

The Wadrán Chronicles



-Metamorphosis-

Bernhard Müller

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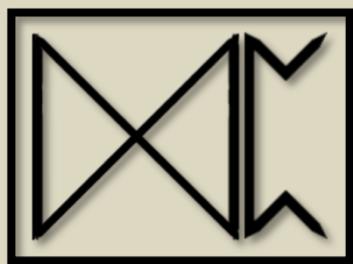
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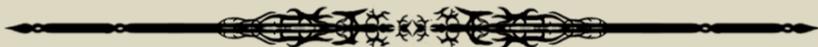


Dark Signes



Grounded! This word probably best describes my current situation. I just wanted to help. Yes, I have helped – rashly, hastily and adventurously – and saved thereby a life. I gained a new friend who couldn't be more unusual. The being that calls itself Chracuta and is not unlike a werewolf is an alien. Probably every child and teenager would envy me the privilege of meeting an alien, thinking of a cute shaggy monster like Alf of Melmak who likes to eat cats, but doesn't do it because you don't do that. But there's nothing cute about my alien friend. He is a wild beast that tears its enemies to pieces with brute force, feeds on the meat of its prey like predators and eats it raw.

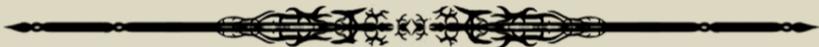
With my help, I got caught between the fronts of an interstellar conflict and had to flee Earth head over heels with my new friend. Now I am here in his world, Whough – a strange world that could hardly be more hostile to men. Just to be able to move here, I depend on bionic armour, which gives me the necessary strength. Because of my deed I was accepted by his clan and integrated into their community with an elaborate ritual – at least I believe that. Actually, I should be proud that I was integrated into their society as a full member – a society in which honour, integrity and strength are of central importance. And these are by no





means just ideals, but lived values. Normally, people would be denied integration into their culture because of their weak physique. Therefore, I should be proud of myself. Most of all, however, I am afraid of the possible consequences of this unusual step. I would rather return to my world and my mother today than tomorrow. However, because of my present situation and the interstellar conflict, I am deprived of any possibility. I am stranded here on Whough and sometimes I wish I had just left and let Chracuta die – sometimes.

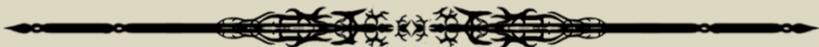
The Sırkaç ritual, my integration ceremony, was so horrible that it took me five days to recover from it. At that time I was just lying apathetically in a corner of the cave, unable to cope with the events of that evening. My whole body hurt. Especially the wounds that Wempai had inflicted on me did not want to stop burning. I was seriously worried that they were infected. Whenever I closed my eyes, I had the teeth-blazing beasts before my eyes, beating each other over and over again with their fangs and claws, until the blood dripped from their bodies and splashed in fine drops through the air, gradually soaking the ground. Inside I was so traumatized that my hands trembled for many days afterwards, and if one of my siblings or parents came too close to me, I retreated defensively. The numerous injuries that those Çrond'lorı had inflicted each other during the ritual had disappeared the next day. They had to have healed themselves in the night to regain their old form and fighting efficiency as quickly as possible. Only the symbol on the place colored red by their blood and the smoking fire places still reminded of the Sırkaç ritual. As Chrachra told me a few days later, this symbol represents a sign of their clan, a kind of clan emblem.





Seven weeks have passed since then. Just since last week I was able to talk to Wempai about the details of this ceremony. He explained to me that in the ritual duels of the family members their strength, tenacity, bravery and fearlessness would be demonstrated to the ancestors and also served the request of the Çrond'grzem to prove himself worthy to them. At the same time, he explained to me, the ground and the clan crest had been consecrated by the blood of the family members in order to obtain the necessary meaning for this ceremony and to call the souls of deceased clan members to this place. While the symbol of the clan is cut into the chest of the Çrond'grzem, one of the present souls introverts and makes a temporary connection with the soul of the Çrond'grzem, if he has proved worthy. This is the only way to successfully complete an integration utterly. In the myths only intraspecific ceremonies are reported. Accordingly, I am the first alien person who has been fully integrated into a Çrond'llor family. Therefore Wólf did not speak of an initialization, but of an incarnation, because my soul would not only have been evaluated and accepted, as it would have happened with a Çrond'llor. It has also been transformed into a Çrond'llor soul. In their eyes I am, therefore, no longer the same person.

