

Florian Illies

As the Sun Goes Down

The Mann family in Sanary

336 pages

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- The new book by the bestselling author – extensively researched and brilliantly told
- Over 2.9 million copies of Florian Illies's books sold
- Florian Illies titles have been translated into over 20 languages



Exiled to paradise: The dramatic summer of the Mann family in Sanary in 1933

In the sweltering summer of 1933, the political situation in Europe reaches a crisis point – and so does that of the Mann family. After an adventurous escape in June, Thomas and Katia Mann and their six children have ended up in the dreamy harbour town of Sanary on France's Mediterranean coast. Now they all find themselves stuck, with nowhere to go.

One place, one family, three months at thirty degrees – Florian Illies tells of the grief over the loss of home and possessions, the fear of the looting by the Nazis, of melancholy, defiance and passion. And of the ordeal between Klaus and Erika and their father.

A brilliant montage of the last “family showdown” before the exile: the struggle for the father's recognition, sibling rivalries, fears for the future – all against the backdrop of the political situation.

Florian Illies transforms past eras into the living present with elegance and ease. He draws surprising cross-connections between the protagonists and weaves scenes and snapshots into stirring panoramas. His international history, *1913. The Summer of the Century*, with which Illies invented a new genre, topped the SPIEGEL bestseller list for months. Born in 1971, Illies studied art history in Bonn and Oxford. He was head of the arts section of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung and ZEIT, publisher of Rowohlt Verlag, managed the Grisebach auction house and co-founded the art magazine Monopol. Today, Florian Illies is co-editor of ZEIT as well as a curator and freelance writer. S. FISCHER most recently published the epic portrait *Liebe in Zeiten des Hasses* ("Love in Times of Hate"), which has since been translated into 18 languages. His art podcast *Augen zu* (together with Giovanni di Lorenzo) is one of the most popular German-language podcasts.

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As the Sun Goes Down. The Mann family in Sanary

Translation: Simon Pare

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February

This isn't the right moment to leave Germany. The train for Amsterdam departs at 4 pm and Katia has told the chauffeur to come at a quarter past three. Why on earth have neither German railways nor his own wife considered that is precisely when he, the Nobel laureate, usually naps for an hour?

This is totally unheard-of.

Thomas Mann suppresses his anger and fishes the violet-scented handkerchief out of the inside pocket of his jacket. He doesn't unfold the square of fine silk, just dabs his forehead with it quickly and very earnestly before tucking the cloth away again with equal care.

Form is everything. It frightens him when his life gets out of control. For instance, when he cannot take his nap between four and five. When the record on the gramophone starts to rasp. When a wandering fly buzzes into his study. When he feels the signs of an impending sore throat while swallowing. All these things are a personal offence.

It is the eleventh of February 1933. Having lunch in the Mann family residence at Poschingerstrasse 1 in Munich are Thomas and Katia with their two

eldest children, Klaus and Erika. Nearby are little Elisabeth and the housekeeper, Marie Kurz, or Kurz Marie as the Bavarians would say.

It is a quiet meal, a clatter of spoons the only sound. Soup at the start of every meal, the head of the household has decreed, regarding this as a sign of his social advancement.

Three children are missing today, and they happen to be the ones whose self-confidence is most dented. Twenty-three-year-old Golo is revising for his final exams in Göttingen; Michael, 13, is at boarding school in Neubeuern, and Monika, who is 22, is currently hanging out in Berlin. How does their father feel about this? He's glad that these three are far away right now.

Katia is instructing Kurz Marie what needs packing for the forthcoming trip to Amsterdam. The luggage should be light, she says. And then please send all the winter clothes straight to Arosa.

That's right: after the lectures in Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris, the couple have decided to take a relaxing three-week holiday in Arosa, at their beloved Waldhotel where Katia has so often convalesced and whose dining room Thomas immortalized in *The Magic Mountain*. Three weeks—they intend to stay on the magic mountain for exactly the same length of time as the novel's hero, Hans Castorp, originally planned to.

