

Jo Lendle

A Kind of Family

[Eine Art Familie]

Outline + Sample Translation



Literary Fiction

Penguin Verlag, 368 pages, August 2021

"It's the story of a German family. My own, as it happens." *Jo Lendle*

You don't choose the times you are born into, that shape you. As is case with Lud and Alma. Lud, born in 1899, and his brother Wilhelm adore Bach and Hölderlin and share the same unattainable ideals. Wilhelm, who joins the National Socialist Party at an early age, measures others by them, Lud himself, which leaves him struggling with himself throughout his life. Alma lost her parents when she was still a child. Her godfather Lud, little older than herself, and his housekeeper will become a kind of family to her. A professor of pharmacology, Lud researches sleep and how to induce it. While he spends his days at the university, Alma can't stop thinking about him at home. When he begins to research poison gas, he tells her nothing about it. His struggle with noble ideals becomes more desperate. For there is also Gerhard, at whose side he fought in the First World War, whom he cannot get out of his mind.

Jo Lendle's cleverly narrated novel about the breakup of a family, about guilt, about science and its relationship to the world, and about the subtle differences between sleep, anesthesia, and death takes us from the German Empire through National Socialism and the young GDR to the post-war Federal Republic. It is the story of a German family - his own, as it happens.

Jo Lendle was born in 1968. After studying cultural education and animation culturelle, he joined the German Literature Institute in Leipzig, edited the literary magazine Edit and has been a visiting professor and lecturer at several universities. He was awarded the Leipzig Promotion Prize for Literature in 1997. Since January 2014 he is head of the Hanser publishing house.

Sample Translation

by Katy Derbyshire

You may well have heard of the inspector general's assassination. A lesser-known detail is that one of the bullets missed its target and flew on across the Inspectorate General courtyard, through that September morning in 1912 and across to the guard of honour lined up on the opposite side. The fact of this stray bullet later faded into the background, since the assassin's other projectiles hit their target and thus all eyes were on the dying inspector. He writhed on the floor of the open carriage, the horses bolting at the sound of the shots, the guardsmen shouting, the inspector general screaming, the coachman yelling to call his beasts to sense – but sense is far from standard in such a moment, either in the body of a horse or in a startled castle courtyard. A long row of guardsmen chased after the coach, pursued by the military police, the gentlemen of the fire brigade, then the small medical brigade and finally, with his yellowish leather bag, the inspector general's personal medic, buttoning his tunic as he ran. He had an inkling he would come too late, what with the blood running out of the carriage onto the sand in the inspectorate general's courtyard. Every drop that fell, the medic knew as he panted after the carriage, was one essential drop less inside the inspector's body.

A single guardsman was not running with his fellow soldiers. There could be no accusation made against him: he lay still at the foot of the wall by the castle gate – on his belly, his head turned to one side, eyes and mouth open as though looking back over his shoulder at something nobody could see, least of all him.

He was the first victim of the assassination, though he would barely be mentioned later. His name was Stanislaw Grau; he appeared only marginally in the newspapers, as evidence of the assassin's cowardice, having ambushed his target and taken the sacrifice of an innocent guardsman into account. There were many assassinations in those days, and one was as cowardly as the next. It took them some time to spot Grau in all the agitation, being too busy attempting to keep the inspector general alive by means of emergency surgery, even once his body had cast off all signs of life. The castle basement still housed a makeshift field hospital from the last war, where the inspector lay on a stretcher, the medic's uniform jacket draped over the patient to prevent his temperature from falling, the previously yellowish doctor's bag at the foot of

the bed now stained with blood, the medic himself working mutely inside the body of the dying or dead inspector, encircled by assistants and administrators, who were sent on regularly sorties to the advisors and liaison officers, reporters and correspondents crowding outside the makeshift surgery with bated breath, all the way out to the courtyard and down to the ferry, where they mingled with the common spectators. In those never-ending moments, no one thought to seek out possible relatives of the casualty.

