

DIE DAME SOW DEN
SCHWARZEN VORZUG IHRES
KUTSCHENFENSTERS
BESTE . . .

The Dame shoved the black curtain of her carriage window off to the side and asked, "Why don't you drive any faster? You know all that depends on my punctual arrival to the party!"

The one-legged carriage driver turned himself in his seat and bent to look at her below replying, "We've gotten tangled up in a convoy, Madam. Even I don't know how! I must have dozed off a little. In any case, suddenly there were these people here blocking the road."

The Dame leaned out the window. To her surprise, the road was in fact filled with a train of people. There were children and adults, men and women; all dressed in adventurous, pied, traveling-artist's clothing, with fantastic hats on their heads and great packs on their backs. Some rode mules, others large dogs or ostriches. Among the convoy, there were also two-wheeled cars, packed high with boxes and suitcases and covered wagons in which families sat.

"Who are you?" asked the Dame a boy in a harlequin outfit who was walking near the carriage. He had a pole over his shoulder, the other end of which was carried by an almond-eyed girl in a Chinese outfit. There was every kind of personal belonging hanging from the pole, on which a little, cold ape sat. "Are you a circus?"

"We don't know what we are," said the boy. "We are not a circus."

"Where do you come from then?" the Dame wanted to know.

"We are from the Heaven Mountains," replied the boy, "but that was long ago."

"And what did you do there?"

"It was before I was born. I was born underway."

Then an old man who carried a big lute or theorbo on his back came into the conversation.

"There we performed the *Unending Play*, fine Dame. The boy knows not such things anymore. It was a play for the sun, the moon and the stars. Each of us stood on a different mountain crest and we screamed the words to each other. It was done without end and this play held the world together. But now most of us have already forgotten it. It has already been a long time."

"Why did you stop acting it?"

"There was a great tragedy, fine Dame. One day we noticed than a *word* was missing. No one had stolen it from us and we didn't forget it. It was simply no more. But without this *word* we couldn't go on because nothing made any sense anymore. It was with that *word*, everything hung together. Do you understand, fine Dame? Since then, we have been underway, to find it anew.

". . . with that *word*, everything hung together?!" asked the Dame astounded.

"Yes," said the old man and nodded gravely, "even you, fine Dame, would have certainly noticed that the world is only composed of fragments, fragments which have nothing to do with each other. It has been this way since we lost the *word*, and the worst is that the fragments are always falling deeper into ruin, leaving less and less intact, less and less that hangs together in harmony. If we cannot find the *word*, one day the world will up and be no more! For this reason we are underway and search for it."

"Then do you believe that you will really find it one day?"

The old man did not answer, but instead sped up and passed the carriage. The girl with the almond eyes, who was now close by the Dame's window, explained timidly:

"We write the *word* in the long way in which we go, on the surface of the earth. For this reason we never stop."

"Ah," said the Dame, "then you must always know where you must go?"

"No, our bodies move on their own."

“Then who or what guides you?”

“The *word*.” answered the girl, smiling as if to excuse herself.

The Dame looked at the child from the side for a long time and asked quietly:

“Can I come with you?”

The girl went silent, smiled, and passed slowly, following the boy in front of her, the carriage.

“Stop!” called the Dame to her carriage driver. He stopped the horses, turned around, and asked:

“Do you really want to go with them, Madame?”

The Dame sat upright and was speechless, staring straight ahead. Step by step, the rest of the troop passed the carriage. After the last of them went by, the Dame climbed out and looked at the train of people until it disappeared in the distance. It began to rain a little.

“We're turning around!” she called to the carriage driver, as she climbed back in, “we're going back. I have changed my mind.”

“Thank God!” said the one-legged man, “I was starting to believe you were really going to go with them.”

“No,” answered the Dame absentmindedly, “I would be no use to them. But you and I, we can be witness to the fact that we saw them.”

The carriage driver turned the carriage around.

“May I ask a question Madam?”

“What would you like?”

“Do you believe that they will find this *word* some day?”

“When they find it,” answered the Dame, “the world will change from one hour to the next, don't you think? Who knows, perhaps we will also be witness to that someday. And now, off we go!”