

Josef-Gerhard Farkas:

Dirge for a Chihuahua.

Translation of the German

“Totenklage um eine Chihuahua”

by the same author, 2008.

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DIRGE FOR A CHIHUAHUA

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Dirge for a Chihuahua.

Of the aging and dying
of our last doggie.



Bollardy; Tsarissa (longhaired, black); Mimi; Chicola

Of the four doggies who at the same time were with us long, this I had not liked most at all. It was the least obedient, therefore an excursion problem. Outdoors we had to be prepared that Chicola begins to race and responds to no call. Beautiful it was of course to see the slender longhaired as a tan, dark

striped feather flying along on dirt roads. At the same time however we had to look out worried in all directions for raptors. So one of us can run there fast enough if danger threatens the leveret-small lightweight, while the other protects the predominantly willing-to-listen rest of the gaggle of dwarfs. But this nimble-footed doggie therefore to walk leashed, was an act of violence against its nature. In addition difficult, even with criss-crossly crafted chest strap. Because Chicola managed to wriggle out from the to her annoying breast harness if she was not pitilessly tightly constricted into.

A particular excursion problem was this prettiest of our Chihuahuas because of her panicky fear of the Rhine. We live not far away. Walks on the dikes are not interesting solely for people, when ships from different countries pass upstream-downstream and at the embankments as of late Egyptian geese graze. To dogs the Rhine dikes offer many kinds of change from the off-river meadows. To which on hot days they pantingly show the long tongues. The wide, quiet stream in contrast cools and moves the air at least somewhat. But Chicola not even stood his

sight. Even if she was picked up in one's arm and well talked to. Trembling, tensed-up by fear, wheezing she tried with hardly tameable efforts to jump down so as to escape away inland, perilously towards the street. Applying the breast harness did not calm the distraught one who defied being pulled. A torment for her, for us. With the consequence that the for the other Chihuahuas refreshing run along the Rhine was cancelled. Because leaving Chicola at home, that could not be.

Yet she was by no means afraid of water. At brooks, Rhine gravel quarry pits, beach locations she had formerly liked romping around like the others. Until one day on the dike way, not far from the ferry something so shocked her, only her, that she fled and was captured by good luck only. Had an insect stung her so badly that to her pain and river became one? A swelling was not recognizable. Had someone with an ultrasonic whistle that we could not hear inflicted a fright shock upon her? In all years since, when Chicola feared not only the event site but the entire Rhine bank and did not let change her mind neither by rewards nor other efforts

we found no explanation. Let alone for her exact differentiation of large waters. Ponds and lakes, it is true she no longer approached as gladly as once either. But endured them unequally less fearlessly than the river.

Unfortunately the Rhine-phobia did not work at puddles, which Chicola rarely avoided decidedly. And if after heavy rains the water stood in deep way hollows that she due to raceflight enthusiasm only noticed at hitting the water with a splash, the shock did not stop her at all. With unabated momentum she gushed through as a highwide fountain to the end. In apparently high spirits. Which in turn my wife afterwards was unable to share. When she had to rub dry, clean, comb the clapped-together wet unsightly race feather to fluffy long-haired, tan Chihuahua fur.

Aside from the fact that always my wife herself had to take care of this dog, because it listened exclusively to her command. Aside on the other hand from the imperative consideration for its Rhine-phobia, and in return admiration of its graceful

sprinter performances. Aside from these 3 things, for years I noticed nothing at all about Chicola. At first she was just one of four, until Bollardy, ten years old, as the youngest died in the uterine surgery. Between this drab roly-poly and me a personal relationship had briefly emerged, as Bollard knew I would give her help at obstacles and if need be carry her if she follows me away from the excursion pack. If I recognized her neediness, unfortunately not always immediately, it was the most touching expression of gratitude that with velvety tongue she caressed the hand that had lifted her up and held her tight.

Longer and narrower was the relationship of escort and confidence between me and the pack-leading bitch Tsarissa. At first she refused me barking loud, as often as she saw me coming up the stairs where she guarded the first floor. She loved my wife. Who had at mutually spontaneous affection selected her, cherished and took care of her. That my wife additionally also associated with me annoyed the jealous Tsarissa. It took long until she resigned herself into the unalterable and accepted me as a secondary person authorized to live here. With in return random expectation of a delicious donation off the table.

