

Hans  
M O H R B O O K  
Literary Agency  
Dr. Mehrenwitz und Heumann  
Feldstrasse 28

Street

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F R A U L E I N T H E A

By

Charles G. Finney and Hans Natonek

Eventueller deutscher Titel:  
WIRBEL UM THEA

... And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

"Lilith" by Dante Gabriele Rosetti.

Faust: Wer ist denn das?

Mephistopheles: Betrachte sie genau! Lilith ist das.

Faust: Wer?

Mephistopheles: Adams erste Frau.

Nimm dich in acht vor ihren schönen Haaren,  
Vor diesem Schmuck, mit dem sie einzig prangt.  
Wenn sie damit den jungen Mann erlangt,  
So lässt sie ihn so bald nicht wieder fahren.

Goethe's Faust. Walpurgisnacht.

## The First Party

## 1

Heinrich Heller slouched out of bed and drew back the curtains. The desert foothills undulated into the higher mountain ranges, serene and limpid. For a moment he pretended he was seeing the scenery for the first time, transferred without travel or travail, by a magic stroke as it were, from Dachau to Arizona.

Well, there had been magic in it, but the miraculous change had not come with a single stroke. It had started in 1933, and this was 1946. This span was divided between 8 years of flight and hiding, and 5 infernal years of the concentration camp <sup>after</sup> when the Nazis had finally caught up with him, in Paris, 1941.

Heller tapped the back of his head with cautious fingers to nudge his hazy mind ~~back~~ into working order; it was a gentle, mesmeric way of telling the hideous dream stuff which still clouded his mind to go back to darkness. A habit with him now, this tapping was a reminder of those days when a Braunhond had used a rubber hose on that same pate.

How now, Obersturmbannführer Horst Klebberstroecker, part-time

torturer of Dachau? Ha, dashing Horst, accompanied by beautiful women, used to make the rounds of the KZ-camps for sadistic shows. Now a prisoner of the Russians; perhaps at the very moment in some gruesome compound between the Yenisei and the Ob, a husky Tartar would be using a rubber hose on Klebberstrecker's pate. No, rubber was short in Siberia. The Tartar would be using wood.

The faint light of a smile whisked over Heinrich Heller's face. There had been lice and near-starvation in the foul barracks of Dachau. Yet, as against the compounds of Siberia, Dachau could quite possibly seem tolerable. "Lucky me, unlucky Horst," Heinrich said to himself as he went to the shower.

"When things became unbearable I gritted my teeth another grit. When things became unbearable for handsome Adolf he blew himself to pieces. Ja, old Toothbrush now in hell, and lucky Heinrich in a palatial foothill estate in Southern Arizona."

The world had surely turned, and Heinrich Heller found it good. He sang as he stood under the shower. He sang with delight as he noted his growing corpulence that stemmed from the blandly fattening condition of the good American life. He sudsed and sang. The suds came off under the spray, and a purple, round mark with a number came to view on his left arm. He stared at it, and his song fell silent. There it was again, the stain of Dachau, lurid, indelible. His past was *branded* into his skin.

The past, the European past with all its losses was etched into this livid tatoo - wife and children, a well-paid job

as a newspaper man, fifteen years of his life, all gone. That he hadn't lost his life altogether in a gas chamber was due to the fact that he had still been good for cracking up stones in a quarry. Making little ones out of big ones, as the Americans put it.

He picked <sup>up</sup> a short-sleeved sport-shirt and hesitated. "No, better not," he muttered and took a long-sleeved one from the drawer. "You can't walk around with a visible trademark, made in Dachau."

And yet this mark of distinction had done him a lot of good, setting him aside as one of the weird elite who had survived Adolf's decree that Heinrich and all his kind should vanish from the face of the world. When Horst Klebberstrecker had <sup>inspected</sup> ~~overseen~~ the application of the caustic little brand, he had, in fact, conferred the mark which later served <sup>Heller</sup> as a passport into the promised land.