And so it came that Louise Grau did not read of her husband's death until she returned from the office. Rain had set in and she had bought the evening edition from a newspaper boy at the stop just as her tram approached across Kyffhäuserplatz. Raindrops ran down the carriage windows, leaving tracks in the dirt. A puddle had formed outside on the square that reflected nothing but black sky. Louise folded the newspaper and jumped off the moving tram; she had to go to him, even if he no longer lived, she had to go home to her daughter to save at least her. Either way, she was in the wrong place here on the tram. She slipped on the wet cobbles and slid prone onto the opposite track. The driver of the approaching tram saw her as he turned onto the square. The screech of his brakes melded with the squeal of the wheel in the curve, into a shrill sound that shattered against the facades. Headlight beams on the wet cobbles, the driver's dully illuminated face in reflection, the screams of the tumbling passengers – by the time the tram came to a standstill, the first two carriages had already run over Louise Grau.

The couple were survived by a daughter. A girl of eleven, who received the news of her parents' loss with external composure. A military policeman conveyed the sad message that she would be alone in the world from then on. Did she have godparents? The girl thought for a moment. There had always been a parcel at Christmas. Every year, she had sat down at the living-room table on Christmas Day and written a card to her godfather in her best handwriting.

Dear Ludwig, thank you for the pencils.

Dear Ludwig, the apron is very nice. Mother says I look like a little lady.

Dear Ludwig, many thanks for the ball. I played with it in the yard and thought of you. Alma

*Dear Ludwig, thank you for the doctor's bag. We are all in the best of health. Yours,
Alma*

She had never met him.

ONE

HISTORY AND HANDICRAFTS

No one chose the times in which they lived. Through which they stumbled. In which they perished. To cap it all, one's own era included one's contemporaries, one's eternal, incessant contemporaries. One was constantly surrounded by them. Would Alma have been better off in other times? Barely. Would she have wanted to live in another age, nonetheless? She would have given everything to do so. What fellow man one might imagine! What absences of fellow men – her thoughts ran wild – one might conjure up. Just her and the Pleistocene, interrupted by nothing but an occasional thunderstorm, a volcanic eruption on the horizon, now and then a solitary sabre-toothed tiger to spot her from a distance and leave her in peace. She would have whiled away not just the day, but her whole life. The modicum of plant and berry-gathering for her own needs would be ticked off by the eleven o'clock chimes, and she would have spent the rest of the day delighted that the eleven o'clock chimes were merely imaginary, a relic of a distant future that she had overcome. How she wished to be part of the Pleistocene. But that was not on the agenda, as she well knew. Here she sat, inextricably entangled in her life, her times.

Alma Grau had spent the past few years under varying care. Having rejected her godfather as too young, the authorities first placed her in the custody of the local deaconess, with whom Alma spent two unedifying years. At the breakfast table, the woman prayed for the physical and mental health of her flock and further acquaintances, for the imminent advent of God's kingdom, and before that for a speedy victory on the western front, all with such fervour that her boiled egg grew cold in the meantime. She served nettle tea with every meal, 'for your health', and when Alma gathered up all her courage and objected that she was not ill, the deaconess gave her a silent glare and then said: 'Guess why that is.' Alma was firmly convinced that the woman wanted only the best for her, it was just that she herself had different ideas of her best – as vague as they might be. The deaconess would wheeze with satisfaction when she retired to her reading chair with a book in the evening. To begin with, Alma had tried not to hear the heavy breathing, but she failed. In the end she would sit opposite her, leaning against the fireplace with a school book on her lap, and hold her

ears as she read, which didn't make turning the pages any easier. They were not made for one another.

Alma spent her next orphaned year in a kind of foster family, which, however, understood little of either family or fostering. She was simply unlucky, Alma explained her situation to herself, in custody matters. There was a Dobermann in the family, which had to be put to sleep the week after Alma's arrival due to hepatic colic. The father grew mournful over the loss of his dog, which the mother held against him at every opportunity. Her attacks came with the reliability with which a good farmer tends his crops, fertilising and watering the seeds of her husband's gloom. Soon the melancholy was detached from its original cause and became chronic. The father refused to leave his bed for days at a time, and when he did rise at last, with many a groan, he would find himself in the kitchen with reddened eyes, having forgotten what had driven him there. The mother had long since relocated to the settee in the living room, where she held long tirades against her marriage and marriage in general. Against the damned war that never came to an end. Against men, against humanity itself. Alma spent entire afternoons lying on the rug in her room, her face pressed against a pillow, doing something she called crying – though not a tear flowed and not a sound passed her throat.

At the end of that winter, a teacher Alma confided in took pity on her and took her in. They lived in close quarters in a house backing onto the railway line. The teacher had been transferred from Friesland down to the Rhine, and she told Alma in a confidential tone that she too felt out of place there. Alma could not have said whether she felt out of place there or everywhere.