Regardless of that Tsarissa remained an incorruptible executive. At rides into the area she not only cared for the behavior of the pack. But also examined what I, lagging behind am doing or looking for by the roadside.

One day I lured her to the edge of the forest and signified to her that I want to proceed further in and would like to have her with me. For exciting minutes the bitch hesitated. Ran back a piece, waited for my turning back. Then joined me again. Stopped, looked around, remained, pondered. Then she came along. In the quiet, shady mixed forest nothing stirred except us. I observed the under the towering trees tiny Chihuahua. The area destined for natural park, therefore allowed to grow wild was unknown to her. Above all broken. Earth humps and mouldering trunks blocked her view. The sometimes mossy, sometimes hard-as-clay path wound itself around old Siegfried Line ditches and swamp sites, always changed direction. At the start of our walk I had lifted Tsarissa up and showed her the area from my eye level. Now she ran alternately in front of and behind me, was carried where necessary, therefore left no smellable track. After several

bends we both knew: back she would never find alone. With big eyes she looked at me. "Come further", I said. She followed. Thus began my reverent experience of intimate confidence of the in the big forest helpless doggie, that I would bring her home again safely.

For me adult human remained overview around, where the little bitch only saw grass blades or brushwood. Where thick tree trunks lay in our way, on and over which she could not jump and endlessly to circumvent disliked, she looked expectantly up: Lift me over. I did it, after being put down she wagged with wide flag her well-being. Sometimes a resoundingly crashing scrawny branch startled her, an occasional shrill bird sound did not bother her. Carefree she scurried on and off the path, from one race obstacle to the next, inspected the mushrooms I looked at, obviously felt safe with me. Likewise obviously happy and distinctly relieved she then was too, however, on leaving the forest. Where she had free view again, caught sight of our car and after enthusiastic reunion dance before my wife devoted herself self-confidently to her role in the pack. That in the forest I had won her full con-

fidence, Tsarissa henceforth confirmed every morning when she came to me onto the pillow and joyfully noted that I breathe. Therefore have survived the night alive and maybe something pleasant comes to my mind again today, once she definitely wakes, licks me from sleep. It was a tiresome procedure. If she was forbidden to do it, she toddled off deeply offended.

Tsarissa died as the second of our four. At the age of eleven much earlier than expected. Of the cardiac enlargement not rare in smallest dogs, often due to jumping stairs up-down from one floor to the other. Like with people due to competitive sports. Should therefore keeping Chihuahuas be allowed only those who live ground-level? Should in single family houses the movement-needy, joyfully jumping doggies be imprisoned on one floor? Not every athlete and not every Chihuahua is killed by the long overstrained heart. Our long-haired black one did grizzle already, but she was still far from being decrepit, physically worn-out. It was the in the house ubiquitous small leading bitch's heart that pressed the lungs and necessitated medicinal drainage. What with Tsarissa in addition to still other things became problematic

Until she even at night could no longer breathe calmly, but instead struggled for air coughing.

Tsarissa's life's end was peculiar, her death behavior unusual as she herself. My wife had tinkered for our doggies a convenient staircase at the edge of the bed. So it was up to them whether they want to sleep above, or below where a glimmer of light pointed the way to the water bowl so they would never thirst. If Tsarissa was healthy, she chose the bed. If she had one of the bad cardiac-cough fits, she padded down into her basket to be alone. If my wife could not help her with medicines, Tsarissa also renounced compassionate caress, did not force herself on anyone, bothered nobody, retired. The increasingly frequent veterinary efforts helped less and less. When we unsuspectingly took her to the last treatment, it was striking that she for the first time behaved quietly. Without the slightest hint of protest, which she had always expressed clearly when recognizing the practice. It was as if this sensitive little animal knew its death. And also wanted it. To stay alive with difficulty only was not worth living. Before the doctor found that another injection than the last, the gracious, would perhaps extend

Tsarissa's now excruciating existence only till night.

