

# The Lane Was Narrow, The Sky Black



Landscape of Fehmarn, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

It had been a long time coming to this. He wasn't surprised. If he was mystified about anything, it was how long it had taken for them to catch up with him. He felt sure there was a moral order, a kind of balance, and any excess on one side or the other of that balance would result in a swing to the other side sooner or later. Moderation in all things was a great maxim, he had come to learn. It was a pity he hadn't been aware of it a few years ago. Well, he wasn't one to linger in regrets. What was done was done. Now he had to deal with the consequences, and that was all there was to do. First, he had to choose his ground, ground that would give him any advantage there was to be had. He considered an intellectual argument, an attempt to persuade his persecutors of the reasonableness of his past behaviour in light of his then-circumstances, and that they should now bury their resentments, move on with their lives, and leave him be. He enjoyed himself for a time working up such an argument, all the time knowing that it was purely for his own entertainment as there was no way his persecutors would listen. They had come to their judgment very quickly, and accurately out of a natural instinct for justice, and would not be remotely interested in some fancy philosophical verbiage that they would see, quite rightly, as an effort to distort the truth of the matter. His persecutors were not remotely interested in post-modernist distortions of what they knew was common sense.

He had accepted that he had had a good run. But now the piper had to be paid. He had piled up so much debt in his single-minded pursuit of a kind of airhead ideology, with its concomitant rejection of his roots in culture and practicalities, that he had quite lost his bearings for many years. And now, he just knew, the balance had to be restored, for those persecutors were not ever going to leave him be until it was restored. He smiled to himself ruefully. All those years in "la-la land". He had enjoyed them, and they had certainly been profitable. A secure tenured position as a professor in one of the better universities. An index linked

pension. Practically unfirable, at least until all that cancel culture nonsense came along. Now his students could get him ousted from his secure, tenured, and well earned position by simply accusing him of him being transphobic, or islamaphobic, or any other kind of phobic their current fashion dictated as unacceptable in their woke society. And, he had to acknowledge to himself, he had participated in the creation of this state of affairs. It was only justice that he should suffer the consequences of it.

Those students though were not his persecutors. His persecutors were his inner demons, the parts of himself he had pushed aside and tried to bury as he had gone about his “la-la land” agenda. They were insistent now, merciless. He knew he would not be able to keep the lid on them this time. There was no escape. He would have to confront them, make room for them, and do the terrifying thing, that is change his mind.

He decided to resign his position at the university. He reasoned that it would be better than exposing himself to the vindictiveness of the students he had trained in their post modernist and woke attitudes. He knew that no one would escape them in the end, perhaps particularly anyone in his age group, who were suspect purely on that ground. And a respectable retirement, complete with his index linked pension, was preferable to the kind of public humiliation and excoriation that he knew his students were now capable of.

After all the business of leaving the university was done, he spent a few weeks in his home close to the campus. It was long enough for him to experience the not so gradual erosion into nothingness of his relationships with the rest of the Faculty, and to face his aloneness. He had left. He was no longer in the game, and no longer of any interest to those who still were.

Unexpectedly, a few lines from a Binyen poem came into his mind –

*Now is the time for me to strip my spirit bare;  
time for me to burn the days ended and done.  
There is no solace in things that have gone before;  
only rootless hope and fruitless desire lie there.  
let them go to the fire, with never a look behind.  
The world that was mine is no more.*

He left his adopted country, and the university, and its very comfortable lifestyle, and went back to his home country, to his roots, to prepare himself for his confrontation with his inner persecutors.

He could feel their agreement to his chosen course, an almost overwhelming eagerness to have him back on what he felt was his home ground. His arrangements went without any hitch whatsoever. On several occasions he had reason to feel that something or someone was looking out for him. In any event, his closing off of his affairs in his adopted country, and his efforts to re-establish himself in his home country, went remarkably well.

He thereafter spent many hours going over his choices, his motives, his academic record, and regretting his sacrifice of what he had known to be true in order to stay with the current and be contained in the then in-crowd, all done to maintain his position at the university, and the eventual receipt of that index linked pension. He had sold his soul in that pursuit. He deeply regretted his actions now. He realized, ironically, that some would say that it was all very fine for him to regret it now, now that his index linked pension was secured, but what about the damage he had done in the interim.

It was on one of his late evening walks, something he had taken to doing in an effort to calm his mind, and prepare him for sleep, that he found himself in a lane in an area he hadn't ventured into before. The lane was narrow, the sky dark. It was a night sky that promised a thunderous rainfall to come the next day, but, in the interim, the atmosphere was

eerily calm and clear. The calm before the storm that he had heard of from country folk. He had paused, and looked around, and then, without knowing where the lane led, he decided to follow it. He felt very calm and peaceful, at one with the world and his inner persecutors at last.

He was never seen again.