wissen Sie was, kommen Sie mit mir zum Essen, ich lade Sie ein, in irgendein nettes Restaurant!« Und sie dachte: ›Nein, nicht zu Spitzer, das ist zu fein, sie könnte sich genieren, vermutlich trägt sie nichts weiter als ein billiges Fähnchen unter diesem Rest von einem Mantel, und auch nicht ins Regina, am besten ins Bahnhofsrestaurant, da ißt man gut und nicht zu teuer, und ohne irgendwie aufzufallen!‹

Das Mädchen hauchte: »Um Gottes willen nein!« Starrte, als habe man ihr den scheußlichsten Antrag gemacht, der fremden Dame ins Gesicht, die anzusprechen sie gewagt hatte, dieser großen schönen Frau mit der Stimme, dem selbstverständlichen Tonfall einer Schwester; welche eben schon ein Taxi herbeidirigiert und das Mädchen mit mildem Druck auf den Oberarm darauf zugelenkt hatte, sie nun hineinbugsierte, dem Chauffeur mit zwei Worten einen Auftrag hinwarf, welchen das Mädchen im Wageninnern nicht verstehen konnte, sich nun neben sie in den Fond des Wagens setzte und sagte: »Sie sollen sich überhaupt nicht genieren, Sie sind eben heute abend mein Gast!« Und als das Mädchen, weniger aus seinem Munde denn viel mehr aus seinem ganzen schmal gekrümmten Körper heraus, zu einem Widerspruch anzusetzen schien: »Wirklich, Sie brauchen sich nicht zu entschuldigen, Sie brauchen mir nichts zu erklären, so kann es schon gehen im Leben, nur sein Sie jetzt nett und tun Sie mir den Gefallen, mit mir zu Abend zu essen!« Und sie fühlte sich versucht, ihren Arm um die vogelknochig eckigen Schultern des Mädchens zu legen; dachte dann aber, daß eine solche Geste, selbst wenn sie ihr in aller unvoreingenommenen Herzlichkeit gelinge, das Mädchen eher noch tiefer verschüchtern als es aus seiner Verschüchterung befreien könnte, und ließ es; dachte weiter, daß es unbezahlbar schade wäre, wenn sie mit irgendeinem ungeduldigen Leichtsinn, dem bestgemeinten sogar, diesen seltenen, köstlichen Fang, den ein glücklicher Zufall ihr gradewegs in die Arme trieb, vorzeitig verscheuchte; empfand aber allsogleich einen solchen Gang der Gedanken als ein Streunen in verbotenen Bezirken und sagte,

auch um sich selber wieder auf den rechten Weg zu bringen: »Wir wollen ganz gemütlich zu Abend essen, wir beide, ja?«

Das Mädchen gewahrte, daß der Chauffeur den Weg zum Bahnhof nahm, welchen sie von Hause weg schon seit etlichen Minuten, mit einem schamtiefen Zögern vor jeder Frau, die anzusprechen sie sich kühn genug fühlte (um es dann doch wieder bleibenzulassen), gehastet war, und sie dachte, daß es um so günstiger sei, je näher sie dem Bahnhof kämen. Und als sie noch, gleichsam mit fiebrigen Fingern in ihrem Gehirnkasten kramend, überlegte, wann und vor allem wie sie es ihr begreiflich machen sollte, da lenkte der Chauffeur bereits, wie ihm aufgetragen war, auf den Bahnhofsplatz zu, kurvte in weitem Schwung herein und heran und bis unter das über den Gehsteig vorspringende Dach vor der Schalterhalle; zwischen den Regenfäden an den Wagenfenstern stierte das Mädchen hinaus wie ein Gefangener zwischen den Gitterstäben. »Fahren Sie vor bis zum Restaurant!« Dort hielt der Chauffeur den Wagen an, sprang heraus, riß den Schlag auf, nahm das geforderte Geld entgegen, ließ, als eine Geste seiner Auftraggeberin ihm bedeutete, es stimme so, seine Börse mit dem Wechselgeld flugs in der Tasche seiner Windjacke verschwinden. Das Mädchen dachte, daß jetzt der Moment sei, es ihr zu sagen. Indessen spürte sie schon eine leise Berührung unwiderstehlich an ihrem Arm, ihre Gastgeberin hatte sich untergehakt und geleitete sie schon die Treppen hoch zu dem Restaurant, hinein und hinüber zu einem der wenigen freien Tische vor den großen Fenstern, die den Blick freigaben hinunter auf die Bahnsteige und die Geleise dazwischen, wo einige Züge abfahrbereit standen. »Jetzt wollen wir uns aber einen gemütlichen Abend machen, nicht wahr?« Das Mädchen, welches bisher noch nichts gesprochen hatte, sagte noch immer nichts, legte weder Kopftuch noch Mantel ab, starrte hinab auf die Bahnsteige, unter deren flachen, nach innen leicht abgeschrägten Dächern mit der Regenrinne in der Mitte einige Koffer und auf engstem Raume trippelnde Beine von wartenden Reisenden, des Blickwinkels wegen aber keine Gesichter zu sehen waren. »Legen Sie doch ab, Fräulein —!« Das Mädchen dachte: ›O nein o nein o nein!‹ Griff zugleich unters Kinn, wo sie das Kopftuch verknotet hatte, löste und hob es vom Haar, hängte es über die Lehne des Stuhls. Dachte: ›O wenn sie nur nicht so hundsgemein freundlich wäre — wie soll ich es ihr da nur sagen können?!‹ Sie fühlte sich außerstande, ihre Gönnerin zu enttäuschen, vor ihr nun alles aufzudecken als wie den Inhalt eines Beutels voll von Diebsgut; legte, zumal die fremde Dame ihr dabei behilflich war, nun auch den regenfeuchten Mantel ab, ließ sich ergeben in den zurechtgerückten Sessel drücken. »Am besten, wir

trinken zuvor einen Cognac, das wärmt uns auf.« Und als das Mädchen noch immer schwieg: »Sie mögen doch einen Cognac?«