Of the four Chihuahuas the third left us at the age of twelve, the shorthaired strawberry blond Mimi. With her I would not have dared a walk through the woods, nor could I have walked her alone anywhere else. She would not only have run away immediately, but would have been uncatchable. Exclusively to my wife was Mimi submissive. Except for listening to her calls when she pursued cyclists or joggers. Then she was the most tireless and returned despite disobedience expecting praise rather than scolding. Because she still had expelled the strangers who despite timely barked warning had invaded our path area, and protected us from evil deed. From my wife she let herself willingly be picked up despite then vigorous "Thatwas-boo". Like for unreproached screening for ticks. From me she never let herself be caught, nor be carried without resistance.

My special relationship with Mimi consisted therefore in the worry that I someday would either press her too strongly to me and thereby hurt her. Or that otherwise she snake-smoothly winds herself out of my arm and by falling from about thirteenfold her body's

height fractures herself. An acute danger, if my wife at the approach of cyclists or an agricultural vehicle handed me Mimi to hold, and then another thrashabout for the other arm. Because my wife herself had her arms full on excursions with the in-law family's Chihuahuas we took along. Mimi however showed herself absolutely friendly towards me, when I lay in bed. Not already evenings. Then she like Tsarissa and Chicola remained busy occupying her usual sleeping place. But when morning started to break they used to change their places and Mimi became my head sleeper. She snuggled up to me as a velvety, literally skin-tightly fitting fur cap on top over the head to warm her belly. That she needed it essentially, unfortunately proved too late.

Originally it was amusing that Mimi had watched the morning greeting by which Tsarissa woke me since the confidence-building forest walk. That I tolerated her breath testing visits, fascinated Mimi. Every morning she looked from my wife's pillow attentively over here. Then tried it also. But not like the black long-haired, but by

sniffing at my ear. How should I forbid this tickling second moist harassment? To acquire affection with the otherwise demure Mimi was important to me. Likewise right that I do not risk losing Tsarissa's benevolence, don't shove off specifically the easily offended one. Mimi dissolved the conflict situation ingeniously: she always came over long before Tsarissa and appropriated the warm room in the pillow together with the upper part of my head. The face she left to her competitor. During the day she still did not let herself be touched by me.

Mimi had the talent of a ballet master to articulate herself by body motions. She could express unrestrained, rousing joy. Unlike Bollardy, Tsarissa, Chicola she also conveyed impressively uninhibited her suffering, her illness. Empathizingly so that her grief seized everyone. Her mostly cheerful, agile nature mostly obscured the fact that she not only was also cardiacally ill with the usual accompanying syndromes. Hers was the largest share in my wife's collection of prescribed medicines, who every morning and evening had to carefully pour powder capsules into doses beneficial to smallest dogs, and

also was not to apply a drop too much of liquid medicines with a pipette. Mimi lived from this devotedly faithful care. She died, according to autopsy of an unrecognized intestinal ailment that became inoperable. The symptoms of which in the final phase were overlapped by the allegedly long aftermath of a dental anesthetic. What I refused to believe, on suspicion of an other cause hoped for a change of the crisis for the better. Just the previous day a strengthening syringe had made Mimi thirsty and get some appetite, showing a touch of cheerfulness. The euthanasia recommended by the veterinarian I delayed.

Mimi's expressiveness was not limited to body movements. Her last photo, which hangs over my wife's desk on the urn shelf is the saddest expression with which an animal or human also can turn away from life. With bleary eyes apathetically staring into voidness, interested in nothing any more, at best auguring only a caress, not realizing it consciously any more. I had not wanted to release her into death, had been unable to keep her back. Guilt depresses me every time soul deep when I actually see the picture

or see it inwardly. But is it really guilt, that I wanted to give her one more chance to become healthy again, though the veterinarian had already given her up? Only Mimi had come to me to fetch warmth. It comforts me in retrospect to know that she sometimes got from me what benefited her soft little poor belly.



Photo: Mimi withering away.

