

**Mogens Klitgaard**

**God Tempers  
the Wind to the  
Shorn Lamb**

Translated and  
with an Introduction and Notes  
by Marc Linder

With the Assistance of  
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The cover image is one of the friezes adorning the lobby of the Danish Parliament, which were painted by Rasmus Larsen between 1918 and 1921. Courtesy of Folketinget.

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## Ninth Chapter

### 1

We took a walk in the Bois de Boulogne\* and Jeanine was a perfectly ordinary girl who wanted to get married and didn't believe I was serious about it. And she had an uncle who could get me a job in a mansion as a doorman and we'd have it so good.

And I came to love everything that was ordinary and we did everything that ordinary people do. We made excursions and visited her family and bought cheap little things for the home that would become a reality as soon as I could start the job. And one day she brought a pair of embroidered slippers for me and one day I bought a porcelain teapot and six cups and saucers. And she sewed buttons on my shirts and made me happy by saying that I should take care of my clothes. And at a photographer's on Boulevard Montparnasse there was a display case with photographs of little children, which we always had to stop and look at, and so I'd be a doorman the rest of my life and Jeanine would earn a little extra by helping out at the master and mistress's.

And then one morning Jeanine came into the Danish cafe on *rue Servandoni* while I was doing some polishing and said that she'd gotten word that I could start work in three weeks. And she had on a flowery dress made of thin material and she resembled a picture in *La vie parisienne*,\* but her face was like a child's, and now I was finally about to live like other people and be happy.

And two weeks before the wedding I got drunk because I knew that I wouldn't be in a position to go through with it, because I wasn't going to be able to be a doorman the rest of my days.

And a week before the wedding I wrote a letter to Jeanine and begged her forgiveness and two days later I was in Copenhagen.

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And several days later I went to Sweden and in order to earn

a little on the way I took along thirty packs of *Flag*,\* which I was going to sell in Malmö, and as I was going to sell the first one, I was arrested and put in jail and after three weeks I was sentenced to pay the Swedish state damages and was deported from the Kingdom of Sweden for all time.\*

And when I was standing in Copenhagen again, I didn't have any money to buy food with and went up to a house to beg. The first place there was nobody home and a lower-level railwayman, or else he was a lieutenant—in any event something like that—lived at the second place and he called the police and I was convicted of begging.

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And since then everything I've touched has gone wrong for me: if I try to do a little deal, I'm arrested, if I sleep in a railway car, I can be certain there'll be a raid that very night—my luck has abandoned me.

I've often thought about the fact that it'd actually be easier to put an end to it all, take a little gas or something like that, but I've never been able to make up my mind to do it, not because I'm a coward, but I've quite simply not felt like it.

And up till a couple of days ago I was living in a rusted-out car—it was my home and that's the way I felt about it. And I wanted to do so much and had such big plans about freedom and so on, and then it ends up with me living in a rusted-out car and I'm happy about it.

But actually I'm not dissatisfied with life and sometimes I'm comfortable with the feeling that I've tricked the people who wanted to trick me. You see, my triumph is that I didn't become a parish deacon or something like that—I was brought up to do that and I tricked them. I tricked the whole lot of them. You're brought up to be nice and well-behaved, to toil and slave for other people without getting anything for it, and to die just as poor as when you were born. And when folks become discontented with having to slave away night and day and still be poor as a church mouse, people console them by saying that salt and bread make your cheeks red\* and telling them the story of the world's happiest man, who didn't even own a shirt. But they

haven't been able to pull that one on me; I've tricked the whole bunch of them—my father and my mother, my aunts, the teachers, the newspapers and the church, the pastor and the whole education system, the whole society—there they were having trouble with me, thrashing me and preaching and ordering and trying to manage to make a gardener or doorman or custodian or something else solid out of me—and then the whole thing was a waste, I tricked them totally and completely; the whole system's been wasted on me.

They made up the story of the happiest man without a shirt so people wouldn't feel discontented in their slavery. They couldn't pull that one on me and I'm proud of it. So the lamb won't make a fuss about being shorn, they say that God tempers the wind to it.

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Unfortunately I don't have my rusted-out car any more: a few days ago there was somebody in it when I got home and I had my glasses smashed and had to walk the streets at night.