

riches, went eagerly after business and pressed his debtors for payment, for he wanted to play again, he wanted to squander again, he wanted to show his contempt for riches again. Siddhartha became impatient at losses, he lost his patience with slow-paying debtors, he was no longer kindhearted to beggars, he no longer had the desire to give gifts and loans to the poor. He, who staked ten thousand on the throw of the dice and laughed, became more hard and mean in business, and sometimes dreamt of money at night. And whenever he awakened from this hateful spell, when he saw his face reflected in the mirror on the wall of his bedroom, grown older and uglier, whenever shame and nausea overtook him, he fled again, fled to a new game of chance, fled in confusion to passion, to wine, and from there back again to the urge for acquiring and hoarding wealth. He wore himself out in this senseless cycle, became old and sick.

Then a dream once reminded him. He had been with Kamala in the evening, in her lovely pleasure garden. They sat under a tree talking. Kamala was speaking seriously, and grief and weariness were concealed behind her words. She had asked him to tell her about Gotama, and could not hear enough about him, how clear his eyes were, how peaceful and beautiful his mouth, how gracious his smile, how peaceful his entire manner. For a long time he had to talk to her about the Illustrious Buddha and Kamala had sighed and said: "One day, perhaps soon, I will also become a follower of this Buddha. I will

give him my pleasure garden and take refuge in his teachings." But then she enticed him, and in love play she clasped him to her with extreme fervor, fiercely and tearfully, as if she wanted once more to extract the last sweet drop from this fleeting pleasure. Never had it been so strangely clear to Siddhartha how closely related passion was to death. Then he lay beside her and Kamala's face was near to his, and under her eyes and near the corners of her mouth, he read clearly for the first time a sad sign—fine lines and wrinkles, a sign which gave a reminder of autumn and old age. Siddhartha himself, who was only in his forties, had noticed gray hairs here and there in his black hair. Weariness was written on Kamala's beautiful face, weariness from continuing along a long path which had no joyous goal, weariness and incipient old age, and concealed and not yet mentioned, perhaps a not yet conscious fear—fear of the autumn of life, fear of old age, fear of death. Sighing, he took leave of her, his heart full of misery and secret fear.

Then Siddhartha had spent the night at his house with dancers and wine, had pretended to be superior to his companions, which he no longer was. He had drunk much wine and late after midnight he went to bed, tired and yet agitated, nearly in tears and in despair. In vain did he try to sleep. His heart was so full of misery, he felt he could no longer endure it. He was full of a nausea which overpowered him like a distasteful wine, or music that was too sweet and superficial, or like the too sweet smile of the dancers or the too sweet perfume of their hair and breasts.

HERMANN HESSÉ

But above all he was nauseated with himself, with his perfumed hair, with the smell of wine from his mouth, with the soft, flabby appearance of his skin. Like one who has eaten and drunk too much and vomits painfully and then feels better, so did the restless man wish he could rid himself with one terrific heave of these pleasures, of these habits of this entirely senseless life. Only at daybreak and at the first signs of activity outside his town house, did he doze off and had a few moments of semi-oblivion, a possibility of sleep. During that time he had a dream.

Kamala kept a small rare songbird in a small golden cage. It was about this bird that he dreamt. This bird, which usually sang in the morning, became mute, and as this surprised him, he went up to the cage and looked inside. The little bird was dead and lay stiff on the floor. He took it out, held it a moment in his hand and then threw it away on the road, and at the same moment he was horrified and his heart ached as if he had thrown away with this dead bird all that was good and of value in himself.

Awakening from this dream, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of great sadness. It seemed to him that he had spent his life in a worthless and senseless manner; he retained nothing vital, nothing in any way precious or worth while. He stood alone, like a shipwrecked man on the shore.