That Chicola as the most delicate of our four survived even Mimi, surprised us increasingly. To her my relationship based, for a time, on she having been left to us. During excursions with the in-law Chihuahua group my self-evident attention focussed on her because she, as it was, belonged to us. Perhaps unconsciously also because

her sight reminded of those no longer accompanying us. A confidence-building forest walk as with Tsarissa was of course out of question with Chicola. The panicky Rhine-shy doggie would have run away here too senselessly, disoriented. Light prey for fox or wildcat, marten, badger or buzzard, owl. An unpredictable runaway she remained even for my wife. As long as Chicola could hop along quickly enough, the danger during our stays at the Upper Bavarian Lake Eib was that after relieving herself she would run away from the usual birch by the hotel. To the parking lot, in front of cars, buses, between tourist groups with larger dogs. Almost still in her final stage I had to watch her closely when early in the morning I took her down in front of the hotel so she could empty her full-to-burst bladder.

Chicola from her part certainly had no special relationship to me. She avoided me. When at meals she scented something tempting, it did not embarrass her occasionally to que up also in front of me if my wife because of the dog's health was stingy. As long as Chicola's eyesight was good, she watched breathlessly the slow swaying down of spaghetti. Such a game she deemed worth wagging a thankyou.

At older age she did recognized me as quite useful when she desired to be carried on the way. But despite my carry offers I remained second choice, the primary expectation was directed at my wife. At home and without need Chicola did not let herself be touched till the end.

Of Tsarissa's circumspection and authority she had assumed nothing. Prior to her by the way Mimi neither, who instead excelled herself differently. Chicola became no morning smoocher, either, but on the contrary an increasingly lazy late riser. Who deeply cuddled into the bed wanted her peace. Unless suddenly awake she felt urged to do gymnastics, with twitching limb- and leg movements, throwing herself around in the bed and stretching herself comfortably. No epilepsy, blithe solo gimmick. Till her last days.

Our mutually years long indifferent relationship however changed since Mimi's death, after which it was only Chicola to look at. Gradually I noticed her aging and a personal connection originated. With sympathetic shock, without speaking about it, I watched the changes of this long-haired brown one,

which I once had seen as a powerful, marvelously pretty feather flying on dirt roads. Now she no longer toddled nimbly elegantly around. Former weightlessness had become weighty walking. By which she no longer strove straight forward, either, but tended to an oblique track. Had she remained behind at a sniffing spot, she caught up hopping. This seemingly pleasing sight cheated. Because hopping she had to. Her little legs to move fast enough singly she could no more. That my wife explained to me who knew of Chicola's joint symptoms and her spinal condition. And who because of Chicola in the course of time also had become familiar with the merely pain-soothing, anti-inflammatory maintenance treatment of spondylosis. Which unstopably leads to curvature of the spine. In our doggie to kyphosis visible as a hump. The hump to arise I saw. To get it explained in detail on Chicola I did not want, so as not to deepen my own fear of a possibly similar fate.

Compared to the body changes in humans, Chicola's aging happened at timelapse speed. Whereby the

rapidly progressing deformation of her hind legs struck me especially. But even before the oval diffraction became increasingly clear, the power waned also to a longer hopping run. At each dog excursion since then it was Chicola who decided the route, by stopping and not letting herself be lured by anything to come further. If we left her, she knew that sometime we would turn back. And then go with her in the direction of "car-home". That made her willing again to go. When the O-legs became pronounced, the routes became ever shorter. Stretch by stretch we extended them by already carrying Chicola forward, too, so that the run would be worthwhile for the others. That she was really tired was indisputably established if she let herself be picked up by me without fuss. By me, instead of otherwise only by my wife. Amazingly, the thin legs did not seem consistently crooked every day, but sometimes almost straight again. Likewise different could it be in the brushy foot-near area which sometimes appeared neatly erected while often it looked as if she limped, waddled, crawled on flatly lying ankle joints and fibula. It constricted my throat, when in her final time, which was winterly unpleasant I warmed those once proudly

jumping, now powerless wet, icy little feet,
bare soles and tiny toes in my cupped hand.

