

Sample Pages
The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway
Fred Schäfer

Dear Fred ... I rushed immediately to the manuscript and began reading with wild abandon ... I can see clearly your influences ... And I really laughed out loud about our casual meeting. You have such a good way with words ... I am totally delighted by your book. You have captured certain essences and smells and ways of doing things ... I am sure *The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway* will be a wonderful success.

All the best, *Tony Miller*

Fred Schäfer has a charming writing style and unique voice. This is a brilliantly forthright and humorous account of a glorious adventure. Perfectly captures Jung's words, "Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes". Read it and *live!*

Clare Carlin

Fred Schäfer takes on two of the 20th Century's literary giants. The story takes off when he arrives in New York. Miraculously, he meets an old mate of Hemingway's from the *Toronto Star*. He enjoys a bevy of buxom beauties, in true Miller style. Not as macho as Ernest, Fred manages to inject the book with a unique philosophy, somewhere between Schopenhauer and Bob Dylan.

There are scenes that will stay in my memory, like the time he visits Rachel's English class and speaks about his radical reading of *The Great Gatsby*. Or the time he stays up all night with his Mexican hosts in California, arguing about Schopenhauer and predetermination.

Bruce L. Russell

Author of *Channelling Henry* (Fremantle Press, 2003)

The more you read *The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway*, the more you want to read to find out more. It's a book of excitement and humour. A book with a great plot. It is autobiography, fiction and non-fiction. A magnificent read.

David Price

Fred Schäfer's *Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway* is a terrific read from beginning to end. At times a wildly humorous ride through the author's many and varied sexual encounters, at other times a philosophical unveiling of life's meaning and absurdity. I found myself coming back to Fred's book again and again, interested to find out what would happen next. He invites us into a world of unfolding identity development. In the process, he speaks with a directness and honesty that is compelling. Throughout, the words are carefully chosen, never is there an overuse of language, although everything seems to have been written with such ease. This beautiful efficiency and some damn fine storytelling makes *Henry Hemingway* one of the best memoirs I have yet read.

Steve Wells

Internationally recognized psychologist and author

Fred, I thoroughly enjoyed your book. I started off reading and hearing your voice. Just as if you were talking to me. But as I was reading the last few pages I suddenly realised your voice had gone and it was the sound of my own voice I could hear in my head. What did this mean? Your memoirs have made me appreciate my own experiences more. It dawned on me that my life has been better than I sometimes think. Your book is great and easy to read. I look forward to the 'sequel'.

Paul White

This is an autobiographical tale told in great honesty and warmth. Fred reveals his inner thoughts and retains an optimistic viewpoint throughout. He meanders through his adventures during the 60s – firstly in Berlin and later in America – and with an easy, conversational style draws the reader into his story. It is told with philosophical undertones and a subtle sense of humour. I left the story feeling both exhilarated and saddened from the nostalgia that had risen up within me. A delightful romp through one man's past.

Trevor Hedges

About Fred Schäfer

Fred grew up in *Sontheim an der Brenz* in the south of Germany. He lived in Berlin, Düsseldorf and Heidenheim and travelled extensively in America, India, Sri Lanka and Australia. Today Fred lives with his family in Western Australia.

He writes literary fiction and non-fiction books in English and German. His books invite the reader to reflect, they entertain, sometimes they provoke, often combined with a subtle sense of humour.

Fred's non-fiction bestseller, *The Solution Within Yourself*, helped thousands of people to reassess their lives, find happiness and achieve better results.

Also by Fred Schäfer
Weitere Bücher von Fred Schäfer

Travelling with Maria

A fascinating travel and a wonderful love story about a two year journey through India, Sri Lanka and Australia.

The Solution Within Yourself

A practical guide for achieving results, happiness, success and purpose in life.

Success, Money and You

An invitation to an inspiring journey to financial success.

Herrn Eberhardts Erinnerungen

Ein Meisterwerk und ein mutiger Roman, der Fred Schäfers Vielseitigkeit und die literarische Bedeutung seines Werkes überzeugend darstellt.

Die Beeinflussung des jungen Jakob Berg durch Henry Miller

Eine faszinierende Liebesgeschichte, die ihren Ursprung im epochemachenden Berlin der sechziger Jahre hat.

**For more information and free sample pages please visit
www.condorbooks.com**

The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway
An Introduction

This is the story of Henry Hemingway. It is also my story. Everything about Mona, the girls, the toolmakers, IBM, boxing, Schopenhauer, sex and all the stuff that happened in Berlin, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and in the Canadian woods is true – as true as these things can be.

Somewhere along the way Henry Hemingway joined me. Sometimes we travelled together, sometimes he was nowhere to be found. In Bon Echo we met Merrill Denison. He told us about Ernest Hemingway with whom he had worked at the *Toronto Star*. In Los Angeles we stayed with Anita Alma and her daughters Rosa and Martha. Without Anita's hospitality things would have looked pretty bleak. We met Henry Miller's son Tony in Pacific Palisades. This was a fateful meeting. Henry Hemingway had initiated it. In the background I could hear Tony's father hammering away on a typewriter. Without Tony, who knows, Henry Hemingway may still be around today. He would probably be an alcoholic or a famous writer. Maybe both.

I have recorded the conversations with these people exactly the way I remember them. All other names in this story are invented. For those who think they recognize themselves, may I suggest that you pretend everything is fiction. That worked for me. It still works for me and is also pretty true.

Fred Schäfer

I can still see you (PART 7) was one of the winning entries in the 2001 Lyndall Hadow/Donald Stuart Short Story Competition by the Fellowship of Australian Writers (WA). The Judge's Report stated: "... you have to publish a story that ends with the lines *Thanks Sybil. I can still see you with that big, black, stinking cigar in your mouth. Naked and very attractive*".