While the teacher spooned little heaps of rock sugar into Alma's tea, the kitchen cabinet trembled with every train that rumbled past. Its drawers were full of history and handicrafts, both of which made Alma curious for more. They would spend their evenings side by side on a bench, embroidering. Outside the back window, the trains ferried their loads back and forth: charcoal, passengers, artillery. While the teacher magicked one motto after another onto the white linen, Alma's embroidery frame filled up as hesitantly as her life to date. The teacher tried to spark her foster child's awareness of her own existence. Did she know what a sensation she, Alma, was? Alma gave her head a barely perceptible shake. The teacher wanted to convince her that life was a gift. The only price it demanded was the task of living it well. Alma did not understand the point of a gift that had to be paid for.

The teacher did all she could to awaken Alma's buried memories of her parents. Buried memories were *à la mode*. While the teacher made suggestions of forgotten moments (lullabies, walks in the woods, boxed ears...) Alma noted to her surprise that her strongest memory of her parents was the smell of gravy.

Regretfully, the teacher was transferred to yet another town after six months, and was not allowed to take Alma with her. To be precise – as it now emerged – she had not been allowed to take her in to begin with. What Alma retained of her was basic knowledge of the French Revolution and cross stitch, a sadly only half-finished piece of embroidery ('All's well that') and a mild aversion to rock sugar.

Alma was now sixteen years old. The teacher's excellent recommendations enabled her to attend a prestigious school. No one there needed to know she was accommodated in a children's home on the edge of a park. Alma liked the view from the window.

The home's residents showered twice a week. Alma removed her clothes and folded them on a stool. The cabin was cramped. On turning the tap, ice-cold water came pelting out at first. Then she stood naked and shivering in a corner of the cabin and waited for it to warm up.

Why were people, why was she in the world? She had not the faintest idea. And to date, she had met no one who might have explained it to her. For her, the world was a giant orange, garish and unpeeled. She did not like oranges; they gave her a rash.

She had her bright moments, of course. Waking up in the morning and chasing a dream in which things had been better. Caramel biscuits. Occasionally, music. In the evening she would stand beneath the window of the neighbouring conservatory and listen to the scales wafting out to her on the pavement, barely audible. She could actually see them, fragile flights of stairs, and she wished she could walk up them to get a better view, but every time, the music students broke off mid-run and began anew, and after a while Alma stopped going there.

She knew what joy meant; that wasn't it. It was just that she pined when it happened to her. She wished to keep herself free from emotions she did not believe in.

One Sunday, she walked north; she was back on the Wednesday, hungry and wet through. She had been picked up on the edge of the Lüneburg Heath and put on a train, not managing even a hundredth of the way. Her plan to become a member of the Royal North Cape Club had failed. The club assembled the conquerors of the North Cape, but she could not join it. She founded her own club, one nobody knew, with herself as the

only member. She would meet for plenary session from time to time and exchange her thought on her experiences. They were long meetings, with much witty banter. The membership was on familiar terms, ensuring a trusting atmosphere. The meeting room was the last cubicle in the girls' toilets on the top floor of the children's home. She knew every crack in every tile on the wall. Sometimes the mood changed abruptly at the end of a meeting, and the club members shed a few tears together. They were fortunate to have one another.

COWS AND A GODFATHER

'Watch out, young lady. Let me help with your case. Where are you heading?'

'Frankfurt.'

'I do hope you're not disembarking in the city centre; they sometimes have air-raid alerts there. A cyclist got hit in the summer. Will you be staying long?'

Toppled telegraph poles lay alongside the railway tracks. The windows were so draughty that Alma felt wind whistling in her eyes. Thin cows encamped motionless around a pond. They passed through an unfamiliar town without stopping, children in long coats running alongside the train on the platform and waving. Impossible to decipher the station sign. They passed slowly beneath a half-collapsed viaduct, grass growing on the stumps of the bridge. Alma looked out of the window, her fingers interlocked on her lap as though she were holding her own hand. The compartment door was open; a briquette-fired stove roared in the corridor. There was coal dust everywhere, on the door handle, on the woollen fabric of the head rests, even outside the windows. They passed an extinct gasometer. How huge everything was, how difficult to understand. The wagons on the patched-up roads, the cold empty houses, then open land again.