»Nein«, begann das Mädchen zögernd, gesenkten Blickes, leise und voll von Ekel bei dem Gedanken ans Trinken; sagte aber dann, mit dem Gedanken, daß der Cognac ihr den Mut machen würde, den sie nun brauchte, um ihren in der Freundlichkeit der fremden Dame festgefahrenen Karren doch noch flottzumachen und zu wenden, den Mut, den sie nun brauchte wie nie zuvor im Leben: »Aber — bitte, wenn Sie meinen, gnädige Frau?«

»Sehn Sie!« sagte die also Befragte, befriedigt von ihrem ersten Einbruchserfolg in das schweigsame, gleichsam zugemauerte Wesen ihr gegenüber; und bestellte bei dem Kellner, der eben zwei Karten an den Tisch brachte, die Cognacs. »Einen französischen, bitte!« Und wandte sich wieder an das Mädchen: »Aber sagen Sie nicht wieder ›gnädige Frau‹ zu mir; nennen Sie mich einfach bei meinem Namen!« Und nannte diesen. Und dachte: ›Was für ein hübsches Mädel! Kein dummes, kein übles Gesicht! Weiß der Himmel, wie sie unter die Räder gekommen ist?! Vielleicht jemand krank zu Hause, oder sie selber! Sympathisch, nur maßlos verschüchtert! Bettelt wahrscheinlich zum ersten Mal — und ich, ich kann es vielleicht so wenden, daß dieses erste Mal auch das letzte Mal ist. Müßte nur wissen, was wirklich los ist mit ihr! Aber wird mir schon ihre Geschichte erzählen, sicher, ganz sicher wird sie das tun!‹

Der Kellner brachte die Cognacs. »Schon gewählt, die Damen?«

»In zwei Minuten!« Der Kellner zog sich zurück. Sie hob ihr Glas, lächelte dem Mädchen ermunternd zu. Das Mädchen tappte nach dem Glas, hob es an den Mund, nippte, nippte ein zweites Mal, kippte das Glas sodann mit einer heftig-eckigen Geste hintüber. Atmete mit sich abzeichnender Beengung des Schlundes tief ein und aus, stemmte ihren Kopf aus dem Nakken wieder zurück, verhielt die Bewegung plötzlich in dem Blick auf die Uhr an der Wand, nur weiße Wand eigentlich mit zwölf schwarzen Strichen und achtundvierzig schwarzen Punkten dazwischen und zwei darüber kreisenden schwarzen Zeigern, und dachte: ›Es sind jetzt keine zehn Minuten mehr Zeit, aber immer noch Zeit genug, durch den ganzen Zug zu laufen, in jedes Abteil zu blicken!‹ Und dachte: ›Wenn ich es jetzt nicht sage, dann ist es zu spät!‹ Und sagte: »Ich möchte — ich möchte Ihnen etwas erzählen —«, und verlor, zum zweiten Mal von ihrer eigenen Kühnheit überwältigt, ihre mühsam kontrollierte Sprache allsogleich in ein derart konfuses, verquältem Weinen nahes Stottern, daß die andre sie sanft unter-

brach und sagte: »Wir wollen zuerst einmal in aller Ruhe essen, ja? Nach einem guten Essen spricht sich's viel leichter, ganz bestimmt! Wählen Sie nur! Wählen Sie, was Sie nur mögen!« Sie schob ihr die aufgeschlagene Karte vor das gesenkte Gesicht. »Mögen Sie Kalbsschnitzel mit gemischtem Salat?« Das Mädchen nickte kaum merklich, mit der stupiden, gar nicht begreifenden Ergebenheit eines, dem sein Todesurteil vorgelesen wird. »Oder lieber gefüllte Paprika mit Reis? . . . Und das, das wär' auch was Feines: Ragout mit Pommes frites!« Und als das Mädchen weiter, wie aufgezogen, nickte, bestellte sie bei dem herangewinkten Kellner zwei Portionen Ragout mit Pommes frites und dazu eine kleine Karaffe Wein, und für das Mädchen noch einen Cognac zuvor. Sie hätte dem Mädchen gern etwas Ermunterndes gesagt, aber die Worte, die ihr in den Sinn kamen, fühlten sich abgeschmackt an, sowie sie sie formulierend auf die Zunge legte; so schwieg auch sie. Draußen vor dem Fenster qualmten die Lokomotiven breiig träg in den nebligen Abend, einzelne Lichter, grüne, rote, blaue und weiße Lichter schwammen in der feuchten Dunkelheit draußen. Der Kellner brachte den Cognac, das Mädchen rührte ihn nicht an. Ringsum an den Tischen nahmen immer mehr Menschen Platz, Reisende zumeist, die einen Nachtzug gewählt hatten und vorher hier ihre Abendmahlzeit verzehrten, aber auch Leute aus der Stadt, die bloß des Essens wegen hierhergekommen waren. Züge wurden ausgerufen, widerwillig artikuliertes Räuspern eines Bahnbeamten in der Fahrdienstleitung, Arbeiterzüge in die nähere Umgebung. Und dann der D-Zug »mit Kurswagen nach Le Havre«. Das Mädchen hörte die Ansage krachen und knistern, starrte, als könne ihr Blick die Zeit zum Stillstand bringen, auf die weiße Wand mit den schwarzen Strichen und Punkten und Zeigern vor ihr, wußte, daß dies die letzte Chance war, und schwieg, als habe eine übergroße Schuld ihr den Mund vernäht; noch nicht wissend, aber mit einer alles Wissen übersteigenden Sicherheit ahnend, daß nicht die Bitte selber, vor noch nicht einer halben Stunde an die fremde Frau gerichtet, all ihre Energien aufgezehrt hatte, sondern daß die kleine Unwahrhaftigkeit dieser Bitte das Gefäß ihres Willens, das ihr vor kaum einer halben Stunde noch unausschöpflich erschienen war, ganz und gar leergetrunken hatte. Der Kellner brachte die Speisen, schenkte Wein in die Gläser. »So«, sagte ihre Gastgeberin, »und nun denken Sie an gar nichts anderes als an das Essen!« Das Mädchen nahm ungeschickt, wie mit steifgefrorenen Fingern, aus denen alles Blut gewichen ist, das Besteck in die Hände, setzte es an, ließ kraftlos die kaum gehobenen Arme wieder sinken; und dachte, indes die andere Hälfte ihrer Gedanken einem einzigen, ach so