Fred Schäfer

**The Short and Wonderful Life of
Henry Hemingway**

A memoir of the years of fiction

The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway
Copyright © 2007 Paul Friedrich Schäfer (Fred Schäfer)
Published by Lulu
www.lulu.com

ISBN 978-1-4092-1117-4

Originally published in Australia in 2007
by Condor Books
www.condorbooks.com

In comparison with the original edition, this edition contains minor editorial changes.

Paul Friedrich Schäfer asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work. All rights reserved.

For Maria

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to Dr Chris McLeod for editing this book and for his encouragement, to Bill Jackson for reading the first draft and for saying that he would like to read the second draft as well – Bill, that really meant something – and to Rick Boyd who in his unassuming approach once again helped in so many ways, especially during the early days of the manuscript. Rick, I hope you do find a publisher soon for those amazing novels in the top drawer of your desk. Also many thanks to Julia Beaven, Louis de Vries and Jan Miller. Your encouraging feedback contributed substantially towards the publication of this book.

Thank you also to Henry Miller's son Tony, to Clare Carlin, Bruce L. Russell, David Price, Steve Wells, Paul White and Trevor Hedges for their willingness to read this book prior to its publication and for their comments and encouragement.

The sixty-three words from Susanne's story – *Diese Geschichte schreibe ich für Dich...* – are her own words. Her actual story comprises several pages. Unfortunately, I lost touch with her but I am confident that she doesn't mind that I included these sixty-three words. They are essential. And, of course, her real name is not Susanne.

Prologue 13

PART 1

**Men who left messages, indifferent soldiers
and guys who didn't pay 17**

PART 2

Sarah and the idea of being *in the beds* 41

PART 3

Finding Mona 81

PART 4

New York, Chicago, Bianca, Rachel and Victoria 141

PART 5

Canada and the old man in Bon Echo 175

PART 6

Schopenhauer in Hollywood 199

PART 7

I can still see you 219

Postscript 223

Books by Fred Schäfer 225

The truth of every event in every life, if you look at it deeply and respectfully, is so amazing that it becomes quite obvious that someone must have invented it before it could occur. Everything originated in fiction.

Henry Hemingway in a letter to Susanne, sent from Lake Mississagagon.

Prologue

What happened may have been predetermined, it may have been accidental, it may have been of my own doing. We don't know and those who think they know could be wrong. Besides, I am now all right with that Mona obsession and with the other girls and everything that happened. It has become a story. It makes me think that I have not missed out on anything. You really don't want to be regretting the past and thinking that you missed out on things in your younger years.

This is not how it all started, but it is a good way to start. Monika was drunk when I met her at *Mutter Leidike*. She had consumed too much of the pub's renowned gooseberry wine. People drank the stuff like juice. It tasted like juice. Some people placed the full bottle on their lips and by the time they took the bottle off, empty or almost empty, the waiter had placed another bottle in front of them. Monika was twenty years old, but looked like fifteen. It was a Saturday night which had started like so many other Saturday nights. I had just popped in at *Mutter Leidike* to see if I could spot a familiar face.

Monika, with a bottle of wine in one hand, walked right into me.

"Excuse me", she said. Well, not exactly. We are reflecting here on an event that happened in Berlin. Accordingly, what Monika really said, or most likely really said, was something along the following lines: *Entschuldigen Sie bitte. Hoppla!* (I am not so sure about the *Hoppla*. This word is used more widely in the south of Germany. It means whoops!)

Then, all of a sudden, Monika's legs gave up on her. If I hadn't caught her, she would have crashed to the floor. The

place was so crowded, people might just have stepped on her or fallen over her.

She asked for a lift and since I was bored and had nothing planned for the rest of the night, I agreed.

This, as I realized retrospectively, was my mistake. Or maybe it was okay. The price I had to pay was small. A bit of emotional pain. Easily hidden and denied. Stay away from drunken women. Don't pick them up. My mother could have told me that.

In my car I asked the girl where I could drop her off.

She said she would prefer my place.

That wasn't what I had meant.

She lived with her parents and told me about a silly argument with her father and that she could not go home.

This didn't sound too bad. Can happen to anybody.

I didn't mind her spending the night at my place, but it was only ten o'clock, much too early to go home. What now? She suggested that I could do whatever I liked and she would curl up on the back seat of my VW and whenever I drove home I could wake her up. I didn't like that idea either. It was winter and cold and I didn't want to find her frozen in my car.

Hell, how would I explain that to her father and her mother and the police and to my father and my mother and so on?

Drunk was bad enough. Drunk and frozen would have been really bad.

We agreed that she needed a strong cup of coffee and after that we would go to the Bellevue, a cinema that showed slapstick movies every Friday and Saturday night from eleven o'clock till one or two in the morning. I thought this would cheer her up. But once in the cinema Monika fell asleep within minutes and I did my best to drink her gooseberry wine and enjoy Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin on my own. There was also a jazz band on the stage. Many people smoked and some had brought a bottle of wine or *Schnaps* along and shared it around. As far as I know, the Bellevue was the only cinema of that kind in Berlin. In any

other cinema they would have gone berserk, called the police and threatened to arrest you if you smoked and boozed and farted and swore and whatever else people did in the Bellevue.

There was a good atmosphere.

The place reminded me of Paris: of locations I had read about in Henry Miller's *Quiet Days in Clichy*.

After the movie I carried Monika to my car. She was so slim and so light, I was worried that the wind may just blow her away. She still insisted that she wanted to spend the night at my place. "You hardly know me," I challenged her.

"You look all right," she said.

I didn't argue with this.

At the time I lived in a little apartment in Kreuzberg, just around the corner from where the painter Kurt Mühlenhaupt had his atelier. Monika spent the night on my sofa. The next morning we had breakfast together. It was a bit like in one of those old Rock Hudson and Doris Day movies. I had a good fire going and she walked around in her panties and a blouse and nothing else.

It was actually much better than in those stupid movies. We made love and Monika's bohemian appearance reminded me of Mona, one of Henry Miller's characters that he had modelled on his muse and wife June.