Sadly, Siddhartha went to a pleasure garden that belonged to him, closed the gates, sat under a mango tree, and felt horror and death in his heart. He sat and felt himself dying, withering, finishing. Grad-

SIDDHARTHA

ually, he collected his thoughts and mentally went through the whole of his life, from the earliest days which he could remember. When had he really been happy? When had he really experienced joy? Well, he had experienced this several times. He had tasted it in the days of his boyhood, when he had won praise from the Brahmins, when he far outstripped his contemporaries, when he excelled himself at the recitation of the holy verses, in argument with the learned men, when assisting at the sacrifices. Then he had felt in his heart: "A path lies before you which you are called to follow. The gods await you." And again as a youth when his continually soaring goal had propelled him in and out of the crowd of similar seekers, when he had striven hard to understand the Brahmins' teachings, when every freshly acquired knowledge only engendered a new thirst, then again, in the midst of his thirst, in the midst of his efforts, he had thought: Onwards, onwards, this is your path. He had heard this voice when he had left his home and chosen the life of the Samanas, and again when he had left the Samanas and gone to the Perfect One, and also when he had left him for the unknown. How long was it now since he had heard this voice, since he had soared to any heights? How flat and desolate his path had been! How many long years he had spent without any lofty goal, without any thirst, without any exaltation, content with small pleasures and yet never really satisfied! Without knowing it, he had endeavored and longed all these years to be like all these other people, like these children, and yet his life

had been much more wretched and poorer than theirs, for their aims were not his, nor their sorrows his. This whole world of the Kamaswami people had only been a game to him, a dance, a comedy which one watches. Only Kamala was dear to him—had been of value to him—but was she still? Did he still need her—and did she still need him? Were they not playing a game without an end? Was it necessary to live for it? No. This game was called Samasra, a game for children, a game which was perhaps enjoyable played once, twice, ten times—but was it worth playing continually?

Then Siddhartha knew that the game was finished, that he could play it no longer. A shudder passed through his body; he felt as if something had died.

He sat all that day under the mango tree, thinking of his father, thinking of Govinda, thinking of Gotama. Had he left all these in order to become a Kamaswami? He sat there till night fell. When he looked up and saw the stars, he thought: I am sitting here under my mango tree, in my pleasure garden. He smiled a little. Was it necessary, was it right, was it not a foolish thing that he should possess a mango tree and a garden?

He had finished with that. That also died in him. He rose, said farewell to the mango tree and the pleasure garden. As he had not had any food that day he felt extremely hungry, and thought of his house in the town, of his room and bed, of the table with food. He smiled wearily, shook his head and said good-bye to these things.

The same night Siddhartha left his garden and the town and never returned. For a long time Kamaswami tried to find him, believing he had fallen into the hands of bandits. Kamala did not try to find him. She was not surprised when she learned that Siddhartha had disappeared. Had she not always expected it? Was he not a Samana, without a home, a pilgrim? She had felt it more than ever at their last meeting, and in the midst of her pain at her loss, she rejoiced that she had pressed him so close to her heart on that last occasion, had felt so completely possessed and mastered by him.

When she heard the first news of Siddhartha's disappearance, she went to the window where she kept a rare songbird in a golden cage. She opened the door of the cage, took the bird out and let it fly away. For a long time she looked after the disappearing bird. From that day she received no more visitors and kept her house closed. After a time, she found that she was with child as a result of her last meeting with Siddhartha.

By the River

Siddhartha wandered into the forest, already far from the town, and knew only one thing—that he could not go back, that the life he had lived for many years was past, tasted and drained to a degree of nausea. The songbird was dead; its death, which he had dreamt about, was the bird in his own heart. He was deeply entangled in Samsara; he had drawn nausea and death to himself from all sides, like a sponge that absorbs water until it is full. He was full of ennuï, full of misery, full of death; there was nothing left in the world that could attract him, that could give him pleasure and solace.

He wished passionately for oblivion, to be at rest, to be dead. If only a flash of lightning would strike him! If only a tiger would come and eat him! If there were only some wine, some poison, that would give him oblivion, that would make him forget, that

would make him sleep and never awaken! Was there any kind of filth with which he had not besmirched himself, any sin and folly which he had not committed, any stain upon his soul for which he alone had not been responsible? Was it then still possible to live? Was it possible to take in breath again and again, to breathe out, to feel hunger, to eat again, to sleep again, to lie with women again? Was this cycle not exhausted and finished for him?