After the midday meal he goes into his study to pack his briefcase; outside the winter daylight is already fading away. Thomas picks up the manuscript of the speech about the 'The Suffering and Greatness of Richard Wagner' and—getting slightly emotional about his achievements—pops it into his leather case. He adds cigars from the cooler built into the wall. Then the gliding Waterman fountain pen, and ink too. He takes the last piece of ginger cake from the bowl.

Right.

He has a brief look around.

Thinks for a second.

And then, in a final act, he deposits his current diary in the wall cabinet, adding it to the other old diaries from the past three decades, double-locks it and then—even he doesn't know why—drops the key into the inside pocket of his briefcase to take with him on his travels.

The tall stack with the manuscript of the third volume of *Joseph and His Brothers* he is currently working on: this he leaves behind. He intends to resume work on it after his trip.

Last, he takes a few measured steps over to the corner of the room, where the large black-and-gold pendulum clock has been ticking on top of the rosewood cabinet for two decades. An old family heirloom from Lübeck. He wonders for a second whether it is really a good idea to wind it up again just before he leaves, but then he decides to perform this orderly task all the same. His face a picture of sacred seriousness, he tugs the cord until the mechanism stirs into motion. The large room is filled with the metallic rhythm he adores. The clock is ticking.

As he opens his desktop calendar to 11 February and Katia reminds her 'Tommy' from out in the hall that it is time to leave, he remembers with a jolt that today is his wedding anniversary, yes indeed, 11 February 1905, 28 years ago today, how on earth could he have forgotten. With fondness he thinks of Katia, who will certainly not have forgotten but has been discreet enough not to remind him of

his slip-up just yet. He goes out into the hallway and looks at her tenderly, more tenderly than usual, and she understands what that look means.

Elisabeth, his favourite child, comes down from her room and briefly snuggles up to him. He gives his 'Medi' a farewell kiss on the top of her head. She is to come as speedily as possible to join her parents in Arosa when they get there ten days from now. And then, at last, Thomas puts on his coat, scarf and hat, one after the other. Muschi, the small, white Maltese dog with the silly middle parting, rubs impatiently against his leg, unwilling to see her master go, and yaps a few times. 'Be quiet!' Thomas Mann cries in irritation and asks Kurz Marie to pick up the dog so it won't run after them.

'Qui-et'—he always splits the word neatly into two syllables when angered by an unnecessary disruption of his routine. Then everyone in the house, even the dog, knows he mustn't be trifled with any more.

Thomas Mann pulls the front door of the house in Munich shut behind him with north German decisiveness, and then he and Katia walk down the few steps to the edge of the drive, where Hans Holzner, the chauffeur, is waiting for them, engine running, in the Horch.

*

What about Klaus and Erika? They are relieved that their parents are finally off.

With them the day before was Annemarie Schwarzenbach—the serious, rich Swiss friend with the angelic features. She brought Thomas and Katia fresh flowers and Klaus and Erika fresh drugs. Now 'Mielein' and 'Pielein' have finally driven off to the station, they can finally take them. Klaus had popped out to the pharmacy specially just before to get some distilled water, but nevertheless they have the same old problems with filling the syringe from the vial, tying off their arm and injecting. Complicated, the whole thing, but as Klaus notes with relief in his diary that night: 'Effective all the same.'

In the evening Erika and Klaus sit in front of the radio in the hall at home, listening in torment to the speeches at the Nazi rally in the Sportpalast in Berlin. Here too: effective all the same. To dampen the effect of the broadcast, Klaus leafs with rapt attention through an illustrated book titled *The Beauty of Man* containing pictures of Greek sculptures. How magnificent the male bodies are. Not that this helps much, though: at night, Klaus is pursued in his dreams by hordes of decidedly unattractive SS soldiers.

