

JAN
KJÆRSTAD THE
DISCOVERER

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THE DISCOVERER

Jan Kjærstad

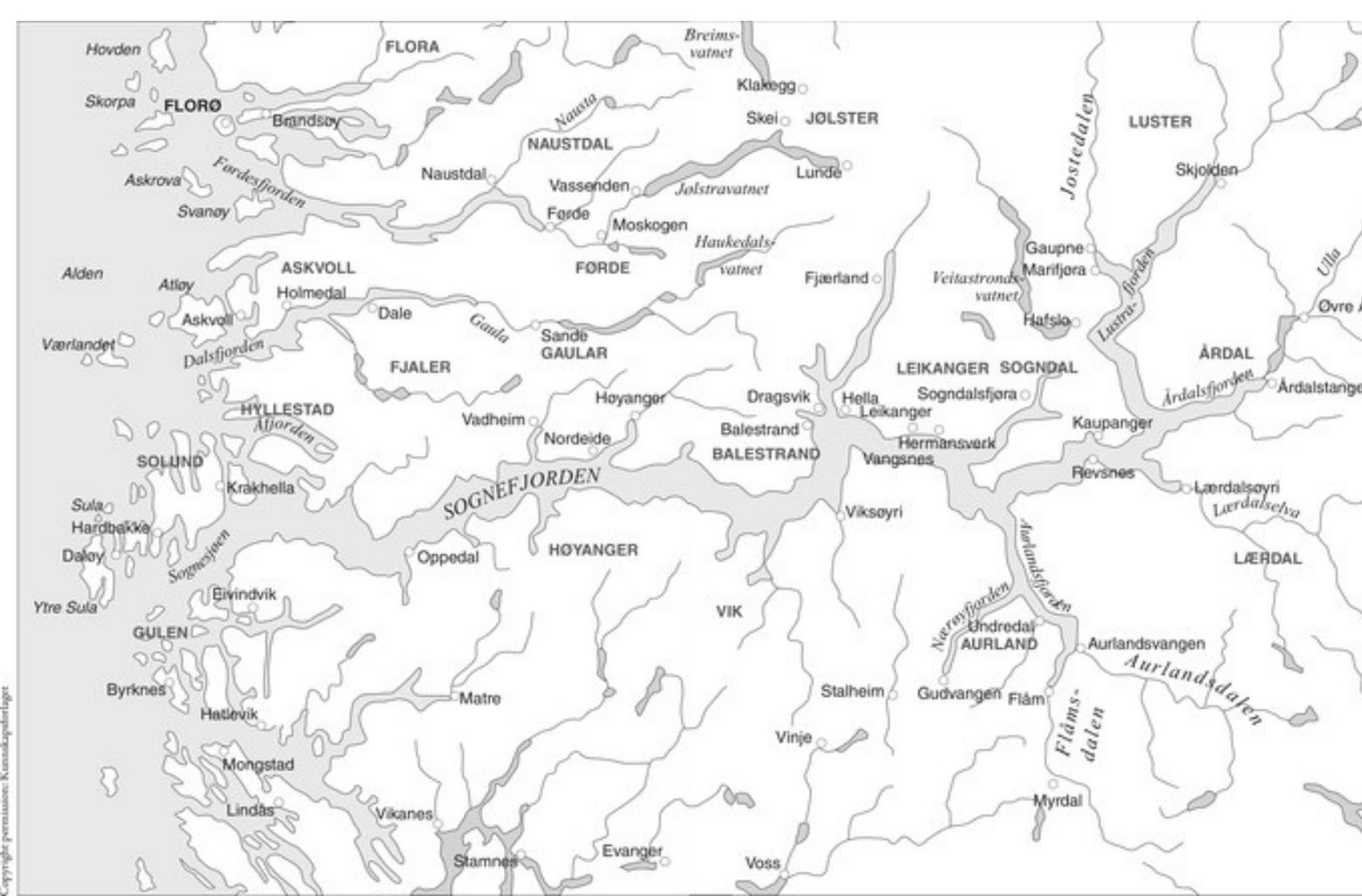
Translated from the Norwegian by Barbara J. Haveland



For Martin

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Jupiter

Behold this man. Behold this man, as he feels three tugs on the rope and slowly after smiling uncertainly, proceeds to traverse, to edge out onto those daunting airy galleries. Behold this man as he inches across the rock face; see how with the caution of the novice he feels his way forward using all of his limbs, his whole body in fact, before shifting his weight from one foot to the other. I can sense how frightened, how truly terrified he is, and yet how full of the determination to do this, to see it through, make it to the top. And then, suddenly, as if something has ground to a halt, he freezes. He shuts his eyes. He looks as though he is listening to the wind, while at the same time concentrating hard, trying to place the scene emanating from the rock against which he is pressed. The bright sunlight glitters off the cliff face, sparkles in the runnels of meltwater. As far as I can see he is holding his breath. I have known it all along. This is the moment of truth. On the ledge, with a drop of hundreds of metres into the abyss only a step away. Here you live, or you die.

This is a second I shall remember.

Then he does the one thing I have begged him not to do. He half turns, which is apparently hanging on tight with both hands. He looks out. Looks down. As if intent on defying something. Proving something. For a moment he seems to be completely dazzled by the Slingsby glacier far below. Or no, not dazzled, but stunned, panic-stricken. Psyched out, as they say. I refuse to believe it. That this man could be afraid of anything, a man who brought thousands of cars to a halt on Oslo's Town Hall Square and who, by his mere presence, drew a cyclone towards himself; a man who has been with three fair maids at once and who would not hesitate to dive to a depth of fifteen metres without an oxygen tank. Yet he hangs there, rigid. Still holding his breath. Or am I wrong? Does he bend down ever so slightly? I think - I know it sounds strange, but I almost believe he is trying to kneel.

One hand fumbles with the knot, as if he means to undo himself from the rope. 'Sit!' I call sharply. 'Don't look down.' But he goes on staring, seeming more mesmerised than frightened now. Or infuriated perhaps, contemptuous. As if there were a set-to with Norway itself, a confrontation for which he has waited years to stand on the edge of an abyss, without a safety net. I can see temptation written large on his face. He could let himself fall. He could realise the cliché which will forever be attached to his story: that of his downfall. The final, glorious headline.

'You're perfectly safe,' I shout. 'It's all in your head.' I'm jittery too now, I check that the coil of rope is securely fixed around the sharp rock next to me. I know I can trust Martin, who has led the way, hammering in pitons at regular intervals and is now out of sight behind some large boulders, a short rope-length from the bottom of the chimney. Martin has climbed everything from the Bonatti pillar to

Ama Dablam. But never with such a partner, a man who – according to the newspapers – lost his head and shot a woman straight through the heart. I am uneasy. The uncertainty of the figure huddled against the rock face radiates towards me. I may have miscalculated. Perhaps I should have said no after all. Then he turns to me. His face is calm. I can see that he is breathing, drawing the cool mountain air deep into his lungs, hungrily. He smiles, even raises his hand in a wave, traverses onwards.

Behold this man. Behold this man, the bearer of a mystery.