At fifty, looking younger, a greying Johnny-come-lately, Heinrich had passed gently from hand to hand, first across the ocean, then across the continent; sponsored by <sup>Rescue</sup> a committee for European intellectuals, he had <sup>been given</sup> ~~got~~ a temporary appointment as a <sup>French</sup> Instructor at the summer session of the college. This was only a part-time employment, but fortunately he landed a second job to eke out a living ~~in~~ in animated semi-solitude. Lionel McColm, the writer of best seller fame, had picked him for a double function: caretaker during the summer at Casa McColm and research worker on an 18th century <sup>French</sup> ~~historical~~ novel which Lionel was planning to write.

Lionel McColm was at breakfast in a glass-enclosed dining nook

that opened upon a magnificent scene of towering mountains and boundless desert. His luggage was piled in the stone-flagged vestibule; he was about to leave for summer in Connecticut and a trip to Paris, ~~at the same time, he was to go to the East.~~

"Sit down, sit down, Mr. Heller," said Lionel. "How did you sleep? Everything comfortable? Sit down. Dig in. When I start on a journey I always commence with a good breakfast. That was the habit of the old trail-makers who pioneered this country. I am inclined to credit our pioneering ancestors with a great deal of sound common sense. They did a lot of stupidly heroic things but they always did them on a full stomach." He forked <sup>and toast</sup> ~~a little bit of~~ pork sausage into his mouth. 991

"Yes," said Heinrich. Like any profuse talker he felt somewhat uneasy when he found himself out-talked. He looked irresolutely at the various bowls of stewed fruit, plates of sausages, juice, cereal, pepping toaster, platter of eggs, jug of coffee, ~~He~~ took a pink grapefruit in an iced cup.

"Good idea for a start," said Lionel. "Starts the bile juices to work. Have some sausage and eggs." He watched Heller with a sanguine expression of patronizing friendliness. "Gad, I'll be glad to get away from this place a while. I've been a slave to my typewriter. Did you see what Rolle wrote about me in the <sup>Magazine?</sup> Atlantic? McCalm brings all his work to an uncannily high degree of polish. <sup>Good old Rolle, he's so right.</sup> Yes, you sit here all winter and germinate ideas and set them out on paper to sprout and flourish, and then suddenly you've had enough."

"Yes," said Heinrich, impatiently waiting for the last-minute instructions for which he'd been summoned by the ~~the~~

great fictionist of history's besony heroines.

"As you know I want you to *gather* background material - footage as the movie people say before they start a picture. Anything, anything at all, relevant to Madame Pompadour and the period of Louis Quinze. Brief it out and mind the details; they are terrifically important to the historical novel: how people dressed, bathed, ate, slept; their furniture and their perfume; their plumbing if any. So forth. That is the secret of Flaubert's success; in his novel 'Salambo' he reconstructed every detail of ancient Carthage."

Heller rose to the occasion he had been impatiently waiting for. "Ah, the French <sup>l</sup>Eighteenth Century! I am a connoisseur, an amateur of this redolent and lascivious era." His long, straight nose sniffed voluptuously the scents of faded boudoirs. He expatiated upon the subject with gusto, a heavy accent and an erratic vocabulary that seemed to pick the most obsolete words <sup>to be found in</sup> ~~anywhere~~ from a thesaurus. He talked all the more to make up for not being able to talk correctly. In a way he raped the *new* English mistress and enjoyed it.

"Good," grunted Lionel. "Dig out all the spicy anecdotes you can find in these dusty French tomes. I myself am not so good at reading French texts."

"For you I shall delve into the sources which are abundant. I shall also draw from the lecherous paintings of Francois Boucher who pictured the King and his mistress in ~~a~~ sex-act although in the disguise and attire of <sup>a</sup> playful shepherd and shepherdess," said Heller, affecting what he thought was a refined Harvard

diction.

Lionel took a last gulp of coffee and got up. "I had better show you around the place a little more. Just to make sure. Ramon, the Mexican houseman, will take care of the lawn and the trees, and his wife will go over things with the vacuum and whatnot. But you know how these Mexicans are; they need supervising. The animals will be your wards. They are ~~individual~~ personalities and need individual care."