*

On 21 February, a mere ten days after the Manns leave Germany, Heinrich Mann, Thomas's older brother, boards a westbound train at the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin. He isn't setting out on a lecture tour: the 61-year-old is emigrating, even if he initially only buys a ticket to Frankfurt so as not to set off any alarm bells. He dresses up as a travelling salesman—fortunately, he couldn't look more like one in his overly formal suits, his stiff tie and the impeccable creases in his trousers. Nobody must notice the true destination of this author and permanent prophet of

doom, which is why his only luggage is the umbrella tucked under his arm. Heinrich is terrified of being arrested on the platform or at the border. All too often he has sympathized with the socialists, and he has recently signed an 'Urgent Appeal for Unity' by the International Socialist Militant League ahead of the March elections. This enraged the Nazi press, and he has just been forced from his position as the president of the literary division of the Prussian Academy of Arts. He occupied that position for two years, but now he and his opinions are no longer in step with the new zeitgeist, an age of conformity with the regime's commands. Every time he entered the Academy, all he could hear were whispers behind his back. Until one day at a reception the French ambassador, André François-Poncet, whispers a word of warning to him. Heinrich knows that his time in Germany is up.

The very next morning, Nelly Kröger, his vivacious 35-year-old partner, whom he met three years ago when she was working as a 'hostess' at the disreputable Bajadere bar on Wittenbergplatz, packed two suits and some linen at the flat at Fasanenstrasse 61 where they have recently moved in together. She has placed the suitcase discreetly on the luggage rack of Heinrich's compartment before the train pulls out of the station.

'Adieu, Heini mine,' she whispers in his ear on the platform—she really does call him 'Heini' as if the field he cultivates was a hectare of turnips and not the heights of German literary life. But he is comfortable with this: 'one must savour the social mismatch,' he wrote in a declaration of his love for the louche ladyfolk to whom he remains addicted his whole life. Nelly weeps on the platform and asks him when they will see each other again. 'Tomorrow?' she wonders.

He gives her a tender smile and replies, 'The day after tomorrow.'

After saying goodbye to Nelly, Heinrich roams around the platform with nothing but the umbrella in his hand. His ticket is only valid to Frankfurt, but from

there the newly dismissed president of the literary division of the Prussian Academy of Arts, the author of *The Loyal Subject* and *Small Town Tyrant*, plans to travel straight on to France.

He stays overnight in a simple hotel in Frankfurt, walks back to the station at the crack of dawn and takes the first train to Karlsruhe and then on to the border town of Kehl. There he disembarks and removes his suitcase from the luggage rack with calculated nonchalance.

Heinrich Mann is afraid of being carefully checked on a train and so he feels safer leaving Germany on foot. His hunch proves correct: the official on the German end of the bridge over the Rhine is daydreaming in the early morning sun and stamps Mann's passport without comment.

Heinrich walks on, bidding farewell to the cast-iron statue of Father Rhine and tipping his cap. He tries to amble across the 234-metre span as if he were out on a short stroll. All the time, he gets more and more tense.

Beneath him the broad river flows quietly and serenely on.

He greets the border guard on the far side, in Strasbourg, in perfect French. No, he has nothing to declare, he says, he just means to relax for a few days. He receives a French stamp in his German passport, then takes a few more steps as if it were the most natural thing in the world. With his umbrella still firmly wedged under his arm, he gazes up in disbelief at the sun, which is suddenly French.

Heinrich Mann has made it.

During a wait at the post office, he notes in his pocket calendar a single word for 21 February: 'Departed.' Then he sends a relieved telegram to Sanary-sur-Mer in southern France to his friend Wilhelm Herzog, who went into

exile a week earlier. Next, Heinrich gets back on a train, but this one will carry him to Paris. That same day the German newspapers announced the end of his time as head of literature at the Prussian Academy. 'Good riddance to one dreaded Heinrich,' the *Völkischer Beobachter* thundered after him.

*

From his very first months in exile, Thomas Mann wavers enormously. Dizzily so.

Initially, it's about where they're going to live. Almost every week Thomas Mann has a new idea of where—to use a favourite phrase of his—they could make their 'fixed abode'. First it's Zurich, then Innsbruck, then Berne. Next—and this time Thomas Mann is absolutely convinced—it has to be Basel, as there he would be closest to the German and humanist traditions. Or maybe Vienna? Then someone suggests Bolzano because it has a touch of Munich about it, and so he immediately changes tack: Bolzano, yes, they really should consider it. Thomas Mann also immediately puts this down in writing to René Schickele in Sanary. But Mann's friend writes: No, Sanary is the perfect spot, at least for the summer, as a temporary home.