The rest of the climb went well, remarkably well. Down by the stone cottage at Bandet earlier that day I had been worried. A couple of times on the way up the ridge, on the toughest, most exposed stretch, I had considered turning back. I could see that he was gasping for breath, he looked a little lightheaded. The air was keen and thin. Over one stretch we secured our passage with a length of rope – mainly for his sake – and when we started climbing again he dislodged a rock which went clattering down the mountainside, leaving a whiff of gunpowder behind it. An omen. His fleece clothes and the harness made him look like a child, truly, in this situation, like a helpless child. And, funnily enough, *I* felt responsible for *him*.

‘Aren’t you a little afraid of heights?’ I had asked him when we set out from Turtagrø that morning.

‘I used to be. I’m a different person now,’ he said.

We reached Hjørnet – the Corner, slipped off our rucksacks. It was early in the season, and there was more snow than I was used to. Wetter and dirtier. We wouldn’t be able to switch to climbing shoes. It went fine, though, with no great problems – even over the few metres of real climbing up the Heftyes Rennet transformed now into a chill, slippery, icy chimney.

We reached the top around midday. I shall never forget the look of triumph on his face, the way he stretched his arms up and out. To the spring sky. All those years inside. Down. And now, only a couple of years after that first intoxicating taste of freedom: on the roof of Norway. Right at the very top. Everything below us seemed much lower, markedly so. I heard him murmur, partly to us, partly to himself: ‘I never thought I would make it.’ And a moment later: ‘But I knew I had it in me.’

We sat down beside the little cairn. He studied the commemorative plaque fixed to the stone as if expecting to find his name inscribed there. There too. I took the landscape shots I needed. He said not a word, just sat there looking at the view. He could not seem to get enough of this, the most spectacular panorama in Norway. The massive Jostedal Glacier, Galdhøpiggen and Glittertind and all the other peaks of Jotunheimen. Alpine forms with peaks and crests, carved and gouged out by the ice. ‘Organ pipes,’ he muttered suddenly. ‘This has to be the world’s biggest organ, listen to the wind!’ From the massif on which we sat, two jagged ridges wound off like petrified vertebrae. ‘What are they?’ he asked. ‘Kjerringa og Mannen,’ I said – the Woman and the Man – and instantly regretted it. A strange look came over his face.

Behold this man.

We prepared for the downward journey. Just as I was wondering how he was going to cope with the abseiling, he turned the wrong way, towards the sheer drop to Skagadalen. I was about to call out, but the cry stuck in my throat. He stretched his arms out to the sides, as if about to do a swallow dive.

Why did he do it?

One has to start somewhere, and a good, not to say almost perfect, departure point – or even, to stick with the climbing motif: viewpoint – from which to examine Jonas Wergeland's life would be another stony edifice, another gallery, hallowed hall, a room with walls of granite, and an autumn day in the 1980s – an autumn day which would bring with it deep sorrow and wistful joy, as well as a strange mystery, an incident bordering on the scandalous. Nor is it entirely inappropriate that Jonas should be at the organ, an instrument befitting his history and the power which for so long he had exerted over the minds, not to say the souls, of the Norwegian people. Jonas Wergeland is playing the organ, framed by its gleaming, monumental face, making the whole church tremble with his playing, making the very stone, the bedrock of Norway, sing. He is not an organist, but he handles the instrument almost like a professional musician; he is an organist by nature, he might have been made for this part, this pose. No wonder he once replied when asked, in Samarkand, what he did for a living: 'I am an organist.'

Scarcely an hour earlier, after collecting a pile of sheet music, he had closed the gate of the house he would soon be moving into and which people would dub Villa Wergeland, and set off down the road he had walked every day of his childhood. Wherever he turned his eye he risked becoming lost in memories: the life-threatening bonfire, the windows Ivan broke, the wallet in the ditch which brought him a heaven-sent fifty *krone*-reward, the magnetic, nipple-shaped doorbell on the front door of Anne Beate Corneliussen's building. He sauntered along, wishing to prolong the poignant aspect of the moment. There was a strange mood in the air too. It felt as though there was no longer anyone living in the houses he passed. Even the shops looked deserted. It was an exceptionally dull day. Damp. The last leaves had fallen from the trees. The ground was covered with an indeterminate gunge, as if after an incredibly drunken party. The blocks of flats and the shopping centre reminded him of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union. The whole of life seemed suddenly drab and dreary. And yet – in spite of all this – he felt hopeful. As if he knew that behind all the greyness lay something else, something surprising. Something is about to happen, he told himself.

As his eye was drawn to a couple of solitary clusters of rowan berries, two rosy bright spots in all the greyness, he found himself thinking of another grey day in his life. The year before, off his own bat, he had gone to Moscow with a friend and a colleague from the NRK purchasing department who was attending a television conference there. They had stayed at the Hotel Ukraine, one of Stalin's seven so-called 'wedding-cake' buildings from the fifties, all of which looked like squat, bulky versions of the Empire State Building. One morning he had crossed the great River Moscow, meaning to walk to the Kremlin. Ahead of him lay Kalinina Avenue, broad and surprisingly empty-looking, despite the cars. The weather was clear

but a haze still managed to leach everything of colour. The distances seemed enormous, and almost in order to escape from those vast, empty spaces thick with the fumes from low-octane petrol, he took a right turn which led him into some narrower streets. Here he found more people. Women in headscarves, carrying baskets. And there *were* queues. Two in one short stretch. For eggs, perhaps, he thought. Or toilet paper? To these people, even the magazines he had bought at Fornebu airport, with their glossy adverts, would be objects as rare as rocks from the moon. He walked along, looking and looking, trying to take in the dreariness around him. Brown, grey, black. Hulking, homogenous buildings. Everything covered in a thin layer of grime. He fancied that he was wandering through a sort of populated desert. Always, when he came to a new place, he went exploring. As a small boy he had transformed every house he visited into an unknown continent. He was a Columbus, stepping ashore. The threshold was a beach. The hallway a jungle, the stairs a mountain, every cupboard a cave. But Moscow: so gloomy, so dispiritingly vast. This was obviously not a city one simply strolled through. Before he got back, he thought, before I am engulfed by all this greyness.

The problem was, however, that he no longer knew where he was. And as if that weren't enough, he desperately needed to go to the toilet. He cursed his bad habit of drinking too much coffee at lunchtime, while casting about in hopes of finding some building that was open to the public. He fell in with a stream of people who seemed to have been caught by a current and were being swept towards a façade with a large M over the doors. He had always liked the letter M, took this to be a good omen. He was not prepared, however, for the sight which met his eyes, for the way the stony desert gave way to a shimmering oasis.