The animals, a big white tomcat, a black long-haired Persian, a Siamese, and a female Dalmatian were at that moment lounging in various attitudes in the patio.

"Most contented they look and strong," said Heinrich.

"I know it," said Lionel. "But they are treacherous things, get sick at the drop of a hat."

A notebook in hand, Heller was jotting down the names of ~~the~~ pets and their specialized diet, as Lionel led him around the terraces and <sup>the</sup> buildings, showing the switches for the cooling system and the pump, and how the swimming pool worked.

"You'll have the jeep and the station wagon, but don't touch the Cadillac," said Lionel as they stood in the garage.

"Jeep -- jeeps with a white star--" said Heinrich softly and tapped the back of his head.

"What's the matter?" asked Lionel.

"Oh nothing -- the jeep, it reminds me -- all these American jeeps swarming all over Dachau, on that day of deliverance."

"Forget it," said Lionel.

"I cannot."

They returned to the house. "Di Chiara will be around here



for some time," said Lionel. "He's a brilliant craftsman, old Italian tradition. He'll be doing the interiors of the new wing."

"I met him. He's a powerful person. It will be great to have him here," said Heinrich.

"Too bad about the trouble he has with his fiancée, <sup>the</sup> German refugee girl," said Lionel.

"Oh, I am sorry to hear that," said Heinrich ~~pleasantly~~ surprised. "Is she here?"

"No. That's the trouble. He met her in Bavaria when he was a GI over there, fell in love and wants to get her over here. Stacks of red tape in the way, of course, the usual nonsense."

On the circular driveway, Ramon was putting the luggage into <sup>the</sup> Cadillac ready to leave for the airport.

"Well, I've got to shove," said Lionel. "Uh, let's see-- oh yes - I've arranged with Baerman's market to carry you along on my charge account -- But no parties! That's an order. When you have parties things get messed up. I think that's all."

"Words fail me to utter my gratitude," said Heller truthfully. "All this grandeur... this generosity..."

"Nonsense," said Lionel. "You have now the run of the house and grounds. House has to be lived in. Shut <sup>a place</sup> ~~it~~ up and <sup>its</sup> ~~they~~ get musty. Send along reports on how you're making out with the research for the book." He thrust out his hand. "Bye, now."

"Be assured, sir, you'll find casa <sup>Pompadour</sup> ~~Maison~~ in perfect shape when you return," said Heinrich Heller. "Good-bye."

The moment of wakening, every morning, in millionfold simultaneity,

is commonplace but universal and inevitable. People emerge from the depth of sleep, ~~mostly with unconsciousness~~, facing their particular needs, problems, troubles, or anticipatory pleasures of the day ahead.

Benvenuto di Chiara, the Italian craftsman, was waking up in a very complex mood, ~~as~~ cursing mixed with delightful expectation, just as Lionel McCalm was driving away, past di Chiara's ~~guest~~ rented cottage on the curve of the hill, ~~estate~~. He awoke by reluctant degrees, calling down, when fully awake, a malediction on the wine he had drunk the night before. He wasn't in the habit of drinking to the extent of a hangover. It was his idleness of ~~as~~ a lover and artist, his yearning for a head of blond hair, that made him a seasonal drinker.

"Mea culpa," he sighed. "Perhaps Thea culpa," he punned. "What's holding her? Why isn't she coming? Why doesn't she write? Carramba - "

Under the shower he gave his hangover the cold spray treatment. There, standing gracefully in the pose of a demigod, sinewy and not too hairy, he hummed a little, and it came to him that the tune he hummed was the Giovenezza. And so relentless is memory that he spat the tune out of his mouth, cursing the shadows. These days of frenzied idleness in Rome-- that bellowing, loud-mouthed ass Il Duce. Ecco! Hung up by the heels, full of bullet holes.

