

The Touch of the Pianist

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Book synopsis. *The Touch of the Pianist* is a novel about a New York pianist named Gabriel Goldman, whose personality is loosely based on Glenn Gould. The story unfolds in two different, although interwoven timelines of the life of the main protagonist, split apart by a fatal event, towards which the whole narrative unfolds. The past events, especially the missed touch with the love of his life and the tactile experiences with music, all thicken in the traumatic realization that the protagonist cannot touch anything or anyone without gloves – anything or anyone but his own deemonic piano. Despite the fact the the book is written as a modernistic musical novel about touch, mainly referring to its legendary predecessors (such as Mann's *Doctor Faustus*), it also humorously flirts with postmodernistic literature (especially the work of Vladimir Nabokov). The author researched touch in two scientific monographs and in this instance the novel represents the continuation of his philosophy of touch with literary means.

About the author. Mirt Komel is living, working and writing between Nova Gorica, Ljubljana, and Trieste. Studied at the University of Ljubljana in Ljubljana, obtained a Phd. in Philosophy in 2010 at the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts,

now teaching and researching at the Department of Cultural Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Author of two scientific monographs about touch and touching, *Poskus nekega dotika (An Attempt of a Touch)*, and *Sokratski dotiki (Socratic Touches)*. In 2006 he published *Mes(t)ne drame (City dramas)*, a collection of three dramas (*Srpena luna, Elizejske planjave, Neznosna zofa*), in 2008 *Luciferjev padec (Lucifer's fall)*, a dramatic poem in 10 acts, in 2009 and 2010 published two literary-philosophical travelogues, first *Sarajevski dnevnik (Sarajevo's Diary)* and then *Kahirske kaheksije (Cairo's Cohesions)*. In 2015 he published his first novel with the Goga publishing house, *Pianistov dotik (The Touch of the Pianist)*, nominated for *Kersnik* award for literature (best Slovenian novel of the previous year).

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

THE TOUCH OF THE PIANIST

Mirt Komel

I. The Daemon

Darkness. Timeless, no color, no weight, a weak emptiness without you, without me, him, anyone or anything else. It doesn't matter. The not so inevitable traces of the body's subconscious movements followed by the awakening of consciousness: pain, whiteness, pain, emptiness, pain – voices. Your own cries and moans. Your heart beats, breath, blood seeps, breath, the wound heals, breath. Light.

He awoke with his gaze on the wall and his nose in an oxygen mask in the New York hospital where they brought him at some undetermined point in the past after he had collapsed and fallen to the ground. Later they told him that he had fallen face down on the asphalt and had, understandably, injured himself, but at the same time, less understandably, had fallen into to a coma from which he was only now awakening. What was strange was that he didn't know if the first fall had caused the second, or was it the other way around?

Awakening from the fall reminded him of what everyone has experienced but no one can remember let alone relive: one's own birth, the emergence from a comfortable and heated space (full room and board in a luxury hotel) through a slimy claustrophobic door into a tearful and anxious world (only one warm meal a day provided either by your mother, and you have only one mother, and, if not, at the nearest church or mosque). Look at the sofa, lie on it, close your eyes, and relax with the thought: *better to have never been born*. But what to do when such luck comes so rarely? Most of us never fall into life. And, anyway, nobody ever said life was fair.

He was hurled into the world in the middle of the week, on a Wednesday during the restless end of the middle of the twentieth century, born into the much more restful home of a Jewish family that lived in a shamelessly grand apartment renovated in the old Renaissance style in an elegant building in the heart of Brooklyn, New York. At around the same time, three new sounds appeared in the world that had been unimagined in the previous century: the hollow pulse of a satellite in the silent universe, the cries of student protests in the western capitals of decline, and the music in the baby's head, the sound of the vocal chords of Gabriel born in the family of Goldman.

This newcomer to the world was one of one thousand forty-four children who came squalling into life on a hot August night when Mars ruled over the starry sky and Hades ruled over the shadows of the underworld, on a night when there were eight-eight traffic accidents in New York City, sixteen armed robberies, three murders, and one solitary suicide committed by a man named Michael Levy. Surprisingly few for the season, the mayor commended the fact: the heat, people are born, people die, people kill each other in such great numbers in the course of a single day that the meaning of the number pales in such a densely populated horizon, in the same way that a picture fades if your glasses fall from your nose while driving. Why would anyone count the grains of sand on the beach, the green blades of grass in a meadow, the automobiles on the highways, the print run of newspapers, or the notes of Bach's *Prelude in C Major*? It has no meaning, especially if you can't get your glasses out from under the seat.