In his mind he was in Moscow, in reality he was approaching Grorud shopping centre, casting a nostalgic glance in the direction of Wolfgang Michaelsens' garden where every autumn as boys they had gone scrumping for glossy, green apples so juicy and so sweet that they even merited running the risk of the Michaelsens' Rottweiler getting loose. There was a slight haze in the air, the sort of autumn mist that quickens the senses and which, rather than concealing things, seemed to bring them closer, even things that were a long way off. Chet Baker weather, he thought to himself. He felt nervous. Before him lay a sight which triggered memories of childhood theatricals, packed gym halls. The fluttering in his stomach might otherwise have been attributed to his own misgivings, a dawning sense of having come to a dead end. In his life. The problem had to do with his work at NRK TV. He was an announcer, and popular. And yet he wasn't happy. He did not understand it. At some point in his life he had abandoned all of the goals he had set for himself as a youth. He had thrown in the towel halfway through a course in architecture, having previously dropped out of a course in astrophysics. By chance - and not really caring one way or the other - he had allowed himself to be led into a tiny television studio. For many years he had been more than happy with his good fortune, with having found a job where he could do so little, and yet, it appeared, mean so much to so many. But now it seemed that an old ambition was once more stirring. Something he had forgotten. Wanted to forget. His conscience still pricked him. He caught himself looking for

loophole, a way out, a way forward. Which may have been why now, on this day especially, despite his sense of confusion, he suddenly felt optimistic. He had a strong feeling that something awaited him. That it was only minutes away. That something, a curtain, would be pulled back and something else, he did not know what, would be revealed.

As in Moscow. Because, when he penetrated beyond the grey façade with the steel M over the doors it was like stepping into the foyer of a theatre. As though someone up in the flies had dropped a richly hued stage set into place right before his very eyes. He walked along broad, brightly lit corridors, gazing round about him in disbelief; found a toilet without any problem. He had always set a lot of store by mazes and the possibilities these presented. You set out to sail to India and wind up instead on an unknown continent. You go looking for a toilet and stumble upon a metro station, a veritable treasure house. He seized his chance, followed the crowd, popped a five *kopek* coin in the slot and passed through the barrier. Moments later he was being transported down into the bowels of the earth on the steepest, longest escalator he had ever ridden, a wooden one, and that; then he found himself in a vast, glittering white chamber hung with magnificent chandeliers. A sunken palace. He was Alice in Wonderland, the victim of a supernatural occurrence. He took the hall in which he found himself for a glittering ballroom until a train came rushing in and stopped right in front of him.

Out of sheer curiosity he hopped on, only to alight at the next station - Plostsja Revoljutsii, he later learned: Revolution Square. It was like entering a museum. The station concourse was full of bronze sculptures. As far as he could tell, they represented the different trades. He was about to take a closer look at a statue of a sailor when he almost bumped into a shabby-looking character sweeping the floor. The man stopped, leaned on his brush and examined Jonas. The look he gave him contrasted sharply with his down-at-heel appearance. Keen eyes studied the small Norwegian flag which Jonas was wearing in his lapel while in Moscow, a badge intended to serve much the same purpose as the tag on a dog collar indicating which embassy to contact were he to collapse in the street. The cleaner stood for a while staring into space, as if deep in thought. Then: 'Gustav Vigeland' he said at length, extending his arms to the statues round about them. Jonas nodded. There were certain similarities. 'Gustav Vigeland,' he responded. These two words pretty much said it all. Forged a bond between them. Encapsulated the whole story. Or so Jonas thought, until the Russian leaned towards him: 'Fascism' he hissed, pointing eloquently at the sculptures. Jonas smiled uncertainly, tried to nod politely before continuing his tour. This man could easily be a professor of art, he thought, but now here he is, sweeping railway platforms for holding certain incorrect opinions on art.

Jonas was right underneath Red Square, but he was not interested in taking the escalator up, out. Why see Lenin's tomb when he could see this? He wanted to stay down here in this brilliantly illuminated secret. Here, in Moscow, they had built their sculpture parks underground. Jonas wandered on and off trains for hours, endeavouring to see as many stations as possible. A subterranean grand tour, he thought to himself. Proof that man had evolved beyond the cave.

stage. He strolled through halls faced with every sort of polished stone, a genuine geological museum. Everything was spotlessly clean. Jonas walked upon gleaming tiles, down colonnades, amid copper and steel, surveying all manner of ornamentation: mosaics, reliefs, stained glass, statues of pilots and scientists. A part of this decoration sprang from the ideal of bringing art to the people. He thought of his brother's favourite writer, Agnar Mykle: 'Socialism is clean bodies and classical music in the factories.' And art in the metro stations, Jonas might have added. During his visit, Jonas came across nothing that told him more about the Soviet state and, not least, its part in the last war. He had seen something like this before: the Town Hall in Oslo. He went on walking and thinking, considering. What, today, was the greatest public space? Might it not be television, the box, the square common to all. In other words: wasn't that the place for art - in palaces of a sort, beamed into people's living rooms?

After a while he began to discover crossover points between lines, eventually he even found one line that ran in a circle. He would have liked to stay down there for days, becoming part of the network, until he realised that he had reached Kievskaja station, a short step from his hotel. Later he would study the patterns on the onion domes of St Basil's Cathedral and visit the Kremlin with all its undreamt-of treasures; he would see monasteries and churches with incandescent icons and glittering domes, but for Jonas Wergeland nothing could compare with what he had experienced, the sights he had seen, in the underground: a maze of sunken palaces. 'In Moscow,' he would later say, 'I learned that sometimes you have to go down into the depths in order to see the light.'

As he left Grorud station behind him, something told him that the Moscow experience was about to repeat itself, that something which had until now lain hidden awaited him. His current job with NRK was also the happy outcome of a story about going astray. In many ways it was the tale of needing the loo and making, therefore, a bit of a detour only, when all but sitting on the toilet, to be offered the chance to fill a vacancy. Now, though, he suspected that there was a sequel to this story, that his job as an announcer was merely the first - possibly dull - stage along a path that might almost have been said to lead to sunken palaces.

This suspicion was confirmed a moment later when he pushed open the main door of the church and that lofty room lay before him, suddenly much warmer, much brighter, much richer in scents and sensations than before. Myrrh, the thought flashed through his mind. Like a child in Sunday school, sticking goldfish onto a drawing of a fishing net in a book. Like Christmas Eve, he thought, in the days when the church was still a place filled with anticipation, with swelling organ music and coloured light from stained-glass windows. In the days before anyone told you there was no God.

Jonas Wergeland was playing the organ. Or rather: not playing, but weaving, playing Johann Sebastian Bach, causing transparent worlds to pour from the organ casing, causing a succession of veils to drop down over the lofty room. His thoughts flew in all directions. Forward in time. Back in time. Often, on his way

home from school or from piano lessons he had popped into the church, where his father was the organist. On a couple of occasions – during serious crises in his life – he had lain on the red carpet in front of the altar, feeling as though he were dead. Then his father had played, usually fugues, and he had walked out again like a soul resurrected. To Jonas it seemed that his father played life into him. Blew life into a dead thing. ‘This is a control centre,’ his father had said, pointing to the instrument’s complicated keyboard. Jonas was more inclined to call it a rescue centre. He did not think of his father as an organist, but as a lifesaver. Maybe that was why, at an early age, he decided that this was what he, too, would be.

