

## **THE REVEALING HAND**

### **Robert - Chapter 2**

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The mid 1960's found me living with my family in a suburb of Dusseldorf in Germany, where we had two delightful neighbours called Margaret and Wilfred.

We frequently visited each other and my wife Audrey and I spent many lively and interesting evenings in their company.

In Germany, the education system involves parents very closely in their children's work and Wilfred supervised his son's progress at school, quite avidly. He checked the boy's homework, questioned him about his day and enquired about his friends, teachers and the day-to-day happenings.

Robert's younger sister, Barbara was also at the school and she was brilliant, whilst her brother was struggling. One evening when we were invited for dinner, Margaret served us some drinks, whilst Wilfred was upstairs, checking his son's work. As we sat chatting to her, we became aware of Wilfred's voice, raised in anger, and excusing herself, Margaret slipped upstairs.

Eventually she reappeared with Wilfred, who was carrying some of Robert's exercise books.

He apologised, explaining that his annoyance had been caused by his son's apparent inability to understand what he was actually doing in his work at school. Sometime later, a seemingly contented Robert came downstairs to say "goodnight" to us and after he had gone to bed, his father continued to explain how important it was for Robert to pass his forthcoming exams. If he failed them, he would remain in the class and lose a year. With this, he showed us the books into which his son was writing his term's work and when I saw the handwriting, I had a shock.

I remembered an occasion when Wilfred said to his boy " for goodness sake, look at Barbara, she is younger than you and is beating you hollow. You can't let that happen, can you?"

The image shows a sample of handwritten text in a cursive script. The text is written on a light-colored background and appears to be a single line of writing. The letters are slanted and closely spaced, with some irregularities in the ink and line, suggesting a hurried or nervous writer. The text reads: "So wie die Lobator von River Gromwell".

**Fig. 2**

The torn slant, the narrow and squeezed spacing between letters and words, the irregular continuity and heavy pressure, showed clearly how distraught this lad was and I felt certain, that unless something was done about him, he would suffer a nervous breakdown.

We talked at great length about children who were late developers, as opposed to those who were on top of their studies. Some who needed to study, others who found it easier to remember lessons, those who were nervous of examinations and the kids who were not.

I pointed out to my friend, that his son was on the point of mental collapse and showed him the relevant movements in the handwriting and explained what they meant.

My friend was beside himself with worry and self-torment and decided there and then to see the headmaster as soon as possible. He even went upstairs to see if Robert was asleep and since he was, he had to wait until the next day before telling him about the outcome of our conversation.

A few days later, we discovered what happened when Wilfred went to see the headmaster. Apparently the head was delighted by the visit and confirmed at once that Robert, whilst a very intelligent and able boy, was far behind in his progress and that he was not up to the speed of work at the school.

The upshot of all this was that Robert was removed from his school and sent to a much more suitable establishment. In due course he passed all his exams there, with flying colours!

Joining the German Civil Service, he became a high-ranking officer within it.

He also changed his surname!