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The Sleepwalkers

HERMANN BROCH

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The
SLEEPWALKERS

Hermann Broch (1886–1951) was born in Vienna, where he trained as an engineer and studied philosophy and mathematics. He gradually increased his involvement in the intellectual life of Vienna, becoming acquainted with Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sigmund Freud, and Robert Musil, among others. *The Sleepwalkers* was his first major work. In 1938, he was imprisoned as a subversive by the Nazis, but was freed and fled to the United States. In the years before his death, he was researching mass psychology at Yale University. *The Death of Virgil* originally appeared in 1945; his last major novel, *The Guiltless*, was published in 1950.



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BOOKS BY HERMANN BROCH

The Spell

The Guiltless

The Death of Virgil

The Sleepwalkers

HERMANN BROCH

The
SLEEPWALKERS
a trilogy

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY WILLA AND EDWIN MUIR

VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL
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Part One
THE ROMANTIC
(1888)

I

IN the year 1888 Herr von Pasenow was seventy, and there were people who felt an extraordinary and inexplicable repulsion when they saw him coming towards them in the streets of Berlin, indeed, who in their dislike of him actually maintained that he must be an evil old man. Small, but well made, neither a shrivelled ancient nor a pot-belly, he was extraordinarily well proportioned, and the top-hat which he always sported in Berlin did not look in the least ridiculous on him. He wore Kaiser Wilhelm I. whiskers, but cut somewhat shorter, and on his cheeks there was none of that white fluff which gave the Emperor his affable appearance; even his hair, which had scarcely thinned yet, showed no more than a few white strands; in spite of his seventy years it had kept its youthful fairness, a reddish blond that reminded one of rotting straw and really did not suit an old man, for whom one would have liked to imagine a more venerable covering. But Herr von Pasenow was accustomed to the colour of his hair, nor in his judgment did his monocle look in the least too youthful. When he gazed in the mirror he recognized there the face that had returned his gaze fifty years before. Yet though Herr von Pasenow was not displeased with himself, there were people whom the looks of this old man filled with discomfort, and who could not comprehend how any woman could ever have looked upon him or embraced him with desire in her eyes; and at most they would allow him only the Polish maids on his estate, and held that even these he must have got round by that slightly hysterical and yet arrogant aggressiveness which is often characteristic of small men. Whether this was true or not, it was the belief of his two sons, and it goes without saying that he did not share it. For, after all, sons' thoughts are often coloured by prejudice, and it would have been easy to accuse his sons of injustice and bias in spite of the uncomfortable feeling which the sight of Herr von Pasenow aroused, a really remarkable feeling of discomfort that actually increased when he had passed by and one chanced to look after him. Perhaps that was due to the fact that his back view made one doubtful of his age, for his movements were neither like those of an old man, nor like those of a youth, nor like those of a man in the prime of life. And as doubt gives rise to discomfort, it is possible that some chance stroller might have resented as undignified the man's style of progression, and if he should have gone on to characterize it as overweening and vulgar, as feebly rakish and swaggering, one would not have been surprised. Such things, of course, are a matter of temperament: yet one can quite well imagine some young man, blinded with hatred, hurrying back to thrust his cane between the legs of any man who walked in that way, so as to bring him down by hook or by crook and break his legs and put an end for ever to such a style of walking. Herr von Pasenow, however, went straight on with very quick steps; he held his head erect as small men generally do; and as he held himself very erect too, his little belly

was stuck slightly forward, one might almost have said that he carried it in front of him; yes, that he was carrying his whole person somewhere or other, belly and all, a hateful gift which nobody wanted. Yet as a simile really accounts for nothing, those ill opinions would have remained without solid foundation, and perhaps one might even have grown ashamed of them until one noticed the walking-stick accompanying his legs. The stick moved to a regular rhythm, rose almost to the height of his knees, returned with a little sharp impact to the ground and rose again, and the feet went on beside it. And these too rose higher than feet should do, the toes shot out a little too far as if they were presenting his shoe-soles in contempt to approaching pedestrians, and the heels were deposited again with a little sharp impact on the pavement. So the two legs and the walking-stick went on together, suggesting the involuntary fancy that this man, had he come to the world as a horse, would have been a pacer; but the horrible and disgusting thing was that he was a three-legged pacer, a tripod that had set itself in motion. And it was horrible, too, to realize that the three-legged purposiveness of the man's walk must be as deceptive as its undeviating rapidity: that it was directed towards nothing at all! For nobody who had a serious end in view could walk like that, and if for a moment one involuntarily thought of a profiteer inexorably conveying himself to some poor man's house to collect a debt, one saw at once how inadequate and prosaic was such a notion, and one was terrified by the intuition that it was a devil's walk, like a dog hobbling on three legs—a rectilinear zigzag ... enough: for anyone who analysed Herr von Pasenow's walk with loving hate might have discovered all this and more. Most people, after all, lend themselves to such experiments. There is always something that will fit. And if Herr von Pasenow did not really lead a busy life, but on the contrary expended ample time in fulfilling the decorative and other obligations which a quietly secure income brings with it, yet—and that too expressed his character—he was always bustling, and mere sauntering was far from his nature. Besides, visiting Berlin but twice a year, he had abundance to do when he was there. Just now he was on his way to his younger son, Lieutenant Joachim von Pasenow.

