



German Departures

D. C. Riechel

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At sunrise on the first of April 1928, an ordinary young man of eighteen years left his home town, a village in the Thuringian hills of Germany, and went to Hamburg. Thus begins a departure from the ageless myth of initiation: an adventuring April fool discovers life, loss, and love, by way of the sea. The lad stumbles into the employ of Worldmate Shipping, an unusual company of sea captains who put their oars in troubled waters. Along the way the lad becomes a scullion, a murder suspect, a waiter in ships, a stowaway and a seaman. The story unfolds in the years from 1928 to 1935, in the Germany of the Nazi seizure of power and in the America (and Europe) of the Great Depression. It is a tale of ships and seaports, of smuggling, shipwreck, and daring rescues of the persecuted; and to borrow from "Tristram Shandy," a tale at the same time digressive and progressive, with excursions into German history and geography as well as into questions of life as literature, and the ways of words.

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