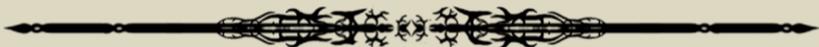
During the initialization or incarnation phase of the ritual, the whole family emblem would have had to be torn into my chest in order to comply with the norm. But he was content with the symbol of his family when he realized that I would not survive this procedure, my father said. According to his explanations, though, all clan members of the inner circle should have been present at the ceremony. However, there was urgency, so there was no time to quote them. And yet my father thinks that the ceremony was





successful and that my belonging was legitimate and accepted by all members of the inner circle. He firmly believes that I have a powerful *Çrond'llor* living in me, for it could not be a coincidence that at the moment the metamorphosis took place, an *Aurora Borealis*, one of their most mythologically significant natural phenomena, had formed and then disappeared with a mighty bolt of lightning. But I cannot understand how such intelligent and open-minded beings, as they are, can believe in such myths and hold on to such cruel ceremonies.

The wound that *Wempai* inflicted on me when scratching the clan symbol has healed well, but I will have to bear this sign for the rest of my life because of the scarring, which will always mark me as a member of this clan. Well, I'll try to see it as some kind of 3D tattoo and honor it. But much worse than the physical trauma is the psychic one, which was inflicted to me during this cruel ritual. Since then, every night I have had terrible nightmares in which I am haunted and hunted by horrible creatures, mostly wolf-like creatures. These dreams have only been missing for four days, so that I can finally sleep restfully again. And yet I no longer only see my friends when I see *Chracuta* and his kind, but rather the cruel and dangerous predator in them, although they always meet me friendly and tenderly. Most of all, however, my guilty conscience makes me feel uncomfortable. I cannot forgive myself for losing control insomuch during the integration ceremony that I fell into a kind of killing frenzy, even blood frenzy. If I had been strong enough, I would have cut that exhausted male lengthwise and enjoyed the blood splashing out. And even *Wempai* I would have ramed my knife into his body over and over again if he hadn't stopped me. I can't understand how this could have happened to

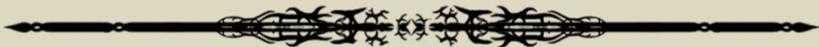




me. That fills me with shame and makes it hard for me to look them straight into the eye.

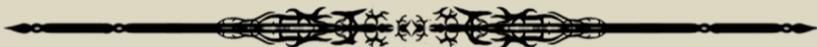
Since the full integration nothing has changed in my life here. I am mostly treated friendly and I have the impression that I have been more or less accepted as a full family member, at least by the puppies. They treat me completely casually, as if I had always belonged to them. Only Wor'tllán still has big problems with that. Still, he never misses an opportunity to humiliate me and show me that I don't really belong here. But even he has slightly improved his behaviour towards me. At least he hasn't peed on me since the day I was integrated. I don't know what Wempai said to him back then, and to be honest, I don't care. But it seems to have had an effect on him. Nevertheless, we are far from being buddies. With the adults, our aunts and uncles, however, I am not so sure. There is something in their eyes that awakens distrust and fear in me. I will inform Wempai when the opportunity arises.

After integration ceremony the normal everyday life of the Chretwóř quickly returned. For the puppies this meant the resumption of their hard training. Their school day begins early in the morning and ends late in the evening when the sun has long since disappeared behind the horizon. The daily workload is murderous every time. In the morning hours they receive lessons in natural sciences, mathematics and linguistics. Afterwards, the survival training, as they call it, begins. For hours they are trained and brought to their physical limits, introduced to hunting techniques in theoretical and practical exercises and drilled in combat. My education has so far been limited to intensive language instruction and mathematical-scientific teaching. I would be much