A fig for old Musse! In fact, di Chiara, fretting with the Thea situation, was just venting his temper on a vicarious subject. For though the bald Fascist had been rough with the di Chiaras, Benvenuto had gotten away as a very young man,

way back in the <sup>late</sup> thirties. He had become a merchant seaman and had jumped his ship when first it hit the American shore. He had been slapped into a camp with other Italian nationals when the U.S. went to war, but had secured his release by enlisting in the American army. As a rifleman he had served under Patton in the European theatre. His record was good, and now he was an American citizen.

It was good to be an American citizen and to enjoy the vested rights of <sup>an</sup> ~~an~~ GI. But what good was it all as long as Thea wasn't here!

As he dried himself with a towel his rage rose again. The towel happened to be red, and this was enough to remind him of red tape, and thus reminded, he called down new maledictions-- this time on the American government.

First it was that foolish prohibition of fraternization which put the Fräuleins practically off limits (and there weren't enough USO entertainers and army nurses.) He had to woo Thea Giese who was hiding somewhere in the Bavarian mountains, in all secrecy. Then came the Denazification. Hell, they were all Nazis more or less, they couldn't help it. The <sup>had</sup> had <sup>NS</sup> some affair with a party bigwig, name of Klobber-something, the schöne HerSt - well, he's gone for good, and she, clever girl, <sup>with</sup> succeeded in getting cleared. Ah, her charm! Her charm will cut through the tangle of red tape. She'll charm the snooping swivel-chair bureaucrats into granting her at least a visitor's visa. Nobody can resist her beauty. And anyway, she was his fiancée - or almost - and this entitled him to bring her over.

He wasn't feeling himself that she was coming for his own sake. He needed her, and she needed him to escape her ruined homeland. It was he who was providing her path to the land of plenty. He only feared she might find ~~herself~~ a better sponsor, shrewd, calculating and ambitious as she was.

He had spent a small fortune in telegrams to the American consulate in Genoa where she was stuck, he had sent her money for the great crossing (Lionel's advance for his work was almost gone); and any day her answer to his last two cables must arrive.

Soon, under the hot stars of Arizona, he would see her again, as he had wooed her in the hideout of the Bavarian mountains. And her beauty would light up the whole desert.

He hurried to dress and get up to Casa Lionel, and await the mail delivery there.

4  
As Lionel McCalm soared away in an American Airlines plane, Larry Rimrock lay in his bachelor apartment, hating to get up. Forty-five and looking nearly sixty, he was becoming of late more and more enamored of sleep and the world of dreams. Paradoxically this was so although, or perhaps because, he had a very active job, being a journalist, an occupation that kept him awake half the night.

His thesis was simple and ironical. He was much more comfortable in bed asleep and dreaming than he was awake and faced with the <sup>tedious</sup> reality of ~~daily news~~. The things which came to him in dreams were much more fun and seemed much more valid than the things which happened to him awake. So he withdrew

into the deeper layers of listlessness. "Blessed are the drowsy ones," Nietzsche had crooned, "for they shall soon sleep." Rimrock concurred heartily.

However, he was a realist and he knew that a body in order to make a living had to get up sometime, and it might just as well be now. So Larry Rimrock got up, made his toilet, latched his bifocal glasses over his nose, slipped his dentures into his mouth, snapped his hearing aid into place and was ready to meet the world.

As he percolated coffee and toasted toast, his telephone rang. It was Heinrich Heller. ~~It~~ He had arrived, some weeks ago, on a particularly un-newsworthy day; the arrival of a former Dachau inmate had been phoned to the newspaper, and Larry, having nothing else to do, had interviewed him. He had interviewed European refugees by the dozen; it was strange but a fact that they were never in short supply. One told it to the other that Tucson was a good place to settle, much better than the big cities in the East, and so the grapevine had attracted quite a number of these homeless wanderers to the wilder climate of the desert.

With Larry Rimrock and Heinrich Heller it was a case of opposites meeting and liking each other. Heller was sturdy, pudgy and bubbling with vitality. Rimrock was lean, lank, loose-knit and morose with cynicism. Heller possessed the intellectual charm of a voluble European <sup>conferencier</sup> ~~conferencier~~. Rimrock was a taciturn listener. Heller, the displaced European Jew, admired in Rimrock the American deeply rooted in the

New World, whereas Rimreck was seeking the lure of the buried European past.