Whenever Joachim von Pasenow met his father, memories of his boyhood thronged up in him as was natural enough: but the most vivid of these were always the events preceding his entrance to the cadet school in Culm. True, it was only fragments of the past that fleetingly emerged, and important and trivial things flowed chaotically through one another. So perhaps it may seem idle and superfluous to mention Jan, the steward, whose image, though he was a quite secondary figure, obtruded itself in front of all the others. But this may have been because Jan was not really a man, but a beard. For hours one could gaze at him and meditate whether, behind that dishevelled landscape covered with impenetrable yet soft undergrowth, a human creature was concealed. Even when Jan spoke—but he did not speak much—one could not be certain of this, for his words took form behind his beard as behind a

curtain, and it might as easily have been another who uttered them. But most exciting of all was when Jan yawned; for then the hairy superficies gaped at a pre-ordained point, substantiating the fact that this was also the place where Jan conveyed food into himself. When Joachim had run to him to tell him of his approaching entrance into the cadet school, Jan was having his dinner; and he sat there cutting bread into chunks and silently listening. At last he said: "Well, is the young master glad?" And then Joachim became aware that he was not in the least glad; he actually felt he wanted to cry; but as there was no immediate pretext for that, he only nodded and said that he was glad.

Then there was the Iron Cross that hung in a glass-covered frame in the big drawing-room. It had belonged to a Pasenow who, in the year 1813, had held a high position in the army. Seeing that it always hung on the wall, the great fuss that was made when Uncle Bernhard received one too was somewhat puzzling. Joachim was still ashamed, now in 1888, that he had ever been so stupid. But perhaps he had been embittered merely because they had tried to make the cadet school more palatable to him by dangling the Iron Cross before him. In any case his brother Helmuth would have been a more suitable subject for the cadet school, and in spite of the years that had passed Joachim still considered it a ridiculous arrangement that the elder son had to take to the land and the younger to the army. The Iron Cross had left him quite indifferent, but Helmuth had been filled with wild enthusiasm when Uncle Bernhard had taken part in the storming of Kissingen with his division, the Goeben. In any case he wasn't even a real uncle, but only a cousin of their father's.

His mother was taller than his father, and everything on the home farm was managed by her. Strange how little attention Helmuth and he had paid to her; they had been like their father in that. They had ignored her stubborn and lackadaisical: "Don't do that," and were only annoyed when she added: "Look out, or your father will catch you." And they weren't in the least daunted when she employed her final threat: "Well, I'm really going to tell your father this time," and scarcely minded even when she fulfilled the threat; for then their father only threw them an angry look and went on his way with his stiff, purposive stride. It was a just punishment on their mother for trying to side with the common enemy.

At that time the predecessor of the present pastor was still in office. He had yellowish white side-whiskers which were hardly distinguishable from the hue of his skin, and when he came to dinner on festival days he used to compare their mother with Empress Luise in the midst of her brood of children. That had been a little ludicrous, but it had made one proud all the same. Then the pastor had acquired yet another habit, that of laying his hand on Joachim's head and calling him "young warrior"; for all of them, even the Polish maids in the kitchen, were already talking about the cadet school in Culm. Nevertheless Joachim was still waiting at that time for the final decision. At table one day his mother had said that she didn't see the necessity of sending Joachim away; he could quite well enter later as an ensign; that was how it

had invariably been done, and the custom had always been kept. But Uncle Bernhard replied that the new army required capable men and that in Culm a proper lad would soon find his place. Joachim's father had remained disagreeably silent—as always when his wife said anything, for he never listened to her. Except, indeed, on her birthday, when he clinked glasses with her, and then he borrowed the pastor's comparison and called her his Empress Luise. Perhaps his mother was really against his being sent to Culm, but one could put no dependence on her: she always finished by taking sides with his father.