NOTE: In other editions there is a break after "Polster", page 277, line 8, and "dieweil das Mädchen . . ." starts a new paragraph. This corresponds with the similar break after "Frau", page 278, line 18.

nahen und ach so unerreichbaren Ziele zustrebte, daß sie hier nun gefangensaß, gefangen in einer Falle, deren Gehäuse aus ihrer unwahrhaftigen Bitte gebildet war, und deren hinter ihr zugeschnapptes Türchen in der übermäßigen Erfüllung dieser Bitte bestand! Man darf sie nicht drängen, man muß sie ganz langsam zu sich kommen lassen, dachte die andre indes und begann, so unauffällig wie möglich, zu essen. Ließ selber plötzlich Messer und Gabel sinken, als sie sah, wie des Mädchens Blick, aus wie im Krampfe versteinertem Gesicht, mit todhafter Starre über sie hinwegzielte, so daß sie, wie einer hinter ihrem Rücken lautgewordenen Gefahr gehorchend, sich umdrehte, dort aber war nur die weiße Wand mit der schwarzen Uhr darauf. Unten, von den Geleisen her, schnitt ein Pfiff durch die Stille, die leise raunend über dem ganzen Bahnhof lag, dann schnaubte eine Lokomotive hoch, paffte heftig und kurzatmig, fand alsbald ihren Rhythmus wie das sich zu dröhnendem Mahlen steigernde Anrollen der Räder. Das Mädchen verharrte reglos, zum Platzen gespannt. Nein, dachte ihre Gastgeberin, sie ist derart verschüchtert, daß es am besten ist, man läßt sie allein! Fingerte eine Visitenkarte aus ihrer Tasche, legte drei gefaltete Geldscheine dazu, schob das kleine Päckchen dem Mädchen unter den Tellerrand und sagte, all die ihr zur Verfügung stehende Herzlichkeit in ihre Stimme zusammenraffend: »Ich sehe grad, es ist schon sehr spät für mich.« Und die Hand zurückziehend wie nach ertapptem Diebstahl: »Wirklich, ich möchte Sie nicht — kränken! Ich möchte Ihnen nur helfen — soweit ich das kann. Bitte schreiben Sie mir, ich habe einflußreiche Freunde, ich bin ganz sicher, daß wir etwas finden werden für Sie!« Und sich erhebend: »Tun Sie mir nur den Gefallen und zahlen Sie das alles, und über den Rest kein Wort mehr, ja?« Nun erst sah das Mädchen die Visitenkarte und die drei Zehnmarkscheine, nestelte mit zitternden Fingern daran herum, hob den Kopf, und dann auf einmal platzte es heraus aus wutüberkrustetem Gesicht, eine Stichflamme von Enttäuschung und Verzweiflung: »Jetzt jetzt jetzt!« Fegte Geld und Visitenkarte über den Tisch, sprang hoch, riß den Mantel vom Haken und stürzte hinaus, an dem dezent erstaunten Kellner und an den näheren Tischen vorbei, wo die Leute ihre Hälse reckten und renkten und hinter dem Mädchen herstarrten und sodann herüberblickten, wo die also heftig Verlassene dem Kellner rasch zahlte, und jemand am Nebentisch sagte, sagte es so laut, daß sie es hören mußte: »Na klar, die hat was wollen von dem Mädel!« Sie raffte ihre Sachen zusammen und schritt, gesenkten Hauptes, davon, überlegend noch, ob sie nicht das Kopftuch, welches das Mädchen auf dem Stuhl hatte liegen lassen, an sich hätte nehmen sollen, als eine gegenständliche Erinnerung an dieses unbewältigte Abenteuer. Und eben, als sie schroff diesen grad erst ihr eingeschossenen Gedanken verwarf, tauchte der Kellner neben ihr auf und reichte ihr das Kopftuch. Sie nahm es, nur um ohne weitere Komplikationen davonzukommen, wortlos an sich. Und strebte ihrem Bahnsteige zu, wo, wie sie wußte, sehr bald der nächste Pendelzug abfahren mußte; und sank, nachdem sie das Licht im Coupé gelöscht, in die Polster, dieweil das Mädchen draußen über den Bahnhofsplatz stürmte, fort und zurück den Weg, den sie im Taxi hergekommen war, im betäubten Kopfe nichts mehr als ihn, den zu sehen, noch einmal, zum letztenmal zu sehen sie unterwegs gewesen war und der nun abgereist war, ohne daß sie ihn noch hätte sehen, ihm noch hätte sagen können, daß es nicht ihre Schuld allein gewesen, bei Gott im Himmel nicht ihre Schuld allein! Auch diesen letzten Brief noch hatte ihr Vater unterschlagen, weil er ihn nicht ausstehn konnte, diesen »fremdländischen Laffen«, diese »Übersee-Visage«, oder einfach, weil er die Tochter, die ihm das Geld zum Versaufen ins Haus brachte, nicht hergeben wollte; und als ein Zufall, der heute schneller als sonst ihn in röchelnden Schlaf kippende Rausch des Vaters, ihr das Schreiben mit der Mitteilung seiner endgültigen Abreise dann doch noch in die bebenden Hände spielte, da war es zu spät, oder eben doch noch nicht ganz zu spät, wenn sie nur das Geld gehabt hätte, die fünfundzwanzig Pfennig für die Straßenbahn und die zehn Pfennig für die Bahnsteigkarte, doch diese fünfunddreißig Pfennig hatte sie nicht gehabt, ihr Vater, selbst wenn es ihr gelungen wäre, ihn wachzurütteln, hätte sie eher mit seinen leergesoffenen Flaschen zu Tode geprügelt, als daß er ihr, für welchen Zweck auch immer, Geld gegeben hätte, und niemand war in der Nähe, wo sie das Geld hätte borgen können. So war sie losgehastet zu Fuß, hatte dann die fremde schöne Frau angesprochen, und damit war alles verloren gewesen. Hatte sich nicht mehr befreien können aus dem Zugriff der Zange, deren eine Backe ihre unwahrhaftige Bitte, und deren andere Backe die übermäßige Erfüllung dieser Bitte war, hatte sich nicht mehr daraus befreien können, um die Wahrheit, diese simple, kleine, ach wie verständliche Wahrheit, zu gestehen: daß sie ihn ihn ihn noch sehen mußte, ihn sehen schon nicht mehr, um ihn zu halten, sondern einfach, um ihm zu sagen, wie das alles nun so gekommen war zwischen ihnen, ihm all das zu sagen, ehe er fortfuhr, fort so weit, wie sie nicht einmal denken konnte, und niemals wieder zurück — ja, ihm sagen, wie das alles nun so gekommen war zwischen ihnen, und wirklich schon nicht mehr, um ihn zu halten, zur Umkehr zu bewegen, sondern allein, um dies alles ihn wissen zu lassen und unter diesem Wissen den Zank und Harm und