At home in the stairwell she had instinctively become cautious, as she felt the asthenia of her legs. Since her youth she was accustomed to the lively stairs-up and -down, which the younger other ones from the ground floor undiminishedly could and eagerly practiced. Having seen at an excursion Chicola's abdomen bending in, to us a grid on the landing seemed inevitable. With, however, the serious disadvantage that simultaneously with it the desired coming upstairs of her playmates still existing only on the in-law ground floor would be impossible. Very relieved we noticed, however, on a hitherto inevitably downstairs leading occasion that Chicola pauses at the edge of our floor, by the movement of a paw suggesting the jump downward, but not daring it. Not even when we tentatively knelt below the stair edge on a step and would have caught her. It was fortunate for all in the house that we needed no fence. Because it was clear that at interesting noises on the lower floor Chicola would not try to jump down the humane size steps which had become too high

for her, and perhaps hurt herself badly. If highly exciting events drove those living below into fits of barking frenzy, Chicola partook vividly by loudly barking along from our landing, but cautiously guarded herself against the self-recognized danger of somersaulting down. When later on she found it hard to every time climb out of her cozy little basket in the hallway, she barked from there her full support to the others. If she was brought down for common dog feeding, whereafter she liked to linger a bit with the others, she did try, but could not quite manage the stairs completely. Again she surprisingly behaved cautiously, instinctively disciplined. Waiting she remained standing on one of the highest steps, without riskily turning backward, and waited patiently until someone took her upstairs.

Of the other infirmities I noticed little. With her early edentulism, the vexing evil especially of smallest dogs, Chicola had enviously well come to terms. Her apparently hardened periodontal, the above only canine that remained and below 2 premolars allowed her the consumption of a variety of food. Even the gnawing

of the Chihuahuas' most beloved veal bones. -- That she went blind unstoppably, the veterinarian stated every time. Recently my wife had also to skillfully drizzle drops against conjunctivitis into the watery, frightened twinkling eyes of the energetically evading little head. That Chicola according to examination findings was already blind in one eye and with the other saw only light and shadow seems doubtful to me. She bumped herself nowhere to an object, toddled not into strange feeding plates, found what she wanted. But before all it was admirable at night when she was looking for her bedtime treat. Those I distributed for her on our wide beds over four square meters. On blankets, pillows, in folds. Those stuck into folds she could indeed solely trace by her excellent nose. But the pill size little brown treats on light bedding that I deliberately had scattered in irritatingly same olfactory widths from her, plus a few more distant: ones: those the allegedly practically blind not only sensed, but saw. At least at shorter distance, after the nose had shown her the direction, she could still see. That I am sure of. Because I cannot believe that a dog can compensate the loss of its eyesight so

completely by sense of smell as Chicola. She did not err around on the bed, but recognized the dog candies nicely quietly, in orderly succession. It was no greedy food search, but for the two of us the daily repeated evening fun. At which she occasionally at first discovered the goodies singly, left those which she found lying, in order to look them up anew after completed action and chew them with relish.

With suspected signs of aging in Chicola my wife excused many things which earlier were considered as gross rudeness or animal protest against something. Dog owners when visiting dog-owning friends keep an eye on the living room carpet, where the brought-along bow-wow perhaps marks itself a piece of precinct. Lately it could happen, fortunately very seldom only, that the housebroken Chicola at home ignored without comprehensible reason her lavatory corner. But of our elderly doggie's actual forgetfulness my wife herself could hardly be convinced when I heard her annoyed "That-is-boo". A mild assessment in favor of the dog was the reverse case, where I succeeded to stop Chicola from running away from me at the Lake Eib Hotel

by shouting loud. The tide turned against me: "The poor dog had merely lost orientation! "Really? How it was when Chicola lost her senses, I experienced stunned at her dying day only.

My wife was the best possible geriatric nurse of our last doggie. Chicola had unexpectedly become older as the younger Bollardy, Tsarissa, Mimi who died of diseases. My wife knew all habits and needs of Chicola. And knew how to find out by offering different alternatives, what she just wanted. Whereby it was quite useful that Chicola at certain times at each location had the same needs. Evenings and at night to descend from the bed by doggie stairway to the water bowl, that was too difficult for her since long. If she sat herself upright, always only then, she was thirsty. Then my wife gave her the water. Not because in the evening to water her had been neglected. But because Chicola then had refused it. If after certain medicines thirst overcame her in the middle of the night, she did not bark or paw. But sat up and waited that my even asleep subliminally Chi-

cola watching wife perceive her altered posture, get up and supply her with water.

