

people did not dare to raise their lowered heads; eventually they did take the liberty. They by now feel themselves to be in the guise of bodiless spirits... Finally they stand up and look about them: the same familiar places, the same bright sky, the same people. An involuntary motion lifts everyone's gaze to the sky: the comet was moving away from the skyline.

II

This brought on a collective feast of the terrestrial globe. There was no tempestuous joy at this feast; nor were loud ejaculations heard! Long since had lively merriment turned for them into silent delight, into the usual round. Long since had they stepped over the obstacles preventing a human being from being a human being. The memory had already gone of the times when crude matter could laugh at the efforts of the spirit, when need gave way to necessity. The times of imperfection and prejudice had long since passed, together with human diseases. The planet was the mighty dwelling place of only the most powerful tsars, so no one was surprised at nature's magnificent feast. Everyone awaited it, for long had the premonition of it appeared to the imagination of the chosen ones in the form of a delightful vision. No one asked others anything about it; a triumphant thought shone across all faces and everyone could understand this mute eloquence. Quietly, the Earth drew near to the Sun, and an unburning warmth, like a fire of inspiration, extended across it. Just another moment – and the heavenly became the earthly, the earthly the heavenly: the Sun became the Earth and the Earth the Sun...

BEETHOVEN'S LAST QUARTET

1830 / 1844

I had not the slightest hesitation in supposing that Krespel had gone mad, but the Professor was of the contrary opinion. "There are men," he said, "whom Nature, or some peculiar destiny has robbed of that outer covering beneath which we others conceal the madness within us. They are like insects with thin integuments, whose visible play of muscles seems a deformity, though in reality it is the perfectly normal thing. What in us remains as thought, in Krespel's case is translated into action."

*Hoffmann**

IT WAS THE YEAR 1827, in spring; in one of the houses on the Viennese outskirts, a few lovers of music were performing a new quartet by Beethoven, which was hot off the press. With amazement and vexation they were following through the outrageous lurches of this genius in decline: there was such a change in his writing! The charms of original melody, filled with poetic thought, had disappeared; the exquisite finish had been transformed into the laborious pedantry of an untalented counterpointist; the fire that had previously flamed in his fast allegros and, gradually strengthening, had overflowed like boiling lava in full, huge consonances, had collapsed amid incomprehensible dissonance; and the original, light-hearted themes of the jolly minuets had been transformed into gallops and warbles, impossible on any instrument. Everywhere there were primitive, unattainable strivings towards effects that have no place in music; everywhere there was some dark feeling, not even making any sense to itself. And yet this was the same Beethoven, the very one whose name, along with those of