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Writing Sample

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Esther Dischereit

The Child with the Big Face

'CAUTION: Patient's Property' – it said on the plastic bag by the door, which someone had left ajar: 'Surname: First name: Street: City: Room No.':. The staff had deposited her clothes in the bag and locked it away. On a different door it said 'Clean and Unclean', as if Jewish rituals had somehow found their way into this multi-storey hospital. The church bells, pealing on the hour, were extraordinarily loud. Somebody on the night shift wore a badge with a familiar name. It turned out that she was a relative, a cousin of her reclusive uncle, an intellectual, obsessed with books, whom the Nazis had deported him to a concentration camp. A man of honour, he had been made the heir of his Jewish publisher when the latter's firm had been 'Aryanized', but had neglected to reinstate the owner afterwards. This part of the legend surrounding the company had passed into oblivion however, leaving only his own tale of hardship.

If she wanted she could always talk to the chaplain, the hospital psychologist had suggested. But they were hardly going to have a Jewish chaplain here, not any more. Not anywhere these days. The duty registrar noticed she had a Jewish name, and since they had come to mention it, asked where she had been born. 'Just a few villages away, a couple of hours maybe, quite close really', she said. So he said: 'I am only a year younger than you, and I have never met a German Jew. You are something special'. 'Yes', she said, 'hooray, we're not dead'. Although there was a lot of talk of dying and letting go in this place.

During the night, tossing and turning, she inadvertently touched the emergency button for the nurse. She sat up, quickly switching the button off again. In the morning she would claim to have slept well.

On the first day she had opened the fridge and stowed her things in it. As she was doing so, a jar fell over, the top coming off and pink yoghurt spilling into the bottom drawer, which contained several bottles of beer. She picked a fragment of glass out of the mess; the jar had broken. Wiping it up, she remembered the week-long training placement she had once absolved in an old people's home.

Her class had gone abroad on an outing, an end-of-school trip, and she hadn't gone with them. The alternatives had either been attending school or the old people's home, so she had chosen the old people's home, not realizing that training meant cleaning. She had been allocated several rooms to dust. In one elderly woman's room picture frames of different sizes stood on the bedside table, ornate frames in gold and silver; smiling young (and not so young) men in uniforms with *Wehrmacht*-badges and SS-insignia were arranged on a glass table top, under which lay round crocheted tea-mats. She was already worried, not only in this resident's room, about doing everything wrong, and when somebody spoke to her she knocked over a velvet-encased photograph, breaking the glass. She did not feel like admitting the incident to the woman, who had always spoken roughly to her, and so she returned the frame to its original place with the glass cracked. She felt the men might escape from their frames, crowding into the small room. She quickly pulled the door closed behind her and was gone. Perhaps she could serve the food or clean mirrors in the toilets – at least there wouldn't be any photographs there. Later, she was asked to report to the ward sister; the old lady had complained. She claimed to know nothing about any framed pictures, or whether the glass had cracked. Perhaps they could give her a different room to clean. They could. But there were framed photographs in the next room, too, with wooden frames or frames with cloth covers. She was glad to return to school at the beginning of the following week. There was nothing she cared to say or write about her training experience.

The child with the big face leant over the banister. Her curls hung to one side, falling on her shoulder. They were light brown corkscrew curls. She resembled a child in a 'Kölnflocken' oat-flakes advert. She wore black patent leather shoes with buckles, white socks and a pink dress. The dress was drawn in far above her waist. It was much too short. The child's head jutted above the parapet, the uprights pushing into her chest as she pressed against them. She had just been to the room of an old lady in the dark corridor behind her. There, a large magnifying glass lay on a newspaper, and a tin of biscuits stood on top of a wardrobe. Whenever the girl came in, the old lady, whom she called 'Aunt', reached up for the tin. She was not supposed to visit the lady alone. Why did the old lady live in a room in the dark corridor? Did somebody live behind the other doors, the ones that didn't open? The child would never know, and she would never ask, because she ought not to have been there in the first place. She pushed her chest up against the uprights, so that the bars pressed hard against her ribs under her blouse.

She peered down past the tall storeys into the lobby below. Stone flags covered the ground floor; in some places the flags were worn. There was a man down there, lying on the floor, held by four policemen. Two of the policemen had his arms, another, pressing his knee on the man's pelvis, was attempting to fixate one of his legs; the fourth had managed to pin down his other leg. The man's limbs were splayed apart. He shook his head from side to side and banged his head on the floor, screaming 'Mama'.