For parents and the immediate surroundings, each newborn is infinitely less than a crowd, but at the same time infinitely more than just a number: compared to the world, a birth is a small event, but when it occurs, despite everything, it feels like a genuinely

great event in miniature. And Gabriel? Well, this was also true of him, of course. On the face of it, he was just one of many, one among others, differentiated from them only insofar as a different name was written on the tag hanging on the edge of his crib, and then, much later, on his front door. If you are lucky enough to have a front door, you know what this means.

But it escaped no one, that is nobody's ears, even the most unrefined, that his voice, in tone and color, was different from all others, so strong and distinguished that it awakened considerable embarrassment in the nurses who tended to him each day. The doctors attributed it to a deformation of his vocal chords, as they did the bruises that marked his skin, much more tender than most, to his difficult birth from a young, clearly too young, mother. The child emerged from her petite, still girlish body with great torment. The damp walls through which he entered the world held him for quite some time in a sort of limbo and the voice that was released, when he first breathed with his own lungs, withered all those who were present.

Something boiled up in his early childhood, something much stronger than the heat of that summer night, a very particular kind of heat that is present in a greater number of people than imagined by the obsolete and elitist minority who, by arbitrary decision, erects pompous monuments to the great, yet in a smaller number than the contemporary majority that perceives unrealized talent in each untalented child. In Gabriel's case, it was as if he were painting a canvas, or freeing an image from a stone, or filling a sheet of paper with black ink (from a pen in the nineteenth century, a typewriter in the twentieth, a keyboard and printer in the twenty-first). And yet something outside of him, something outside of his powers, prevented what was inside of him, the part that was more intimate than his own thoughts, from being expressed in any way that was not musical.

This external force was certainly not his parents, still less his relatives, family friends, or teachers. Despite centuries of persistent stereotypes that there wasn't a Jew who didn't have an ear for music, his family, on his father's side anyway, couldn't muster even a single remarkable musical talent, and, on his mother's side, there was only her father, an aging Russian pianist who had never managed to transcend the amateur league. The Goldman home therefore was far from a miniature music school teeming with

masters and disciples, which is often the case when one family or another produces a musician on Mozart's caliber or a somewhat lower caliber (since, of course, there is no higher).

No, there was nothing human about the external force that prevented Gabriel from expressing himself in any other way but musically; otherwise he wouldn't have been allowed to express himself at all. He was ridden in the way a merciless rider might push on his horse with a whip, not letting it sleep or relax until the animal reached the finish line, even if it died at the end of race, spent and exhausted by the effort. For the sake of truth and in the name of love for artistic deception, let the record show that, in Gabriel's case, it had to do with a daemon that fleetingly appeared on several occasions in his life as a silhouette in the middle of an illuminated play of shadows.

The first time Gabriel saw the daemon was in childhood when on the basis of a transitory experience he just barely caught sight of the image to which he attached the unshakeable presence that would accompany him throughout his life. Sometime toward the end of the night, when day had almost broken, he was awoken by an unusual sound, something that sounded like the wind blowing through a crown of leaves. Still half asleep, he followed the rustling sound into the living room where he found the daemon sitting on top of the old credenza, a sort of statue among the bric-a-brac: legs bent, hands crossed over his knees, long dark hair and even darker eyes, a painterly figure at times dead serious and determined, at times cheerful and laughing, but in general a melancholy boy, entirely human to any eye that was able to perceive it (*Daemon*, oil on canvas, 1890).

Gabriel immediately fled to his mother's bedroom and her embrace, and she carried him back to his room and sang him a lullaby, comforting herself that the child had only been dreaming, in the same way she would have said to herself – “It's just a dream!” – if she did not want to believe that some truly unusual thing existed in this world. Indeed, this is the consolation of many who experience something out of the everyday order of people and events, and then begin to doubt either their own sanity or the sanity of others (like someone on the highway who, upon hearing on the radio that a lunatic is driving on the wrong side of the road, comments: “Not just one person – everyone!”). But

it is true: you have to be a lunatic – or at least an artist – to believe in daemons who shape the fate of people in the same way that a writer shapes the fate of his characters.