All right. And then at the Grand Hôtel in Bandol, two evenings before their scheduled move to this place Sanary, Katia gets scared that the heat down here in the south might actually be too much for her husband because Thomas Mann is feeling weak and sick. Maybe they should look for a house in Normandy or Brittany instead? Not a bad idea, Thomas Mann thinks, but he is far too exhausted

from months of toing and froing to change direction again, and so, thank goodness, they stick with Sanary for now. Nevertheless, no sooner have they moved into the pretty villa called La Tranquille than the manoeuvring starts all over again. Where should they spend the winter, he asks himself, his wife and their children—in Nice, perhaps; yes, Nice would probably be best, and his brother Heinrich wants to go back there as well. Or Zurich after all? Erika pushes for Zurich, and maybe she's right?

Thomas Mann wavers.

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And Thomas Mann stays silent. It is not just a stable geographical position that he urgently needs; he's in need of a moral one too. And this second matter is almost harder because, unlike a villa, you can't just rent a stance for a summer.

The problem is that Thomas Mann regards himself as the true representative of German culture—but he isn't in Germany. And as for the people in Germany who see themselves as even truer representatives of German culture—he despises them. In his diaries he is unsparing in his disgust and revulsion for the Nazis, but he is very sparing when it comes to taking a clear public stance, because what sort of 'German revolution' can drive 'minds like me' out of the country? And yet, the waverer writes, 'even the most dreadfully turbid Germany is still a great thing'. He proudly records in his diary a letter from Käthe Hamburger certifying 'that as an artist and a man, you are still viewed as the

leader of the German intellectual tradition'. Helplessly he wonders: In whose view is that?

René Schickele sums up his friend's situation most concisely: 'Thomas is very unhappy. He feels like most Germans of his generation. They see full well what is going on and what is coming, but they won't actually acknowledge it because it is inconceivably mad, in particular because they won't admit that they have lost their fatherland.' Yes, Thomas senses in the spring already what kind of signal his remaining abroad sends, but 'one does not feel completely at home in the company of the people who are abroad, that man Kerr, Tucholski, etc.' Because they're all journalists and persecuted on account of being Jewish, and he feels superior to them all as the son of a Lübeck senator and a Nobel laureate. And: 'If there's one person who really doesn't have it in him to be a martyr, it's Thomas Mann,' René Schickele says.

Heinrich Mann is very different: he accepts exile, sees events in Germany as confirming his worst fears and speaks up now from abroad. His nephew Golo Mann is impressed—and he compares his uncle with his father after following another of their daily discussions: 'I really feel sorry for Heinrich; he bears his fate with dignity, even with charm, not fussing like a woman over his hurts or seeing insults everywhere like the old man.' With the word 'insults' the sensitive son has perfectly encapsulated how Thomas Mann perceived the early days of the Nazi dictatorship: as a personal offence.

Thomas Mann reads every day in letters and newspapers from Germany that the atrocities are growing, the judicial system is being dismantled and liberal newspapers shut down. The horrors in his homeland very audible to him at La Tranquille on its lovely hill.

During this phase of irritation and fundamental uncertainty, two very different forces begin to act upon Thomas Mann. In one camp are his children Erika and Klaus (and Golo too, up to a point), who signal to him ever less subtly that he must commit to exile and to a life outside the Reich, that he must side loudly and clearly with the émigrés.

And in the other camp is his lily-livered publisher, Gottfried Bermann Fischer, who phones him, visits and sweet-talks him: It will all calm down again; it isn't half as bad, whatever you do, please don't make any political statements that might jeopardize the publication of the first volume of the Joseph series in the autumn. And Bermann Fischer knows how much his author cares about not leaving his loyal readership back home in the lurch.

But Thomas has a growing sense of foreboding, a suspicion that he's being manipulated by the publisher, who is trapped in the middle and even tries to buttonhole Klaus in Paris. He notes: 'Worried that B. is trying to involve me in the publishing house's coordination with the regime ...'