Chicola herself needed increasingly much sleep. She slept soundly, then apparently heard nothing, sometimes was hard to wake and was reluctant to be taken out from her respective sleeping hollow. At night she laid herself between us, never came to my side, made herself comfortable beside my wife. Striking was her differing warmth demand. At night she slept elongated, completely burrowed in under the blanket and even at her head tolerated no breeze of coolness. During the day, however, she slept curled up in her little basket in the hallway. Without blanket, airy, her own body warmth sufficed. Perhaps according to earlier custom, during the day at any time to jump up from just a brief slumber. Since that guardian phase that had become deep sleep. And at involuntary awakening it could take several seconds until Chicola, tiredly looking around, recognized us and knew again where she was. That, however, sometimes happens to humans, too. In the last months, after supper she came to visit us in the living room, for viewing slides. The images on the few meters

distant screen to see and recognize something she, going blind, barely could. Nor did she ever show the slightest interest, either. It was simply important not to be left outside, but to be noticed upon entering and after expectant glancing up to the couch to be allowed to sit with us. Either on my wife's lap or next to her on a blanket, if necessary for a while also with me. Just to be in our company, to share in the togetherness combined with talking and clicking change of light. Warmth for the Mind.

Chicola's health was generally satisfactory. Considering her age, anyway. The heart disease diagnosed and treated in her case, too, had not worsened. On the contrary, the magnification no longer pressed the lungs so much that dehydrations were still necessary. She was spared poor Tsarissa's terrible cardiac cough, she could breathe freely. Problems she has had instead for some time when emptying her bowels. The pressing caused back and pelvic pain, she then depended on my wife's help. Clear sign of Chicola's indisposition was always her feeding

behavior. But if in the morning she did not feel like eating breakfast, in the evening she mostly had appetite again. Or next day made up as much as she was allowed to. On the composition and amount of Chicola's food, which of course also had to be tasty, my wife took exact care. – In reasonably good weather Chicola together with the excursion-liking ones of the in-law Chihuahuas got out into nature. At fresh air, on ways rich of smells she was to have as much movement as possible. In the apartment you could not lure the in old age tired-to-run always from one room into the other, anyway, so that her muscles would not slacken.

If something was wrong with Chicola, she was immediately taken to the veterinarian. On the basis of longtime acquaintance occasionally if necessary even on weekends. Thanks God, as to the physician- and remedy costs we did not have to consider how much is left over for ourselves after the best possible care for a beloved animal. Since we had learned that physical therapy for the vertebrae and joints exists also for dogs, we let ours also have this benefit, every few weeks the acupuncture massage according to Penzel. Medically well prepared, traveled Chico-

la on the first Sunday in January with us to Lake Eib.

The this time despite lousiest weather hardly four-hour trip Chicola spent in her transport basket on the back seat. Getting out of the car en route was impossible today. From Garmisch and Grainau upwards the temperature declined continuously as the road curving upwards parallel to the Zugspitz railway rose. At the Christl hut the precipitation just happened to pause. We stopped, got out with Chicola. She recognized the meadow path where she usually liked to relieve herself. But now there was black ice. Somewhat stiff legged from the ride, she emptied her bladder already after a few meters and immediately wanted to get back into the warm, dry car. That was comprehensible. On the icy, snow covered ground she had slipped with bent fibulae instead of hopping upright. We therefore abstained from urging her to romp around as usual after the trip. In the Lake Eib Hotel she was immediately interested in the environment, inspected our room she was familiar with, licked water from the bowl put down for her, ate her lunch. -- My wife had brought from home a package of paper used by Chicola, together with the padding from her lavatory corner, spread

it out in a room niche. Chicola sniffed-sniffed and after a while indeed squatted down on the spot thus assigned to her. What a joy! The unpacking of the suitcases she understood properly as setting up in the new home, did not feel our going out alone at suppertime as abandonment. From the restaurant we brought her a fragrant, obviously already expected meat reward. She remembered again the "great life", did not miss the at home usual ration healthier food in the kitchen.