In this place, I pause and offer the following as an intermediate conclusion or merely as an interjection for more sensitive readers or perhaps simply to laugh in the face of those who judge a book by the ending and rush to read the last page. I offer the assurance that this novel will not end with the death of its protagonist (although I also reserve the right, in the name of artistic caprice and freedom, to change the ending if the spirit moves me).

II. The Musical Lexicon

Gabriel's *anima* was moved from the reanimation department – both entities owing their names to Latin – and journeyed a few corridors away and several floors above in a miniature Dantesque voyage at the end of which was promised not the loss of Beatrice and the finding of God, but precisely the opposite. Similar to Dante's soul, his also travelled together with his body from which he was separated at the moment; if someone had wanted to place a telephone call to his soul, the following answer would have been received: "My soul is out at the moment – can you please call back later?"

The destination? The department for rehabilitation, which also owes its name to Latin, but in this case not to the Latin of ancient Rome but to that of the Middle Ages: *rehabilitare*, which means, as Gabriel recalled from his lessons, a return to health through therapy and training, but also a return to previously earned privileges or honors in politics, the church, the university or anywhere else where, in addition to one's position of power in the hierarchy, symbolic prestige and connections also accrued: the military, the court, the police, the fire station, the hospital, and so on and so forth to the end of the world and back to the beginning of humanity.

There is absolutely nothing divine and even less comedic about traveling with one's gaze on a ceiling on which there is an alternating dance of neon lights, ant-spotted tiles, and shiny metal pipes. Neither Doctor Virgil nor his sense of humor accompanied Gabriel, having left him at reanimation after several minutes of more or less one-sided

conversation. In his stead, the helm was taken by a coxless pair, two lively and chatty nurses whom Gabriel, drugged with who knows what legal drugs, addressed with a senseless sentence about how “sooner or later everyone bleeds at least once in his life and at least a little, not, God forbid, like Jesus, who took it way too far”; and how “each exit was a little death and each death a hasty exit just like an orgasm”; and how “far it still was until midnight, filling the time until the daemon awakes!” The two nurses, thinking this harassment was due to Gabriel being under the influence, forgave him and conveyed him to a room where, without paying a fee, they parked him in a dusty corner under a dirty window.

The home of the Goldman family was considerably more pleasant half a century ago than the rehabilitation department was in the present day. It would have been possible to visit the Goldman family home when Gabriel was not only much smaller, but also much less frightened than he was now as he lay on the bed not knowing what had happened to him. *Goldmanhaus* was not really a temple of divine *Musiké* as was, for example, the Bach household with all those musically-educated uncles, but Cecilia’s voice nevertheless provided Gabriel with the first human guidance for all musical matters. Cecilia. The attentive and musically knowledgeable reader will certainly notice how the wise and philologically educated *Prudentia* gave Gabriel’s mother the name of the ancient Roman patroness of music; and it is true that, through her, Gabriel, already in embryo, unconsciously learned the musical lexicon.

He loved to listen to his mother’s melodic voice. For him, her cheerful singing was even lovelier than her generous smile with which she graced him when she turned to him while washing the dishes; even lovelier than how she paused for an instant on the way from the kitchen to the bathroom and gently stroked his hair; even lovelier than her warm embrace when he rested on her small breasts and listened to the rhythmic beating of her heart and smelled the discreet perfume of her swanlike neck, one hand laying across her slender forearm, the other playing with her light curls.

Children are cheap plagiarists but because, they are minors, no one ever brings them before a court, and Gabriel, at least, in this way, was no exception. Day after day, he listened to his mother, how she sang as she did her chores around the house, and he tried with all the atonality of his young voice to follow the melody of her singing while at

the same time pursuing his playful childish tasks with the same zeal that his mother did her household work.

It is a funny thing, the games, especially didactic ones, that adult minds conceive for the useful little hands of children. In their adult simplicity, they imagine that children have fun when, for example, they have to search for the right geometric form within a perforated surface, not realizing that for the little Euclid it is no more fun than for the real Euclid, a university student who proved that things that are similar to one thing must be similar to each other. Children tackle most games in the same mood as they feed themselves at precisely measured intervals, but parents persevere with bites and games for the child's own good, so the little gamblers and eaters get used to both the former and the latter not so much to reach a higher good from what might seem to them irrational activities, but above all because their parents want them to.