Thomas Mann is completely lost. While still in Bandol, he receives—as has only recently been established—a letter from his childhood friend Otto Grautoff. Its reception isn't marked in Mann's diary, even though he records everything there, right down to payment reminders from the electricity company. Yet this letter is obviously too embarrassing for him—due to the sender, who brings back memories of his youth and of medical attempts to correct his homosexuality. And, equally importantly, due to the letter's contents: 'I wrote to Thomas Mann who spent the first months as an émigré in Bandol after being stripped of his rights in Munich,' Grautoff writes in his unpublished memoirs. He goes on: 'I appealed to him. I urged him to raise his voice in defence of freedom, truth and justice, in defence of Germany's cultural legacy, whose custodian he had often boasted of

being. No answer. What a moral heavyweight the German émigré community would have gained!

But it didn't. Thomas Mann feels that everything is far too knotty for him to be able to act with a specific purpose. Like a case worker, he notes: 'My mind feels overwhelmed at times by the political complexities amalgamated with my own personal issues.'

Yes. No. Maybe. It will be a few years before Thomas Mann manages to sever this Gordian knot in America by simply declaring himself the German republic in those famous words of his: 'German culture is where I am.' Here in Sanary, in these June days, when everything is a messily amalgamated, the watchword is: No-man's land is where I am.

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It is Erika who eventually saves half of the Manns' furnishings from the house in Poschingerstrasse. She has made it her ambition to deceive the Nazi authorities and so on 30 July in Sanary she and her parents hatch a complex plan, which now, in mid-August, she puts into action. Once the Taylors have moved out on 10 August because they're annoyed that Ida Herz keeps bumbling around the library looking for books, they cannot trust Kurz Marie, and they are bothered by the political tensions that hang in the air of this villa, Erika begins to execute her master plan from Zurich. In its precision it is worthy of an overseas intelligence operation.

To fetch the remaining books and furniture from Poschingerstrasse 1, the grain merchant and haulier Richard Ludwig Tennenbaum of Freigutstrasse 12, Zurich is furnished with bogus documents apparently designed to simulate a house purchase with a fake mortgage.

The linen, the silver, the sculptures and the paintings are to be transported from Munich to Badweiler in the state of Baden-Württemberg. This is the registered address of René Schickele, the new friend from Sanary, who signed papers and gave papers to Erika on 30 July, according to which the items at Poschingerstrasse are actually his 'removal items'. Since he is a French citizen, they can exploit this ruse to make it from Badenweiler across the German border into Switzerland, which the bogus documents mention as Schickele's final destination. Erika writes to her mother on 8 August from Zurich: 'The day after tomorrow, an agent is travelling to Munichtown with precise instructions, super-precise ones. All attempts should be made to extricate the instrument as well. Wouldn't it be funny if so, ohohoh, unbidden, we could pull this thing off.'

And on 15 August, they do indeed pull the thing off. The large-scale deception works, Tennenbaum's people load up his lorries—but when they go to Max-Joseph-Strasse 2 to collect Thomas Mann's most precious books that Hans Feist, aka 'Foggy', the friend to whom we bade farewell earlier in this book, had brought home for safekeeping back in June, he isn't there. They ring the bell and wait, and Grandmother Hedwig rings up every place Foggy could conceivably be—but he has vanished; he is, as Hedwig writes to Katia, 'untraceable'. And so, on the evening of 15 August, the hauliers have to set off without the precious cargo from Feist's flat. Yet what they have in their two lorries is already spectacular enough—not just the library but Thomas Mann's large mahogany desk, his leather armchair, his gramophone, the records to go with it . . . and—extremely important—his yellow silk quilt, which he always wraps around his legs when he

sits in the armchair reading. They did leave the Hermes figure in the garden behind, though; they mean to set out on their long journey without the god of travel, and the Manns probably believe that Hermes can look after himself.

Last but not least, the two lorries stop by at the Pringsheims, who are tearfully packing up their own belongings, but have managed to rescue their daughter's and son-in-law's artworks. And so the family's paintings are also loaded up in the Arcisstrasse to be transported to Switzerland. They include the portrait of Katia that Franz von Lenbach painted in 1892, the young male bathers from Thomas Mann's study, and—the father asks after it over and over again—the bust of Medi, sculpted by Hans Schweigerle in 1925, that had stood on the left-hand side of Thomas's desk.

