

Epitaph
for Pinnau

No tree stands in front of Kant's house. Is the street really so narrow? Why is it that one never comes past the two-storied bleak box without brushing sleeves and shoulders against the façade-wall? And taking along some more of the coating? One day, that's for certain, the bricks that are still covered today will peep out: a bright red, which will lack the color green, for no tree stands in front of Kant's house. Behind the house and round the side of the one gable lies a little garden. That's too little. But stuck on to the house, there is a shack for the chickens. So we have at least these weirdly argumentative bird voices, which converse or don't — one never knows, one listens, and when the coppersmith down there at Castle Mountain hammers about a bit and the bell from the castle tower clap-

pers out the wrong hour, or the right one, only the clattering of hurriedly rapped canes is still missing — canes with iron tips and silver pommels, black or dark brown canes — a concert, that suffices to describe the English city of London, as it lies sprawling there along the River Thames, or a conflagration in Stockholm, that stops still before Swedenborg's house with a bow.

But now the impatient canes approach and grow too loud. These canes are a nuisance. For someone who wanted to listen to the concert. Come along, eat up, my little chickadees, says the old woman and goes back into the kitchen. There stands Kant in brown frock coat and shakes pepper from a yellow jar over the lovely food. And the canes have arrived at the house door. Sit down, each with a little bang, on the stone slab in front of the threshold, each a finishing point at the end of a hurried march — from the Junker Garden, from the Stone Street, from the Customs Street. Punctuality, Gentlemen.

Now the canes raised and into the house. Stout Scheffner says loudly up to the walls: Blessed time of day, and Lampe, the servant, says: May I, Mr. War Councillor, and relieves him of his cape. And Professor Schulz shuffles along, hangs his coat over his shoulder and pops his hat on his head, and Lampe terrified says: But of course, Mr. Royal Chap-

lain. That's the one I should have taken first, it dawns on him, while the elegant Motherby is already impatiently tapping him on the back with the little cane, gently of course: We were asked here after all! and throws his coat across the bannister where, by the way, the Royal bookseller Kanter's things are already lying. There is general motion in the vestibule, and Borowski and Vasianski too, the one tall and thin, the other short and round, Scheffner broadest in the middle, Schulz more and more massive down towards the bottom, skeins, rhombuses, cones, the dummy Motherby comely among them. Well then up the stairs. Kanter is already standing there in the open door, has given the dinner table a quick look over — everything set right — looks thus reassured down over the stairs, discovers Hamann's coat tails just in time in the kitchen doorway, and now the tails too have disappeared, and the door is shut, and Lampe elbows his way through the guests on the stairs and arrived at the top, composed and rigid, says: His Honor the Professor are in kitchen, will be right back. And below the door opens again, and the old woman, the cook, shouts upstairs: Yeah, be right there, and you, Mr. Lampe, come down.

So Lampe exits. The gentlemen produce the pretty chronometers all at the same time, for it strikes twelve from the castle tower,

and now because it's quiet one hears not only the strokes but also in between the rattling and wheezing of the works.

Below in the kitchen, where it's a little steamy, stand Kant and Hamann. Pinnau, did you say?

Yeah, but I know 'em too, good people, says the cook.

No, we mean the son, says Kant.

Good-looking bloke with black hair, says the woman.

Bookkeeper Pinnau, says Hamann, he is dead, this morning, I heard a shot, in the adjoining chamber, I ran there, and Pinnau was lying there, shot in the face, was dead immediately.

What was the matter with him, asks Kant, he worked at the Customs office didn't he?

He thought — Hamann puts his hat on again, which he had passed from one hand to the other, always shifting cane and cape. He wrote, poems — he desired that which is not possible, he says. And Kant replies quickly and tonelessly: Don't you too?

Above, the gentlemen walk about upon the bare planks, up to the window, into the room again, round the table. But what's keeping the host? And now Lampe comes with the tureen, and close behind, small and light, just as though the stairs had carried him from below, Kant and next to him — overly long

coat tails, cloak over the arm, hat on head, like a raven with shaggy wings caught up in the river wind, and with black cane — Customs and Warehouse Administrator Hamann.

He didn't attend my lectures, says Kant, did he attend any at all?

With that he steps into the room, a bit astonished because he hears Hamann behind him answering: Yes, mine.

Schulz looks at Borowski, the Neurossgärten Parson, significantly, both shake their heads, and that means: Hamann? That fellow is surely neither licentiate nor master of arts, but the head shaking fits neatly in with the motion of the cones and rhombuses, skeins and whatnot, which now begins again.

Kanter with arms extended, which he brings together backwards, as if wanting to embrace the air behind him, as it were, the world, at least the town, or better, the three towns which indeed until recently it still was, together with its seven hills, surround it, offer it up to the Great One, Wise One, nay the World Wisdom itself. At the same time taking three, four baby-steps. And Scheffner! A short, fiery bow. So it is when out of admiration one tears away an amorous poet's crown of honor from one's own brow. That's the way that looks! And Schulz, as mathematicus, knows best of all what the illustrious colleague signifies: a star. Of first

magnitude, of course. And the others also round about, circles and elliptical orbits, and again a little dance, charming, for the twelve strokes are past, and the town-musicians, down from the tower, blow their gay mid-day chorale over the roofs and into the houses as if their job were to cool the soup for rich and poor.

Turning slightly from one to the other, Kant warmly greets them all, and so everyone quickly comes to his place at table. A small sigh from bottom-heavy Schulz. But the first question is again directed towards Hamann. Kant says: What were you getting at before?

We were speaking of Pinnau, answers Hamann and sits down across from Kant.

Gentlemen — now that's Kant again — Bookkeeper Pinnau of the local Tariff Bureau shot himself dead this morning. Gentlemanlike, as he lived. Mr. Hamann can give you the details.

Vasianski startled: Pinnau? And so now: Pinnau, upright, that is, son of poor people, of oft proved diligence, who started the bathing in the Pregel river, some more things and poems too — but what could become of him anyway, where did he come from anyhow? no place for him here; perhaps Kanter (but no one says so because Kanter is present) could have helped him or Korff or Hippel;

that sort of thing is always possible; but in the end he did find a place; so Pinnau had held a pistol to his face, he lay in the middle of the empty clerks' chamber, beneath a blackish cloud, which was reluctant to settle down over him.

Why does a person like Pinnau shoot himself, says Scheffner, and for Motherby it remains a question, he doesn't know. Who does anyhow? He was doing quite well, bookkeeper at the Tariff Bureau, he wanted to marry, six trees from Stockmar's garden had been promised him. Nothing to do with his work, was it, Mr. Hamann?

A lively conversation. Which brings the skeins, cones, rhombuses, even the pyramid Schulz into rollicking motion again. Although everybody still remains seated. One should be hard of hearing: then one could enjoy it completely as at a masquerade.

Kant raises his smooth little face towards ill mannered Hamann who as usual has again laid his left leg with its dirty shoe on the empty armchair next to him, and calls over: Do you know? And Hamann says: Yes, and it's about time Schulz got on with the grace.

So Kant says: Gentlemen, let us begin the meal. Be so kind, Mr. Royal Chaplain! and Schulz: — gatherst us daily about thy gift, gather us, Lord, about thy throne.