From all the great and rich repertoire that was made available to Gabriel as a small non-speaking child (Goldman and Company as a business blossomed so much in these times that the blossoming American toy industry found fertile ground on Gabriel's carpet), he became authentically attached to only one item in the same way that all of us do not give our love freely but rather choose according to our own taste and thus tastefully discriminate. Gabriel fell in love with a tiny xylophone.

The miniature musical instrument equipped with seven rainbow-colored metal keys, arranged according to the Pythagorean scale, on which the pitch of their wood-amplified tone increased in inverse proportion to their length. The simple diatonic C-scale belonged to the flowing color spectrum where the lowest note corresponded to the darkest color, blue, and the highest note to the lightest color, yellow. This childishly simple arrangement caused Gabriel to connect a certain color with a certain note, and from then on colors would always flow into sounds and sounds would always dissolve into colors. Soon he was no longer able to see any color without hearing the corresponding tone and vice versa. When he clearly heard one tone or another, there would always appear before his eyes – whether they were open or shut – exactly the color he associated with it.

The little boy experimented on the rainbow instrument in a terribly systematic way, trying all the combinations that could possibly be made from the available notes.

First he hit all the given keys with a single stroke and then, using a decreasing number of strokes, listened to the vibrations across the boundaries of the normal hearing ear, all the way down to the quietest nothing-sounding silence that vanished with the reverberating tone of the chosen color. This procedure gradually gave birth to new experiments, which he conducted on the little instrument with the same diligence as the previous ones. Again and again, he tackled playing all possible tonal combinations, this time changing the volume, the sounds produced now divided into different nuances as he became better able to master the weight of the keystrokes, his slender little hands hurrying over the slick oval keyboard.

The nuanced combination of tones was like the ongoing mixing of colors of the painterly palette in his imagination, so soon he discovered not only the difference between various tones of blue, red, green, and others, but also the many colors in between, everything to the border of ultraviolet on the one side of the visual spectrum and infrared on the other. The game of musical colors or colored music endlessly entertained him to the point that he didn't have much interest in other games or even in nutrition, and, while playing on his xylophone, his stomach rejected the repulsive necessity of eating just as his mind did the boring placement of geometric figures on a perforated plane. Cecilia noticed how difficult it was for her son to part from his first love, and, if she had believed in Shakespeare's statement that music is the food of love, she might not have worried so much that the child, if she didn't manage to get him to eat, would die of hunger just for the sound of the tiny xylophone. If what Shakespeare said were true, she wouldn't be so burdened because she would know that Gabriel was receiving with his musical food the same pleasure and nourishment that he had received at his mother's breast: "Play on!"

Otherwise, in his earliest experience of music, Gabriel imitated his mother in another way. He always saw her happy and smiling, and it was clear to him that her constant singing contributed to her cheerful mood. From his perspective, the boy didn't see the tired face of a woman doing housework, because when she turned to him, she always sent him a smile. In the same way, he didn't see that she was concealing tears behind her smile, that she retreated from him when she was sad, or when, in an attack of

panic, she hardly knew what to do with a child who was becoming, as he grew up, increasingly uncontrollable and falling victim to terrible spells that nobody understood.

Gabriel looked at everything with a childish innocent regard: singing, as far as he could tell, had only beneficial effects; it had the miraculous power of helping to wash the dishes, do the laundry, and perform all sorts of other tasks that his mother conquered with the melody of her voice. For this reason, he also sang, either to cheer himself up when he played on his precious xylophone, or when he faced some other more difficult task, stacking blocks, or something on that order. When, for example, he had to take a wooden hammer and strike a blue triangle, pushing it into a likewise triangular-shaped opening on the coated wooden surface, he first began to sing in a tone suitable to gathering the courage needed to strike the triangle. Only then was he able to decisively swing the hammer: as if by magic – and to the great joy of the happy little musical magician – the color undulated with the swinging tone, and the shape slid into place. If at times his singing didn't work in the way he thought it should, this did not make him question musical magic, but rather the stupid game – it had been packed in the box incorrectly, something was the matter with the triangle, the wooden surface was not smooth enough, etc. – which otherwise had nothing to do with the objective geometric order of reality that existed entirely in accordance with his expectations and in which music was recognized as having greater power than all other worldly objects.