The policemen, as if fighting some wild beast, had managed to subdue the man and now had his arms and legs in a twist. They were quite unaware of the child high above them, watching from the top storey. Nobody was there to look after the man; nobody was there to hold his bag or even his coat or jacket. The child stepped back from the banister. The man cried out; the child ran down the stairs until she reached the entrance to the corridor where she belonged.

During the night the sick screamed behind their bars, and the noises they made carried beyond their windows. They were deep, guttural sounds, weirdly distorted, as if stemming from some place that had never seen a human being; doleful, bellowing sounds, sounds that rattled and rasped, escaping involuntarily from the bodies that made them. On the following day, shortly before lunch, her father, his doctor's white coat unbuttoned, told them there had been a suicide. The child poked at her dry boiled potatoes with a fork and stared. Her father asked for a glass of wine, and a damp ring formed on the table-cloth around the foot of the glass. The child continued to stare at it even after the food had been cleared away and the glass was no longer there. The square white porcelain dish with the leftover, yellowed, quarter-cut potatoes had gone, too. Almost unnoticeably, the table-cloth had stained where the glass had left a ring – not much of one, because the wine was white.

On one occasion, the child went along with her father; she had been promised that Santa had something for her. Doors were unlocked for them, and locked again behind them. She stood between two barred doors. Behind one was a man she did not know, standing bolt upright with his hands clenching the iron bars. From the side, a powerfully built Father Christmas now appeared and addressed the child. At the same time the figure produced a switch, and let a heavy chain glide through his hands so that it struck the floor and rattled. A deep groaning sound issued from the unknown man. The child had the fright of her life, and with the doors locked behind and in front of her, was unable to escape. She could not understand why her father had not stayed. The Santa Claus and the unknown man in his barred cell were gigantic figures; to escape them she would have to become as small as a tiny mark on the old stone floor – like the mark left by the wine-glass, which had barely left a trace on the table-cloth.

She remembered the man's gaunt face and bony hands, his sharp knees when he would sometimes lift her onto his lap and bob her up and down. Up and down and round and round, up and down and round and round – the man liked it when they laughed together, so he took the drain plunger and pressed it onto the linoleum floor in the wide corridor. Then he said: 'watch this', and with one jerk of the wooden shaft he lifted the brittle material off the ground, then – loosening the suction cup – let it drop back with a light slap. 'Again', said the man, and the child nodded. The heavy-duty sisal of the corridors left red weals on her knees when she knelt, creating landscapes on her skin. Once, her mother had come by and had forbidden him to press the plunger on the floor, or to lift her onto his

knee. 'Aunt Lulu has escaped', she suddenly said, and disappeared into the gardens, where far into the compound, in fact at its far edge, she was hoping to harvest her lettuces, kitchen herbs, gooseberries, blackberries, black currant, strawberries, cabbage, plums and pears. She was from the town, and did not find the work in such a large garden easy. She insisted the child come out and get some fresh air. To do so she had to cross a surfaced road where she encountered people whose skin was all white and puffy. Their heads would be tilted or skewed; some stopped and stared, others drooled and slobbered. She was not allowed to go with them, especially not to the neighbouring park. Often the men wore dark brown, pin-cord trousers and blue, labourer's shirts; it was as if they had never worn other clothes or colours. Like their flat and the corridors of the mental hospital, the gardens too were spacious, enormous in fact, and bordered by impenetrable thickets. The branches of the brambles pricked her legs through her knee-socks, leaving scratches on her skin. There were bees, hornets and spiders, also worms and snails. A dog from a neighbouring garden would sometimes bare its teeth at her, and once it leaped over the fence, and its owner had trouble calling it off.

She could not make out whether the neighbour, its owner, had actually enjoyed the spectacle of his dog going after them and tearing her mother's stockings. It struck her that he might have set the dog on her on purpose. As if the days of setting dogs on them were not yet over.