Would she be staying long? Alma did not know what awaited her. She had bent the small ticket between her fingers for so long that the cardboard had broken in the middle. She couldn't stop running her fingers over the card, the recessed type, the hole clipped in it by the conductress. Pressed paper bulged out of the broken edge like flesh from a wound.

At last they reached Frankfurt. Through a hole in the clouds, the sun cast red light across the city. Somewhere behind it waited the night, patiently.

Her godfather stood on the top step outside the front door and looked down at the street. His hands were folded behind his back. How young he looked. He was not even wearing a tie. Where on earth had she ended up? He was barely older than her. Alma opened the taxi door; the driver lugged her case onto the pavement. Once the godfather saw it really was the visitor he was expecting, he leapt down the stairs and ran to the driver, but she had already paid.

Then they stood before one another; Alma stretched out her hand. He hesitated for an instant, as though unable to decide between all his hands. What times were these, when not even godfathers were proper father figures? But he did have a nice neck. Her hand mired in his handshake.

They climbed the steps to the front door in single file. The doorbell was labelled LUDWIG LENDLE. The hall was gloomy, the parquet as dark as if there were no floor. A solitary jacket hung on a long row of hooks. It smelled of chamomile, firelighters, mustard, of well-worn seat-covers. A dwarf-sized door fitted underneath the stairs, presumably leading to the cellar. The door was ajar. Above the dresser, a dulled mirror, and she saw something that must be herself, spotted and blurred and cracked, and her large eyes in the middle.

Ludwig was already on the threshold of the kitchen, holding the door open and his hand out to her, as if it were a great step to get in there that Alma would not manage on her own.

The good thing about her godfather: He did no consoling. Everyone else over the past few years had constantly stroked her head, most recently the gentlemen from the railway mission. This man, however, acted as if she had always been there. Sat her down on a kitchen chair and placed a china cup in front of her. Occasional heads of chamomile floated in steaming water. There weren't even biscuits. He stood leaned against the sink, in his hand another small cup into which he blew with his head lowered, cooling his tea and awkward over their meeting in equal parts. The tips of his eyebrows were pale from the sun. Was he an adult at all? He had quite astounding hair. His collar open, a fairly clean shirt. His trousers, however, would not have passed muster with her mother. But her mother was no longer around. Alma took a sip and drank with her eyes closed. Everything was different now; a single pair of trousers did not matter. There had been a clock in the breakfast room at the children's home; its ticking passed the time. That was

missing here. Why did he not say anything? Nonetheless, she was glad to be in this kitchen, if she had to be somewhere. And he wasn't firing questions at her. She felt like the pattern on the kitchen tiles; there was no visible order to it. She wanted to be part of that pattern.

Music wafted through the half-open door. From the hall, she had spotted the cone of a gramophone, with a black disc revolving beneath it.

'Bach,' he said. 'The *Musical Offering*. You'll get used to it.'

Later, Fräulein Gerner returned from her errands. She was rather short and rather wide, plus a little sweaty from the stairs, her hair stuck to her forehead. She began speaking as she fastened her apron, and didn't stop when she ran the dishwater so loudly into her enamel bowl that she presumably understood barely a word she said. Essentially, she seemed to be reporting on having just carried her heavy shopping past the *Zur Harmonie* hall in Sachsenhausen, where the Travelling Association of Courier Pigeon Fanciers had just opened an exhibition of military carrier pigeons and tea had been served, so she had left her bags in the entrance area to at least catch a glance of the birds, and thankfully nothing had been lost, one never knew these days, and now just look at how baked-in the dirt was on this casserole dish, no scrubbing brush in the world could ever get it off.

Alma wanted to lend her a hand but Ludwig beckoned her out from the hall, telling her it was better to leave the kitchen to Fräulein Gerner.

And so they spent the afternoon in the salon. There was barely any light, though only some of the dark yellow curtains were drawn. It looked as though they'd been hanging there for centuries, and in all that time there had never been time to take them to the cleaners. Other men might have placed the armchairs by the window to look out, into the vegetable gardens, the sky, the open. Not him.

There was a chaise longue by the gramophone stand. They sat upright side-by-side on the once-green velvet and listened. That is, he listened; Alma furtively peered in his direction. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be holding his breath. One could only hope he would still be alive by the end of the record. It looked as though he were not moving a muscle, but she could tell by a twitch at the corner of his lips, a tremble of a nostril, that he was still there and still among the living, more alive than before. During the quieter passages, Fräulein Gerner could be heard talking in the kitchen.