Siddhartha reached the long river in the wood, the same river across which a ferryman had once taken him when he was still a young man and had come from Gotama's town. He stopped at this river and stood hesitatingly on the bank. Fatigue and hunger had weakened him. Why should he go any further, where, and for what purpose? There was no more purpose; there was nothing more than a deep, painful longing to shake off this whole confused dream, to spit out this stale wine, to make an end of this bitter, painful life.

There was a tree on the river bank, a coconut tree. Siddhartha leaned against it, placed his arm around the trunk and looked down into the green water which flowed beneath him. He looked down and was completely filled with a desire to let himself go and be submerged in the water. A chilly emptiness in the water reflected the terrible emptiness in his soul. Yes, he was at the end. There was nothing more for him but to efface himself, to destroy the unsuccessful structure of his life, to throw it away, mocked at by the gods. That was the deed which he longed

to commit, to destroy the form which he hated! Might the fishes devour him, this dog of a Siddhartha, this madman, this corrupted and rotting body, this sluggish and misused soul! Might the fishes and crocodiles devour him, might the demons tear him to little pieces!

With a distorted countenance he stared into the water. He saw his face reflected, and spat at it; he took his arm away from the tree trunk and turned a little, so that he could fall headlong and finally go under. He bent, with closed eyes—towards death.

Then from a remote part of his soul, from the past of his tired life, he heard a sound. It was one word, one syllable, which without thinking he spoke distinctly, the ancient beginning and ending of all Brahmin prayers, the holy Om, which had the meaning of "the Perfect One" or "Perfection." At that moment, when the sound of Om reached Siddhartha's ears, his numbing soul suddenly awakened and he recognized the folly of his action.

Siddhartha was deeply horrified. So that was what he had come to; he was so lost, so confused, so devoid of all reason, that he had sought death. This wish, this childish wish had grown so strong within him: to find peace by destroying his body. All the torment of these recent times, all the disillusionment, all the despair, had not affected him so much as it did the moment the Om reached his consciousness and he recognized his wretchedness and his crime.

"Om," he pronounced inwardly, and he was conscious of Brahman, of the indestructibility of life; he

HERMANN HESS

remembered all that he had forgotten, all that was divine.

But it was only for a moment, a flash. Siddhartha sank down at the foot of the cocanut tree, overcome by fatigue. Murmuring Om, he laid his head on the tree roots and sank into a deep sleep.

His sleep was deep and dreamless; he had not slept like that for a long time. When he awakened after many hours, it seemed to him as if ten years had passed. He heard the soft rippling of the water; he did not know where he was nor what had brought him there. He looked up and was surprised to see the trees and the sky above him. He remembered where he was and how he came to be there. He felt a desire to remain there for a long time. The past now seemed to him to be covered by a veil, extremely remote, very unimportant. He only knew that his previous life (at the first moment of his return to consciousness his previous life seemed to him like a remote incarnation, like an earlier birth of his present Self) was finished, that it was so full of nausea and wretchedness that he had wanted to destroy it, but that he had come to himself by a river, under a cocanut tree, with the holy word Om on his lips. Then he had fallen asleep, and on awakening he looked at the world like a new man. Softly he said the word Om to himself, over which he had fallen asleep, and it seemed to him as if his whole sleep had been a long deep pronouncing of Om, thinking of Om, an immersion and penetration into Om, into the nameless, into the Divine.

SIDDHARTHA

What a wonderful sleep it had been! Never had a sleep so refreshed him, so renewed him, so rejuvenated him! Perhaps he had really died, perhaps he had been drowned and was reborn in another form. No, he recognized himself, he recognized his hands and feet, the place where he lay and the Self in his breast, Siddhartha, self-willed, individualistic. But this Siddhartha was somewhat changed, renewed. He had slept wonderfully. He was remarkably awake, happy and curious.