Monday morning Chicola was particularly well off. After we had again succeeded with the help of the urine paper brought from home to get her urinating in the room corner rather than having to carry her out of the hotel, she was not solely therefore effusively praised, rewarded, caressed, stroked also by me. It was, namely, her birthday. Her fourteenth. That we spent in the hotel owing to weather conditions. The compared to human lifetime, no matter how calculated, gotten considerably old birthday-doggie had company. The hours between the meals today she needed neither to slumber away lonely nor to spend on trips to perhaps unattractive locations. The

alpine air, the grueling journey here, the hotel swimming pool animated us to emulate Chicola. For her it was the fulfillment of all wishes. We had brought along her little basket, but here in addition she also had the bed. At home there was bed only in the evening in the bedroom, here all day. Everything that was necessary and pleasant for her was combined in the spacious hotel room, and she could already at daytime lie at will next to or between us or alone. Coronation of the great experience then was the portion boiled fillet of beef haunch brought along from supper from the restaurant.

Everything was in perfect order. Still. The date anticipated with almost superstitious concern, whether Chicola would live to this highest birthday of all our dogs, was over. Just three days before the trip the veterinarian had examined Chicola, expressed no concern, merely gave her a vitamin-rich strengthening syringe. Yet at my wife's inquiry about a prognosis for the foreseeable future, replied, it remains "now with a loving and a caring eye" to see further. My wife told me those words. To me they sounded like a poetically formulated, logical non-binding statement about the un-

predictable life expectancy of an aging animal. Self-evidently my wife had always kept "loving eyes" on this as on the previous doggies, with which she therefore so frequently visited the veterinary practice. The "loving eye" was in my opinion meant as great praise to my wife. And the "caring eye" as a doctoral promise of further conscientious medical care. My wife, however, sounded out a deeper, earnest sense. She was incessantly occupied, troubled, oppressed by the reference to the "now"-point in time together with the addition "caring eye". She had lastly held Mimi and before that Tsarissa in her arm in the euthanasia by the same doctor. Did she want to prepare her for the "now" soon necessary help for Chicola? In order that the "caring eye" would not also torment Chicola to live too long as Mimi? That was my fault. No one mentioned it. But did "caring eye" not mean the shortly timely care for a this time easy death? When the ominous sentence came to my wife's mind again by the end of the Sunday trip here, I bit back an irritated remark. Why should Chicola not live to her birthday tomorrow, on Monday? And be with us for a long time yet!

Tuesday morning the saying was forgotten. Chicola's new year of age began cheerfully with breakfast and weather improvement. For the afternoon we made excursion plans. After the encouraging start of the day, however, Chicola's wellbeing turned into audible abdominal pain. My wife gave her a medicine, afterwards yet another. But instead of lying down in the basket as usual if not feeling well, Chicola followed her restlessly at every step, could not be calmed by anything. The strange behavior struck my wife, for she knew everything about her and had never noticed this kind of painful nervousness. I went swimming. At my return Chicola's state had so far improved that she let herself be gotten on the bed. We treated us to a cozy morning hour. Chicola stretched herself along between us. She did not fall asleep like usual, but looked at us alternately, warmed herself. The retreating clouds let some sun in. A proper holiday idyll. At lunchtime Chicola was not hungry. We got ready for the drive to the hospital, I had a cardiologist appointment. My wife prepared a cuddly camp for Chicola in front of the bed, so she could get to the water and food and to her lavatory corner.

In the following hours, Chicola's last, the events took such a rapid course, that we have rolled up the reconstruction from behind. On the veterinary sales slip from Garmisch the time of deposit is 16:54. Before that was the examination and pain treatment. To which we drove down from the Lake Eib Hotel, where the phone call of our veterinarian from back home reached us, who got to her practice shortly before 16 o'clock. My memory of Chicola's state sets in 10 to 12 minutes maximum previously. Because after returning from the hospital I had seen Chicola at best from afar.