A few birds sat around the tables gossiping, human birds, quite bald. They had knives and forks and stuffed forkfuls of grated side salad into their mouths. She watched the way some mouths went endlessly up and down, like mechanical grinders. The biddies were called Anna and Katrin, Birgit and Bianca, Saskia and Elfi – hardly any would have passed for a Gülken or Elzbieta. They were joined by one or two men, albeit significantly fewer. This is a very unexceptional hospital, the woman at the reception had told her on arrival. There were bins for syringes near the doors, and disposable gloves: 'Please disinfect your hands', it said, and in front of some rooms green surgical scrubs lay at the ready. The sky kept turning grey; raindrops streaked the windows, leaving a sombre impression. In the kitchens they were preparing the various kinds of sauce thickener they had been using here for the past fifty years. They served dry boiled potatoes, overcooked rice and one vegetable, the addition of sufficient quantities of Maggi sauce guaranteeing an identical taste, no matter what vegetable was used; not forgetting the way the amount of vinegar they used transformed salads into shapeless, green-orange-white heaps of fodder, which the inmates or patients were convinced would do them good. During the doctors' round the consultant, a man, insisted that sexuality was a very important matter. The duty nurse threw a non-committal glance at her file. This sentence went round and round in the patient's head while she was doing her pelvic floor exercises; she heard talk of anuses, perineae and vaginas, and of how important it was to keep them opening and closing. On one occasion the women were asked to put their hand between their legs and feel their contractions. The furnishings were in plain white, with grey spotted carpets, while the grey-white curtains were covered with pink, black and white hatchings that ran to long, nondescript streaks; they were reminiscent of the walls of scratch-coat rendered terraced houses. In the early hours of the morning she felt her hand spread between her naked thighs, rubbing between the protruding lips until the contractions started and she bit into the stiff, freshly-ironed pillow-case.

The psychiatric hospital was home to three Jews, a woman who had survived and her two children, her husband, a former German soldier and scion of an East Prussian family, Aunt Lulu, patients who had not been killed, petty criminals for whom there were not enough prisons, derelicts who had ended up without family or friend or had got too close to a detonating bomb, new patients who had become insane after 1945, and old doctors and nursing personnel. The workers were rumoured to hail from the surrounding villages and to have chosen to become hospital orderlies rather than butcher's apprentices. Aside from all else, the work was better paid. In the early years, nobody could afford meat. Children would stand in the shops with gleaming eyes, waiting for the saleswoman to pass them a sliver of wurst across the counter. The children liked to go shopping with their mothers, even when the latter bought whole ox's tongue, or pig's head. Her father came from a family of butchers himself, and he liked to employ these men, these butchers' sons. 'They're strong boys', he would say, 'they'll certainly get a patient behind bars for you'. The women he liked to take on were generally single mothers. People said they were more likely to 'get involved' with him; they were, but they would also stick it out regardless because they had children.

Her father stuck a doctor's title on his coat and on the door at the entrance below and treated the hysterics who had returned from war and could no longer raise an arm, although not because they had taken a bullet. Electroshocks and hypnosis – that, too, was how he had helped a former baker, who was able to lift his arm again and now contributed to the family livelihood by selling Remington razors. Her mother had become friendly with the man's wife, but only until the man had hung himself in the attic and people whispered that it had all been the wife's fault. The wife cut a rotund, corpulent figure among the cream cakes she sold – but her visits grew ever fewer.

She had no idea why the butcher and his wife drank so much. What she did know was that his wife's skin was covered with large, blotchy moles – they were on her face and back, and she had seen them once. It had been on the only occasion when she had visited the woman and been in her garden. The woman had been wearing a bathing-suit, for which she had apologized profusely, but actually they had not announced their visit. The child and her mother had gone for a walk in town and, without intending to, found themselves in the street where the couple lived in their newly built house. Across the street, in sight of the house, lived the woman's old mother; the child called her Granny Lerschel. Granny Lerschel wore slippers, and long thick dark stockings even when it was warm. Her house dress had originally been black with a tiny white floral pattern, so that it now looked a patchy greyish white, like the enamelled pots and pans on her new electric cooker. Granny Lerschel still kept her old cast iron stove, which had to be lit and stoked, next to her new one. The child longed for the crumble which lay on a tray on top of it.