Jonas Wergeland sat on the organ bench in the church of his childhood, playing, weaving music into being, weaving thoughts into being, smiling as he pictured his mother’s horrified face, the look that met him when, as a boy, he shot up from the bottom of the bath gulping for air. She never spotted Daniel – a reassuring element – until it was too late. His brother would be perched on the toilet seat in the corner with the stopwatch they used when they went skating or lay in front of the radio listening to broadcasts of various sporting championships, as if they did not trust the lap times and final results quoted by the commentators.

‘Blast!’ Daniel always exclaimed, in dismay and delight – heedless of his mother’s stricken expression. ‘He flippin’ well did it again. A minute and a half.’

‘You owe me five *krone*,’ Jonas would gasp, his face tinged with blue, not altogether unlike the image of Krishna in Indian paintings.

Åse Hansen, normally the most even-tempered member of the family, remarkable for her stoic composure even when Rakel did not come home from parties or some ill-mannered relative ruined a Christmas dinner, was for a long time worried sick every time Jonas sneaked off to the bathroom and she heard the water start to run. It played merry hell with her nerves to know that if she peeked round the door she would see her son lying at the bottom of a full bathtub, holding his breath until his lungs screamed for oxygen. One day, when she could no longer turn a blind eye, she flung open the door just as Jonas’s head burst to the surface with him coughing and spluttering from all the water he had swallowed. She gave him a telling off, asked him why on earth he was doing this.

‘I’m practising,’ he wheezed.

‘For what?’

‘To save lives.’

Well, there was really no arguing with that. His mother sniffed some remark at another and closed the door, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. But Jonas was in deadly earnest. Ahead of him lay a summer during which he would establish his goal in life. He practised with all the perseverance of the perfectionist. And he became very good.

Some people go through life without sparing the most profound existential questions more than an occasional heavy sigh. They want simply to live. Not to live for anything. For them it is enough just to scrape some money together, to seduce someone. And if that doesn’t do it, you can always go parachuting. To what extent such people are fortunate is not something we will go into here, because Jonas Wergeland belonged to another branch of humanity, to that group who from

very early age, possibly a little too early, begin to reflect on the purpose and the meaning of life. Jonas found this question as obscure as it was, for Daniel, crystal clear: as far as his older brother was concerned the whole point of life was to be the best. At everything, no matter what. Daniel belonged to that category of Norwegian who from the moment they were born seemed intent on dedicating their lives to proving the truth of Gro Harlem Brundtland's later assertion that 'it is typically Norwegian to be good'. For Daniel, the whole point was to be able to ascend the winner's rostrum, be it a high one like Mount Everest or a low-lying one like a woman's mount of Venus.

Jonas, on the other hand, had come to the conclusion that the purpose of life was to make a name for oneself - the reason for this need be nothing more mysterious than that he was distantly related to the people in the Book of Genesis. Although, it could of course also have had something to do with the fact that he liked to walk around town looking at all the shop signs: Ingwald Nielsen, Thv. 1 Holm. At night some names, such as that of Ferner Jacobsen, were even written in neon. He could stand for ages on Egertorg, staring at the jeweller's where Aunt Laura had begun her career, admiring the lettering proclaiming DAVID ANDERSEN. More than fame itself, Jonas longed to see his name in lights. The world would read his name and know that it stood for something of great worth, right up there alongside silver, gold and precious stones.

Jonas considered many different options. For some weeks - apropos the business with the names - he was quite convinced that the whole purpose of life was to have a dish called after one. He had long been used to hearing people refer to such culinary delights as Janson's Temptation or beef à la Lindström: names which might not conjure up images of silver or gold, but which certainly made the mouth water. His mother was surprised by the interest displayed by her youngest son in the kitchen. But after several unsuccessful, scorched attempts at what he called a Jonas cake: a concoction involving bananas, cardamom and liquorice gums which had Daniel, his guinea pig, hanging over the toilet, throwing up - he started to think bigger.

How could anyone have missed it? All those books, a whole sea of articles and reports on Jonas Wergeland - and no one has mentioned the real prime motive behind everything he did. Because the fact is that Jonas made up his mind in the spring of the year when he turned ten. As he saw it, the answer to the question of the fundamental reason for living obviously had to be related to life itself: it was quite simply, to save lives. Jonas made the sort of secret, solemn decision of which only a child is capable. One day, he vowed, he would save someone's life. Most children do not give much thought to what they will be when they grow up. Even when coming out with the expected 'A policeman!' or 'A ship's captain!' they are really not that interested. It is too abstract a concept. But Jonas meant it with all his heart when, in response to the grown-ups' questions, he declared: 'I'm going to be a lifesaver.'

From the very start he knew it would have to do with water. With drowning. He could not picture himself reaching out a hand to stop a runaway pram from careering downhill onto the electrified rails of the new subway line, all but stifling

a yawn as he did so, or nonchalantly sticking out a foot to prevent some brat on sledge from sliding into the path of a big truck. No, it would have to be something more spectacular. A real act of heroism. Preferably with masses of spectators. Grandstands full. He toyed for a while with fire as an alternative; in his mind he saw himself rescuing a woman from the licking flames in a burning building, pictured himself dashing out, coughing, his eyebrows singed, with the woman in his arms, just as the fire engines drove up with blue lights flashing and sirens blaring and the whole edifice collapsed in a deadly inferno behind him. In his imagination, the woman was always wearing lacy underwear and had her arms wrapped tightly around him, a reward greater than seeing his name - inscribed in letters of fire, so to speak - on any 'Norwegian Fire Protection Diploma of Honour'.

But training for such an eventuality was not easy, and Jonas realised that it would have to be water - even though this was several decades before television series about lifeguards would become such a hit. For Jonas, this conviction went hand in hand with the knowledge that he was in possession of an extraordinary gift: it could not be for nothing that he had been endowed with his almost uncanny ability to hold his breath. Some day, possibly a cold winter's day, in front of a stunned crowd, he would have to dive off a quayside to save a child that had fallen in and was lying many metres below the surface. There might even be ice and he would have to find his way back to a little hole in it, like a seal. Shouts and cheers. Banner headlines. His name in shining letters. 'Boy risks his own life'. The classic life-saving exploit. The sort of thing for which people were awarded the Carnegie Medal. Some day the call would come and he had to be ready. In his daydreams the child was usually a girl, a lass with wet hair and lacklustre eyes which, nonetheless, were turned up to him in a look of eternal gratitude.

Jonas trained with single-minded determination. Held his breath on the walk to school, held his breath in the classroom, held his breath before he went to sleep. He thought the hour of his great deed lay far in the future, that he would have to be patient. And then, only a year after he has made up his mind to be a lifesaver with his basic training barely completed, it is upon him. The accident occurs on a day when he is totally unprepared for it, a day when he has almost forgotten about it or is, at any rate, thinking about something else. A day when the aim is not to save a life, but to see as many naked women as possible.