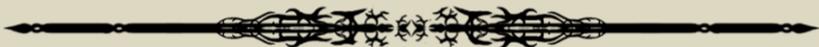


too small, weak and fragile for survival training. It is much more important that I get fit in my head and soon get along without the translator, Wempai explained to me. The behaviour of my step-parents towards me has not changed since the integration ceremony and the problems have remained the same, for example my nutrition problem. Since I simply did not want to eat the raw meat, it was initially instilled in me according to the motto "what comes into the cave is eaten", Chracuta's method accordingly. However, I never kept the raw meat with me for long. So they tried it later with grilled pieces of meat. That tasted better. Above all, it was a bit easier to grind, because the meat of their prey animals is very tough. But I also vomited the cooked meat again. Spring is the wrong season for vegetarian food like fruit, vegetables and mushrooms. And it is questionable whether I would have kept them with me at all. Apparently I can't stand their food. During this time I have lost a lot of weight, which is a sign that I cannot use the meat. Wempai suspects that the cellular structure would differ too much from that of the terrestrial structure, which would be incompatible with my digestive system. It would explain why my feeding was always accompanied by diarrhoea, nausea and even vomiting. I could not even keep the water of the mountain stream with me. It never lasts long until I felt sick and vomited it again. Already two days after my arrival I was already totally dehydrated. There was only one solution. I had to get food from my homeland. That's why Wempai has been leaving for the spaceport near Calaeus at regular intervals ever since. From there he procures dried fruit and meat, which comes from Terra and is still available as provisions. He also organizes water preparation tablets for me so that I can drink the local water. Wempai explained to me that the reason for the incompatibility of the water





was the numerous microorganisms that live in every drop of the water. Fortunately, I was able to rule out a disease and at least to use the tablets to prevent me from dying of thirst or starvation. However, this rather monotonous food seems to be completely inadequate. Although I am actually eating all the time, I am still getting weaker and weaker. It seems that dried fruits and meat are not productive enough, not rich enough in calories. It is clear that something has to change about this condition as a matter of urgency, because my general condition has deteriorated very much. Since I have been on this planet, despite Wempai's efforts, I have become increasingly lean. In between I consist only of skin and bones. My stepfather thinks, however, that this does not explain the enormous speed of my weight loss and suspects that it is the result of an extreme form of adaptation reaction, in which my organism tries to adapt the body physiology to the local environmental conditions. Since there is no improvement, however, I slowly have doubts about the correctness of his assumption and apparently so do he himself as well. Yesterday he expressed his concern that he would have to go to the Yüpjons to get advice from them if he could not come up with anything decisive to improve my situation. Recently, I can't stand the dried fruit any more, either. For a few days now I have lost the taste for it and the day before yesterday I even vomited the dry food from my homeland. Wempai thinks he can't stand idly by and watch me dying on installments, especially since the cold outside is getting more and more difficult for me. A permanent solution had to be found as soon as possible. And he is right. Meanwhile I am so emaciated that I often lack the strength to concentrate sufficiently and to follow the lessons. I then lie apathetically in the cave and don't even watch the cheerful play of my brothers in the clearing,





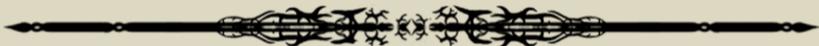
which Mums and Wempai note with increasing concern. Instead, I study the behavior of the newborns there, who have grown enormously in the past few weeks and doubled their weight. I noticed that the weakest of the seven puppies is constantly pushed aside by its stronger siblings and prevented from drinking because Mums only has six teats. Although the already petite puppy is already completely starved and weakened, she does not interfere and simply lets the stronger ones go. Another of the newborns reacts extremely aggressively to each affection of his brothers and sisters. I wonder what is going on in him, why his behaviour in this way differs so much from that of the others. I think he should get a proper beating in order to stop his inappropriate and impertinent behaviour towards his siblings. Wempai is just coming into the cave.

"Tçirchtç'ë Wempai."

"Tçirchtç'ë Çuran."

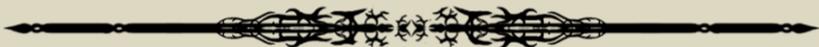
Lovingly I am welcomed by him before he goes to Mums and the puppies and repeats the greeting procedure at each of them. I am treated by them as if I had always been a member of this Çrond'lloç family, and slowly I begin to feel accordingly. And yet, especially in the last few days, I have to think very often about home – a home where all these problems did not exist and everything was familiar to me. I usually look at the woundakai claw, which Chracuta tore out of himself in the spaceship and handed over to me after his treatment as a souvenir. It has long since become a symbol of my emigration and now functions as a kind of lucky charm that I always carry with me and wear as necklace.