The man with the gaunt face was a bicycle and wireless thief. Not that he flogged them. He would take a bicycle, try it out, sign a contract, and not pay. It was the same with the radio set. The radio had become his property simply because he had put it under his arm and gone off with it. The old judges convicted him; he went out and – needed another bicycle. This was how he had come to be in the mental hospital, how he had been committed and then selected for service in the doctor's quarters. He liked living in this doctor's household. It was better than staying in the dormitories where he never knew if someone might throttle him of an evening, or where people would scream and throw faeces. He spent a lot of time with the child with the big face, whom he loved dearly. One day another child who lived nearby had called up to the child to come down and play, and the child had wanted to go. It was rare for another child to enter the compound and ask for her. The other people who worked here, and there were quite a few, kept their children off the compound. The man, who was maid servant and nanny in one, took the child downstairs, saying it was better so. But as soon as he saw the other child standing there he lunged at it, manhandling it onto the paving stones that surrounded the entrance. The child's stocking was torn and her knee bled. Anyway, the child with the big face had gone upstairs to get her mother, who arrived with a bandage and plaster. The other child's name was Marita. She cried when iodine was splashed on her fresh wound. The child with the big face would not be playing with the other girl that day, nor on any other day. Marita no longer came.

There was another thing that was odd. It too had to do with boiled potatoes and schnitzel, and it only happened on weekends. On one such weekend her parents had decided to visit an inn some miles from home. Her father was always welcome there, for the grandfather of the house had suffered from unspeakable depression after the war, his whole body turning stiff and numb, and was now healed. He could now do a proper day's job in the kitchen among the heavy pots and enormous pans, which meant the grandmother of the house was no longer so distraught. Behind a partition were masses of drying plums; in other places they kept apples, potatoes, and roosters with long necks and pointy beaks that strutted through the grass and left their droppings. 'Viennese Schnitzel': schnitzel meant meat. In those days most people were still eating savoy cabbage and roasting a bit of meat on the rare occasions when their relations came to visit. The child with the big face did not like these precious schnitzels, and whenever they were on the way to the village in the Odenwald forest and her parents' little VW had to stop a dozen times or more because she felt sick, her father would grow impatient and angry. When the child got out of the car and inhaled the fresh air, big black-and-white cows came rolling up to the fences; the child just stood there and didn't know what to do. The cowpats looked overwhelmingly huge.

On other weekends Elvis and Claire Waldoff would go round and round on the gramophone. Later her parents went out to the Golden Half-Moon, her mother wearing her dance dress. Her mother asserted Claire Waldoff over Elvis and beat her man at chess.

Driving through the villages and small towns, they would pass Michelstadt. Ivory carvers had set up here, and so they bought a cute little white elephant and a necklace of smooth round beads. The place had probably maintained some kind of link with the Greater German colonial Reich, but the child was too young to give it much thought, although it was certainly odd to find ivory among the vines and orchards and cattle farming – those huge black-and-white cows. Why did the cream-coloured Beetle – that's what people called the car, and the Beetle was a bit like them: nobodys, en route to becoming somebodys – why did the Beetle always smell of imitation leather, floor wax, and the sweat of sodden wool? Perhaps it was the finish of the upholstery. This was before the days of nylon wash-and-wear shirts; but they wouldn't smell too good either. The Beetle had probably been bought on the *Wiedergutmachung*-reparation which the country now calling itself the Federal Republic of Germany had granted her mother because of racial persecution, damage to life and limb, and other things, like being barred from education or vocational training. The car had not been excluded from the reparation deal; on the contrary, suddenly they had found they could buy one. Later on, year by year and little by little, the country's laws had improved, so that if only her mother had had the audacity to instruct her lawyer to keep on challenging the settlement, they might even have got the four-door model instead. In which case the child, carsick in the back, could have jumped out onto the side of the road in time whenever they had to stop. Her father sat behind the wheel, her mother beside him. If her mother felt unwell herself, she never mentioned it.

The little apples that grew on thin trees along the unfinished road tasted delicious and their pale flesh, when she bit into one, revealed a subtle rose flush, as if its skin had left a stain. The child with the big face thought of Snow White and was unsure whether to enjoy the fruit.