Jonas Wergeland sat on the organ bench. Remembered a dream he had put out of his mind, rejected as being far too naïve. Of being a lifesaver. The first time his father had taken him behind the organ and shown him the fan and the bellows had reminded him of breathing, of being able to control your breath. Jonas thought, wove, his playing suddenly more inspired, as if he really could save lives, breathe life, spirit, into something that was dead; manipulated the stops as if he were Dr Frankenstein in his laboratory. There, in Grorud Church, he played Bach's the exquisite 'little' Prelude in E minor, a piece which starts out sounding like an improvisation, a playful exercise in runs and harmonies, but gradually slips into a more definite pattern, following a more distinct theme. Jonas had spent a long time practising to get it right, but now he simply sat there, weaving, or leaving

to Bach, the great weaver of the Baroque. Every musician knows that sometimes on mysteriously blessed days – one can exceed one's own musical and, not least technical skills. For Jonas, this was one of those days. It felt good to play. There was something special about the contact between his fingers and the keys, an unusual sureness to his touch, even his feet seemed to dance of their own accord.

Jonas did not know that a woman clad in bright orange was about to enter the church beneath him and, indirectly, change his life. He was playing the organ, and because he happened to be playing Bach on the organ, a piece of music resembling a network within which everything was connected in a comforting and meaningful fashion, his thoughts kept revolving around his father. His father and him. Always these two, Haakon and Jonas. He knew he was the apple of his father's eye, thought it might have something to do with a talent they shared, that his father saw something in Jonas which he recognised. He had the feeling that his father was trying to shield him from something, though he never knew what.

As a small boy, Jonas could have appeared on *Double Your Money*, answering questions on his father. He knew his every wrinkle, every scent, every story. He could describe the way his father ate grapefruit, or his virtual addiction to the *National Geographic*; he could detail his father's method of cutting his toenails or repeat word for word the minutes-long spiels he recited every morning in bed as he stretched his limbs until they cracked. Jonas was the only one, so he believed, who knew of the great pleasure Haakon Hansen took in being able to paddle the edge, his kayak in and out of the little islets around Hvaler. And then there were his father's breakfasts: bacon and egg every morning when there was no school. Instead of bawling out the standard 'come-and-get-it' refrain their father would sit down at the ivories of the piano in the living room and wake them with a rendition of Bach's Goldberg variation no. 6, a piece which is only thirty seconds long, but which Jonas felt was the closest one came to the perfect work for the piano. His father played that same piece every Saturday and Sunday morning, year in year out; the pleasure of it stayed with Jonas for ever, that of waking to Bach's Goldberg variation no. 6 and the smell of his father's breakfast. 'What more does a man need than Bach and a bit of bacon?' as Haakon Hansen would say, thereby making his contribution to the great debate on the meaning of life. It was a weekend in itself: Bach and bacon. And bacon, mark you, that was as crisp as the music of Bach.

Jonas would be well up in years before he understood that even though you knew someone, you might not know them at all.

One day in April they went for a drive in his father's Opel Caravan, these two always just these two, Haakon and Jonas. A journey of discovery his father called it. Jonas had been given the day off school; he thought they were going to Gjøvi, but they had carried on past it and taken a road away from Lake Mjøsa, running inland. Jonas stared out of the window as they drove through a valley, feeling rather disappointed. Nothing but farms, a few scattered houses. Could anything be discovered here, in such a lonely spot? Just at that moment his father pulled up in front of a large, yellow-painted building at the head of the valley. On a sign on the façade tall, white letters gleamed in a rainbow arc: The Norwegian Organ and

Harmonium Works. Jonas found it hard to believe that something as thrilling as this could be hidden away deep in the forest. A man greeted Haakon Hansen courteously when he stepped out of the car, as if he were a visiting prince. 'Welcome to Snertingdal,' the man said. Snertingdal - to Jonas it sounded as full of promise as Samarkand.

First they were ushered into the workshop where the pipes were bored. Jonas knew a fair bit about organs, but nothing about how they were made. He was struck with the carpentry skills of a man working on a console with a manual keyboard that he had to be dragged away to the drawing office, from which they also had a grand view of the valley and the mill next door. To the accompaniment of a droning saw his father pored over the drawings for the new organ for Grorud Church - since that was, of course, why they were here; his father had been informed that work on the instrument would soon be finished. Enormous charcoal on a tilted drawing board showed the organ from different angles. His father nodded and smiled, traced lines with his fingers and enquired about details which meant nothing to Jonas. To him it looked like a cathedral, or the designs for some fantastical machine.

They were shown round the rest of the factory, saw the storage room and the cabinetmaker's workshop in the basement where the great machines were housed and the façades, wind chests and wooden pipes were made. 'See this Jonas, cherry wood. And over there: ebony! This is a far cry from whittling willow flutes, eh?' They proceeded to the first floor, to the pipe store and the tuning room where the pipes were given their first rough tuning. His father's face lit up as he picked up pipes and blew into them. Each pipe had a life of its own, was an instrument in itself. Haakon Hansen was looking more and more happy, chatting incessantly to their companion about matters which went way over Jonas's head about the Principal and the Octave Bass, about the importance of the choir organ to the tonal quality of the instrument. Jonas watched as a man made a notch in a pipe with a knife and rolled back a tongue of metal with a pair of pliers, much as Jonas would have opened the lid on a sardine tin. He wished his mother could have been there, she would have loved this, working as she did at the Grorud Ironmonger's. Jonas always got a great kick out of places which combined ironmongery with music, uniting his mother's and his father's work - in such situations he could well understand why two such different individuals came to be married to one another. He heard his father and the strange man talking about the German factory which had supplied the stops. Jonas loved all the secrets surrounding the metal alloys for the pipes, it smacked of alchemy. I'm not in an organ factory, he thought. I'm on a visit to a wizard's cave.

Then, to crown it all - a well-orchestrated surprise - their guide flung open the doors of the assembly hall, a room the size of a medium-sized church, and there standing against one wall, all ready for playing, was Grorud's new organ. A shimmering palace. Jonas's father bounded over to the organ, looked back at the others, his arms outstretched to the gleaming façade, like a child unable to believe its eyes, while people stood there nodding, as if to say: 'Yes, it's yours, you can have it.' Haakon Hansen switched it on, set the stops and began to play. H

played the only fitting piece of music: Johann Sebastian Bach, Prelude in E-flat major, *pro organo pleno*, he played so resoundingly that he all but raised the roof. And as his father played, Jonas tried to grasp how everything he had seen, all those separate elements in so many different rooms – thousands of pipes, thousands alone – could conjoin to form such a palatial instrument, one capable of producing such glorious, polyphonous music – a whole that was so much more than the sum of individual parts which he had seen. A sound which caused the body to swell. It was true, it *was* alchemy, gold was made here, but it was gold in the form of music.

Jonas knew, of course, that with this visit his father was trying to tell him something important, and on the way home Haakon did indeed say something, although it was no more than a single sentence: 'Remember, that was just a man and an organ.' That was all. His father did not say another word on the drive home. Haakon Hansen never said too much. But in his mind Jonas could hear the rest: 'So just imagine how everything in life fits together.'

And that was why you had to save lives. In his mind's eye, Jonas sometimes pictured people as being like walking organs. The first time he saw a dying child on television he realised what a tragedy this was, because what he beheld was a mighty organ into which no air, no spirit, no life was being breathed, one which, in all its senseless and ghastly complexity, was breaking down into its individual parts.