Siddhartha raised himself and saw a monk in a yellow gown, with shaved head, sitting opposite him in the attitude of a thinker. He looked at the man, who had neither hair on his head nor a beard, and he did not look at him long when he recognized in this monk, Govinda, the friend of his youth, Govinda who had taken refuge in the Illustrious Buddha. Govinda had also aged, but he still showed the old characteristics in his face—eagerness, loyalty, curiosity, anxiety. But when Govinda, feeling his glance, raised his eyes and looked at him, Siddhartha saw that Govinda did not recognize him. Govinda was pleased to find him awake. Apparently he had sat there a long time waiting for him to awaken, although he did not know him. "I was sleeping," said Siddhartha. "How did you come here?"

"You were sleeping," answered Govinda, "and it is not good to sleep in such places where there are often snakes and animals from the forest prowling about. I am one of the followers of the Illustrious Gotama, the Buddha of Sakyamuni, and I am on a

pilgrimage with a number of our order. I saw you lying asleep in a dangerous place, so I tried to awaken you, and then as I saw you were sleeping very deeply, I remained behind my brothers and sat by you. Then it seems that I, who wanted to watch over you, fell asleep myself. Weariness overcame me and I kept my watch badly. But now you are awake, so I must go and overtake my brothers."

"I thank you, Samana, for guarding my sleep. The followers of the Illustrious One are very kind, but now you may go on your way."

"I am going. May you keep well."

"I thank you, Samana."

Govinda bowed and said, "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Govinda," said Siddhartha.

The monk stood still.

"Excuse me, sir, how do you know my name?"

Thereupon Siddhartha laughed.

"I know you, Govinda, from your father's house and from the Brahmins' school, and from the sacrifices, and from our sojourn with the Samanas and from that hour in the grove of Jetavana when you swore allegiance to the Illustrious One."

"You are Siddhartha," cried Govinda aloud. "Now I recognize you and do not understand why I did not recognize you immediately. Greetings, Siddhartha, it gives me great pleasure to see you again."

"I am also pleased to see you again. You have watched over me during my sleep. I thank you once again, although I needed no guard. Where are you going, my friend?"

"I am not going anywhere. We monks are always on the way, except during the rainy season. We always move from place to place, live according to the rule, preach the gospel, collect alms and then move on. It is always the same. But where are you going, Siddhartha?"

Siddhartha said: "It is the same with me as it is with you, my friend. I am not going anywhere. I am only on the way. I am making a pilgrimage."

Govinda said: "You say you are making a pilgrimage and I believe you. But forgive me, Siddhartha, you do not look like a pilgrim. You are wearing the clothes of a rich man, you are wearing the shoes of a man of fashion, and your perfumed hair is not the hair of a pilgrim, it is not the hair of a Samana."

"You have observed well, my friend; you see everything with your sharp eyes. But I did not tell you that I am a Samana. I said I was making a pilgrimage and that is true."

"You are making a pilgrimage," said Govinda, "but few make a pilgrimage in such clothes, in such shoes and with such hair. I, who have been wandering for many years, have never seen such a pilgrim."

"I believe you, Govinda. But today you have met such a pilgrim in such shoes and dress. Remember, my dear Govinda, the world of appearances is transitory, the style of our clothes and hair is extremely transitory. Our hair and our bodies are themselves transitory. You have observed correctly. I am wearing the clothes of a rich man. I am wearing them because I have been a rich man, and I am wearing

my hair like men of the world and fashion because I have been one of them."

"And what are you now, Siddhartha?"

"I do not know; I know as little as you. I am on the way. I was a rich man, but I am no longer and what I will be tomorrow I do not know."

"Have you lost your riches?"

"I have lost them, or they have lost me—I am not sure. The wheel of appearances revolves quickly, Govinda. Where is Siddhartha the Brahmin, where is Siddhartha the Samana, where is Siddhartha the rich man? The transitory soon changes, Govinda. You know that."

For a long time Govinda looked doubtfully at the friend of his youth. Then he bowed to him, as one does to a man of rank, and went on his way.

Smiling, Siddhartha watched him go. He still loved him, this faithful anxious friend. And at that moment, in that splendid hour, after his wonderful sleep, permitted with Om, how could he help but love someone and something. That was just the magic that had happened to him during his sleep and the Om in him—he loved everything, he was full of joyous love towards everything that he saw. And it seemed to him that was just why he was previously so ill—because he could love nothing and nobody.