One day one of the biddies came to her table and suggested taking a photo of them all – smiling, in the garden. These birds had all lost their hair. They had been hounded by one course of chemotherapy after another. When she looked one in the face, she thought of her mother and her friends and sisters, imagining them moving about in the concentration camp, and she wondered who was left today. She saw them walking about with their long necks craning in this direction and that. Their eyes had grown bigger, wider. On one occasion the kitchens had served couscous, but they had added vinegar, garnishing it with sweet corn and a sign saying Oriental Salad. With conditions like this more than twenty percent of Germans could only feel discouraged from pursuing such therapies – those who had come from other countries to live here, and for whom, evidently, no arrangements were being made even now, not even a glass of Turkish tea. They were simply expected to adapt, and indeed she had adapted too. ‘Do you always go about as a twosome?’ a woman asked in the direction of a couple who were walking past, a corpulent woman in a black T-shirt and a thin man whom she later could not remember. ‘It’s always good to take your nigger with you’, said the fat woman, laughing. The thin man said nothing. He would soon be joining the bald biddies. The woman who had asked laughed too. The doctors’ white coats passed her by like the semolina porridge and raspberry jam she had once eaten before school. These coats too were part of breakfast, unflinching, merciless, and there was no refuge from the smell of medicine. In the early afternoon she made her way to the weight-training room. At this time of day she could be on her own; other people took a nap, or went for a walk in the cooling afternoon sun. She walked up to the large mirror and stood in front of it with her legs apart. She then went over to the rack at the side of the room and selected her plates. Today she would add a second weight, two on each side, a big one and smaller one in front. The barbell lay ready on the floor. Her hands tightened around the grip – no wrenching, she thought, just don’t wrench. As she pumped the weight and balanced it on her shoulders at the bottom of her neck, she swayed a little. Down here, in the cellar, nobody would hear her.

The hens at the inn were fat and never stopped pecking. One day the boy, who was named after his father and was known as ‘little Hans’, showed her an egg lying under a hen. He took it, pricked a little hole in the shell and sucked out the contents. He gave her one, too. She took it and drank it, but found it absolutely disgusting. ‘Oh’ – said the child, and thought how nice it would have been if she hadn’t come here at all. The air was supposed to do her good. The people at the inn were unpleasant in a way she found hard to describe. That said, she and her family were often the only guests in the large dining-room. Perhaps this was because the child’s constant nausea made them arrive so late, or perhaps there just weren’t any other guests. Which was also strange, for the family behind the counter always seemed to have plenty to do. Very few words passed between the grandmother, busying herself with the taps, and her daughter-in-law, or Hans, the boy’s father. Here the boiled potatoes seemed even drier than they were normally. Later, her father drank for a while with Hans, the boy’s father, while the mother of the boy confided in her mother.

Once or twice the two men had gone out again and taken the child with them. They walked to a crowded extension, at one end of which several heavyweights were giving a performance. Uttering a brief roar, the men would heave and thrust one knee forward as they braced the weights at shoulder level. Sometimes they were unable to steady their legs, and, with a yell, they would fling the bar down in front of them. Her father had been taken by Hans to view these men from close up, and, after the public performance was over, he went into the back room where the weights were. They let him have a go, and he roared too, his face turning bright red and his neck arteries bulging. The room was full of watching men. The girl thought the disks of the weights on the floor would surely come up to her thighs, or hide her completely if she were crouching. The men were gathered in a dense throng, all wearing dark, crisply-pressed trousers. Hans, the boy’s father, was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he’d gone after the women, now their menfolk were all here. With the war over there were a lot more women around anyway. More than men that is, the camps having done for some, war for the rest.

Sometime later, the next woman in her father’s life had told the child with the big face the real truth about these goings-on. ‘Listen’, she said, ‘your father met your mother in a train. They were standing in a crush, and she said, “Why don’t you come by”, and gave him her address. And so he did come by, and stayed too. And do you know why he stayed? Because she had everything. Everyone else was cold and hungry, but she had a special victim’s ID-card, and her room was heated. They were given

preferential treatment'. And it had seemed to the child, who was now much older, that the woman, some sixty years later, still begrudged the Jewish woman and her daughter a stove to heat their room. 'Oh', said the old child, 'I am sorry about that', and she had got up and left the woman's flat.