I was fascinated by Monika's body. She was so slim, so perfectly slim. Before I had met her I would not have thought it possible that such a slim female body could stir up such tremendous sexual feelings in me. Monika was very down to earth and had a great sense of humour. She phoned her parents and returned home a few days later.

We had more sex.

Then, one day, she told me that she had fallen in love with someone. She asked if I wanted to meet the guy. I didn't.

Why would I want to meet him?

I realized that my search for a muse – *my Mona* – would start again. We phoned each other a few more times before we lost contact.

After that I never picked up a drunken girl again. Not because I wouldn't. It just never happened. This was a once in a lifetime experience. She was there. I was there. She was too drunk to stand. I caught her. She asked for a lift. This is how these things sometimes happen.

PART 1

Men who left messages, indifferent soldiers and guys who didn't pay

... don't believe you are insane because you find
yourself in a nut house ...

Henry Miller
*BIG SUR AND THE ORANGES OF
HIERONYMUS BOSCH*

Not one thought of sex during the entire day

It started in Berlin in 1964. Herbert and Karl picked me up from the airport. I had arrived on a Lufthansa plane from Stuttgart. My first flight. I couldn't say that I was impressed. I thought I should be. But it was just like a very fast train ride, only a lot higher up.

Herbert, Karl and I were from the same village in the south of Germany and none of us wanted to become a soldier in West Germany's army and one way to avoid it was to run away – *abhauen!* – to West Berlin. They were *abgehauen* a few months earlier. Today things are different. But during those years, you may remember, West Berlin was located pretty much in the middle of East Germany, in fact, it was a bit closer to Poland than to West Germany. The city was an island with special legal and political status, outside the jurisdiction of the West German government, occupied by Ameri-

can, British and French forces, encircled by a wall, sealed off by East Germany's brutal border guards and surrounded by Russian forces and millions of people – *den Ostdeutschen* – who yearned to be free.

What a place to escape to!

What the hell did I think?

I was nineteen years old, one hundred and seventy-six centimetres and seventy-five kilograms. *Mittelgewicht*. I thought of myself as good-looking, a bit stubborn perhaps and not easily intimidated. I, Paul Friedrich Schäfer, called Friedrich by my parents and, later, Fred by my friends, was about to discover life.

Life ... that unpredictable cocktail comprising love, sex, fiction and forty thousand bullets every day. Every thought we think a bullet. Forty thousand a day. Trust me on this one. I counted them.

On a Monday, one week after my arrival in Berlin Tempelhof, I went to the *Arbeitsamt*, that's the Labour Office. After I had filled in endless forms and queued and waited for what seemed like days, *ein Berliner Beamter*, a public servant, decided that it was my turn. Public servants were still seen as the kings and the queens in Germany. Mainly kings. The public was there to serve them, not the other way round.

Today things are different. Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker are gone and Germany is an integrated part of Europe. Instead of the cold war there are asylum seekers and neo nazis. But there has been no real war in Germany during the second half of the twentieth century. That is often forgotten. And Germany's public servants, what about them? Some have changed and some are the same, just the same.

"What's your profession?" the king asked me in 1964.

"I am a toolmaker."

He looked at me with an empty face. The way only a king can look.

"We have enough toolmakers in Berlin."

I said nothing.

“Anything else you can do?”

I could beat you up.

“We need street cleaners and garbage men.”

I am going to beat you up.

“You don’t want to clean streets?”

What an idiot!

“Why not?”

Have a guess.

“Because you are a toolmaker.”

Well done!

“What’s wrong with you?”

Stay calm, very calm.

The man was nothing short of a dictator. He treated me as if I was an unwanted asylum seeker, which wasn’t entirely wrong. The West German army didn’t want me in West Berlin. They had no jurisdiction in that city in the middle of communism and would have preferred me in their own ranks. The Russians didn’t want me in West Berlin. They wanted West Berlin. The city was a thorn in their side. But if you had asked them if they wanted the city with or without me, they would have replied without hesitation: Keep him! And the East German government? They were a crazy mix of people and didn’t want me in Berlin either. It no longer matters why.

When the dictator didn’t understand something I said because of my Swabian accent, he told me I should have learned proper German before I came to Berlin. Then the phone rang. He stopped mid-sentence, took the receiver, leaned back, closed his eyes and held a long conversation with his girlfriend, or maybe his mistress.

“Sure darling.”

Heavy breathing.

“What a lovely idea.”

Heavy breathing.

“You are so special.”

Heavy breathing.

“So amazingly special.”

He must have fantasized or he was an asthmatic.

The man had no idea how much and how seriously he had endangered his health on this very day. His bullying tactics and my need for dignity created an explosive emotional mix in my mind which I found hard to control. In my imagination I had my hands around his neck, his face was blue and his eyes bulged out and begged for mercy.

Please!

Don't kill me!

I'll find the perfect toolmaker job for you!

I promise.

I ended up with the name and address of a company in a suburb called Tegel. In order to go to Tegel I had to use the U-Bahn, which is Berlin's underground train. Tegel is almost on the other side of Berlin and the U-Bahn had to travel underneath East Berlin on its journey from Mariendorf. It seemed to take ages and was depressing. There were underground train stations with heavily armed East German soldiers where the train slowed but didn't stop. I had heard that sometimes soldiers jumped onto the train for a ride to freedom.

Some made it.

Some got shot.

The company in Tegel was big and on the brink of bankruptcy. They offered me a job as a toolmaker, which I accepted. The next day I arrived for work at half past six in the morning.

It was dark.

Dark and cold and raining.

I quit in the afternoon. It was still dark and cold and raining. A dark and cold and rainy day in Berlin with me in the middle of it.

An hour after I had quit they paid me my wage for one day of standing around and doing nothing in a cold and hostile workshop environment. I took the money, somewhat reluctantly, but all in all pleased with myself. I still remember viv-

idly an old man who worked on a turning lathe. He didn't look up when I asked him a question.