With a smile Siddhartha watched the departing monk. His sleep had strengthened him, but he suffered great hunger for he had not eaten for two days, and the time was long past when he could ward off hunger. Troubled, yet also with laughter, he recalled

that time. He remembered that at that time he had boasted of three things to Kamala, three noble and invincible arts: fasting, waiting and thinking. These were his possessions, his power and strength, his firm staff. He had learned these three arts and nothing else during the diligent, assiduous years of his youth. Now he had lost them, he possessed none of them any more, neither fasting, nor waiting, nor thinking. He had exchanged them for the most wretched things, for the transitory, for the pleasures of the senses, for high living and riches. He had gone along a strange path. And now, it seemed that he had indeed become an ordinary person.

Siddhartha reflected on his state. He found it difficult to think; he really had no desire to, but he forced himself.

Now, he thought, that all these transitory things have slipped away from me again, I stand once more beneath the sun, as I once stood as a small child. Nothing is mine, I know nothing, I possess nothing, I have learned nothing. How strange it is! Now, when I am no longer young, when my hair is fast growing gray, when strength begins to diminish, now I am beginning again like a child. He had to smile again. Yes, his destiny was strange! He was going backwards, and now he again stood empty and naked and ignorant in the world. But he did not grieve about it; no, he even felt a great desire to laugh, to laugh at himself, to laugh at this strange foolish world!

Things are going backwards with you, he said to himself and laughed, and as he said it, his glance

lighted on the river, and he saw the river also flowing continually backwards, singing merrily. That pleased him immensely; he smiled cheerfully at the river. Was this not the river in which he had once wished to drown himself—hundreds of years ago—or had he dreamt it?

How strange his life had been, he thought. He had wandered along strange paths. As a boy I was occupied with the gods and sacrifices, as a youth with asceticism, with thinking and meditation. I was in search of Brahman and revered the eternal in Atman. As a young man I was attracted to expiation. I lived in the woods, suffered heat and cold. I learned to fast, I learned to conquer my body. I then discovered with wonder the teachings of the great Buddha. I felt knowledge and the unity of the world circulate in me like my own blood, but I also felt compelled to leave the Buddha and the great knowledge. I went and learned the pleasures of love from Kamala and busied myself from Kamaswami. I hoarded money, I squandered money, I acquired a taste for rich food, I learned to stimulate my senses. I had to spend many years like that in order to lose my intelligence, to lose the power to think, to forget about the unity of things. Is it not true, that slowly and through many deviations I changed from a man into a child? From a thinker into an ordinary person? And yet this path has been good and the bird in my breast has not died. But what a path it has been! I have had to experience so much stupidity, so many vices, so much error, so much nausea, disillusionment and sorrow, just in

order to become a child again and begin anew. But it was right that it should be so; my eyes and heart acclaim it. I had to experience despair, I had to sink to the greatest mental depths, to thoughts of suicide, in order to experience grace, to hear Om again, to sleep deeply again and to awaken refreshed again. I had to become a fool again in order to find Atman in myself. I had to sin in order to live again. Whither will my path yet lead me? This path is stupid, it goes in spirals, perhaps in circles, but whichever way it goes, I will follow it.

He was aware of a great happiness mounting within him.

Where does it come from, he asked himself? What is the reason for this feeling of happiness? Does it arise from my good long sleep which has done me so much good? Or from the word Om which I pronounced? Or because I have run away, because my flight is accomplished, because I am at last free again and stand like a child beneath the sky? Ah, how good this flight has been, this liberation! In the place from which I escaped there was always an atmosphere of pomade, spice, excess and inertia. How I hated that world of riches, carousing and playing! How I hated myself for remaining so long in that horrible world! How I hated myself, thwarted, poisoned and tormented myself, made myself old and ugly. Never again, as I once fondly imagined, will I consider that Siddhartha is clever. But one thing I have done well, which pleases me, which I must praise—I have now put an end to that self-deterioration, to that foolish