Groll zu begraben, der sie fortan tiefer trennen würde als das tiefste Meer zwischen ihnen, sofern es ihr nicht gelänge, ihn doch noch zu sehen, ihm alles zu sagen, ein gutes Wort ihm zu geben und ein gutes Wort von ihm zu empfangen: damit, wenn hier wirklich alles zu Ende ging, es nicht anders ende, als es hätte dauern sollen! Sie hatte sie angesprochen, die fremde schöne Frau, mit der Bitte um Geld für ein bißchen Brot, weil Brot ihr das einzige Ding auf der Welt zu sein schien, das den Menschen ein begreifbarer Wert ist und dessen Mangel die Menschen so greifbar spüren, daß sie bereit und fähig sind, darob sich zu empören, und deshalb vielleicht auch, zu helfen; und war nun alles viel besser und deshalb viel schlimmer gekommen! Einfach hängengeblieben war sie, hatte sich nicht mehr losmachen können von dieser mißbrauchten Hilfsbereitschaft, an die sie aus einer nicht in ein Wort wie »Brot« faßbaren Hilflosigkeit appelliert hatte, hängengeblieben war sie, eingeklemmt zwischen ihrer eigenen winzigen Lüge und der übergroßen Güte jener fremden schönen großen reichen Frau,

welche nun schon in dem rumpelnden Zuge saß und dachte, daß es eben doch nur der Hunger gewesen sei, der sie langsam ausgehöhlt, der sie elend gemacht, der sie anfällig gemacht hatte für Abenteuer, die ihrer Natur nach nicht zu bewältigen waren; und daß es nur deshalb dazu hatte kommen können, weil sie im Laden des Antiquars nicht sogleich getan, was sie morgen nun würde nachholen müssen, telephonisch. (»Ja also, ich habe mir's überlegt, habe die Sache zuerst einmal überschlafen. Nun, ich nehm' es . . .«) Trotz allem, sie fühlte sich nicht glücklich bei dem Gedanken an das Teeservice, und je verbissener sie an diesem Gedanken festhielt, desto schmerzlicher fühlte sie sich betrogen um die eigentliche Beute ihres Fischzugs im Ungewissen. Vertane Zeit, vertanes Geld, vertane Mühe, sinnlos und nutzlos vergeudete Liebesmüh', und am Ende dazu die Blamage! Nie, so weit sie auch zurückdachte, war ihr etwas so völlig mißglückt, ohne daß sie eine Ursache dafür in der Sache oder eine Schuld bei sich selber gefunden hätte! Herz und Hirn überfüllt von der Frage, was denn eigentlich geschehen war und warum sie dieses Abenteuer nicht hatte bewältigen können, da sie an Zeit, an Geld, an Mühe wahrhaftig doch nicht gespart, an nichts ihr Möglichem es hatte mangeln lassen: so verirrte sie sich aus Irritation in Ärger, aus Zweifel in Gleichgültigkeit, aus Scham in den Wunsch, zu vergessen. Dem neuen Erlebnis des schuldlosen Scheiterns sah sie sich hilflos ausgeliefert, sie wußte nichts anzufangen damit, sie wollte es los sein. Und so auch das Kopftuch des Mädchens. So, als sei nichts, aber auch schon gar nichts gewesen, so sollte nichts, und auch nicht das Kopftuch, sie an etwas erinnern! Sie fingerte aus ihrer Tasche