As early as 17 August, Thomas Mann is able to report disbelievingly in his diary: 'The export seems to have been a success. Over 40 boxes, the entire library . . . have arrived in Zurich. The silver, the china, . . . furniture have departed for Badenweiler to be forwarded as removal items . . . The idea that I will be back between my desk and my reading chair in the near future and have the gramophone again is agreeable, cheering even.'

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One of the fondest memories that all the settlers will retain of Sanary are the readings in the author's gardens on summer evenings. On 17 August, for example, Thomas Mann invites his friends to the garden of La Tranquille—he intends to read 'The Wedding' section from his manuscript of *Joseph and His*

Brothers. More than 20 friends have come, the air is heavy with an Egyptian heat, as befits the subject matter. The tree frogs are croaking and the mosquitoes buzzing as the guests' cars trundle up the hill and park, one after the other, under the tall pines.

Medi and Bibi lead the guests around the side of the house to the garden, where everything has been set up for the reading. The small terrace behind the house acts as a podium. On the scorched lawn in front of it, all the chairs in the house stand in lines, and beside them two picnic blankets have been spread out for the children to sit on.

When Erika is at home, she stands next to her father during the readings and turns the pages of the manuscript for him. Today it is Katia's task.

The magician is an excellent reader—and he loves being able to savour his own words again like this and identify where it sounds too saccharine and which passages could do with a touch more salt or even some spicing up. Sometimes he reads in a quiet voice, at others with vim, and a smile flickers across his face when one of his monster sentences finally concludes with a verb, long after his audience has given up the wait. Not only that, though. He repeatedly conjures up a verb that no one has expected because it seems to belong to a completely different linguistic sphere; he has been dusting it off for so long that it fills the last place before the full stop of one of his endless sentences as naturally as if this had always been its destiny.

As he reads aloud, Thomas Mann smokes a cigar, on which he draws with delectation during the pauses between paragraphs. He always holds his head at a slight slant, tilted to one side with apparent tiredness. And underneath the white tablecloth that Katia has draped over his desk the guests see the white summer shoe on his right foot wagging wondrously to the rhythm of his words.

When he reads about the nuptial chamber 'in which it blew and drew, for the night wind poured through the window hatches under the ceiling and out again through the hatches on the courtyard side', the children couldn't help laughing. What Jacob experiences in that distant Egyptian palace aeons ago in their father's telling is quite clearly the annoying night-time draught about which their father complains so frequently at La Tranquille.

And when he speaks of Jacob's love for Rachel, his wife has to stifle a sob. The resilient woman almost has tears in her eyes.

How enchantingly her husband describes the moment when Rachel is at last able to snuggle up to her husband on their wedding night: 'That is love when it is complete: affection and lust, all in one.' That is what it is like between the two of them, she thinks, between her Tommy and herself, despite the many confusions.

In the novel her husband also has his Jacob speak many times about 'desire' and 'a tensing of virility', which is probably very important to readers, she tells herself. And Heinrich likes it very much, and his Nelly enjoys it even more, of course.

For her, on the other hand, the most important thing is the spiritual bond between the lovers that Thomas Mann evokes in his book. He himself, he later confesses in his diary, is 'moved to tears' when he reads his stories about Rachel, because: 'It is here that the character's origins in my relationship with K. are involved. It is not for nothing that she too loves the story of Jacob and Rachel so much. She recognizes it as the idealized, mythical representation of our life together.'

When, surrounded by elated and spellbound listeners on this summer evening, Thomas reaches the passage where Jacob is finally poised to lift the

bride's veil, his eyes linger on his wife for a second longer than usual. Because only they know that Tommy has smuggled the enduring pet name of their marriage into the biblical story: 'Here, my doe,' are the words he puts in Jacob's mouth.

The doe at his side gives a bashful little smile that no one but the reader notices.

Then: wild applause, champagne and some chicken salad.