Ludwig showed Alma her room in the evening. He pressed an old pair of pyjamas into her hand, saying he no longer needed them. Fräulein Gerner quickly made the bed; then she was alone.

Alma lay in the dark for a long time, observing the night.

NOTHINGNESS AND WILDERNESS

He was called Lud in the family. Even though our family is fond of shortened names, it took me a while to realize it was an abbreviation.

Ludwig Lendle had been born in the last year of the old century. In Wiesbaden, where an ancestor had moved from the forests of the Taunus, in search of a better life. That search proved to be an enduring challenge.

Our family's traces are lost in the Taunus. In Rambach in Nassau, to be precise. Many years ago, a landsknecht had ended up there, during the turmoil of the Thirty-Year War. Where he came from is unknown; we don't even know whether he came from anywhere in the first place. He probably didn't know himself. Geography was an approximate matter in those days, unlike religion. There are families in Vorarlberg's tri-border region whose names can be traced back to Saint Landelin; perhaps that was his origin and he couldn't or wouldn't go back there. His name was Johannes Lendle. He seems to have settled in Rambach to make a fresh start. That age-old dream.

During a break in the war, a survey was done of the villagers' possessions. At the top of the page, the bailiff's neat strokes spelled out a long heading: *Index of the belongings of the inhabitants of Rambach and all wardships, including their vacant houses as of the 4th of December 1630, as follows.* He made a long list of the local men, counting up what each of them possessed: *He and his wife 1 son and 3 daughters one pair oxen. Or: One child currently in Herborn is poorly, one pair borrowed cattle. Or: Two boys, uncertain whether still alive.* At the very end of the list is a short sentence. The origin of our family, our roots. In barely legible writing, the last entry reads: *Hans Lendlae has nothing.*

Ludwig's father had traded in goods from the colonies; he had died in his grocery shop. Ludwig's mother Pauline had the maiden name Machenheimer, earning her ridicule at school. *Mach in Eimer!* – the other children found the suggestion of *going in a pail* contained in her name an irresistible taunt. That experience may have hardened her

somewhat, which would explain a number of things. There was one brother, Wilhelm. We shall hear more about him.

There was little to fault about their childhood, in any case. The brothers were good singers, good gymnasts, good children. Other than that, their young years consisted mainly of long hikes: Vogelsberg, Rhön, Odenwald, Wasserkuppe – they knew every nook and cranny. They had learned to read tracks, the signs of the clouds, the signs of the animals. Prints of paws and claws, bitemarks, pellets. They had found out how to tell the wind direction and how moss on the bark betrays the weather side of trees. They knew how to predict rising low pressure, estimate distances, conceal themselves. A lifelong blessing: having learned how to hide. They could tell edible from poisonous shoots, they chewed wild herbs, could light a campfire in the midst of a heavy shower. They lit the wood at first with many matches, then with few, later with the sparks of constantly struck flints. The guitar came out in the evening. They recited Stefan George verses into the darkness. They lay down to sleep beneath a ceiling of stars and knew every one of their names. Ludwig saw himself as a gamekeeper, Wilhelm as a game hunter. One considered himself ideally in nature, the other in battle.

Then the real battle had begun. Ludwig was dispatched to the Maas and began to keep a diary.

‘The war brings out strange things in people,’ he wrote. ‘Not solely bad things, though the bad outweighs the good.’ One had to make decisions without being able to gauge the consequences. Not only because there was generally no time, but also because almost every decision concerned a matter of which there was not yet any experience. ‘Should I report a greater need for potatoes to the supply troops, so as to be allocated at least a sufficient remainder after the inevitable deduction, or would that be sinning against my comrades?’ Should he, when Gerhard was hit – a man who had become a friend – crawl over to him in the middle of the battle to salvage his body, or was that nothing but insanity, a pointless sentimental revolt against the unorderable way of the world? Ludwig did it anyway. The sound of shrapnel raining down on either side of him. Gerhard was alive. Ludwig dragged him back into the trench. For days, he kept watch by the injured man’s side, overcome with yearning for their affinity. He valued Gerhard more than he did himself. Which was no great feat. The unsolvable question of whether affection was more likely to survive if admitted to the other or kept to oneself. Sometimes, when no one but the deaf-and-dumb night was watching, Ludwig wept on his sleeping friend’s chest.