das Kopftuch hervor, um es ihr gegenüber in das Gepäcknetz zu legen. Und da, als ihre Fingerspitzen in den rauhen wollenen Stoff griffen, in dessen schäbigem Gewebe noch ein Rest von Feuchtigkeit saß, da spürte sie in dieser Berührung mit diesem kleinen erbärmlichen Stückchen Wirklichkeit, das ihr geblieben war, wieder die ganze unzerstörte Wirklichkeit der abendlichen Begegnung, dieser Begegnung mit dem schmalen blassen Mädchen im Nieselregen vor dem Portal des Antiquars; spürte mit der unbezweifelbaren Gewißheit ihrer alle Gedanken übertreffenden Sinne, daß sie da nicht bloß irgendeinem armen und elenden Geschöpf aus der ihr unbekannten Welthälfte begegnet war, sondern dem unbegreiflichen Geschick des Menschen selber, welches ihn, tiefer als irgendeine Armut und irgendein Elend, beklagenswert macht, da ja nicht einmal die Güte, selbst wenn ihr alle Mittel der materiellen Welt zur Verfügung stehen, immer und unbedingt imstande ist, zu helfen, zu heilen, zu retten; spürte weiter, daß sich Erlebnisse wie dieses, in das sie da hineingerissen worden war, nicht einfach ablegen ließen im Vergessen wie ein fremdes Kopftuch im Gepäcknetz; spürte endlich, je inniger ihre Finger vertraut wurden mit dem Gegenstand ihrer Berührung, desto reiner die Trauer aus dieser Berührung strömen, wie als die Lösung all dessen, was in Wahrheit da geschehen war, die Trauer aller wirklichen Erfahrung, von der sie gemeint hatte, daß man sie nur mit den Fingerspitzen der Seele macht: die Trauer, in der sie nun hinabsank bis auf den Urgrund des Lebens, wo eben diese Trauer, wenn sie ihren Schacht nun wirklich in die Tiefe bohrt, im Aufprall umschlägt in den unbegreiflichen Mut, dank dem der Mensch nach oben zurückkehrt und lebt. Sie hatte helfen wollen, und ihr war geholfen worden, doch wie! Und als der Zug an dem Ort, wo sie wohnte, hielt, da weinte sie ungehemmt in das rauhe wollene Kopftuch des Mädchens hinein, weinte und wußte, daß man's zu Hause ihr anmerken würde, aber sie weinte leise und schließlich lautlos weiter, auf dem Heimweg, zu Hause, im Bett und hinein in den Schlaf, hinüber in einen neuen Tag, in ein neues Leben, in dem sie sich wiederfand mit leeren Händen und um so reicher.

APPENDIX B - FOOTNOTES

I

[1]C. K. Stead, ed., Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield: A Selection (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

[2]Hans Bender, "Ortsbestimmung der Kurzgeschichte," Akzente, 9 (1962), p. 210.

[3]Bender, p. 210.

[4]Katherine Mansfield, Letters and Journals, ed. C. K. Stead, pp. 249-50.

[5]Herbert Eisenreich, "Das schlechte Beispiel des Herbert Eisenreich" (Nachwort), Ein schöner Sieg und 21 andere Mißverständnisse (Graz, Wien, Köln: Verlag Styria, 1973), p. 155.

[6]Hermann Friedl, "Herbert Eisenreich oder Schreiben, um leben zu lernen," Wort in der Zeit, 7, Vol. 8 (1961), p. 12.

[7]Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, "A Commentary on Herbert Eisenreich," trans. George Schulz-Behrend, Dimension, 1 (1968), p. 481.

[8]Schmidt-Dengler, "Commentary," p. 482.

[9]Peter Demetz, Postwar German Literature: A Critical Introduction (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 34.

[10]Schmidt-Dengler, "Commentary," p. 482.

[11]Bender, p. 213.

[12]Heinz Piontek, "Graphik in Prosa: Ansichten über die deutsche Kurzgeschichte," Merkur, 13 (1959), p. 281.

[13]Bender, pp. 213-14.

[14]Piontek, p. 281.

[15]Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski' und 'Die ganze Geschichte': Zu zwei Erzählungen von Herbert Eisenreich," Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie, 87 (1968), p. 593.

II

[1]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 601.

[2]Ibid., p. 601.

[3]Eisenreich, "Das schlechte Beispiel," Ein schöner Sieg, p. 155.

[4]Eisenreich, Reaktionen: Essays zur Literatur (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1964), p. 97.

[5]Eisenreich, Reaktionen, pp. 85-86.

[6]Eisenreich, Das kleine Stifterbuch (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1967), p. 12.

[7]Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Literatur der kleinen Schritte: Deutsche Schriftsteller heute (München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1967), p. 65.

[8]Eisenreich, Einladung, deutlich zu leben (Wien: Verlag Jungbrunnen, 1952), p. 60.

[9]Eisenreich, Auch in ihrer Sünde (Hamburg: Marion von Schröder Verlag, 1953), p. 23.

[10]Auch in ihrer Sünde, pp. 188-89.

[11]Ibid., p. 189.

[12]Ibid., p. 140.

[13]Eisenreich, Sebastian. Die Ketzer. Zwei Dialoge (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1966), pp. 61-62.

[14]Sebastian, p. 68.

[15]Eisenreich, Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben (Hamburg: Furche Verlag, 1964), p. 38.

[16]Wovon wir leben und woran wir sterben, p. 36.

[17]Ibid., p. 29.

[18]Ibid., p. 36.

[19]Robert Blauhut, "Neueste Novellistik in Österreich," Das Erscheinungsbild der österreichischen Gegenwartsdichtung, ed. Leo Kober (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1969), p. 46.

[20]Demetz, p. 34.

[21]Eisenreich, Böse schöne Welt (Stuttgart: Scherz und Goverts Verlag, 1957), pp. 99- 105.

[22]Robert Blauhut, Österreichische Novellistik des 20. Jahrhunderts (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1966), p. 282.