'People seemed very enamoured,' Thomas Mann writes the next day to his publisher Gottfried Bermann Fischer about the first reading from his new book. His doe regards this as a huge understatement.

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One of the last peaceful evenings at La Tranquille. The smaller children are in their rooms, the father is having a rest upstairs or gazing at the stars, only Golo and his semi-recovered mother are still out on the veranda with drinks, hers a cup of lime-blossom tea, his, a glass of wine. There is barely a breath of wind, the moon is a fine crescent against the firmament. all is quiet, the only sound some dogs barking in the distance, and an occasional mosquito approaches with an excruciating buzz. Katia and Golo bat them away. This is it then: in a couple of weeks this grand summer will be over and the awful packing will begin again—packing not to arrive somewhere, but to travel to the next temporary home. Katia lets out a loud sigh. Golo stares at her for a long time, sees her features outlined somewhat starkly by the candlelight and is silently aghast at how she has aged in the last six months. Exile has taken more of a physical toll on

her than on his father. It is, Golo thinks, revulsion at what is going on in Germany that stokes her rage, fear for her parents in Munich, and now his father's looming rift with Klaus. Her voice is heavy with sadness and laden with anger. Suddenly she asks him, beseeches him almost: 'When will deliverance come, Golo?'

His answer: 'Not any time soon.'

*

At night Golo is plagued by 'evil nightmares in which certain rooms in the house in Munich play a part'. The next morning a French friend of Heinrich Mann's and Hermann Kesten's comes to Sanary. The four of them spend lunchtime and then the afternoon in the cafés among all the exiled Germans who utter amiable hellos and then put their heads together to complain, and in the evening this friend gives Golo an urgent piece of advice: 'He was revolted by the émigrés' conversation, the kind we have every day, and suggested that I should get the hell out of here—he's surely right.'

*

Thomas and Katia make their farewell tour of Sanary. There's a surprise as he says goodbye to his brother: Heinrich is extremely emotional when he comes up to La Tranquille for the last time. He tells Thomas that he will miss him. And the

younger brother notes in his diary that evening that he is 'genuinely touched . . . by his sorrow at our departure'.

When Thomas and Katia and their four children start packing, Heinrich and his Nelly do the same at their guesthouse in Bandol; they don't want to be the only members of the family to hang around, and so they have reserved a room at the Hôtel du Louvre in Nice by phone. The departing Golo writes more warm words about his uncle in his diary: 'Heinrich can only be described as a particularly nice man.'

Sanary is incredibly busy this September, as émigré circles are supplemented by visitors from Paris and summer guests from Germany who aren't even on the run but simply wish to bask in some late-summer warmth. One person who comes by is Franz Beidler, one of Richard Wagner's grandsons; and arriving from Düsseldorf, in a turnup for the books, are Werner Hauser and his wife, the parents of the legendary 'Kläuschen Hauser', Thomas Mann's last crush, the boy he had those intense dreams about in Bandol back in June.

Lisa Marchesani also seems especially attached to the Manns during their final days in Sanary. She drops in for tea almost every other afternoon, sometimes with Sibylle, sometimes without, or they meet up at the seafront cafés. She even invites them to her house once, which is where they have an unexpected encounter with Charlotte Wolff, a doctor freshly escaped from Berlin, who has come to Sanary with her girlfriend, Helen Hessel. Lisa Marchesani has no inkling that her Nori is ticking off the hotels along the Riviera at that very same moment with Doris von Schönthan of all people, the woman who had enjoyed a most intimate relationship with Hessel's famous husband, Franz. Mind you, she need only ask Charlotte Wolff, because she apparently knows everything.

The settlers—led by Maria Huxley, with whom she will become close friends—instantly fall under Charlotte's spell because she is versed in the art of palmistry. Everyone shows her their hands, turning them over and hoping for a benevolent reading of their existing lines and a promising interpretation of their future paths. Charlotte later described how Thomas and Katia had held their hands under her nose in anticipation one warm September evening, but she has kept what she saw there under wraps.

Nor does Thomas Mann offer any comment on this thrilling summer event, acting the party-pooper once again: 'We left early enough at my request, half past ten, and drank some lime-blossom tea at home.'