His mother was very punctual. In the byre at milking time, and in the hen-house when the eggs were being collected she was never absent; in the morning one could always find her in the kitchen, and in the afternoon in the laundry, where she counted the stiff starched linen along with the maids. It was on one of these occasions that he had first heard the news. He had been with his mother in the byre, his nostrils were full of the heavy odour of the stalls, then they stepped out into the cold wintry air and saw Uncle Bernhard coming towards them across the yard. Uncle Bernhard still carried a stick; for after being wounded one was allowed to carry a stick, all convalescents carried sticks even when they had ceased to limp badly. His mother had remained standing, and Joachim had gripped Uncle Bernhard's stick and held it fast. Even to-day he still clearly remembered the ivory crook carved with a coat of arms. Uncle Bernhard said: "Congratulate me, cousin; I've just been made a major." Joachim glanced up at the Major: he was even taller than Joachim's mother and had drawn himself up with a little jerk, proudly yet as if at the word of command, and looked still more warrior-like and straight than usual; and perhaps he had actually grown taller; in any case he was a better match for her than Joachim's father. He had a short beard, but one could see his mouth. Joachim wondered whether it was a great honour to hold a major's stick, and then decided to be slightly proud of it. "Yes," Uncle Bernhard went on, "but now it will mean an end of these lovely days at Stolpin." Joachim's mother replied that it was both good news and bad news, and this was a complicated response which he could not quite understand. They were standing in the snow; his mother had on her brown fur coat which was as soft as herself, and under her fur cap her fair hair escaped. Joachim was always glad when he remembered that he had the same fair hair as his mother, for it meant that he too would become taller than his father, perhaps as tall as Uncle Bernhard; and when Uncle Bernhard nodded to him now, saying, "We'll soon be comrades in the King's uniform," for a moment he felt pleased at the thought. But as his mother only sighed and made no objection, submitting herself just as if she were standing before his father, he let go the stick and ran away to Jan.

He could not discuss the matter with Helmuth; for Helmuth envied him and talked like the grown-ups, who all said that a future soldier should be proud and happy. Jan was the only one who was neither a hypocrite nor a deceiver; he had only asked if the young master was glad, and had not behaved as if he

believed it. Of course Helmuth and the others probably meant well and perhaps only wanted to comfort him. Joachim had never got over the fact that at that time he had been secretly convinced of Helmuth's treachery and hypocrisy; for though he had tried to make it good immediately by presenting all his toys to Helmuth, yet he could not have taken them with him into the cadet school, and so it was not a real expiation. He had given Helmuth also his half of the pony which the two boys shared in common, so that Helmuth possessed a whole horse to himself. These weeks had been pregnant with trouble, and yet good; never, before or afterwards, had he been so intimate with his brother. Then, it is true, came the accident with the pony. For the time being Helmuth had renounced his new rights, and Joachim was given full control of it. But of course that did not mean very much, for in these weeks the ground had been soft and heavy, and there was a standing prohibition against riding in the fields when the ground was in that state. But Joachim felt the superior right of one who would soon be going away, and as Helmuth was agreeable, rode out into the fields on the pretext of giving the pony exercise. He had only started on a quite short canter when the accident happened; the front leg of the pony was caught in a deep hole; it fell and could not get up again. Helmuth came running, and after him the coachman. The pony lay with its dishevelled head in the mire, its tongue hanging sideways out of its mouth. Joachim could still see Helmuth and himself kneeling there and stroking the pony's head, but he could not remember any longer how they had got home and only knew that he had found himself in the kitchen, which had suddenly become very still, and that everybody was staring at him as if he had committed a crime. Then he had heard his mother's voice: "Your father must be told." And then he was suddenly in his father's study, and it seemed to him that the punishment which his mother had menaced him with so often in that hateful sentence, was now, after being stored up and accumulated, about to fall on his head. But nothing happened. His father only kept on walking up and down the room in silence, and Joachim tried to stand straight, gazing at the antlers on the wall. Still nothing happened, and his eyes began to wander and remained fixed on the bluish sand in the frilled paper that covered the polished brown hexagonal spittoon beside the stove. He had almost forgotten why he was there; but the room seemed vaster than ever and there was an icy weight on his chest. Finally his father stuck the monocle into his eye: "It's high time that you were out of the house"; and then Joachim knew that they had all been duping him, even Helmuth himself, and at that moment he was glad that the pony had broken its leg; for his mother, too, had been telling tales on him so as to get him out of the house. Then he could see that his father was taking his pistol out of its case. And then he vomited. Next day he learned from the doctor that he was suffering from concussion, and that made him proud. Helmuth sat on his bed, and although Joachim knew that the pony had been shot by his father, neither of them said a word about it, and these were very happy days, strangely secure and remote from the lives of all the grown-ups. Nevertheless