He said: "*Hau ab!*" Get lost!

He whispered it.

As if this was the most natural thing to do.

I met another man briefly in the morning for about one or two minutes. He was my boss. I didn't see him ever again and am not sure if he also quit, just like me, or if something about me made him decide to ignore me for the rest of the day, or if he was simply busy somewhere else.

The entire day appeared disjointed, unreal. Surrealistic, like Dali's watches melting away and dripping off a table.

After I had decided to quit it took me ages to find someone who was willing to deal with my resignation. I walked from office to office, like being lost in a medieval castle.

Nobody seemed to be in charge or competent to handle resignations.

Nobody had time to listen.

Nobody had time to help.

Nobody smiled.

I seemed surrounded by ghosts and was worried that they might disappear before I had resigned.

Finally I found a man with a dirty tie and a hounded expression who appeared vaguely interested in finding out what I didn't like. He was the managing director. I began to speak but then, within half a minute and without warning, he stopped listening and ordered a young female employee to pay me for one working day and that was it. Well, not quite. The girl didn't exchange one word with me. She didn't even say *here* or *take it* or *hau ab*, when she pushed the money over the counter.

For once I didn't think of sex.

Not one thought of sex during the entire day.

During my first weeks in Berlin I stayed in Herbert's room. Herbert was a lodger with a Mrs Wegner in Berlin Marien-

dorf. If Mrs Wegner was disappointed about my lack of staying power at my first job, she didn't show it. Herbert said I could have tried at least a few days. That was easy for him to say. He was working. His life was miserable. I thought things were going to be different for me. I thought I had a choice. I was at the beginning of a new life.

But he had a point.

After all, I was using his room, sleeping on his sofa.

Two days later I bought a newspaper and studied the job vacancies section. There was an advertisement from a factory in Mariendorf, within walking distance of Herbert's place. They advertised for a toolmaker. I walked the distance, looked at the dirty factory building from the outside and decided not to apply. I felt threatened.

It was not easy to make me feel threatened, believe me. Certainly not by a factory. This was the first and only time in my life that I felt threatened by a building. Hell, a prison building could not have felt more threatening.

The factory stared at me like the stronghold of a gang of robber-knights and it would have been easy to convince me that everybody inside was in chains.

Walking back to Herbert's place I noticed a sign outside another company. It said: *Toolmakers wanted*. In German of course: *Werkzeugmacher gesucht*, or something like that. That company looked friendly. I applied, commenced work the next day and didn't quit for nearly seven months.

A witty man, a competent one and a third one who had not yet thought about his principles

Mr Mendel was in his early thirties and had started seventeen years earlier as an apprentice and worked his way up at the company which had displayed the *Toolmakers wanted* sign. I quickly learned to appreciate and to respect him. When I

commenced he was the *Meister*, the boss of the workshop which comprised twenty to thirty pieces of machinery and about the same number of toolmakers, turners, fitters and mechanics. Bernhardt and I were toolmakers. Bernhardt was a Swabian like myself and about my age.

Swabians.

They are people with a good sense of humour.

Dry, enigmatic, cryptic and profound.

They are a bit like Australians. Some Australians know how to call you a bastard in a way that makes you feel good. Swabians know how to talk to each other in a similar way. But this can only be done in the Swabian dialect. It doesn't work in High German, in *hochdeutsch*. But even in the dialect it is not easy and depends on how good you are at being dry, enigmatic, cryptic and profound.

Got it? No? Don't worry.

Bernhardt had a way with words and girls which I didn't have and for which I envied him. Twice Bernhardt had a date with two girls and in his kindness was willing to share them with me.

One girl for him.

One for me.

Each time both girls were gorgeous. Slim, sexy, you just wanted to grab them and hug them and kiss them, at least one of them, which one didn't matter, and have sex non-stop. It was a friendly arrangement, fair and transparent. Nothing I could have complained about.

Each time we spent a couple of hours sitting at one of the bars in the Riverboat, one of Berlin's biggest discos, then sipping tea for an hour or two in Danny's Den. Bernhardt was an articulate and fluent entertainer. Casually mentioning the name of a politician, as if he had met him recently, Bernhardt would say: "I can't fully agree with his proposal. To me, he shows a lack of understanding and appreciation of the underlying complexity and the multitude of interests associated with this matter. If the government agreed with his view, the

long term consequences would affect not only every aspect of the social fabric of this country, it would also have a regrettably complicating impact on Bonn's relationship with its neighbours in the east."

What a load of bullshit, I thought. What the heck is he talking about?

He knew when to stop and change a topic.

"Anyhow," he would say, "we don't need to address this in more depth. There are opposing views within his party and I think they will take care of this matter before it can cause irreversible damage. Let's talk about last night's *Kreuzfeuer*. I wonder how many people watching this show have ever reflected on why they think it is interesting. It is not interesting. The only interesting thing is the fact that people think it is interesting although it is not. Not that I think that this is very relevant. However, since the show is such a success, there must be an explanation, which could be an interesting one."

More bullshit. I couldn't believe it.

Then he changed the subject again.

The girls seemed to like it.

He kept talking, they listened and most of the time they agreed with his observations.

Or maybe they just agreed because they had no idea what he was talking about.

He was a tradesman just like me but talked and behaved like a man who was only a few days away from receiving his triple Masters in psychology, philosophy and sociology. Add politics to it as well. He managed to make everything he said sound so damn intelligent.

During those days I did not yet know that you can make the most stupid and ridiculous things sound intelligent if you know how to express them with lots of sincerity and confidence.

Bernhardt knew how to say things with lots of sincerity and confidence. There is a trick to it. Or maybe it is not a trick. If you believe what you say, no matter how meaningless it is, as

long as you are convinced of its importance and express it calmly you will have people listening. It took me a while to get there. A couple of years or so. But I never managed it quite like Bernhardt. He just never had the slightest doubt about the stuff he talked about. He could talk about nothing and make it sound important. A bit like Cosmo Kramer in the Seinfeld show. I always seem to be diverted by other aspects. To me, nothing is real in an absolute sense. Reality is just the way we see things at a given moment. Bernhardt could cling to his reality unconditionally. Until this day I expect to find his name among those of the parliamentarians in the German Bundestag.