[23]Böse schöne Welt, pp. 55-68.

[24]Eisenreich, Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1965), p. 180.

[25]Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten, p. 184.

[26]Ibid., pp. 186-

[27]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 593. The story, "Garçon, un bock!", is found in: Guy de Maupassant, Miss Harriet, Oeuvres complètes de Guy de Maupassant, v. 10 (Paris: Louis Conard, 1908), pp. 231-41.

[28]Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten, pp. 51-73.

[29]Ibid., pp. 46-50.

[30]Ein schöner Sieg, pp. 102-03.

[31]Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten, pp. 116-22.

[32]Ibid., pp. 28-34.

[33]Ein schöner Sieg, pp. 127-33.

[34]Ibid., pp. 81-85.

[35]Ibid., p. 80.

[36]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[37]Sozusagen Liebesgeschichten, pp. 83-85.

[38]Ibid., pp. 109-16.

[39]Eisenreich, Die blaue Distel der Romantik (Graz, Wien, Köln: Verlag Styria, 1976), pp. 110-13.

[40]Einladung, deutlich zu leben, p. 60.

III

[1]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 594.

[2]Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach, "Der Muff," Erzählungen: Autobiographische Schriften (München: Winkler Verlag, 1893), pp. 170-79.

[3]Katherine Mansfield, "A Cup of Tea," Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield (London: Constable, 1945), pp. 408-16. Page references for this story are to this edition.

[4]Herbert Eisenreich, "Erlebnis wie bei Dostojewski," Deutschland erzählt: Von Arthur Schnitzler bis Uwe Johnson, ed. Benno von Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1962), pp. 268-79. Page references for this story are to this edition.

[5]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 595.

[6]Stead, p. 18.

[7]Piontek, p. 282.

[8]Eisenreich, Böse schöne Welt, p. 172.

[9]F. Geyrhofer, "Herbert Eisenreich," Neues Forum: Österreichische Monatsblätter für kulturelle Freiheit, 17 (1970), p. 400.

[10]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 596.

[11]See Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers," "Today is Friday," (Eisenreich's dialogue Sebastian resembles Hemingway's "Today is Friday"), "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "The Light of the World," "The Sea Change," and "Homage to Switzerland." See also: Katherine Mansfield's "A Dill Pickle" and "The Young Girl."

[12]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 611.

[13]Ibid., p. 611.

[14]Piontek, p. 282.

[15]Schmidt-Dengler, "'Erlebnis,'" p. 601.

[16]Ibid., p. 600.

[17]Ibid., p. 601.

IV

[1]Eisenreich, Reaktionen, p. 60.

[2]Chaucer borrowed from Boccaccio for some of the Canterbury Tales. Shakespeare borrowed from Holished's Chronicles, Plutarch's Lives, and numerous romances. Brecht's Die Dreigroschenoper is from John Gay's The Beggar's Opera, and his Das Leben Eduards II. von England is from Christopher Marlowe's Edward the Second.

APPENDIX C

"A Cup of Tea" by Katherine Mansfield - reproduced from: The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield (London: Constable, 1945), 408-16.

A CUP OF TEA

ROSEMARY FELL was not exactly beautiful. No, you couldn't have called her beautiful. Pretty? Well, if you took her to pieces. . . . But why be so cruel as to take anyone to pieces? She was young, brilliant, extremely modern, exquisitely well dressed, amazingly well read in the newest of the new books, and her parties were the most delicious mixture of the really important people and . . . artists—quaint creatures, discoveries of hers, some of them too terrifying for words, but others quite presentable and amusing.

Rosemary had been married two years. She had a duck of a boy. No, not Peter—Michael. And her husband absolutely adored her. They were rich, really rich, not just comfortably well off, which is odious and stuffy and sounds like one's grandparents. But if Rosemary wanted to shop she would go to Paris as you and I would go to Bond Street. If she wanted to buy flowers, the car pulled up at that perfect shop in Regent Street, and Rosemary inside the shop just gazed in her dazzled, rather exotic way, and said: "I want those and those and those. Give me four bunches of those. And that jar of roses. Yes, I'll have all the roses in the jar. No, no lilac. I hate lilac. It's got no shape." The attendant bowed and put the lilac out of sight, as though this was only too true; lilac was dreadfully shapeless. "Give me those stumpy little tulips. Those red and white ones." And she was followed to the car by a thin shop-girl staggering under an immense white paper armful that looked like a baby in long clothes. . . .

One winter afternoon she had been buying something in a little antique shop in Curzon Street. It was a shop she liked. For one thing, one usually had it to oneself. And then the

man who kept it was ridiculously fond of serving her. He beamed whenever she came in. He clasped his hands; he was so gratified he could scarcely speak. Flattery, of course. All the same, there was something . . .

"You see, madam," he would explain in his low respectful tones, "I love my things. I would rather not part with them than sell them to someone who does not appreciate them, who has not that fine feeling which is so rare. . . ." And, breathing deeply, he unrolled a tiny square of blue velvet and pressed it on the glass counter with his pale finger-tips.

To-day it was a little box. He had been keeping it for her. He had shown it to nobody as yet. An exquisite little enamel box with a glaze so fine it looked as though it had been baked in cream. On the lid a minute creature stood under a flowery tree, and a more minute creature still had her arms round his neck. Her hat, really no bigger than a geranium petal, hung from a branch; it had green ribbons. And there was a pink cloud like a watchful cherub floating above their heads. Rosemary took her hands out of her long gloves. She always took off her gloves to examine such things. Yes, she liked it very much. She loved it; it was a great duck. She must have it. And, turning the creamy box, opening and shutting it, she couldn't help noticing how charming her hands were against the blue velvet. The shopman, in some dim cavern of his mind, may have dared to think so too. For he took a pencil, leant over the counter, and his pale bloodless fingers crept timidly towards those rosy, flashing ones, as he murmured gently: "If I may venture to point out to madam, the flowers on the little lady's bodice."