Thus was the affinity of contrasts; and these middle-aged men, stemming from such disparate beginnings, delighted in the wonder that an invisible thread had been drawn from Europe to a city in the Arizona desert and where that thread terminated they should meet and find a friendship of a depth and sympathy neither had ever experienced before.

European charm, however, can be hard to take on an American party line, ~~as~~ Rimreck could not help realizing, as Heller's chatter arched into the telephone receiver. Larry switched it from one ear to the other, and lighted a cigarette.

"Our Sir Walter Scott is gone with the wind," announced Heller.

"You ~~mean~~ <sup>mean</sup> Lionel's gone?" asked Rimreck.

"That's what I try to convey," crowed Heller and went into an act of making fun of Lionel McCalm's historical novels.

Rimreck reduced the volume of his hearing aid and then shut it ~~off~~ entirely, just waiting, while Heller was ~~rambling~~ on. When he turned on again the tiny micro he could hear, just in time, Heinrich yell, "Hallee, helle! Are you still here? Do you hear me? I just asked you if this is your Greier Tag - how do you say this in English?"

"Yes, it is my day off."

"Come out and enjoy the chateau of my patron. Di Chiara will be here, too."

"You mean you're going to throw a party the minute the great man's airborne?" asked Rimreck.

"I wouldn't call it a party," said Heller defensively. "His

lordship proscribed parties."

"How's that?"

"He told me, no parties. But friends I can invite for a little celebration, nicht wahr."

"Celebrating what?" asked Larry.

"I don't know. I just feel like celebrating. Tomorrow I must start the research. Today I'd like to be hellacious ~~hellacious~~."

"You certainly are," said Larry.

"Please come, -yes, you come, it's a beautiful place."

"Going to cook up a big dinner?" asked Larry.

"Well, I don't know. It's against the injunction--no parties; on the other hand I have the privilege of Beerman's delicatessen and super-market. There is <sup>so</sup> too much food in the refrigerator. Everything in this wonderful country is too much."

"All right, I'll be out in about an hour and help you celebrate," said Larry. "Mull the wine and truss the fowl. I like to see the festive board really grown."

"Mull? Grown? This I do not understand, Larry."

"Grown - not grown," said Larry. "It's an idiom and means plenty of drink and food."

"Oh, yes, idiom. Idioms make ~~my~~ head[s]ache[s]. But food and drinks I can arrange."

"That's the old pepper," said Rimrock. "Better hang up now, for you're on a party line. Shall I bring anything?"

"No, no! The deep freezer is groaning already."

"Okay, I'll see you, Heinrich."

Rimrock inserted himself in his Hillman Minx, applied the

starter, shifted into gear, squinted at the fuel gauge, turned a corner, slammed on his brake to avoid hitting a dog, shifted, regained speed, swerved to the left to avoid hitting a parked car, jammed on his brakes to avoid hitting a woman jaywalker -- all this done without thinking.

Then it came to his mind he had done it without thinking, and this self-consciousness spoiled the charm of the machine which is to relieve man of that burdensome thing called soul.

Out of the city, along the highway, the four lanes were whirring with continuous traffic. Trains thundered on the tracks alongside, and overhead in the trackless skies planes reared in everywhich direction.

Everybody always on the move going somewhere, Rimrock was thinking. Why are they in such a hurry? They'll arrive sooner than they want to... Yet, the mere sensation of moving counteracted pleasantly his inert breeding.

He turned off the highway onto <sup>the</sup> twisting, rock-strewn trail that Lionel McColm absolutely refused to have graded. "Cuts down the traffic this way," he said. "Fix it up and the world would beat a path to my doorstep. Nuts to that."

The great stillness of the desert swallowed the wheeze of the little car. Spiny ocotilla, cholla, yucca, ancient hermit's plants, were wrapped in the pale green light of loneliness. Loneliness, thought Rimrock, pervades even the bustling city down there, like the sea an island. People seek the desert to be left alone and yet run away from loneliness. ~~Such is man's double nature.~~

Down the climbing road came the postman in his jeep. They



waved even though they didn't know each other.