I was awkward. When Bernhardt said something I butted in and tried to show that I knew better. I didn't. Instead of trying to compete with Bernhardt, if I had shown interest and asked questions, we would have had great conversations and everybody would have had a good time. The girls might even have seen through his crap.

Each time we somehow managed to separate and I made my way home alone and Bernhardt took the two beautiful girls home.

He had sex.

Ich holte mir einen runter.

That's what I thought. Until one day he told me that the two girls didn't want to have sex with him together. They didn't want his penis first in one of them and then in the other. Which one first, which one second? There may have been other considerations, which went through the girls' heads and which we are not privy to. None of our business. Bernhardt might have been able to handle one of the girls, he complained, but not two.

"What did you do?" I asked him.

"I masturbated!" he replied.

He did what I had done.

I was more fortunate in my dealings with Mr Mendel and in my toolmaker job. Here is the scenario. There were two

groups of men in Mr Mendel's workshop. One group consisted of men who were younger than Mr Mendel and the other group comprised men who were older. Bernhardt, another two fellows and I formed the group of the younger ones. The remaining twenty-five or so men formed the older group. Most of the older men were already fully-fledged tradesmen when Mr Mendel was still an apprentice. He was competent, ambitious and successful. Within a decade he became the boss, which many of the older men resented. They didn't say so openly but it was obvious most of the time. When Mr Mendel asked for volunteers to work on a Saturday or Sunday, there was usually nobody who volunteered except myself. When he asked toolmakers or mechanics from the group of the older men to work on a turning lathe or in another section of the company for a couple of days, the men who he had asked usually phoned in the next day and reported sick. They refused to do work which they thought was below their status. They behaved like high-caste Indians who were asked to clean a toilet.

They never phoned Mr Mendel himself.

Later in my life I have observed this kind of behaviour all over the world. People who claim to be sick but are not really sick almost always leave messages with other people. The toolmakers in Mr Mendel's workshop left messages with people in the office.

I frequently worked ten to twelve hours a day. Eight hours as a toolmaker and another two to four hours as a turner, grinder or whatever else had to be done. Most of the men in the older group didn't like me because they didn't like what I did. But they never said so openly after I had beaten up two of them.

"You are an idiot," I was told by one of the two just before the punch-up.

"Why?"

"You work too much."

"I need the money," I defended myself.

“You spoil things for everybody.”

“Why? Just because I work overtime doesn’t mean you have to do the same.”

“You are really an idiot,” the other one of the two chipped in.

“Be careful,” I said. “You call me an idiot once more and I’ll beat the shit out of you.”

“Idiot!”

“What’s wrong with you guys?”

“What’s wrong with *you*? *That’s* the question!” one of them said.

“What is wrong with me?”

“You are pissing in the *Meister’s* pocket. You work like crazy. You make us look bad so that you can be his sweet darling.”

“You’d better take that back, or ...”

“Or what?”

“You will see what.”

“You are not only an idiot and the *Meister’s Liebling*, you are also a coward. Next time you work overtime, *da ziehen wir dir das Fell über die Ohren.*”

What a thing to say!

Threatening to pull my skin over my ears.

One of the two had a black eye and the other one a nose the size of a small balloon. There was blood everywhere and they didn’t turn up for work for nearly two weeks. They never spoke to me about the incident either.

I was an amateur boxer at the time, which they didn’t know. I was not, not yet, successful with girls. This, they didn’t know either. Then there was another thing which they didn’t know. I was happy to beat them up, in fact, I was happy to beat up anybody. Somehow I had to do something to compensate for my lack of success with girls. Beating up a few men seemed just to be the right thing for that purpose. They would have had to be psychologists and clairvoyants to know all this stuff. But they were toolmakers. You could say they

were in the wrong profession and really didn't know very much at all and they harassed the wrong guy and subsequently had no idea what hit them.

Neither did I know any of this subconscious stuff at the time.

Lots of misunderstandings.

Lots of things we didn't understand.

There are wars because of things people don't understand.

I learned to respect Mr Mendel when I discovered that he didn't sack some of the troublemakers in his workshop, although he had the opportunity to do so. Once, when Bernhardt suggested to him that one of the older men had deliberately sabotaged an urgent job, he spoke to the man at length. To Bernhardt he indicated that the man had a sick wife and a drinking problem. The man, after Mr Mendel had reprimanded him, bought a bottle of brandy and shared it with his workmates. He thought he was a hero and told everybody who was willing to listen, and many were, that he had sorted out the boss. He even had the audacity to offer a glass of brandy to Mr Mendel.

Mr Mendel politely declined.

If he had offered the brandy to me, I would have accepted it and it would have meant nothing. A day later if I had had an argument with the man I could easily have beaten him up, despite the brandy, his alcohol problem and his sick wife. I couldn't be bought with alcohol but I obviously had not yet thought much about my principles either.

Mr Mendel knew and lived by his principles.

For many years afterwards, when I was a student at the Gauss Engineering Academy studying precision engineering, whenever I ran out of money I would phone Mr Mendel and could be certain that I could start work in his workshop the next day.

A hero for nothing

When I joined the boxing club where Mr Rudermann was the coach he was in his mid forties, a tall man, a big talker and a poor listener. There were a few good boxers in the club. However, most of the club members were young people who should never have been allowed in a boxing ring except to set it up or dismantle it.

My best friend, Martin Schuller, was one of them.

Martin was the bravest man in the club.