they came to an end, and after a delay of a few weeks he was deposited at the cadet school in Culm. Yet when he stood there before his narrow bed, so distant and remote from his sick-bed at Stolpin, it almost seemed to him that he had brought the remoteness with him, and at the beginning that made his new surroundings endurable.

Naturally there were a great number of things belonging to this time that he had forgotten, yet a disturbing residue remained, and in his dreams he sometimes imagined that he was speaking Polish. When he was made lieutenant he presented Helmuth with a horse which he had himself ridden for a long time. Yet he could not free himself from the feeling that he was still slightly in his brother's debt, and sometimes even thought of Helmuth as an importunate creditor. But that was all nonsense, and he very seldom thought of it. It was only when his father came to Berlin that those ideas awakened again, and when he asked after his mother and Helmuth he never forgot to inquire after the health of the nag as well.

Now that Joachim von Pasenow had put on his civilian frock-coat and between the two corners of his peaked stiff collar his chin was enjoying unaccustomed freedom, now that he had fixed on his curly-brimmed top-hat and picked up a walking-stick with a pointed ivory crook handle, now that he was on the way to the hotel to take out his father for the obligatory evening's entertainment, suddenly Eduard von Bertrand's image rose up before him, and he felt glad his civilian clothes did not sit on him with by any means the same inevitability as on that gentleman, whom in secret he sometimes thought of as a traitor. Unfortunately it was only to be expected and feared that he would meet Bertrand in the fashionable resorts he would have to visit with his father that evening, and already during the performance in the Winter Garden he was keeping an eye open for him and seriously considering the question whether he could introduce such a man to his father.

The problem still occupied him as they were being driven in a droshky through Friedrichstrasse to the Jäger Casino. They sat stiffly and silently, with their sticks between their knees, on the tattered black-leather seats, and when a chance girl on her beat shouted something to them Joachim stared straight in front, while his father, his monocle rigidly fixed, muttered: "Idiotic." Yes, since Herr von Pasenow had first come to Berlin many things had changed, and even if one accepted it, yet one could not close one's eyes to the fact that the innovating policy of the founder of the Reich had produced some very curious fruits. Herr von Pasenow said, as he was accustomed to say every year: "Paris itself isn't any worse than this," and when they stopped in front of the Jäger Casino the row of flaring gas-lamps before it, drawing the attention of passers-by to the entrance, excited his disapproval.

A narrow wooden stair led up to the first floor where the dancing-halls were, and Herr von Pasenow climbed it with the bustling, undeviating air which was characteristic of him. A black-haired girl was descending. She squeezed herself into a corner of the landing to let the visitors pass; and as she

could not help smiling, it seemed, at the old gentleman's fussiness, Joachim made a somewhat embarrassed and deprecatory gesture. And once more he felt a compulsion to picture Bertrand either as this girl's lover, or as her bully, or as something else equally fantastic; and no sooner was he in the dancing-hall than he looked searchingly around for him. But of course Bertrand was not there: on the contrary Joachim found two officers from his own regiment, and now he remembered for the first time that it had been himself who had incited them to come to the casino, so that he might not be left alone with his father, or with his father and Bertrand.