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It is incredibly hard to come to a verdict on Thomas Mann's silence during the scorching summer of 1933. As a result, commentators have for decades voiced opinions based on their personal beliefs, at a particular moment in time and dictated by their particular temperament, one dogmatic, the next scholastic, some providing explanations, others, none. One opinion, voiced from within the family or the émigré community, will be reproachful; a second will be sympathetic, out of unquestioning adulation for Thomas Mann or with sober understanding for his desire not to lose his publisher S. Fischer and his established German readership so that he could still publish *Joseph and His Brothers* there.

All too often, though, the great book itself is forgotten, despite its being the focus of everything. Disguised as a story about the Old Testament, it contains an

explicit message about the present; it is an attempt to 'stand up to the times and their demons', as Thomas Mann writes to Hermann Hesse. In a letter to Bermann Fischer, the author drew neat Hebrew letters on the writing paper with his fountain pen as a proposed cover illustration for the book—which would have amounted to active resistance in the first year of the Nazis' wild demagoguery and bestial atrocities against anyone and anything Jewish. Bermann Fischer, however, closes this down, responding that he has long since commissioned a different illustrator.

When the book comes out that autumn—in a Germany firmly under Nazi control—it is the Jewish newspapers in particular that hear and gratefully register the hidden message, for example Julius Bab in the *CV-Zeitung*, a journal of German and Jewish culture, which is still permitted to publish in 1933: 'It is a curious coincidence that just as Germany's ruling force sets about largely excluding the Jews from contributing to our national culture, a book is published in which a world-famous German author undertakes to reimagine a fundamental theme of the Jewish tradition.'

'Deep is the well of the past', Thomas Mann writes at the very beginning of *Joseph and His Brothers* before directly appending the fundamental question: 'Should we not call it bottomless?'

The same probably applies to a moral judgement of Thomas Mann in the summer of 1933 and his novel *The Stories of Jacob*, which, deliberately or unwittingly, becomes a form of silent resistance that autumn, a 'Jewish book' sent from French exile, a well-disguised Trojan horse suddenly let loose in Nazi Germany.

In his novel *The Beloved Returns: Lotte in Weimar* a few years later, Thomas Mann puts words into Goethe's mouth that must have been running through his mind in Sanary that summer: 'They think that they are Germany—but I am. Let the

new perish root and branch, it will survive in me. Do your best to fend me off, still I stand for you. But the thing is, I was born far more apt for appeasement than for tragedy.'

Someone who has survived a tragedy cannot have been its hero.

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The trial for the Reichstag fire on 27 February begins in Leipzig on 21 September, and it is followed feverishly around the world and by the émigrés in Sanary. Brecht and Zweig and Feuchtwanger and Schickele and the Manns sit in the quayside cafés the next day, reading every newspaper they can lay their hands on. The Nazis are clearly still interested in giving an impression that they support the rule of law and probity, as the Communist defendants are assigned court-appointed German lawyers with letters after their names, and 82 international reporters are accredited.

The blame for the fire that the Nazis themselves started at the symbolic home of German democracy is being absurdly laid at the door of the chairman of the Communist parliamentary party, Ernst Torgler, the Bulgarian communists Georgi Dimitrov, Blagoy Popov and Vasil Tanev and the alleged ringleader, a Dutchman called Marinus van der Lubbe, who was—conveniently, for propaganda purposes— arrested near the Reichstag in the immediate aftermath of the blaze. The papers feature a troubling photo of van der Lubbe on 22 September: instead of fear, there is drug-induced bliss in the eyes of the accused. 'Lubbe's very strange laugh', Klaus Mann notes with concern when he sees the front pages in

Zurich, 'could provide the headline for a reflection on the whole case.' And his father, whose thoughts are once more entirely in tune with his son's, views the whole thing like a play: 'After six months of preparation, the Reichstag-fire trial is being staged in Leipzig today. A disgusting scene.' And here is what he writes a day later, still haunted by the sense of watching the performance of a grotesque German drama from his seat abroad: 'One wonders how it is possible to spare a single thought for all these crude and stupid machinations by subservient individuals.'