Today we puppies have our day off. My siblings always run away together with Chrachra and Chracuta and hang around in





the surrounding area. When they come back late in the evening, they are mostly totally sweaty and look really dull and tousled. The sweat, thickened to a gel-like mass, often appears whitish on their dark, soaked fur. You could then think that they had been applied centimeter-thick cream with a spatula. I look like that after their arrival, because the puppies love to snuggle up and cuddle up with each other at night. I'll probably have to get used to always being wet with their sweat and feeling like an oil sardine, because they'll always be sweaty with their way of life. They only know one pastime that they really enjoy – to fight and to annoy the elder Çrond'Iloří. My brothers and sisters are always accompanied on their forays by two full-grown Çrond'Iloří to protect them from predatory big cats and mustelidae. These guards have often been forced to chase approaching predators at the risk of their lives to save the puppies' life, Chracuta told me. Yet despite this protection, nine puppies were killed – three by hunting accidents and six by woundarah attacks. The first years are the most dangerous for Çrond'Iloř puppies and their mortality rate in them correspondingly high. Even in this family, in which the performance level seems to be extremely high, only half of all puppies have survived so far. For this reason, their growth rate in the first years of their lives is extremely high and their urge to move is correspondingly pronounced to gain the necessary physical attributes. This also explains the wild character of their rude play, where even injuries are accepted and blood often flows. Wempai says it has to be this way for puppies to learn to see their own blood, to ignore the wound pain and to continue fighting despite it. If my brothers and sisters didn't take special care of me and hit me with the full hardness of their blows, my body would be crushed despite my bionic armor or even torn with this suit. Nev-



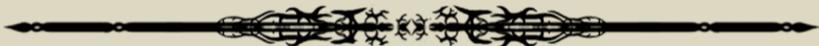


ertheless, and only because of their special consideration, I would also like to wrestle if I only felt better. In addition to Wořawai, Chráchrotus has often been with me the last few days and always wanted to encourage me to fight. Today, however, he went out with the two twins and the others. Although he absolutely wanted to drag me along again, I stayed with Mums in the cave. Wořawai stayed in the clearing with the other Cřond'llorí. He is still too small to run with his siblings.

Together Mums and Wempai take care of their youngest litter and play lovingly with the puppies. The two seemingly abnormal puppies are hardly worth a look. They simply push them aside. Now they both look at me in passing and begin to whisper quietly, so that I can hardly perceive their words. They look deep into each other's eyes. It is probably about the two abnormal puppies, one of which is weaker than the others and left behind. They seem to have made a quick decision. They stand up and turn to the two, who lie a little apart. After such a long time of ignorance they suddenly turn to the 'black sheeps'? Why? Now it leaps in my mind – they just rejected them. Helplessly I have to watch how their souls are sighed out with a neck bite. It was only to be heard from both a short, loud beeping and to observe a still persistent twitching of the lifeless bodies. Horrified I begin to scream and run on weak legs crying out of the cave, because within these days they have grown closer to my heart than I could have imagined. Wempai immediately jumps up, runs after me and stops me.

"Cuřan, stop! Talk to me, that's the best thing you can do now."

I comply with his command and look at him sobbing. "You just killed them! They needed you and trusted you! They were so help-





less and couldn't defend themselves."

Now he walks towards me until he stands close to me. "Yes, you are right. They needed us. You think it's ghastly what we've just done, don't you?"

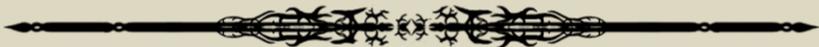
I nod, because I consider that killing one's own puppies is a disgraceful deed, especially puppies who are only seven weeks old and cannot defend themselves yet.

"Do you think it wouldn't be difficult for us to kill our own puppies? But from time to time it is simply necessary. Mums is able to satisfy six puppies. But she had born seven. As a result, one, the weakest, had to die for the others to develop properly. And it is more pleasant for the puppy to be redeemed by a short, painless death, which comes from us by a targeted neck bite, than to starve slowly and painfully, isn't it?"

With these words the blood freezes in my veins, because I find myself in the two dead. The way it looks, there is no possibility to feed me. I also starve slowly and painfully. But I try to hide my fear.

"He shouldn't have starved to death. The milk from those six teats could have been distributed evenly among all the puppies. That would have prevented the death of that puppy, there were even two of them here, and they would all have come through," I answer sobbing.

"It's all very well for you to talk. If we distributed the milk for six puppies over seven, the six healthy and strong puppies would not develop properly, because they would not get enough to drink. And that only to save the life of a weak puppy? This price would be too high to be paid. You just addressed the second one we killed. That one", he points to the corpse of one of the two killed, who had already been carried out of the cave by Mums, "I





observed him the whole time. He was pathologically aggressive. He wasn't psychologically healthy and so it was better to kill him."

"Yes, then you could have let the weaker one live, because then there would have been enough milk for everyone and also mental illnesses are curable.

"That's just what you mean! Mental illnesses cannot be cured, they can only be alleviated or brought into a latent phase. They can break out again at any time."

