

THE SCHATTENDORF ECHOES

PUBLIC SAMPLE

NOVEL I: DANCING ON THE TIGHTROPE OF REALITY



THE HUMAN ENTRY

Hermann inherits a mansion and a nation's unresolved time. Julia must decide what relation can survive when every room has already been interpreted.

FORM

Literary prelude and three novels

STATUS

Complete · English/German parallel texts

LEAD SUBMISSION

Novel I

SAMPLE

Opening publication pages and first choruses

USE OF THIS SAMPLE

This controlled public sample is provided for reading and professional evaluation. The complete work, synopsis, proposal, series map, screenplay, or supporting apparatus is supplied directly upon an appropriate request.

THE SCHATTENDORF ECHOES

NOVEL I



Dancing on the Tightrope of Reality

A SUPERNATURAL HISTORICAL COMPOSITION



L I A N A M A R I E S I V E

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This is the authorized English parallel edition of the German-language principal text. Plot, historical structure, protected recurrences, and endings correspond across the two editions; wording follows English literary usage rather than sentence-for-sentence translation.

First English parallel edition, 2026.

EDITORIAL SIGLA AND NAME USE: UE designates the Unreliable Editor. AFW is the countervoice whose long form is A Fellow Wayfarer. Prinz Rita is the German childhood inscription on the paper crown; Prince Rita is the later chosen name and office. The forms are not silently standardized.

A Note from the Unreliable Editor

Hermann von Kunstdorf survives unevenly in the record. The dates are often clearer than the motives, and later recollections disagree about both. This account does not pretend to restore Hermann whole. It works from fragments: a house and staircase, a sequence of canvases, a letter worn white at the folds, contradictory testimonies, a chessboard, a red ribbon, a sketched butterfly, an unsounded trill, and the memory of a child's question.

Official records call Hermann he because registers, certificates, military papers, inheritance law, and social custom require it. Rita does not always follow that usage. Julia says *Papa* even when the word cannot contain what she knows. The discrepancies remain visible rather than being corrected into false consistency.

Editorial consistency would conceal rather than repair that injury. The fragments do not proceed in strict chronological order. They recur by object, voice, and pressure so that no single memory can govern the others merely by arriving first.

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CHORUS I

THE EAST DOOR LEARNS ERMORDET

Adornfeld brought the paper in before the coffee had settled. He did not wave it. He placed it beneath two estate letters and a bill for lamp oil, as if bad news could be disciplined by being filed under domestic expense. Frau Klemper had already set the paste jar on the long table.

The jar was a medicine glass with the label soaked off. Beside it lay a bread knife, a bone folder, three pins, two bent nails, and a square of gray cloth used for polishing silver. She put the knife handle toward Hermann and said, "Cut straight. Dead people do not need crooked edges." Hermann touched the folded *Arbeiter-Zeitung* with the back of her fingers.

The paper was cool, and the crease split the headline. When she opened the sheet across the table, the type read: Von Frontkämpfern ermordet—murdered by Frontkämpfer. Rausch leaned over the sheet and read only fragments, because fragments were his habit and also his defense.

"Schattendorf. Moser's inn. Tscharmann's tavern. Shots before the meeting. Gendarmerie promise. Further fire near evening. Child. Invalid. Wounded."

He stopped after each noun as if the paper had placed a toll gate between words. Julia stood at the window.

"If the paper says murder, then the room must not soften it into misfortune. If the paper names the dead, then we must not let the headline swallow them."

Adornfeld took out his notebook and wrote the names in a column: Matthias Csmarits; Josef Grössing; Josef Haring; Alois Schmiedel; Josef Wagner; Jakob Stromer; Martin Grössing. He left one blank line after each name and put down the pencil. Alex came in with glue on his sleeve from some earlier crime against paper. He reached for the clipping.

Frau Klemper caught his wrist.

"Ask before touching." Alex asked.

Hermann nodded. He took the headline, carried it to the east door, and pinned it upside down. Nobody laughed. Alex's mistake left the accusation intact but forced every reader to bend toward it.

Hermann removed the pin and set it right. The pin bent; the wood resisted; the old hinge gave a short metallic complaint. She pressed the headline to the panel until paste rose along the edge. A corner curled back.

She did not smooth it at once. The paper had arrived as testimony, not as wallpaper. Frau Klemper wiped the paste from the table with the gray cloth.

"Now read the names," she said.

Rausch began again, not in his fragments this time but one body at a time. Hermann listened for texture: grit in Csmarits, the hard little consonants in Grössing, the scrape in Stromer. Julia repeated each name after him. Alex repeated the ones he could say and did not pretend with the ones he could not.