In acknowledgment of his age and position Herr von Pasenow was greeted with a slight, stiff bow and a click of the heels, as if he were a military superior, and it was indeed with the air of a commanding general that he inquired if the gentlemen were enjoying themselves: he would feel honoured if they would drink a glass of champagne with him; whereupon the gentlemen made known their agreement by clicking their heels again. A new bottle of champagne was brought. They all sat stiffly and dumbly in their chairs, drank to each other in silence, and regarded the hall, the white-and-gilt decorations, the gas flames that hissed, surrounded by tobacco smoke, on the branches of the great circular chandelier, and stared at the dancers who were revolving in the middle of the floor. At last Herr von Pasenow said: "Well, gentlemen, I hope that you aren't refraining from the company of the fair sex on my account." Bows and smiles. "Some pretty girls here too. As I was coming upstairs I met a very promising piece, black hair, and with eyes that you young fellows couldn't remain indifferent to." Joachim was so ashamed that he could have throttled the old man to suppress such unseemly words, but already one of his comrades was replying that it must have been Ruzena, really an unusually pretty girl, and one couldn't deny her a certain elegance either; anyhow, most of the ladies here were better than might be expected, for the management were very strict in selecting their girls and laid a great deal of importance on the maintenance of a refined tone. Meanwhile Ruzena had returned to the dancing-hall; she had taken the arm of a fair girl, and as they sauntered past the tables and boxes with their high coiffures and tight-laced figures they actually produced an elegant impression. As they were passing Herr von Pasenow's table they were asked jestingly whether Ruzena's ears had not been tingling, and Herr von Pasenow added that, to judge from her name, he must be addressing a fair Pole, consequently almost a countrywoman of his. No, she was not Polish, said Ruzena, but Bohemian, or as people said in this country, Czech; but Bohemian was more correct, for the proper name of her country was Bohemia. "All the better," said Herr von Pasenow, "the Poles are no good ... unreliable.... Well, it doesn't matter."

Meanwhile the two girls had sat down, and Ruzena began to talk in a deep voice, laughing at herself, for she had not yet learned to speak German correctly. Joachim was annoyed at his father for conjuring up the memory of the Polish maids, but was forced himself to think of one of the harvest workers who, when he was a little boy, had lifted him up on to the wagon

with the sheaves. Yet though in her hard, staccato pronunciation she made hay of the German language, still she was a young lady, stiffly corseted, who lifted her champagne-glass to her lips with a proper air, and so was not in the least like a Polish harvest worker; whether the talk about his father and the maids were true or not. Joachim had nothing to do with that, but this gentle girl wasn't to be treated by the old man in the way he was probably accustomed to. All the same Joachim was unable to envisage the life of a Bohemian girl as any different from that of a Polish one—indeed even among German civilians it was difficult to divine the individual behind the puppet—and when he tried to imagine Ruzena as coming out of a good home, with a good matronly mother and a decent suitor with gloves on, it did not fit her; and he could not get rid of the feeling that in Bohemia life must be wild and low, as among the Tartars. He was sorry for Ruzena, although she reminded him somewhat of a humble little beast of prey in whose throat a dark cry is strangled, dark as the Bohemian forests, and he longed to know whether one could talk to her as one talked to a lady; for all this was so terrifying and yet seductive, and in a way justified his father and his father's lewd intentions. He was afraid that Ruzena, too, would see through these, and he sought for an answer in her face; she noticed it and smiled to him; yet she let the old man fondle her hand which was hanging languidly over the edge of the table, and the old man did it quite openly, and tried at the same time to summon up his scraps of Polish to erect a lingual hedge round the girl and himself. Of course it was wrong of her to allow him such liberties, and when at Stolpin they maintained that Polish maids were quite unreliable perhaps they were right. Yet perhaps she was only weak, and one's honour demanded that she should be protected from the old man's advances. But that would be the duty of her lover; if Bertrand possessed the slightest vestige of chivalry he was in duty bound to appear now to put everything in order with a word. And suddenly Joachim began to talk about Bertrand to his fellow-officers: hadn't they heard any word of Bertrand lately and of what he was doing; yes, a curiously reserved fellow, Eduard von Bertrand. But his comrades, who had already drunk a good deal of champagne, gave him confused answers and were beyond being surprised at anything, even at the pertinacity with which Joachim harped on the theme of Bertrand; and cunningly and persistently as he brought out the name in a loud and distinct voice, not even the girls twitched an eyelash, and the suspicion mounted within him that Bertrand might have sunk so low as to come here under an assumed name; and so he turned directly to Ruzena and asked whether she didn't know von Bertrand—until the old man, keen of hearing, and officious as ever in spite of the champagne, asked why Joachim was so hot on the track of this von Bertrand: "You're as eager about him as if he were hidden somewhere in the place." Joachim reddened and denied it, but the old man had been set going: yes, he had known the father well, old Colonel von Bertrand. He had departed this life, very likely it was this Eduard who had brought him to his grave. When his waster of a son had chucked the army he had taken it, people said, very