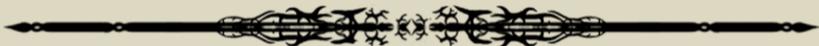
"But, Wempai, one way or another, only one of them would have had to die."

With these words he takes a deep breath and lets it escape with a barely perceptible growl.

"No, both were in deficit! Now I want to tell you something, Çuṛan. It's nice that you're so attached to your brothers. But for you to survive here you have to learn much more about our world and to adjust your psychological profile conformable to circumstances. You no longer find yourself in the security of your familiar terrestrial environment where you can survive with this attitude. You still don't know enough to allow yourself an opinion about our behaviour. You have not yet grasped how hard the struggle for survival is here. So I see no need to justify my decisions to you! It is right, because here on Whough only the best are able to survive! If you ask to learn, then it's fine. But for everything else you are too incompetent! And something else: I am pater familias and have the *ius patriae potestas!*"

Now he turns away from me, grabs the carcasses of those killed and disappears with them into the forest.

Not a word of comfort has been spoken. With my horror I have been left alone. In addition, I was only straighten out after failing





understanding the explanations and criticising his decision. Should I experience all the harshness of canine education? I wonder what "pater familias" means and what he meant by "ius patriae potestas". From my biological mother I know that these terms are Latin. Now I realize what he was trying to say. Pater familias is the father of the family, the head of the family. I know that the Roman father was an unrestricted patriarch. He was right, he ordered, he even had the right to kill family members and slaves. The word of a pater familias was absolute and final. All these rights also seem to be fully owned by a Wořkhan. To make this clear to me, he probably chose the Latin expressions. He just said that only the best survive on Whough. But I am only a seventeen-year-old youth from Earth who can only move normally here with a bionic, multisynaptic exoskeleton. Although I have trained hard over many years and built up a muscular body, I am despite this biotechnological aid weak, small and filigree compared to my stepbrothers of the same age, who are of extremely strong and athletic stature. As a human being I will obviously not grow old here – especially not if a solution to my nutritional problem does not soon emerge. Whether sooner or later I will face the same fate as those who have just been killed, even though I am already seventeen years old?

Already Wempai emerges again from the forest and runs directly into the cave to Mums. With a dull feeling in my stomach I slowly follow him to the cave and enter it again, where my step-parents sit contentedly next to each other and deal with the five remaining puppies.

Mums is now addressing me. "Cuřan, lie to me. What do you have then? You make a very worried impression to me. Does that





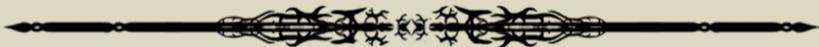
have anything to do with the two puppies that we killed?

"Only indirectly, Mums," I answer her and sit down on her forelegs.

"Wempai told me that on Whough only strong Çrond'Ilořı would survive and he would kill weak puppies – weak and abnormal puppies. Both apply to me. I am very weak compared to my stepbrothers and since I am not a Çrond'Iloř, abnormal. The fact that I don't have fur also indicates a frailty. Besides I do not bear the local meat. I am afraid, afraid that for these reasons the same fate of the two killed will befall me sooner or later and you will kill me one day. Wempai said that he was pater familias and that he had the *Ius patriae potestas*. And that is my worry, no, even my nightmare."

Astonished, she tilts her head. "No, Cuřan, this will not happen for reasons that Wempai will reveal to you. That would be something if, as a reward for your sacrifice and for saving the life of one of our puppies, we let you lose your life because of your relative frailty, because you are forced to live here in exile in a much harsher and inhuman environment for which you are not actually made. That would not be right. We wouldn't have the heart to do that."

Now also Wempai, who listened to everything with interest, breaks into our conversation. "Cuřan, you follow and have an amazingly keen mind for a human being at your age. But you overlook important points of view in your assessment. We have adopted you as puppy and regard you as a full family member. We will therefore also treat you like a Çrond'Iloř puppy as far as education is concerned. But when it comes to such crucial things as these, we can't treat you like a Çrond'Iloř because you've basically remained a Terran and will always remain one. It must be added





that you are very well developed for a human being and your mind has an unusual sharpness. And as Chrorchtuá has already said, you saved Chracuta's life. So he has a life debt to you that we must and will respect. Because of this life debt, to which we parents are also bound in a certain way, our code of honour alone would forbid it. It would be, to put it mildly, a crime on a biological and moral level to kill you because there are no reasons for it."

Their words relieve me immensely and take away my great concern. Nevertheless, I look to the ground in remorse, because I finally want to bring up my misconduct during the integration ceremony, and to formally apologize.