It is a well-known fact that children – especially male children who, in comparison to girls, develop with an emotional delay – paint the relationship between their mother and father in black and white colors, in which the father is assigned the dark palette, the mother the brighter one. The Viennese cigar-smoker, among others, teaches us about all of this, but unfortunately detailed instructions for use are not provided nor the colored lenses with which it would be possible to avoid such bipolar optics. Negative images are not a satisfying solution as they rely on the same logic (mother light, father dark), nor are other dramatic alternatives satisfying (the depressing life and death of the widow Jerica or the grotesque comedy of the tragic King Oedipus).

Even the little *Gabrielius Rex* found himself, entirely without willing it, in such a traditional two-colored print to which he added his own authorial nuances: he mistakenly attributed an angelic soprano which was actually more of a human mezzosoprano to the

bright glow of his mother, and he wrongly heard in his father's dark tones a *basso profundo* while an unprejudiced ear would have detected a baritone, or perhaps the even higher register of a marquis baritone. In accordance with his boyish character, Gabriel idealized his mother, her singing and dancing, her face and her figure, all with the same zeal that he despised his father's legislature in the name of which the highest law dictated that the singing must stop when the head of the family came home. Well, if we are precise, not only the head, but also the hands and the feet and all of the clutter in between without which life would be easier, although it is difficult to imagine a human being getting around without these five body parts. But, nevertheless, let us try: the legs could jump about each on its own, the hands could be pulled along by the fingers like some sort of spider with a tail, the head could roll around with the help of the tongue that would propel each new rotation with a good hard push.

Nathan Goldman, as a fully formed person with a given name and a family name and a head and all the rest, did not like singing or dancing or anything else that was remotely musical or artistic. You might well ask him what he enjoyed in life (or indeed if he enjoyed life at all). You could ask but he probably wouldn't answer, because his feelings would be hurt by the question. If he did answer, he would most likely say that he enjoyed his work, but let us put aside all this speculation and simply ask the question: "What do you enjoy in life, Mr. Goldman?" He responds in a slightly insulted tone of voice: "I enjoy my trade in canned goods, of course!" From this, it is possible to understand a little better why Nathan had always been agitated by Cecilia's useless, imperturbable, and unjustifiable singing, a miniature image of precisely the art that first and foremost has only itself as a purpose (as an artistic functionalist, subventionalist, propagandist, and all the other "ists" that in their envious selves believe whatever they want). Now it was that much worse because Nathan believed that Cecilia's singing was a bad influence on the noises made by his already problematic son – at least this was Nathan's penetrating psychological interpretation of the inner essence of the unconsciousness. In truth, it was exactly the opposite: Cecilia with her singing and in accordance with her mission as the patron saint of music taught Gabriel to master the willfulness of the voice (*nota bene* the absence of the possessive pronoun in front of the final noun).

But Nathan, like all spontaneous psychologists, especially those who visit bars and coffee houses in the late hours of the night, explained everything on the basis of his own taste. Take the Jews in the early morning hours of history, before humanity had its first cup of coffee and let out a huge yawn: these exceptionally musical, but visually untalented people, prohibited the creation of graven images, perceiving the perversity of all other peoples in this activity. The same was true of Nathan: he did not like music and, for that reason alone, music was responsible for the problematic condition of his son who was becoming an increasing threat to his delicate business etiquette. In a similar way, Nathan despised idleness and saw in it the source of all evil to the extent that he almost seemed not to belong to the chosen people, but rather to the diligent and hardworking Protestant community who believed that every blessed day was a suitable day for a new election. Eventually he hated even democrats, and democracy to him seemed guilty of the poor condition of the republic, though perhaps here the expression “hated” is something of an exaggeration, because he didn’t like democrats in the same way that he didn’t like beef, which was guilty for poor digestion and consequently the poor condition of the American soul.

Thus the Goldman *pater familias* strictly forbade music in his house, as well all of its more or less distant relatives, all variety of sounds and noises, especially when it was time for more contemplative activities (in the following hierarchical sequence ordered by the maximal use of space in the apartment): the study of the Torah, which was, because of the favorable lighting, placed on a stand by the window in his presidential, oval, managerial, and always locked office; the reading of an assortment of daily newspapers kept behind the large table in the dining room that could host up to twelve people, popular newspapers only one of which, the *Wall Street Journal*, enjoyed the status of objective truth; the exceptional motion of hands over an otherwise motionless game of chess with his friend Bauman next to the fireplace in the living room, the flames illuminating the finely carved black and white and black-white figures that seemed to come to life before the eyes of the little Gabriel who held his breath throughout the course of the game as citizens might hold their breath throughout the governance of the ruling party.