"Nor rain, nor snow," chanted Rimrock. Shifting in low gear, never yielding an inch to the steep, stubborn grade, he made the final ascent. "Speed, malice, speed," he abjured the torque. "I think I can, I can, I must - volla! I knew I could!" And he slewed the steering wheel, guiding the Minx into the safe haven of flatness near Casa Lionel's ramada.

Heller and all the animals came pouring out to greet him. Behind them, di Chiara was waving a letter.

"Such a day!" cried Heller. "She is coming! Show him the letter, di Chiara, show him!"

The Dalmatian leaped up on Rimrock and licked his face, and the assorted cats scrambled around his legs, rubbing against them, and Ramon peered out a window of the house.

"Who's coming? What's all the excitement about?" asked Rimrock.

"How can you ask!" shouted di Chiara. "The gates of hell could not prevail! She is coming!" And he thrust the letter at Rimrock's face.

"I'll explain to Larry," yelped Heller. "The red tape, phaaah! The trouble, phoooh!" His gesticulating hands danced through the air in high delight. "But first I get you drinks. Larry is thirsty from the long trip. Come in, everybody; on the terrace it's cool. Ramon! Beer!"

As they were seated and the tumult abated, Rimrock settled his bifocals more firmly on his nose and started reading. He read pretty long and finally said, "I don't read German."

"Heller does. Give him the letter," said di Chiara impatiently.

"Go ahead, Heinrich, read it aloud!"

"What for? You understand no German <sup>either</sup> anyway," said Heller testily.

"I understand a little, and I want to hear her own words just to feel how they sound," said di Chiara.

Heller plunged into the letter, reciting it in a high-pitched emotional voice, while Rimrock cut down the volume of his hearing aid.

"Signed: Thea," said Heller when he had finished the reading. "What a beautiful name."

Di Chiara nodded and beamed. "What does the letter say, quick, tell me!"

"You're a linguist, Heinrich, translate it into King James English," said Rimrock.

"Well, there I am in a hole because Thea writes - how should I say it - a rather racy vernacular, a dialect hard to translate unless you're good at American slang, and I am not," said Heller hesitatingly. "Let's see, I'll try--"

"'Big Ben, darling bum of a lever and artist, I'm flying into your muscular embrace if I get priority, what with all planes full of American Vip's -' This I do not understand - what's Vip's?"

"Big shots," said di Chiara. "Oh, she learns fast, my Thea. Go on, Heller!"

"'I'll have to take the boat, probably, because you didn't send me enough money, you no-good Benvenuto Cellini' This again I do not understand," Heller interrupted himself. "Cellini, the great Renaissance artist?"

"Sure, like him I am an universal artist, sculptor, painter, architect, inventor, engineer," said di Chiara with sincere modesty.

"Come to the point - when does she get here?" interposed Rimrock eagerly.

"Well," said Heller, "it says here, 'Serves you right, Nute, if you'll have to wait two weeks or more --'"

Benvenuto di Chiara groaned.

"'My innocence has been established by high places of the American MG --'" Heller stopped, baffled. "Innocence? What did she do?"

"She didn't do anything, you idiot," di Chiara cut in. "They just suspect everybody. She just means she's cleared."

"Ah yes, of course," said Heller. "Der Fragebogen, the questionnaire. Every refugee who comes to America is thoroughly questionnaired before he is cleared."

"You should have seen me filling out questionnaires by the dozen," said di Chiara. "Sometimes I say one thing, sometimes another. I have seen paper work in the army, and I know how it is handled. And then <sup>K</sup>news how to handle these bureaucrats. She just vamps them, plop, like that. Just a look and they melt. Of course my letters to the American High Commission and the M.G. and the Immigration office helped, too, - hundreds of letters, explaining we are betrotted, explaining <sup>W</sup>I'll provide her with a home and support -- now will you finally finish this darn'd translation!"