"Wempai, there's something else I've been wanting to talk to you about for weeks. It really occupies me a lot."

He puts his ears up attentively. "What is so important to you?"

Nervously I begin to chew on my fingernails.

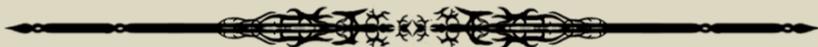
"It's... it's the loss of my self-control during the integration ceremony. I was completely freaked out and had randomly stabbed at you. I wanted to slash you lengthwise and kill you all. I wanted your blood."

I shake my head and begin to sob.

"How could that happen to me? I can't forgive myself because I'm not like that!

My father smiles at me calmly and puts his heavy paw on my right shoulder.

"There is nothing to regret, Cuřan. You acted like a Cřond'llor, like a Wadřán would have done. Your life was threatened and you fought against the threat. With that you proved that you have fighting spirit. We had brought you into a hopeless situation and wanted to see how you react. In such a psychic state of emergency everyone shows his true face. The weak and unworthy collapse





and either run away or remain in a resigned position hoping to keep their miserable lives. The strong and worthy rebel and fight the threat by all means. With your reaction you have shown fighting spirit and shown that you belong to the latter kind. Cuřan, no other behaviour we expected from you. And if you hadn't acted like that, you wouldn't be here now. So there is nothing to be ashamed of."

Surprised, I look up at him. "That means you would have killed me if I hadn't cut you open?"

Asking, I take turns looking at Mums and Wempai, who look at me seriously and shake their heads.

"No, because of your special situation we would have spared your life, but you would now be with the Yüpjons. Undoubtedly this was a big hurdle you had to overcome, Cuřan. And I wasn't sure if you would take it. We are very happy that you took it. But to get to the point, what concerns your nutritional problem: Do you like drinking milk that is still really warm?"

Relieved, I answer him. "Yes, Wempai, I've always liked warm milk for my life."

"That's good. Then hopefully we have already found a solution for your nutrition problem, if Mums doesn't mind."

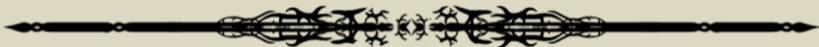
He looks over to his wife questioningly.

"I don't mind, Wólf, as long as he's careful when he sucks and doesn't bite my teat off."

"That will not happen, Chrorchtuá. Humen have bad teeth, don't they, Cuřan?"

"Uh... Yes... Now I don't understand anything anymore."

Now he starts to smile. "Hm, here your acumen locks itself probably. You should drink Mum's milk so that you can grow big and strong and later defeat every Terran. I only hope that you at





least tolerate our milk."

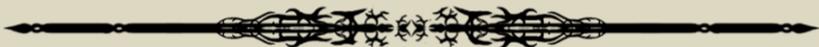
At the thought of sucking milk from the teats of an extraterrestrial she-wolf, a she-wolf at all, I am inhibited. Romulus and Remus were also suckled and raised by a she-wolf, according to Roman legend. Nevertheless, this is something completely different here. But my hunger and thirst is greater than all my inhibitions and doubts, so that I lie down hesitantly to her and start sucking. After several attempts I also get the milk. The other puppies look at me quite strangely out of their fur, as if they wanted to say, what an odd type of puppy who tries to suck there. After a while I straighten up again saturated and eventually with a full stomach. That was, apart from the earthly food, the first meal since my arrival on Whough that really tasted good, although the Cřond'lloř milk is so nutritious that it has the consistency of thick whipped cream. Now it remains to be seen how long I keep it in my stomach.

"Well, have you had enough, Cuřan?", Wempai asks me ironically, knowing that his question is completely superfluous.

"Yes Wempai. Thank you for this meal, Mums."

Once again I am taken to Mum's washing machine.

The milk fortunately turned out to be a good food for me. Within three days, my strength and spirit of enterprise had returned, which my stepparents registered favourably. Since then I have felt an unrestrained urge to move. No way seems to be too steep, no tour too long; and despite signs of exhaustion, it keeps pushing me on. Also the raving with my brothers and sisters gives me a lot of joy. I love to measure my strength and to use my body to its limits. And when I fall into the cave in the evening, bathed in sweat and completely tired, I can hardly wait for the challenges of





the next day while I sink exhausted into sleep. But these have never been my preferences on earth. Something has changed in me for several weeks since I started drinking Mum's milk. I just don't know what and especially not why. [...]