Jonas Wergeland sat in Grorud Church, playing an organ which he had, so to speak, seen unveiled; he was playing Bach, the fugue which accompanied the prelude in E-flat major, marvelling at an invention which enabled him, with just ten fingers and two feet, to produce music so splendid, so powerful, that it penetrated right down into the foundations of the building. Perhaps, when his life was over, this is what would be cited as his greatest achievement: that he had, at one felicitous moment, succeeded in playing Bach's prelude and fugue in E-flat major. He felt the tears falling, realised that he was crying, as if the music had also penetrated to his foundations. He did not know whether he was weeping out of grief or at the thought of an experience shared with his father or because of the beauty of the music, a beauty which reminded him of having his head inside a crystal chandelier sparkling with light and shot with rainbows.

The fugue came to an end. Jonas Wergeland altered the stops, struck up the hymn 'Lead kindly light', and how he played: played joyfully, played wistfully, played as if he were a lifesaver, someone capable of breathing life into people. And from the church beneath him the song swelled up, the singing truly hit the roof, with a force unlike anything Jonas had ever heard before. Because he was not alone. The church was full. He had got there in good time, but the church was already packed when he arrived. That was why Grorud had seemed so deserted. Everyone was here. Well over a thousand people. It had come as a surprise to him. Who was his father? Were all of these people really here to honour Haakon Hansen, to pay him their respects?

Jonas played. Down below, in front of the altar rail, lay his father. Not *as if* dead, but dead. Haakon Hansen had died 'on the job', as they say. Jonas was playing a

his own father's funeral, a funeral which some would describe as scandalous, others as baffling, while his mother, who had more right than anyone to speak of the subject, simply said: 'No one would understand anyway.'

Jonas played 'Lead kindly light', Purday's lovely melody, he had the urge to improvise, introduce some provocative chords, produce innovative modulation while moaning and humming along like Glenn Gould or Keith Jarrett. His father would have liked that. Jonas was always nervous when playing for his father. Now too. Even though Haakon Hansen could not hear him. He lay in his coffin, dead. Yet Jonas played as if he could bring his father to life, was amazed to find that he still possessed it: the longing to be a lifesaver.

He had trained so hard, so resolutely. Particularly during the year when he turned ten it seemed to him that he was more in the water than out of it. At Frogner Baths, at Torggata Baths, out at Hvaler, this was his main pursuit, practising staying underwater for as long as possible. Building up his lung capacity. He could swim underwater for longer than any of his chums, had no difficulty in swimming across Badedammen or the length of the Torggata pool. At Frogner Baths, where you could look into the upstairs pool through round windows, he scared the wits out of spectators by diving down and goggling out at them as inquisitively as they were peering in, rather like a seal in an aquarium, except that he stayed there for so long, on the other side of the window, that people began to shout and bang on the glass in alarm. These daredevil dives did not escape the attention of the lifeguards either: 'Any more of your tomfoolery and you're out on your ear,' they bawled at him from their high stools.

But it wasn't tomfoolery, it was conscientious training. Jonas Wergeland was preparing for his great undertaking: that of saving a life.

During this most intensive phase of his life-saving career, he also practised the technique of getting a half-drowned person back onto dry land. Daniel, who reluctantly consented to act as guinea pig, played the lifeless drownee with impressive realism and did his utmost to show just how difficult such a manoeuvre could be, with the result that Jonas sometimes became a mite over-enthusiastic. 'You're not supposed to strangle me, dummy! You're supposed to save me!' Daniel would gasp when they finally reached the shallows.

Even more important, though, were the various methods of artificial respiration. On several occasions Jonas almost cracked Daniel's spine when practising the Holger Nielsen method on his brother - equally uncanny in his simulation of unconsciousness. Daniel drew the line, however, at mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. This last, as it happens, was a story in itself. In the autumn when Jonas was in fifth grade - in biology class, as was only right and proper - the whole class had the chance to practice giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a dummy, or rather: the top half of a female by the name of Anna - a clean-living version, if you like, of the more notorious Blow-up Barbara - over whose mouth they placed a strip of plastic, for fear, perhaps, of being smitten with unmentionable diseases. If they tilted the head back and blew properly Anna's chest would rise. Jonas was praised by the teacher for his attempt. Anna's breasts jutted upwards like two pyramids under her blue tracksuit top. In his imaginative

Jonas saw how she must have tripped and fallen into the water while out jogging and how he had saved her from drowning with his life-giving breath.

One day when he returned home from Frogner Baths his mother sat herself down right across from him and looked at him long and hard, as if she were wondering whether his alarmingly red eyes were attributable to chlorine or to lunacy. 'Why are you doing all this?' she asked.

'Because I have a talent,' he said. 'I can hold my breath.' What he may perhaps have been trying to say was: I have a duty.

She was still looking him in the eye, but she could not help smiling: 'I'm not sure,' she said, 'but I think it's okay to take life a little less seriously than you do.'

As an adult Jonas would remember these words whenever he had the feeling that he was making too big a deal of things. That is my curse, he told himself. take life too seriously.

But just then all Jonas could think about was the day, sometime far in the future, when he would be put to the test. His life would culminate in this, the moment when he actually saved a life; his presence on earth would be justified by one sensational exploit, broadcast live, as it were, on prime-time television. Everything was to be a preparation for this. Daniel had a calendar with a metal plate on the back and a red metal ring. Most people moved the ring from one day to the next, but Daniel set it only around important dates. Jonas knew that the moment for his dazzling deed awaited him on one of those magnetic, red-circled days.

Then, one Saturday morning when they awoke to the Goldberg variation no. 1 and the smell of frying bacon, Jonas noticed that the red ring on Daniel's calendar was circling that very day. For a second he construed this as an ominous sign. But his brother lay grinning in his bed. 'Today you're going to see so many naked women that you'll never be the same again,' Daniel said. Jonas breathed a sigh of relief, not knowing that this was also the day when he was to be put to the test.

Now though, for all the basic training of his boyhood, he was powerless. Down below in the church a father lay dead. Holding his breath would do no good. Artificial respiration would do no good. The day before, Jonas had stood by the open coffin, regarding his father's body. Haakon Hansen looked as though he were alive. Intact. All that was missing, so it seemed, was a little cog. A glowing spot behind his ribs, that glow which wove the network of tiny links between his organs. As Jonas stood there beside the coffin an old question presented itself. What should you take with you? What makes life life? What *gives* life life?

Jonas Wergeland sat at the organ manuals, terraces of keys, putting everything he had into the playing: fingers, feet, his whole body. This was a day with a heavy red ring around it, a red-letter day for Grorud, one which would always be remembered - not least on account of the unforeseen intermezzo occasioned by an uninvited guest, a personage who showed up dressed in orange even though black was the order of the day, a jungle flower in a dim Norwegian pine forest. 'Haakon Hansen was a Buddhist,' was just one of the rumours which would circulate later. 'For over thirty years we've had a Buddhist for an organist in Grorud Church.' Jonas sat up in the organ loft, accompanying a packed church

'Lead kindly light, amid th'encircling gloom'. And they could have used the light because it was an exceptionally grey autumn day outside. But the congregation sang fit to make the stained glass glow and the eye of God in the triangle at the top of the large fresco behind the altar look down with gladness upon them.