Later on, the child with the big face went with her mother to live in a different town – this was after her mother had left her father. There were no more car journeys. After she had done her homework, she would accompany her mother for a stroll around town. Sometimes her mother would meet someone and start a conversation. The child was bored, because she didn't listen and didn't understand, and because nobody spoke to her. She noticed the way the concierge's wife opened her ground-floor window and, arranging a cushion so she could prop herself up on her arms, stared ahead of her like a sculpted bust with a pale blue cardigan, round face, and brown perm. Several dark hairs were visible around her mouth. Apart from this oddity she was a rotund but not especially large person with an equally rotund face. She usually wore a housecoat, and her brown perm encircled her round head. After a while the two women, who were deep in conversation, became aware of her, and lowered their voices. 'Have you heard?' said the one. 'No,' said the other, 'what's up?' 'The poor woman', said the first. 'What?' said the other, 'surely not?' 'O yes', said the first, 'from that cripple too'. The cripple was her husband – war disabled, as people called them. Nobody said: 'His job was to kill people and he came to grief doing that', or 'He wanted to kill someone but was almost killed himself'. In any case, the concierge had looked after him, incapable as he was of taking civilian work of any kind, and had got pregnant in the process. 'And she's all of forty!' said the first one. The two women talked in hushed tones, and eventually went their own ways. Neither had a war-disabled husband at home; as already mentioned, camps had done for some, war for the rest. And the later marriage of one of them with a man who had stayed because her room was warm had not lasted, although she had believed she loved him. More than a decade later, she would still refuse to tolerate any mention of his name in her presence. Not only had she been deceived and beaten as a wife, but she was also – and this was the worst of her chagrin – a humiliated and debased Jew. The child with the big face understood that she was not to mention her father's name, and so she didn't.

Once she heard her mother say: 'I can report you.' 'Who to?' sneered her father, showing her a letter from Herr Globke, who had become Chancellor Adenauer's right-hand-man. They had just come back from an evening at the Yellow Half Moon, where there was sometimes dancing on a Saturday night. On these occasions her mother wore a special dress – swivelling balls bobbing on a silver puffed-out skirt and a low-cut neckline, with sleeves designed to reveal her bare shoulders. Above their bed on her father's side was a portrait photograph of her posing for a hairstyle contest. The photograph had earned the local salon's young owner First Prize – he had stuck his neck out and portrayed a dark beauty, her mother, rather than an Aryan girl. And there she was, beautiful and exotic, hanging above the bedside table, waiting for them when they returned from their night out. The child had heard a tinkling and other noises coming from her parents' room, and, opening the door, saw her mother on the floor, her dress with its swivelling balls torn at the shoulder, her head between splinters of the smashed photograph. She heard her father saying he was the one who made the decisions, and her mother fighting back. He then grabbed a shoe and threw it at the child, who scampered. When, after a while, she sneaked a look into the corridor, there stood her mother standing in front of the entrance pointing a long kitchen knife at her husband. 'I am going to do it and you won't stop me', she said, opening the front door a hand's breadth. The child with the big face wanted to go after her. Her father told her to be quiet. He then went to the telephone and asked to be connected to the police station. He told the duty officer that his wife was about to pay them a visit; he was the doctor in charge of the mental home and his wife was having a hysterical fit. He would soon sort it out himself; they should send her home. The police had listened to the hysterical woman and sent her home. And anyway, rape in marriage was not a criminal offence. And anyway, charges brought by a Jew against a man who had studied in Austria, and whose family tree was certainly Aryan, and who was a respected, indeed almost eminent personage – as one might say, had he not been quite so young, but in any case a highly respected local doctor – would lack credibility. Even if the husband had beaten the children on several occasions, and be it on occasion with a cane, that too was in accordance with the law, as long as the welts were duly cooled afterwards.

As if there hadn't been enough deaths – the baker's husband, the camp dead, the war dead – there was soon another death, and this one made her mother turn especially pale. Shortly after leaving her husband (divorced as the guilty party was the verdict, that is, he was the guilty party), she heard from the village in the Odenwald that her friend – the wife of the innkeeper, Hans – had driven her car into the river Neckar during the night. People's first reaction had probably been to feel sorry about the car; it was a rare thing in those days for a woman to drive her own car – or was it really his? Her mother kept murmuring something under her breath, saying: 'O God o God', and 'she didn't deserve it'. To her it was obvious that the woman's husband had driven her to it, perhaps after a visit from her own divorced husband – like in the old days, when they had drunk a couple of glasses over the limit, or more. She hadn't been there herself since the divorce. Between Vielbrunn and Neckargmünd, at a place where the wet black road, veering right to the edge of the riverbank, was unsafe, the woman's car had shot over the edge.

translated from the German by Iain Galbraith