I can't remember how many fights he had lost in a row. Maybe fifteen, maybe twenty, maybe only ten. It wasn't always like that. But in Berlin he found himself in a real slump. I don't know why boxing was so damn important to him. He never told me and I suspect he didn't know himself. Maybe it was because he had experienced so many knockdowns and all he wanted now was to win one fight, just one fight, and then quit the game. I don't know why Rudermann allowed him to continue. I don't know why his previous coach in a small Swabian city allowed him to box in the first place.

We were good friends but we never talked about these things and that we never talked about these things is perhaps the saddest part of it all. But that's how it was. Maybe we had a way of looking at life which, retrospectively, I no longer fully understand. Maybe I never understood it. But you find this sort of thing everywhere, even today. Everywhere there are people loving each other and caring about each without talking about things that matter until one day one of them kills himself or herself. That is pretty much the worst that can happen. It happens all the time.

Martin didn't give up.

In the end, boxing may have killed him, but it couldn't destroy him. Martin was a bit like Hemingway's old man.

Martin had the heart of a Muhammad Ali, the heart of a true champion, but he was a lousy boxer.

He died a few years after he had joined Mr Rudermann's club. I was told he had the flu. He was scheduled for a match. As so often before, he fought and he lost.

Knock out.

This was on a Saturday.

He died the next day.

He didn't want to let the team down. Maybe he thought he would be all right. Yes, I am sure he thought he would be all right. He was one of those people who never complained. He was always all right. And so he died. All right. I don't think I should blame Rudermann. In many ways he was like Martin.

All right.

Damn it!

Everything was always all right between these two macho guys. They were good mates, although they had nothing in common except boxing. Rudermann and Martin. If you think about it, it is not really such a bad thing to have a good mate. It's not a bad thing to have one thing in common. To box on a Saturday isn't bad either.

But to die the next day, on a Sunday, that's bad!

Damn it! *That's really bad.*

I quit boxing about a year after I had joined the club. I fought for the club only five times during an autumn tournament. I did well and boxed my way into the final of the contest. My last opponent was a chap about my age. Let's call him Hans. He had no chance, but no matter what I did, he kept fighting like a hero. Or like a madman. This depends on how you see these things. I knocked him down twice. Each time he managed to get on his feet before the referee had counted to ten. He was bleeding. He could hardly see through one of his swollen eyebrows but nobody stopped the encounter. I won the challenge on points.

After the fight Hans was lying on a bench in the locker room. When I walked in the room his coach towered over him, told him to get up, have a shower and stop whining and behaving like a sissy. I got angry. *Very angry.* I told his coach

to leave him alone. He replied that this was none of my shit business. In theory he might have been right, in moral terms he could not have been more wrong. I told him that he was a *Rindviech*, a *Blödmann* and an *Arschloch* and if he wouldn't leave the locker room at once I would throw him out. The man refused to leave and after all the things I had said, I really thought I had no other choice but to throw him out. I didn't succeed. The man was too heavy. You can't just pick up a man nearly twice your weight and throw him out. So I did the next best thing and knocked him to the ground. He was on the floor for a minute at least, gasping for air.

I had hit him so hard in the stomach that I could feel his backbone.

There were no consequences.

By the way, I couldn't really feel his backbone. That's just a way of saying that I really hit him very hard. Damn hard.

He survived.

If I had felt his backbone through all the fat in front of his stomach, he might not have survived. He probably would have burst.

Nobody liked the man.

Imagine the mess, if he had burst. I would have been in real trouble.

A few people said what I did served him right, but I shouldn't do it again. It's against the rules. (Nobody had ever shown me the rules.) Well, maybe it served him right, maybe not. I am sure if we knew more about his life, his upbringing, his family, his job, his worries and unfulfilled dreams and desires, the story wouldn't be so straightforward. This was my last boxing match. I decided to quit because I realized if I continued, then one day I would find myself in exactly the same situation in which I found Hans in the locker room. Lying on a bench, dazed, with a severe headache, bleeding, a black eye. But that wouldn't be the worst part. The worst part would be that I, just like Hans, would be totally unwilling to give up. One day, just like Hans, I would try to be a hero for nothing.

A hero for nothing, that was the most frightening thought.

Rudermann spoke to me several times during the weeks that followed. He even invited me to his place and served me a beer and told me how impressed he was by my performance and that he thought I was the next champion and first we would conquer Berlin, then Germany, then Europe, then the world. There, at least, we had something in common. I, too, wanted to conquer the world. But not in a boxing ring. I did not yet know how I wanted to conquer the world. Not yet. But certainly not with two oversized gloves on my hands, a bleeding nose, a black eye, a severe headache and Rudermann towering over me and telling me to get up. Although he wouldn't have told me to stop whining and behaving like a sissy. That wasn't his style. He would have told me something like: 'get up, we got to get out of here, any moment all hell can break loose'. There would have been no hell that could have broken loose. Everything would have been calm. But that would have been Rudermann's style; always, even in the weirdest ways, trying to create excitement and make himself look good.

Rudermann never understood why I quit after I had won the competition. He never asked me. As I said earlier, he was good at talking and not good at listening. Of course, I could be wrong. He may have known, intuitively, why I quit and he may therefore have known that there was nothing he could do about my decision. But he had to try. At the same time he had to avoid the issue. Maybe something like that. Or maybe that is all too complicated.

What if it is that simple?

I slept on Herbert's sofa for nearly four weeks before I moved into a flat in a building for young West Germans in Berlin Kreuzberg. Imagine, a building full of young men who were

abgehauen. Ran away. From West Germany to an island in the middle of East Germany.

Abgehauen from what?

From the army?

Maybe.

Many of us tried to run away from ourselves. This is what people do all the time. We were no different. Running away from our fears, from preconceived perceptions, from conformity. Berlin was a refuge for young men who refused to join the army. I was categorically against any kind of military authority. The thought of becoming a soldier and obeying orders was unbearable.

Unbearable!

Unerträglich!

There you have my fear.