Before the service began, before making his way up to the organ loft, Jonas had stayed downstairs for a while. He had run an eye over the packed pews, listened to the murmur of voices, inhaled the scent of mingled perfumes. The mood was buoyant, not unlike the first minutes at a big party where the guests have not seen each other in ages. Before him, Jonas saw a cross-section of his own life, his life encapsulated in a church. Here were girls, now women, who had protested when he pawed their breasts; here were mothers, now elderly ladies, who had complained when he played the Stones's 'The Last Time' too loud at Badedammen; here were old men, now ancients, who had shaken their fists at him when he knocked off their hats with snowballs. All tenderly smiling. This was a time for peace and reconciliation. Jonas spotted people he had not seen in years: folk from the housing estate; he nodded to Five-Times Nilsen and his lady wife; he nodded to Bastesen the caretaker, who had actually shaved for the occasion, then he was tapped gently on the shoulder by Karen Mohr, the Grey Eminence herself. 'Your father, he would have been worthy,' was all she said. And Jonas knew: 'No greater compliment could any man receive.'

People were still trickling in, even though the church was jam-packed. Every face shone with that same special radiance, a sort of deep joy born of solemn purpose. Many of the mourners nodded quietly to him. Some of them strangers. Jonas was, after all, something of a celebrity, his face seen on television all the time. He exchanged nods with old teachers from elementary school and sales assistants from the shopping centre, from shops where he had bought his first football, his first blue blazer, his first pencil case. The whole of Grorud had turned out. Jonas spotted Tango-Thorvaldsen, who owned the shoe shop; he spied the dreaded barber and the drunken chemist, and wasn't that the postman - an old old man now - who had delivered the longed-for letter from Margrete? Jonas remembered, suddenly he remembered so much, and stranger still: he also seemed to remember, or to see, things which were to come, things which had not yet happened in his life, as if he were in the middle of an overture.

Up in the organ loft Jonas Wergeland was playing 'Lead kindly light', and as he played he was able to keep track in the 'gossip mirror' of what was happening at the head of the nave. The choir was like a florist's shop, billowing with bouquets and beribboned wreaths like belated laurels. This, and all the people, brought home to him something which had never really occurred to him, and which he had possibly never completely understood until now; something which for some reason, given the situation, was a great lesson to him: his father had been a much loved man. Maybe that was the whole point of life: to be loved? Jonas's eyes went to his family and relatives in the front pews. His mother was sitting next to Benjamin, his little brother, who had Down's syndrome and who had stared uncomprehendingly at Jonas when told by him that unfortunately he could not begin the service with Abba's 'Ring Ring'. Maybe that was why he had refused to

leave his new bow and arrow in the porch and now sat there happily drawing bead on the angel on the altarpiece.

On his mother's other side was Rakel, she too dressed in black. Though there was nothing unusual in that, she had always worn black. Big sister and rebel Cheekbones like Katherine Hepburn's. The pride and waywardness of an Irish actor. A true revolutionary her whole life through. A pioneer in what was arguably one of the most male-dominated of all occupations, a samaritan, a Sister - not only to him, Jonas, but to many, to thousands, of others. It was a privilege to have such a sister. In Jonas's earliest memories she was no more than a face buried in a book, a collection of tales, the *Arabian Nights*; costumes and scents gliding through the rooms and turning the flat into a weird and wonderful place for him and Daniel, kids that they were. There they would be, taking life for granted, and Rakel would sweep into the living room, say something or do something, and all of a sudden they were not sure of anything. He remembered her as a perpetual wry, reproving smile. And then she was gone, or at least reduced to collecting the scalps of a string of boyfriends, to leather jackets reeking of cigarette smoke and the roar of a 1000 cc: a black-clad whirlwind that popped in every now and again. Eventually, though, she settled down, made some choices, got married and moved far away; later, she would often live even further away, for years at a time, with just the odd letter from foreign parts to let them know that she was alive and well. She was the only truly sterling individual Jonas knew. She was the one person he admired most in all the world.

Nonetheless, he toyed with the thought that Rakel could have had a very different life, had their father not been a musician. That, when you came right down to it, it was their father who had kick-started her remarkable career. Because, if Haakon had not been an organist and Bach lover he would never have taken Rakel to Oslo's Trinity Church on a late-autumn day in the mid-fifties. What happened on that day in Trinity Church? On that day Rakel met a lifesaver. A real lifesaver.

Rakel would tell the story of this event any chance she got. She had been seven at the time, and the mere fact of being taken into town by her father, to attend what she understood to be a very grand gathering, was wonderful. The sight of the building alone was enough for her. She was almost living in the *Arabian Nights* at the time, so the broad copper dome put her in mind of a magnificent mosque - all that was missing were the minarets. But more was to come, because no sooner had they entered the church and climbed up to the organ loft, when her father shook hands with the few other invited guests, most of them organists, than the guest of honour arrived, a man who, despite being almost eighty, was still strong and spry, with a good head of hair. 'I thought he was so handsome' Rakel always said. 'I thought it was the Caliph Haroun al-Rashid in disguise.'

This gentleman was no less a person than Albert Schweitzer, in Oslo to be presented with the Nobel Peace Prize which he had been awarded the year before. As far away as Africa he had heard tell of Eivind Groven's curiously pure tuned organ and he had expressed a wish to play it. Now he was actually here, in Trinity Church in Oslo. He seated himself at the simple organ and played a little

not much, just a little - because his eye had been caught by the old church organ and everyone could see that the world-renowned musician's fingers were itching to try it too. So of course he had to sit down at that fine Romantic organ - built in Norway, as it happens, by Claus Jensen - and after only a few bars he nodded his head vigorously in appreciation of the instrument's tone. He played Bach; it may not have been the perfect organ on which to play Bach, but Albert Schweitzer clearly enjoyed what he was hearing. To Rakel, who was of course familiar with the piece he was playing, Schweitzer seemed to render that marvellous warp and weft of voices quite transparent, and more: the very bricks of the church suddenly appeared translucent. Everything expanded, but at the same time everything was connected. Rakel felt that she had learned a bit more about the breadth of a man. That one could care as much about church organs as about the black people in Africa. She knew instinctively, by observing the ease with which Schweitzer handled all the different manuals and pedals, that this was a man capable of doing several things at once. It came as no surprise to her, later, to discover that he could write high-flown works on the history of New Testament research, that he had the ability to cure such appalling diseases as malaria and dysentery, sleeping sickness and leprosy, or that he could edit Bach's collected organ works. This was a man with respect for life at all levels, who had therefore taught himself to use instruments as diverse as the organ, the pen and the scalpel. 'He was a juggler,' she said. Not until Jonas met Bo Wang Lee did he understand what she meant.

Afterwards Rakel was introduced to Albert Schweitzer; he bent down and stroked her cheek. 'It was Bach who provided me with the first funds for my hospital in Africa,' he said in German, but Rakel understood him anyway. What she liked best about him was his rather bushy white moustache. 'And he had kind eyes,' she always said. 'The boy I marry will have to have eyes as kind as his.'