much to heart; nobody knew why, or whether there mightn't have been something shady behind it. Joachim became indignant. "Pardon me, but that's only empty gossip—and the last thing that Bertrand can be called is a waster!" "Gently, gently," replied the old man, turning again to Ruzena's hand, on which he now pressed a long kiss; Ruzena calmly permitted it and regarded Joachim, whose soft fair hair reminded her of the children at the village school in Bohemia. "I not will flatter you," she said in her staccato voice to the old man, "but nice hair has your son." Then she seized the head of her friend, held it pressed to Joachim's, and was delighted to see that the colour of the hair was the same. "Would be beautiful pair," she declared to the two heads, and ran her hands through their hair. The other girl shrieked, because her coiffure was being disarranged; Joachim felt a soft hand touching the back of his head, he had a slight sensation of dizziness and threw his head back as if he wished to catch the hand between his neck and his collar and force it to remain there; but then the hand slipped of its own accord down to the back of his neck, and stroked it quickly and timorously, and was gone. "Gently, gently!" he heard his father's dry voice again, and then he noticed that the old man had taken out his pocket-book, had drawn out two large notes, and was on the point of pressing them on the two girls. Yes, that was just how he used to throw marks to the harvest girls when he was in a good mood, and though Joachim wanted to intervene now he could not prevent the fifty-mark note from being pressed into Ruzena's hand, nor her from sticking it gaily into her pocket. "Thanks, papa," she said, then she bettered her words, "papa-in-law," and winked at Joachim. Joachim was pale with rage: the old man would buy a girl for him for fifty marks, would he? Quick of hearing, the old man caught Ruzena's quip and seized on it: "So! It seems to me that my young rascal has caught your fancy.... Well, you have my blessing...." Swine, thought Joachim. But now the old man was in full sail: "Ruzena, my sweet child, to-morrow I'll call on you and fix up the match in proper style, all tip-top. What shall I bring you as a wedding gift? ... But you must tell me the address of your castle...." Joachim looked away like one who at an execution does not wish to see the axe falling, but Ruzena suddenly stiffened, her eyes went blind, her lips quivered, she pushed away a hand that was stretched out in help or concern, and ran away to cry herself out beside the woman who attended to the lavatory.

"Well, well," said Herr von Pasenow, "but it must be quite late! I'm afraid we must be going, gentlemen." In the droshky father and son sat side by side, stiff and hostile, their sticks between their knees. At last the old man said: "Well, she accepted the fifty marks, all the same. And then she took to her heels." What a wretch, thought Joachim.

On the theme of the military uniform Bertrand could have supplied some such theory as this:

Once upon a time it was the Church alone that was exalted as judge over mankind, and every layman knew that he was a sinner. Nowadays it is the

layman who has to judge his fellow-sinner if all values are not to fall into anarchy, and instead of weeping with him, brother must say to brother: "You have done wrong." And as once it was only the garments of the priest that marked a man off from his fellows as something higher, some hint of the layman peeping through even the uniform and the robe of office, so, when the great intolerance of faith was lost, the secular robe of office had to supplant the sacred one, and society had to separate itself into secular hierarchies with secular uniforms and invest these with the absolute authority of a creed. And because, when the secular exalts itself as the absolute, the result is always romanticism, so the real and characteristic romanticism of that age was the cult of the uniform, which implied, as it were, a superterrestrial and supertemporal idea of uniform, an idea which did not really exist and yet was so powerful that it took hold of men far more completely than any secular vocation could, a non-existent and yet so potent idea that it transformed the man in uniform into a property of his uniform, and never into a professional man in the civilian sense; and this perhaps simply because the man who wears the uniform is content to feel that he is fulfilling the most essential function of his age and therefore guaranteeing the security of his own life.