I remember vividly how during my primary school years I was required to watch movies, documentaries, in which soldiers herded people like cattle into railway carriages. The railway carriages took the people to Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps. In those camps soldiers herded the people – *naked people, frightened people* – into buildings which looked like huge shower blocks. The shower blocks were gas chambers.

I can still see it.

That this could happen is unbelievable. *Unglaublich!*

On the one side there were people. People paralysed by fear. People destined to be murdered. People stripped of everything except their dignity. Nobody could take away their dignity. On the other side there were soldiers. Soldiers with guns. Indifferent soldiers. Soldiers who followed orders. *Soldiers without dignity*.

Soldiers who had no choice.

I didn't believe that then and I don't believe it now.

Our teacher told us that these soldiers had no choice. I know he was convinced that this was true. No choice. I know what he meant. Soldiers *must* obey orders. But I will never

accept it. *I must have a choice*. At times I may doubt that I have a free will, but choice, be it an illusion or not, is a different matter. I want to be able to say “no”. I want to be able to believe that I did the right thing. Always. I made up my mind. I will never allow myself to be put in situations where I had to follow orders.

To hell with Hitler!

But what if he, too, had no choice?

(What if he ended up in heaven?)

What if there is no choice?

Only God’s will?

Everything could be predetermined?

Slowly ... slowly ...

I get so easily carried away.

So far I have been unable to force myself to watch Steven Spielberg’s movie *Schindler’s List*. I believe some of the scenes in *Schindler’s List* were the same as those my teacher made me and my school mates watch at the age of nine or ten. I am glad he did. Without these movies I would have served the West German army during the cold war. I would have been a soldier and obeyed orders.

Orders!

I would not have been on a plane from Stuttgart to Berlin.

Nobody should ever have to obey orders.

Nobody should ever have the authority to order someone to do something.

No orders = no wars.

No orders = no killings of hundreds of thousands of people in Vietnam, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa, all over the world. I could easily add future places of war to the list.

It makes me feel so hopeless. *How, I wonder ...* How can Christians believe that praying makes a difference? How can Buddhists remain compassionate and detached? How can Muslims believe that Allah is on their side? How can Jews believe that they are right? And what about my own spiritual

beliefs? One day, in another life, these questions require answers.

No orders = no wars.

Sounds simple. What if it is that simple?

What if it is true?

They stole my jam, margarine and cheese

In the building full of young men who were *abgehauen* I shared a one-room apartment with Norbert Weil. He was five years older than me and in love with a married woman. Often he would come home at two or three o'clock in the morning, unable to sleep and in desperate need to talk to someone. There was nobody except me. I was sleeping. Norbert walked into the room. He switched on the light. I can't remember how often I threatened that I would lock him out of the flat, kill him or do other unpleasant things to him. He switched on the light. He kept waking me up in the middle of the night. He talked about his love. He was desperate. Unhappy. He had made love to her only an hour earlier. He missed her. He would see her tomorrow again. Tomorrow was far away. He felt lonely. He bombarded me with fragments. He explained his unhappiness in fragments. He developed fragmented plans. He talked and talked and I was not interested, not the slightest bit interested. The nights consisted of fragments. Fragments of sleeping and waking, listening and swearing. After a week or so of listening, arguing and swearing at him, I painted the ceiling light bulb black and developed a listening technique which allowed me to semi-sleep and let him rattle on. He talked and talked and I intermittently made a few noises which to Norbert sounded like comments and which were all he needed during his nightly hours of loneliness and angst. He knew that the woman he loved might disappear like a Fata Morgana in the desert. He talked and got things off his

chest and I, at last, managed to have some rest at the same time. I got so used to his nightly monologues that during some nights when he stayed at home and slept and didn't say a word, I woke up from his silence and wondered why I couldn't sleep.

Then the day came where I met his dream woman. An acquaintance of Norbert had bought a little nightclub. At one time I heard that ninety-five percent of all new businesses close within five years. This one lasted only six months. But that's another story. During the opening night, still six months away from economic failure, invited guests could drink as much as they liked – beer, wine, liqueur, the best of everything – for the modest amount of ten marks. Norbert obtained an invitation for me. He then borrowed ten marks from me since he was unemployed, broke and his friend had insisted that he, too, should pay the ten marks like everybody else. Norbert appeared insulted. Ten marks for a night of boozing, what a bargain! So why shouldn't he pay? Indeed! We arrived at the place; his dream woman was already there, sitting at the bar, waiting and looking truly beautiful, radiant, magnetic, easy to talk to and about twenty years older than Norbert. Slim and sexy and twice my age. I knew all about her from many sleepless and semi-sleepless nights. It was all stored away somewhere in the subconscious parts of my mind. I knew the jokes she liked. I knew the shape and firmness of her breasts.

I knew she enjoyed sex standing. She, drinking a glass of wine and eating pieces of cheese, bent forward a bit, Norbert having her from behind. He told me that he could last for an hour non-stop if this was what she desired.

What?! I wondered. And all the time she's drinking wine and eating cheese? She must be fat and ugly.

I didn't believe a word he said, but tried to imagine it.

I knew so much about her I could have replaced Norbert with one second's notice. Except for that one-hour business. You need practice for that, which was still missing in my life.

But now, at last, I could also understand my room-mate. She was a desirable woman indeed. But she was married, she was rich and used to a wealthy life style. Norbert was poor and lazy. He had never held a job for more than a few weeks. He was convinced he was born for something special.

Definitely not for work.

Poor Norbert.

Poor one-hour fucker. I envied him.

The next day he asked me to give him boxing lessons. He wanted to be able to defend himself in the event that he met her rich husband. I suspected that he wanted to kill the man. I taught him a few things about boxing, we even practised a few rounds of sparring in our flat. He was keen, excited and once he hit me so hard on my chin that I had difficulties eating for several days. I talked him out of joining the boxing club. His right arm was slightly crippled. He couldn't fully stretch his arm. Normally nobody would notice it, but I convinced him that such an arm was not suitable for a boxing career. He was hard-hitting and thought he could beat every opponent with short hooks to the lower body. He was wrong and he was to find it out the hard way.