"Charming!" Rosemary admired the flowers. But what was the price? For a moment the shopman did not seem to hear. Then a murmur reached her. "Twenty-eight guineas, madam."

"Twenty-eight guineas." Rosemary gave no sign. She laid the little box down; she buttoned her gloves again. Twenty-eight guineas. Even if one is rich . . . She looked vague.

She stared at a plump tea-kettle like a plump hen above the shopman's head, and her voice was dreamy as she answered: "Well, keep it for me—will you? I'll . . ."

But the shopman had already bowed as though keeping it for her was all any human being could ask. He would be willing, of course, to keep it for her for ever.

The discreet door shut with a click. She was outside on the step, gazing at the winter afternoon. Rain was falling, and with the rain it seemed the dark came too, spinning down like ashes. There was a cold bitter taste in the air, and the new-lighted lamps looked sad. Sad were the lights in the houses opposite. Dimly they burned as if regretting something. And people hurried by, hidden under their hateful umbrellas. Rosemary felt a strange pang. She pressed her muff against her breast; she wished she had the little box, too, to cling to. Of course, the car was there. She'd only to cross the pavement. But still she waited. There are moments, horrible moments in life, when one emerges from shelter and looks out, and it's awful. One oughtn't to give way to them. One ought to go home and have an extra-special tea. But at the very instant of thinking that, a young girl, thin, dark, shadowy—where had she come from?—was standing at Rosemary's elbow and a voice like a sigh, almost like a sob, breathed: "Madam, may I speak to you a moment?"

"Speak to me?" Rosemary turned. She saw a little battered creature with enormous eyes, someone quite young, no older than herself, who clutched at her coat-collar with reddened hands, and shivered as though she had just come out of the water.

"M-madam," stammered the voice. "Would you let me have the price of a cup of tea?"

"A cup of tea?" There was something simple, sincere in that voice; it wasn't in the least the voice of a beggar. "Then have you no money at all?" asked Rosemary.

"None, madam," came the answer.

"How extraordinary!" Rosemary peered through the dusk, and the girl gazed back at her. How more than extraordinary! And suddenly it seemed to Rosemary such an adventure. It was like something out of a novel by Dostoevsky, this meeting in the dusk. Supposing she took the girl home? Supposing she did do one of those things she was always reading about or seeing on the stage, what would happen? It would be thrilling. And she heard herself saying afterwards to the amazement of her friends: "I simply took her home with me," as she stepped forward and said to that dim person beside her: "Come home to tea with me."

The girl drew back startled. She even stopped shivering for a moment. Rosemary put out a hand and touched her arm. "I mean it," she said, smiling. And she felt how simple and kind her smile was. "Why won't you? Do. Come home with me now in my car and have tea."

"You—you don't mean it, madam," said the girl, and there was pain in her voice.

"But I do," cried Rosemary. "I want you to. To please me. Come along."

The girl put her fingers to her lips and her eyes devoured Rosemary. "You're—you're not taking me to the police station?" she stammered.

"The police station!" Rosemary laughed out. "Why should I be so cruel? No, I only want to make you warm and to hear—anything you care to tell me."

Hungry people are easily led. The footman held the door of the car open, and a moment later they were skimming through the dusk.

"There!" said Rosemary. She had a feeling of triumph as she slipped her hand through the velvet strap. She could have said, "Now I've got you," as she gazed at the little captive she had netted. But of course she meant it kindly. Oh, more than kindly. She was going to prove to this girl that—wonderful things did happen in life, that—fairy godmothers were real,

that—rich people had hearts, and that women *were* sisters. She turned impulsively, saying: "Don't be frightened. After all, why shouldn't you come back with me? We're both women. If I'm the more fortunate, you ought to expect . . ."

But happily at that moment, for she didn't know how the sentence was going to end, the car stopped. The bell was rung, the door opened, and with a charming, protecting, almost embracing movement, Rosemary drew the other into the hall. Warmth, softness, light, a sweet scent, all those things so familiar to her she never even thought about them, she watched that other receive. It was fascinating. She was like the rich little girl in her nursery with all the cupboards to open, all the boxes to unpack.

"Come, come upstairs," said Rosemary, longing to begin to be generous. "Come up to my room." And, besides, she wanted to spare this poor little thing from being stared at by the servants; she decided as they mounted the stairs she would not even ring for Jeanne, but take off her things by herself. The great thing was to be natural!

And "There!" cried Rosemary again, as they reached her beautiful big bedroom with the curtains drawn, the fire leaping on her wonderful lacquer furniture, her gold cushions and the primrose and blue rugs.

The girl stood just inside the door; she seemed dazed. But Rosemary didn't mind that.

"Come and sit down," she cried, dragging her big chair up to the fire, "in this comfy chair. Come and get warm. You look so dreadfully cold."

"I daren't, madam," said the girl, and she edged backwards.

"Oh, please,"—Rosemary ran forward—"you mustn't be frightened, you mustn't, really. Sit down, and when I've taken off my things we shall go into the next room and have tea and be cosy. Why are you afraid?" And gently she half pushed the thin figure into its deep cradle.

But there was no answer. The girl stayed just as she had been put, with her hands by her sides and her mouth slightly open. To be quite sincere, she looked rather stupid. But Rosemary wouldn't acknowledge it. She leant over her, saying: "Won't you take off your hat? Your pretty hair is all wet. And one is so much more comfortable without a hat, isn't one?"

There was a whisper that sounded like "Very good, madam," and the crushed hat was taken off.

"And let me help you off with your coat, too," said Rosemary.