Heller's thin eyebrows slanted to a higher line as he went on: "'Your fool letters were as much piffle but never mind; it's me who smoothed the path to you, darling. Love conquers all obstacles. I made my way across enemy territory, so to speak, by charming ~~the~~ the higher-ups! Incidentally, I prefer

the gentlemanly way of American raping to the Russian roughness."

Di Chiara moaned again, and Rimrock switched his hearing aid to highest volume, so that he might miss not a word.

Heller gasped. "I didn't know they were that hard on refugee girls," he said stupidly.

"What's she look like, Benvenuto? Don't you have a picture of her?" asked Rimrock.

"No," answered di Chiara, "and it is very strange. I had my little camera and a roll of twelve films in it. I take twelve shots of her. In Bavarian dress, in cheese cake, and three pictures in nothing at all. So that I would have something to remember her by while I waited her coming. And not a single picture came out. The film fogged or something. Not a single picture. I think she has bewitched the camera."

"I refuse to believe it," said Heller stiffly. "I am a rationalist."

"Wait till you see her," said di Chiara. "She will bewitch you. She bewitches everybody. It only takes one look. I know --"

Heller laughed. "The time was when young women bewitched me. Now I am immune."

"Immune? hah! hah! An old man, huh?" Di Chiara roared with laughter. "The <sup>a</sup> makes old men into young ones, that is, she makes them act like young ones; at least they try--"

"From the way you talk and from the way Thea writes I'd forecast in all humility that the lady will bring along lots of excitement," said Rimrock pensively.

"A toast to Thea!" yelled di Chiara. "She'll be the rave of the town. And she'll be my inspiration. She'll be the model

for my statue -"

"What's the statue to be like?" asked Rimrock with journalistic inquisitiveness.

"This I don't know yet; but I do know that Thea is my inspiration and that's why I'm waiting for her," said di Chiara ardently. "I knew it since I first saw her. She is like a rare jewel for the possession of which a man would kill. She is like a strange drug which once you have tasted you're willing to pledge your soul for another taste."

"You are bewitched," said Heller, his confirmed sobriety yielding somewhat.

"It promises to be an interesting summer," said Rimrock, waving a can of beer.

## 5

Heinrich pattered around in a mood of high delight; he looked out over the estate and found it good. He was pleased with the way the saguaro cacti had arranged themselves like deployed infantrymen up and down the hill. Haphazard, grotesque, unuseful, those huge plants had nevertheless contrived to make an impressive pattern.

The world, said Heinrich to himself, is mine - or as nearly mine as it will ever be. Dear Lionel, sir, I thank you. I would be a churlish fool, indeed, if I did not use your generosity to the fullest. For it will not last for ever...

The chaparral cock which was the self-appointed foreman of all the birds that dwelled about the oasa leaped up on the low malpais wall and called to him querulously. "Was

"wünschen Sie?" asked Heinrich amiably. He had dubbed the bird Goebbels because of its strutting, cocky pomposity, but he liked it nonetheless.

"Chow," said Goebbels as plainly as a natural man.

"Chow?" asked Heinrich. "What is chow? Ach ja! Food! I address you in the language of Goethe and you choose to reply in American slang. As punishment I should give you nothing." But he relented, took up a long whiplike stick, peered around till he spied a lizard, slapped the lizard smartly with his stick, and held out the still wriggling reptile for Goebbels' inspection. The roadrunner gave a delighted cry and speared it from his hand.

Today is a day of full living, chuckled Heinrich; we start the celebration of Thea's arrival by feeding the birds. But what a way to feed them!

He had phoned for Rimrock to help him with the preparation for what he called the reception-and-surprise party.

"After all the build-up di Chiara had given the Fräulein I wouldn't miss the affair for anything," said Rimrock. "When is it to be?"

"Thea is supposed to arrive with <sup>the</sup> 1.15 train," said Heller as they went into the house. "At six p.m. she'll be sufficiently rested to be ready for the party."

"Have you told di Chiara?"

"Of course not," laughed Heller. "Where would the surprise be if they knew!"

"Look, Heinrich, you can't just get all the guests here, and yodel down to di Chiara 'Yee hoo! Surprise! Come and get it!'