The moment that Nathan returned from work and the jangle of keys was heard in the hallway, Cecilia stopped singing and continued her work in silence. She glanced nervously toward her son, who also grew silent, and then with all the pleasantness she could muster as a good wife and with all the acting skills she had acquired during her visits to drama circles, she greeted the entrance of her husband onto the family stage. In order to protect himself from a variety of unpleasantness and to avoid tension, her little imitator faithfully copied her, most importantly in the limitation of all musical activities to the morning hours when he and his mother indulged in acting, singing, and dancing. In those hours, Cecilia sang countless songs to her son, the words and melodies of which she knew from the set of vinyl records played on the prestigious gramophone player that had the significant title – His Master’s Voice. Her husband, despite his unhappiness about her insistence on not living in silence, had bought them for her when they set up house together.

As a little boy, Gabriel grew from morning to morning with all that music around him, skillfully imitated by her mother in her singing, and in turn imitated by him in his little voice long before he even knew how to speak. Thus it happened in a completely natural way that the child learned to speak through singing and other melodic exercises, he learned to master the movement of his hands and fingers by playing on the xylophone, he learned to walk through the dances that his mother danced with him, his little hands with their oddly elongated fingers firmly held in her gentle grip. With the passage of time and the help of *Musé Musiké*, his clumsily swinging hands became, though the playing of the xylophone, masters of gesticulation, his indecipherable sounds, though singing, became formed words, his uncertain stumbling, through dance, became independent steps, and finally the young boy was able to stride out into the world beyond the walled borders of his childhood home.

Ever since he was little, Gabriel had taken little tastes of the outside world, albeit from the limited perspective of his stroller where his view onto the street lights, the facades of buildings and skyscrapers, and the clouds painting the sky was blocked by the foolishly wrinkled brows of adults making idiotic baby faces, which they continue to do for older children long past the time the children have grown out of such enjoyments. And yet how interesting the world became when he eventually was able to test his own

legs and, with the now unhindered movement of his eyes, once indistinct sounds were assigned a source! How many new voices could be directly discovered there outside, where the world so generously offered him countless images and sounds, luxuriously unfurling like a tiny rosebud on a sunny spring day; like an oyster cooked in its own sauce, spiced and served on a porcelain plate for supper; like a willing virgin to her young lover on their first shy night under the discreet shelter of the sheets. (I know, I know – but children also don't eat oysters.)

Even before he stepped out into the open, the world had revealed itself in all its promising outlines and tones in the apartment in which, in addition to his mother's singing and the radio and gramophone music, a wide variety of sounds reverberated. Above all reigned the measured tick-tocking of the clocks that never stopped and leant their rhythm as much to his xylophone exercises as to the panoply of sounds that came from outside: the ringing of the bell on the postman's bicycle in the early hours of the morning, and the accompanying barking of dogs; the rush of automobiles, speeding up and braking, the blowing of horns; the sudden clamor of a truck, its trailer or half-trailer flying over some rough part of the street; the cries of newspaper vendors calling out as enthusiastically as if the issue they waved in their hand was the last available copy; and finally the indecipherable cacophony of the voices of passersby mingling into the sonic backdrop.

In contrast to the quotidian sounds of civilization to which he quickly became accustomed and soon hardly paid attention, the sovereign rawness of mother nature's qualities as a composer enchanted him each time anew and he felt a great love for her stormy symphony throughout his life. With what pleasure did the little Jean-Jacques Goldman eavesdrop on the soft rain falling from the copper rooftop, dripping softly over his windows, to finally moisten the asphalt streets below; with what wonder did the miniature Gabriel Kant listen to the innocent raindrops as they burgeoned into a powerful storm that darkened the horizon and, in no time at all, flooded the gutters in the streets, where rubbish swirled, and soon the edges of the byways became a torrential and impassable river the deafening flow of which could be heard in the background of the falling rain; with what awe did the miniscule Martin Luther Gold retreat from the window when the storm was accompanied by thunder and lightning, and a wild wind raged

uncontrollably, turning over the dustbins, lifting up the newspapers and scraps from the street, bending the crowns of the trees down to the pavement, rattling the antennas on the rooftops, shaking the sturdy window panes, the terrifying clamor echoing through the hallways and the apartment until it seemed that the whole building, which before had seemed so strong and unconquerable, would crumble before the terrible power of the storm.