The girl stood up. But she held on to the chair with one hand and let Rosemary pull. It was quite an effort. The other scarcely helped her at all. She seemed to stagger like a child, and the thought came and went through Rosemary's mind, that if people wanted helping they must respond a little, just a little, otherwise it became very difficult indeed. And what was she to do with the coat now? She left it on the floor, and the hat too. She was just going to take a cigarette off the mantelpiece when the girl said quickly, but so lightly and strangely: "I'm very sorry, madam, but I'm going to faint. I shall go off, madam, if I don't have something."

"Good heavens, how thoughtless I am!" Rosemary rushed to the bell.

"Tea! Tea at once! And some brandy immediately!"

The maid was gone again, but the girl almost cried out: "No, I don't want no brandy. I never drink brandy. It's a cup of tea I want, madam." And she burst into tears.

It was a terrible and fascinating moment. Rosemary knelt beside her chair.

"Don't cry, poor little thing," she said. "Don't cry." And she gave the other her lace handkerchief. She really was touched beyond words. She put her arm round those thin, bird-like shoulders.

Now at last the other forgot to be shy, forgot everything except that they were both women, and gasped out: "I can't

go on no longer like this. I can't bear it. I can't bear it. I shall do away with myself. I can't bear no more."

"You shan't have to. I'll look after you. Don't cry any more. Don't you see what a good thing it was that you met me? We'll have tea and you'll tell me everything. And I shall arrange something. I promise. *Do* stop crying. It's so exhausting. Please!"

The other did stop just in time for Rosemary to get up before the tea came. She had the table placed between them. She plied the poor little creature with everything, all the sandwiches, all the bread and butter, and every time her cup was empty she filled it with tea, cream and sugar. People always said sugar was so nourishing. As for herself she didn't eat; she smoked and looked away tactfully so that the other should not be shy.

And really the effect of that slight meal was marvellous. When the tea-table was carried away a new being, a light, frail creature with tangled hair, dark lips, deep, lighted eyes, lay back in the big chair in a kind of sweet languor, looking at the blaze. Rosemary lit a fresh cigarette; it was time to begin.

"And when did you have your last meal?" she asked softly.

But at that moment the door-handle turned.

"Rosemary, may I come in?" It was Philip.

"Of course."

He came in. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he said, and stopped and stared.

"It's quite all right," said Rosemary, smiling. "This is my friend, Miss—"

"Smith, madam," said the languid figure, who was strangely still and unafraid.

"Smith," said Rosemary. "We are going to have a little talk."

"Oh yes," said Philip. "Quite," and his eye caught sight of the coat and hat on the floor. He came over to the fire and turned his back to it. "It's a beastly afternoon," he said curiously,

still looking at that listless figure, looking at its hands and boots, and then at Rosemary again.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Rosemary enthusiastically. "Vile."

Philip smiled his charming smile. "As a matter of fact," said he, "I wanted you to come into the library for a moment. Would you? Will Miss Smith excuse us?"

The big eyes were raised to him, but Rosemary answered for her: "Of course she will." And they went out of the room together.

"I say," said Philip, when they were alone. "Explain. Who is she? What does it all mean?"

Rosemary, laughing, leaned against the door and said: "I picked her up in Curzon Street. Really. She's a real pick-up. She asked me for the price of a cup of tea, and I brought her home with me."

"But what on earth are you going to do with her?" cried Philip.

"Be nice to her," said Rosemary quickly. "Be frightfully nice to her. Look after her. I don't know how. We haven't talked yet. But show her—treat her—make her feel—"

"My darling girl," said Philip, "you're quite mad, you know. It simply can't be done."

"I knew you'd say that," retorted Rosemary. "Why not? I want to. Isn't that a reason? And besides, one's always reading about these things. I decided—"

"But," said Philip slowly, and he cut the end of a cigar, "she's so astonishingly pretty."

"Pretty?" Rosemary was so surprised that she blushed. "Do you think so? I—I hadn't thought about it."

"Good Lord!" Philip struck a match. "She's absolutely lovely. Look again, my child. I was bowled over when I came into your room just now. However . . . I think you're making a ghastly mistake. Sorry, darling, if I'm crude and all that. But let me know if Miss Smith is going to dine with us in time for me to look up *The Milliner's Gazette*."

"You absurd creature!" said Rosemary, and she went out of the library, but not back to her bedroom. She went to her writing-room and sat down at her desk. Pretty! Absolutely lovely! Bowled over! Her heart beat like a heavy bell. Pretty! Lovely! She drew her cheque-book towards her. But no, cheques would be no use, of course. She opened a drawer and took out five pound notes, looked at them, put two back, and holding the three squeezed in her hand, she went back to her bedroom.

Half an hour later Philip was still in the library, when Rosemary came in.

"I only wanted to tell you," said she, and she leaned against the door again and looked at him with her dazzled exotic gaze, "Miss Smith won't dine with us to-night."

Philip put down the paper. "Oh, what's happened? Previous engagement?"

Rosemary came over and sat down on his knee. "She insisted on going," said she, "so I gave the poor little thing a present of money. I couldn't keep her against her will, could I?" she added softly.

Rosemary had just done her hair, darkened her eyes a little, and put on her pearls. She put up her hands and touched Philip's cheeks.

"Do you like me?" said she, and her tone, sweet, husky, troubled him.

"I like you awfully," he said, and he held her tighter. "Kiss me."

There was a pause.

Then Rosemary said dreamily: "I saw a fascinating little box to-day. It cost twenty-eight guineas. May I have it?"

Philip jumped her on his knee. "You may, little wasteful one," said he.

But that was not really what Rosemary wanted to say.

"Philip," she whispered, and she pressed his head against her bosom, "am I *pretty*?"

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