Although she was only seven years old, and did not understand exactly who Albert Schweitzer was, all the things he had done and everything he did while he was in Oslo, she had been greatly struck by the fire in those eyes, the warmth of that brief handshake, the music that poured out into the church. Unbeknown to anyone else in the family, over the years she garnered various scraps of information about Schweitzer. Then one day, when she was fifteen and had long been a teenage rebel, there it was on her bedroom wall - causing her parents to shake their heads in disbelief: a picture of Albert Schweitzer, hanging between Elvis Presley and Marlon Brando. A curious trinity. 'Some day I'll find my Lambaréné,' she said. And in a way she did.

At the age of twenty, in curlers and a headscarf, she was to be seen reading Schweitzer's autobiography, *Out of My Life and Thought*, the book that would finally persuade her to leave the world of the *Arabian Nights* - if, that is, since she thought the great doctor bore some resemblance to Haroun al-Rashid, it should not be seen as a natural follow-on from it, one tale, or perhaps one should say one form of rebellion, running into another. Be that as it may, it was at this point that she decided what she was going to do with her life. It came to her as suddenly and clearly as the phrase 'reverence for life' by which Schweitzer was struck on the river in Africa, one evening at sunset as he sat absent-mindedly on board

steamboat butting its way through a herd of hippopotami.

Like Jonas, Rakel wanted to be a lifesaver, but she took a much more serious approach to this than him. Rakel always took things seriously. She decided what her Lambaréné would be. It had to be mobile. She acquired a heavy goods vehicle license and trained as a nurse, in that order; she learned how to reverse a truck and trailer into a garage with a proficiency that put paid to any jokes about women drivers, learned to administer injections in a way that made life flare up. Thereafter, she and her husband, Hans Christian – who could actually have given Albert Schweitzer a run for his money where kind eyes were concerned – drove trucks for just about every humanitarian organisation in the world, always going where the suffering and the danger was greatest. ‘I drive caravans through deserts of need,’ she was wont to say, as if the vocabulary of the *Arabian Nights* still lived within her. Rakel was a leather-jacketed, 400 horse power Mother Theresa transporting food and medicines across front lines in war-torn zones. With – so it was rumoured – Bach’s organ music pouring from a cassette player on the passenger seat. Rakel was the sort of woman who proved that ethics and aesthetics can go hand in hand. Her windscreen was forever being pierced by bullets, but it is said that only once did she get upset: when a piece of shrapnel shattered her cassette player. But just as the Paris Bach Society had presented Schweitzer with a piano with organ pedals, specially built for the tropics, so Rake after this incident, was presented by her fellow aid workers with a special armour-plated cassette player. Rakel had no children, but – and this is not just an empty platitude – she and her husband had thousands of children. Jonas once asked her why she had taken up such a hazardous occupation – whether it was because, at the time, she had felt that there was no rhyme nor reason to life, or because she had felt guilty or whatever? She had stared at him as blankly as Benjamin was wont to do when Jonas said something which he, Jonas, believed to be laudably reasonable: ‘I did it because it’s a fantastic story,’ she said. ‘It’s the best book I’ve ever read.’

Rakel represented Jonas’s first encounter with a race which he would never understand: the bookworms of this world. Jonas simply could not comprehend how a book, a book with a title as innocuous as *Out of My Life and Thought*, could have such a powerful impact. Throughout her formative years Rakel had been an avid reader, the sort of child who had her nose buried in a library book even on the warmest of summer days. The light was invariably still burning on her side of the room when he went to sleep. She was quite capable of turning away boys at the door, when that time came. Then one day she simply got up, as if she had had enough of fiction, and went out into the real world. For good. Jonas could not rid himself – no matter how hard he tried – of a suspicion that the highly moral life she led was a natural consequence of all that reading; it would not have been possible without the ballast of thousands of tales.

Whatever the case: if any Norwegian can be said to have done their bit to save lives, to relieve want, then it has to be Rakel W. Hansen: a woman deserving of any peace prize you could name. Jonas was downright proud of his sister. She was the most upright – the happiest – person he knew. Every time he looked at her he

saw a face that said: I am life that wants to live, in the midst of life that wants to live. So simple, so true. And hence so hard to accept. Jonas did his best, year after year, not to think about it, even when he arrived at the church and saw her mangled, spattered black semi-trailer, an alien element - an almost extra-terrestrial object among the parked cars. But in his heart of hearts he knew: she was the living, provocative proof that happiness lay in helping others.

Jonas Wergeland sat in the organ loft in Grorud Church, playing the organ, feeling almost as if he were in the cab of Rakel's colossus of a truck. He had the same lofty overview. Was in similar contact with tremendous power. He launched into the last verse of 'Lead kindly light', having first closed the swell box and pulled out the Oboe 8 and Gedact Principal 16 to produce an even warmer, richer sound. A comforting sound. He did not know that a bolt of orange lightning was about to strike, an event as unexpected and as inflammatory as him pulling out a unknown stop and suddenly introducing an incredibly dangerous and bewildering voice into the organ's peal.

The hymn came to an end. Daniel stepped up to the lectern, alongside the coffin. Jonas was struck by the symmetry of this arrangement. Two sons. The one playing the organ, the other officiating. One at the front and one at the back. Jonas had often asked himself how Daniel, that sex-obsessed Casanova, that rabble-rouser par excellence, could have ended up as a man of the cloth. Jonas recalled one Christmas in the early seventies when Daniel had stolen up to the organ during the sermon and pressed the button which set the church bells chiming. His father had been back in the vestry, reading a copy of the *National Geographic*. There was an awful row. 'Why did you do it?' the vicar had asked. 'Because I wanted to protest against the American bombing of Vietnam!' But no, Daniel was himself a vicar, and did not expect to be interrupted. For once he did not spout a load of rubbish either. Jonas listened, deeply moved, to what his brother said about their father. A lot of people had asked if they might say a few words about Haakon Hansen, but their mother had said no to all of them. Daniel alone was to speak.

In the mirror Jonas could see Daniel's wife in one of the front pews, pregnant yet again and with three sons aged one, two and three crawling around her feet. Daniel must have been reared on ginseng. Or powdered rhinoceros horn. Jonas listened to his brother's solemn eulogy, then all at once he smiled. A memory had come to him as he glanced to his right, at the point where the organ loft curved round. On that spot, for a number of years in his childhood, Daniel had stood with the Bermuda Triangle, the three ladies who led the congregation in the hymns singing. Which was why, on a Saturday early in the summer between fifth and sixth grades, when they were on their way to Ingierstrand, he had been humming a snatch of a hymn - oddly enough it happened to be 'Vain world, now farewell'. But this was not just any day, this was the day marked with a magnetic red ring on Daniel's calendar. Not until they were on the bus was Jonas solemnly informed of the true objective of this expedition, as if they were commandos and the purpose of their mission could only now be revealed. They were headed for a bay on the other side of Ingierstrand. To a - pause for effect - nudist beach. Daniel

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