The comrades-in-arms. It was not easy living so close side by side, without gasping for air. There were times when it made him dizzy. The dirt, the rifle oil, the never-ceasing rain. In the pauses in shooting, Ludwig read *Hyperion*. The pages of his copy were barely decipherable by now; thankfully, he could recite long chunks of it blindly. He did so at night as he attempted to find sleep, and by day in the trenches. When he shouldered his rifle, he thought he saw one of the verses in his sights, as though that were what he was aiming at. At the last moment, he jerked the barrel up and shot at the empty air.

He had pencilled in at the front of the book: 'We are dying as soon as we come into the world. It is a gradual process. Until that time comes, we are here.'

Gerhard survived.

*

'Alma. A beautiful name. Are you aware of its meaning?'

'It means something? I always thought it was just my name.'

'I looked it up.' Ludwig topped up their tea. He explained that the Mosaic *Almáh* meant 'young woman', which suited her well, did it not? It does right now, she thought. As always, he continued, there were other interpretations. For the Crimean Tartars, her name meant 'apple', for the Mongols 'wild person'. Among the Arabs 'on the water'. 'Wild person?' Alma asked.

'In ancient Rome,' Lud said, 'it stood for nourishing.' They had given their fertility goddess the name Alma Mater; the universities were still named after her. In the Iberian languages, Alma meant 'soul' but also 'spirit'. In Gothic it meant 'brave'. The name united an impressive list of good characteristics.

'You looked up my name?'

Although Ludwig Lendle was a student, he had real toilet paper instead of torn-up newspaper in the water closet halfway up the stairs. Alma used a single sheet to begin with and later, as her confidence grew, a second one.

At noon, when Ludwig lay down for a nap, she crept into his study. It was quieter still there than in the rest of the apartment. A pungent, slightly sour smell, a mix of old books and old milk. The smell of his room, when she thought about it, was the oldest thing about him. Alma considered opening a window, but the fresh air would have given away that someone had been in there. There were brownish files on the desk; Alma

flicked through them. They contained yellowed newspaper clippings. On each of them, he had pencilled the names of the authors, composers, doctors discussed within. One folder was labelled simply 'On language' – it contained articles on efforts towards orthographical reform, one paragraph underlined with pencil and ruler in its entirety: 'We have seen that the vowels a, o, u and their umlauts should be liberated from the parasitic h. In this listing, we sadly miss e and i. These poor letters are condemned, by the thinness of their bodies, to lug around the false aspirate as an eternal burden.'

Beneath the window were several cardboard boxes, filled to the brim with more cuttings. They were apparently waiting to be filed away.

Ludwig Lendle's library displayed ambition, especially for such a young man. Not only Albert Schweitzer's large Bach monograph, but also the most recent new edition of his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Several volumes of Laotse, plenty of Luther, plus Calvin's sermons on the first book of Samuel with his defence of witch-burning. There was also mysticism: Meister Eckhart's *On the Miracle of the Soul* and – inevitably – Böhme's *Aurora or Morning Rising*, its title a reference to the bride in the Song of Solomon: 'Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?'

To finance more reading matter, Ludwig had helped out at a fish stall in the market hall on his return from the war, selling Rhine eels, catfish, zander, occasionally sturgeon. The boats docked at dawn down on the river, and Ludwig helped to heave out the catch. As he lugged the baskets up to the market, the slaps of the tailfins grew weaker. The stall mistress, impressed by his mental arithmetic skills, allowed Lud to help with sales. But he too often got immersed in the newspapers ready for wrapping, startled out of his reading only by the customers' complaints. The boss soon gave him the task of clearing the waste from the stall, fishbones, silvery scales and innards; it looked like the war. Worse: It brought back images of the war. While Ludwig had previously been astoundingly good at holding back the memories, now they were inescapable every time he lifted a crate. What had been bearable at the beginning of spring became a strain during the warmer months. He could not rid his nose of the smell, and the chopped-off fish heads stared at him so helplessly that they pursued him at night as he fell asleep. When the stall mistress caught him tipping a load of waste into the next stall's rubbish crate, he lost the job and was not upset about it. The saved pay sufficed for two volumes of Kierkegaard. *In Struggle with Himself* and *God is Greater than Our Hearts*. As he read, he would sometimes smell his fingers, an olfactory phantom pain.

I find it difficult not to feel related to this Lud.