The east door now carried the headline beside a bent pin while the names remained on the table. January had entered the house as paper, paste, and a list no one could put away.

CHORUS II

CONDOLENCE ON THE HINGE

The next Landtag report arrived with cleaner margins. Adornfeld carried it in a portfolio rather than beneath the bills and sharpened a pencil before copying the official wording. The table had been scrubbed. Frau Klemper disapproved of grief that used stickiness as proof.

“Paste jar to the left. Dry cloth to the right. No elbows in the official sorrow.” Rausch read the unanimous resolution as if reading a proclamation under a low ceiling.

“Burgenländer killed by Burgenländer. Political reasons. Condolence of the Landtag. Political struggles with geistigen Waffen. No violence that breeds violence. Stern action against high-treasonous elements.”

Julia folded her arms.

“If the state can name the sorrow, then the state must also name the pressure that made the sorrow possible. If it calls for intellectual weapons, then it must not leave children beneath actual ones.”

Hermann cut the phrase geistigen Waffen from the column and laid it beside the headline on the east door. Its ink was visibly lighter than the accusation above it. Adornfeld objected.

“The phrase belongs to the sentence.”

“Everything belongs somewhere,” Hermann said. “That is not the same as being safe there.”

Frau Klemper brought a strip of blue laundry ribbon from the kitchen basket. It had once tied sheets. She handed it to Alex.

“Hold one end. Not in your mouth.”

Together they ran the ribbon from the lower hinge to the pasted Landtag phrase. Alex pulled too hard, bending the nail and splitting the wood in a thin line below it. Hermann covered the crack with her thumb while Alex waited for instruction. Rausch continued: peace with Hungary, friendship with the Hungarian people, refusal of Hungarian foreign rule, gendarmerie filled to prescribed strength, republican formations completed in the province.

The list offered a rail along the abyss but no floor. Adornfeld wrote that down before he could prevent himself. Julia looked at the ribbon.

“If that is a rail, then someone must still hold the child.”

Frau Klemper pointed toward the broom.

“Then hold the broom too. Floors do not build themselves under speeches.”

The east door changed its second state: headline at eye height, Landtag phrase tied to the hinge, blue ribbon under strain, crack visible. No sentence was removed and no sentence was trusted alone.

CHORUS III

BALLOTS AFTER BULLETS

After the April vote, the newspaper arrived with arithmetic. Adornfeld liked figures because they made grief wait in line, but even he hesitated before laying them on the table. Rausch read the headline from the Arbeiter-Zeitung in his quoted manner.

“The example of Burgenland. Social Democrats: 47,702. Christian Socials: 39,063. Landbund: 16,713. Smaller parties: 14,252. Strongest party.”

He tapped each number with the pencil and left a black dot beside the thousands. Frau Klemper brought a bowl of white beans from the pantry.

“The boy counts better with something that can spill.”

Alex counted votes in beans. Forty-seven for one pile, thirty-nine for another, sixteen for another, fourteen for what he called the little parties. He looked pleased until Julia said Schattendorf had added votes and Loipersbach had become a majority. Then he pushed one bean toward the list of names.

“Can a fifth more votes bring Josef back?” he asked.

No one answered at once, which was the first mercy anyone offered. Julia sat beside him.

“If votes could raise the dead, the living would be less careless with them. They cannot. They can only tell the people who made the danger that the village has not become obedient.”

Hermann cut the election figures from the page. The scissors caught on the comma after the first number and tore a small triangle out of the margin. She held the scrap in her palm. Margin, missing; number, intact.

That was acceptable. She would not repair every accident merely because it looked like damage. Adornfeld marked the article’s argument in his ledger: answer to Horthy; answer to the Frontkämpfer; answer for republican gains; answer for the school; answer from a border province that knew the appetite of old masters. Rausch read, “Hands off Burgenland,” though those exact hands were his compression and not the paper’s grammar.

He caught himself and corrected: “The paper says it differently. It means that.” Frau Klemper took the beans away before Alex could make armies of them.

“Numbers first. War games never.”

They pasted the figures below the Landtag ribbon, not over the names. Alex held the lower edge. His thumb left a pale oval in the paste. The paper wrinkled around it, and Hermann did not smooth it out.

Alex's thumb-mark dried in the paste. Afterward the door carried the headline, the Landtag phrase, the blue ribbon, the election tally, and the pale oval of his touch. The hinge no longer squeaked when opened. That was worse.

A hinge can become accustomed to burden.