In Berlin, during the nineteen-sixties, most pubs stayed open twenty-four hours a day. One Sunday morning at around five o'clock, it was still dark, and after a long night of drinking, Norbert, some of his mates and I ended up in a shabby pub and ordered potato salad, Vienna sausages and beer.

Believe me, there is nothing better in Berlin after a long night of drinking than potato salad, Vienna sausages and beer.

We had just finished our meal when one of Norbert's mates suggested that we leave the pub without paying. They all agreed. It was obvious this was nothing new to them and within seconds they got up and quickly walked out of the place. I was caught by surprise and just managed to stay a few steps behind. The publican and some of his mates must have suspected something and were right behind me.

Maybe this kind of thing happened all the time.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES

Fred Schäfer

Travelling with Maria

A fascinating travel and a wonderful love story by the author of *The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway*.

After the publication of *The Short and Wonderful Life of Henry Hemingway* – Fred’s wildly humorous and hard-hitting memoir of his years in Berlin, the USA and Canada in the 1960s – he surprises his readers with an enchanting and tender travel and love story about a two year journey through India, Sri Lanka and Australia. *Travelling with Maria* is an entertaining book, a page turner, full of amazing events like running away from wild elephants, meeting a goddess in a Hindu temple, exhausting negotiations with an extraordinarily helpful Indian customs bureaucrat, about love and friendships, a fortune in a biscuit tin, lunchtime striptease shows in Perth, crossing the Nullarbor Plain with a baby in an old Holden HR, about perfect peace and happiness in the middle of nowhere, an amazing man with a slightly damaged brain and two Land Rovers and a lot, lot more.

Fred Schäfer

The Solution Within Yourself

A practical guide for achieving results, happiness, success and purpose in life.

This book will teach you how to develop a powerful focus in life, how to deal with obstacles and adversity and how to achieve personal change. You have a picture of yourself and once you start changing this picture you change your entire life. *The Solution Within Yourself* is one of the most empowering and concise personal development books available today. Its emphasis is on thinking strategies and on how to convert these strategies into actions and results.

Top achievers differ from ordinary people in one major aspect: their minds are conditioned for success. This book will teach you how to condition your mind in whatever way you decide is right for you. You will learn four rules and seven

steps that leave you with no alternative but to achieve what you truly desire. You will learn a two stage perception control approach that provides you with a powerful basis to deal successfully with whatever obstacles and negative events you encounter in your life. You will learn how to relax and control your emotions, even in very adverse and stressful situations.

Fred Schäfer

Success, Money and You

Start your journey to financial success!

This is a concise and inspiring must-read book for people who seek secure and lasting achievements: in business, professionally and financially. You will discover the philosophy of the rich, the philosophy of the poor and powerful success strategies. You will learn how to re-program your thinking and how to overcome money-making limitations.

To be financially successful is not nearly as difficult as many people think. Don't wait. Awaken the wealth-creating power within yourself. Be successful with your next application, promotion or business venture and develop a deeply satisfying vision and focus in life.

Fred Schäfer

Herrn Eberhardts Erinnerungen

Ein sechsunddreißigjähriger Mann liegt bewusstlos in einem Stadtpark. Die Polizei wird verständigt und der Ohnmächtige ins Krankenhaus gebracht. Der Mann ist unverletzt und gesund und die Ärzte sehen keinen Grund, warum er nicht jeden Augenblick aus seiner Ohnmacht erwachen könnte. Wochen später ist er immer noch ohne Bewusstsein.

Herr Eberhardt, zweiundsechzig Jahre alt, schreibt seine Lebenserinnerungen. Er hat sich von einem schüchternen Dorfjungen, zu einem Bohemien und schließlich zu einem erfolgreichen Mann entwickelt. Er hat verantwortungsreiche Positi-

onen innegehabt, Bücher geschrieben und sich einen Namen als *Professional Speaker* gemacht.

Eine Detektivin, ein Obdachloser und ein Schriftsteller versuchen, die mysteriöse Vergangenheit des Ohnmächtigen und seine Beziehung zu Herrn Eberhardt zu klären. Was sie entdecken, ist ganz anders, als jeder von ihnen sich je hätte vorstellen können

Herrn Eberhardts Erinnerungen ist ein zweisprachiger Roman (75% in Deutsch, 25% in Englisch), ein Meisterwerk und ein mutiges Buch, das Fred Schäfers Vielseitigkeit und die literarische Bedeutung seines Werkes überzeugend darstellt.

Fred Schäfer
Die Beeinflussung des jungen Jakob Berg durch
Henry Miller

Eine spannende Liebesgeschichte, die ihren Ursprung im epochemachenden Berlin der sechziger Jahre hat und dreißig Jahre später ihre Fortsetzung in einem ungewöhnlichen indischen Ashram findet.

Im Berlin der sechziger Jahre lebt der junge Jakob Berg ein unstetes und widersprüchliches Leben. Er sieht sich als Künstler, arbeitet als Mechaniker, studiert: er schwankt zwischen den Wertvorstellungen seiner bürgerlichen Erziehung und seinen Zukunftsphantasien. Drei Jahrzehnte später, im Alter von dreiundfünfzig Jahren, liegt er im Sterben in einem indischen Ashram. Er wird von seinem Sohn Wolfgang gefunden. Jakob Berg weiß nicht, dass er einen Sohn hat. Der Sterbende erzählt seine Geschichte: von seiner Flucht vor den Gespenstern der Nazizeit, von Helga, seiner ersten großen Liebe, und davon, wie diese Liebe zu Ende ging. Jakob erzählt von seinen Vorbildern Henry Miller und Ernest Hemingway, seinen literarischen Träumereien, Freuden und Qualen, von seiner Suche nach einer Muse. Er erzählt von der bisexuellen und mysteriösen Marlene...