This is what Bertrand might have said; but though it is certain that not every wearer of uniform is conscious of such things, yet it may be maintained that everyone who has worn a uniform for many years finds in it a better organization of life than the man who merely exchanges one civilian suit in the evening for another civilian suit during the day. True, the soldier has no real need to think deeply of these things, for a generic uniform provides its wearer with a definitive line of demarcation between his person and the world; it is like a hard casing against which one's personality and the world beat sharply and distinctly and are differentiated from each other; for it is the uniform's true function to manifest and ordain order in the world, to arrest the confusion and flux of life, just as it conceals whatever in the human body is soft and flowing, covering up the soldier's underclothes and skin, and decreeing that sentries on guard should wear white gloves. So when in the morning a man has fastened up his uniform to the last button, he acquires a second and thicker hide, and feels that he has returned to his more essential and steadfast being. Closed up in his hard casing, braced in with straps and belts, he begins to forget his own undergarments, and the uncertainty of life, yes, life itself, recedes to a distance. Then, after he has finished by pulling down his tunic so that it stretches smooth and without a crease over chest and back,—then even the child whom he sincerely loves, and the woman in whose embrace he begot that child, recede into such a civilian remoteness that the mouths which they present to him in farewell are almost strange to him, and his home becomes something foreign, which in his uniform he dare not enter. Should he next proceed in his uniform to the barracks or to his office, it must not be thought pride that makes him ignore men otherwise clothed; it is simply that he can no longer comprehend that such alien and barbarous raiment can clothe anything even faintly resembling actual humanity as he

feels it in himself. Yet this does not mean that the man in uniform has become blind, nor that he is filled with blind prejudices, as is commonly assumed; he remains all the time a man like you and me, dreams of food and love, even reads his newspaper at breakfast; but he is no longer tied to things, and as they scarcely concern him any longer he is able to divide them into the good and the bad, for on intolerance and lack of understanding the security of life is based.

Whenever Joachim von Pasenow was compelled to put on civilian clothes Eduard von Bertrand came into his mind, and he was always glad that mufti did not sit on him with the same assurance as on that man; yet he was very eager to know what Bertrand's views were on the question of uniform. For Eduard von Bertrand had of course every reason to reflect on the problem, seeing that he had laid aside the uniform once for all and decided for the clothing of a civilian. That had been astonishing enough. He had been passed out of the cadet school in Culm two years before Pasenow, and while there had acted exactly like the others; had like the others worn white trousers in summer, had eaten at the same table, had passed his examinations like the others; and yet when he became a second lieutenant the incomprehensible thing happened: without ostensible cause he quitted the service and vanished into a kind of life quite foreign to him—vanished into the labyrinth of the city, as people called it, into a labyrinth from which he emerged only now and then. If one met him in the street one was always a little uncertain whether to greet him or not, feeling that he was a traitor who had carried over to another world and there offered up something which had been a common possession, and that in confronting him one was exposed and naked, while he himself gave away nothing about his motives and his life, and maintained always the same equable friendly reserve. But perhaps the disturbing factor lay simply in Bertrand's civilian clothes, in the fact that his white stiff shirt-front was so exposed that one really had to feel ashamed for him. Besides, Bertrand himself had once declared in Culm that no genuine soldier would ever allow his shirt-cuffs to appear below his sleeves, because everything connected with being born, sleeping, loving and dying—in short, everything civilian—was a matter of underclothing; and even if such paradoxes had always been characteristic of Bertrand, no less than the airy gesture with which he was accustomed, lazily and disdainfully, to disavow them afterwards, yet obviously he must have been troubled at that time by the problem of the uniform. And about the underclothing and the shirt-cuffs he may have been partly right: for instance when one reflected—and Bertrand always awakened such unpleasant reflections—that all men, civilians and Joachim's father not excepted, wore their shirts stuck into their trousers. For that reason Joachim actually did not like to encounter anyone in the men's barracks with his tunic open; there was something indecent about it, which gave one a vague inkling of the justification for the regulation that when visiting certain resorts and for other erotic purposes mufti must be worn; and more, which made it appear almost like an offence against the regulations

that such beings as married officers and married non-commissioned officers should exist. When the married sergeant-major reported for morning service and opened two buttons of his tunic so as to draw out of the opening, which laid bare his checked shirt, his huge red-leather book, Joachim generally ran his fingers over his own tunic buttons, and felt secure only when he had certified that they were all in order. He could almost have wished that the uniform was a direct emanation of his skin, and often he thought to himself that that was the real function of a uniform, and wished at least that his underclothes could by a distinctive pattern be made a component part of the uniform. For it was uncanny to think that every soldier carried about with him under his tunic the anarchical passions common to all men. Perhaps the world would have gone off the rails altogether had not someone at the last moment invented stiff shirt-fronts for the civilians, thus transforming the shirt into a white board and making it quite unrecognizable as underclothing. Joachim recalled his astonishment as a child, when, looking at the portrait of his grandfather, he had recognized that that gentleman did not wear a stiff shirt, but a lace jabot. But then in his time men had had a deeper and more intimate faith, and did not need to seek any further bulwark against anarchy. Of course all these notions were rather silly and obviously only an overflow from the kind of things Bertrand said, which had neither rhyme nor reason; Pasenow was almost ashamed of thinking of them in front of the sergeant-major, and when they surged up he thrust them aside and with a jerk resumed his stiff, official bearing.

But even if he thrust aside those thoughts as foolish, and accepted the uniform as a decree of nature, there was more in all this than a mere question of attire, more than a something which gave his life style at least, if not content. Often he fancied that by saying "Comrades in the King's uniform" he could put an end to the whole question, and to Bertrand too, although in doing so he was far from desiring to express any extraordinary reverence for the King's uniform or to indulge an overweening vanity; he was rather concerned that his elegance of figure should neither exceed nor fall short of a definitely demarcated and prescribed correctness, and he had actually been a little flattered when once some ladies expressed the opinion, which was well grounded, that the straight, wooden cut of the uniform and the glaring colours of the bright cloth went but indifferently with his face, and that the brown-velvet jacket and flowing necktie of an artist would suit him far better. The fact that in spite of this the uniform meant much more to him may be explained by the obstinacy which he inherited from his mother, who always stuck immovably to a custom once formed. And sometimes it seemed that for him there could never be any other attire, although he was still full of resentment at his mother for submitting herself without a struggle to Uncle Bernhard's opinions. And now, of course, it had all been decided, and if one has been accustomed to wear a uniform from one's tenth year, sooner or later it grows into one's flesh like the shirt of Nessus, and no one, and least of all Joachim von Pasenow, will be able to specify then where the frontier between

his self and his uniform lies. For even if his military vocation had not grown into him, as he into it, his uniform would still have been the symbol for many things; in the course of years he had fattened and rounded it with so many ideas that, securely enclosed in it, he could no longer live without it; enclosed and cut off from the world and the house of his father in such security and peace that he could scarce distinguish, scarce notice, that his uniform left him only a thin strip of personal and human freedom no broader than the narrow strip of starched cuff which was all that an officer was allowed to show. He did not like to put on mufti, and he was glad that his uniform protected him from visits to questionable resorts, where he pictured the civilian Bertrand in the company of loose women. For often he was overcome with the uncanny fear that he too might slip into the same inexplicable rut as Bertrand. And that also was why he bore a grudge against his father for his having to accompany him, and in mufti at that, on the obligatory round of the Berlin night haunts with which ended, in accordance with tradition, the old man's visits to the capital of the Empire.

When next day Joachim escorted his father to the train the latter said: "Well, as soon as you're a captain, and that won't be long now, we'll have to think of finding a wife for you. How about Elisabeth? The Baddensens have a nice little property over there at Lestow, and it will all go to the girl some day." Joachim said nothing. Yesterday he almost bought me a girl for fifty marks, he thought, and to-day he is trying to arrange a legitimate engagement. Or had the old man himself some hankering after Elisabeth, as after the other girl, whose fingers Joachim could still feel on the back of his neck? But it was incredible to him that anyone at all should dare to think of Elisabeth with sensual desire, and still more incredible that any man should want to incite his son to violate a saint because he was unable to do it himself. Joachim almost felt like asking his father's pardon for the monstrous suspicion; but really the old man was capable of anything. Yes, it was one's duty to protect all the women in the world from this old man, Joachim thought as they were walking along the platform, and while he saluted the departing train he was still thinking it. But when the train had disappeared his thoughts returned to Ruzena.

And in the evening he was still thinking of Ruzena. There are evenings in spring when the twilight lasts far longer than the astronomically prescribed period. Then a thin smoky mist sinks over the city and gives it the subdued suspense of evenings preceding a holiday. And at the same time it is as if this subdued, pale grey mist had netted so much light that brighter strands remain in it even when it has become quite black and velvety. So these twilights last very long, so long that the proprietors of shops forget to close them; they stand gossiping with their acquaintances before the doors, until a passing policeman smilingly draws their attention to the fact that they are exceeding the regulation closing-time. And even then a beam of light shines from many a shop, for in the back room the family are sitting at their supper; they have