After the cozy forenoon hour with her, which in retrospect became meaningful, we had in complete tranquility gotten ready for the pre-cautiously early trip at about 12 o'clock to the valley. But the winding road was not as slippery smooth as expected. In milder tempered Garmisch we had our car washed which by the aggressive thawing salt was totally dirtied, nevertheless arrived on time at the hospital. The doctor's notification sounded quite positive. Delighted we came out in now full sunshine. It seemed to be a beautiful afternoon in every respect, we thought of a little trip with Chicola who yesterday

had spent her birthday in the hotel room. My wife got out at the hotel portal, I still on the parking lot dried the car's doorsteps and frames wet from the carwash, so that here in 1.000 meters Lake Eib height they would not ice up at night. I saw my wife with Chicola in her arm come out of the hotel and point towards the birches, the for years most beloved defecation spot of our doggies. Aha, Chicola did not want to relieve herself in the room. My wife had left me her key, fetched the second key from the front desk, she knew I want to go to the indoor pool again. I did not wait for her coming back, Chicola probably liked it outside. In the swimming pool I ordered my before the cardiologist visit weeks-long swaying between hope and fear thinking into a thank-you to God. "Thanks also for Chicola's welfare after the ambiguous sentence of the loving-caring eye". Soon I felt uncomfortable due to some inconsiderate guests who at completely unusual time stormed in. An odd coincidence that I so early already stood showered and dried in the bathrobe at the exit door, which someone tried to open from the outside. It was my wife, with frightened face,

excited little voice: "Can you come? Chicola is in bad state! "

In the elevator my wife reported that she must bring Chicola immediately to the veterinarian and did not want to drive off without giving me notice. Where to? To Garmisch, there is no one closer. What happened? I could imagine an accident only. For when we drove to the hospital at noon Chicola was obviously healthy, and still a while ago was at the defecation birch. Did something happen there? No, Chicola had vomited and fallen over. To me the vomiting did not sound badly threatening, that never was a catastrophe with our dogs. The falling over was worse. But the weak Chicola I had already repeatedly seen bending in at the back, she probably had problems again during pressing stool. "I drive you down," said I. Because if my wife takes the bout of weakness so seriously and therefore quite against her habit wants to go to Garmisch once again today, it would not hurt if a veterinarian advises and reassures her, who examines Chicola. At home it would be just the same. In good spirits I entered our room. And got frightened.

Chicola with eyes wide open moved disoriented in the room, did not notice our coming in, did not recognize us. Highly excited she felt something that was invisible, and lamented at it repellingly. The respective shrill cry, as I had never heard, ended in angry growl. Someone caused her severe pain which she did not want to tolerate. High-pitched she yelped against the torment and her tormentor, balked at someone's nearing whom she feared, without being able to escape. It was the shriek of fear and repulse of a little animal, which is capable merely to growl in protest when captured. I felt it is no longer about Chicola's vomiting, faintness, falling over. But felt the presence of death. Who approached our Chicola, from the direction of the niche wall looked hither and stopped one-two meters in front of Chicola. He filled that part of the room where she was. My reason rejected the term "death", because that is no being. My mind however insisted that I perceive him. No form, no face, a spectre somewhat taller than I grinned spitefully at me. Between him and me moved Chicola. Her only seemingly empty gaze was directed at the "death". That never experienced phenomenon was surrounded by light warmth.

Chicola was inside of it, to me that didn't extend. I felt it and it irritated me, because to death belongs cold.

I was wary not to mention the only weird, not fearsome perception. It was clear to me, any hint is now inappropriate and the only sensible thing to do to get dressed fast. I remember that I pondered whether I should just slip into the shoes with socks or without, or bind them properly. I knew, however, it no longer comes down to seconds and tied the laces neatly. On entering the room I had caressed Chicola, compassionately touched the edge of her bumpy narrow back. She however was absent, as none of our dogs before. It was not Mimi's obedient, mute, sad absence on her last photo. Chicola was not willing to depart. When my wife made yet another phone call and still gave the doggie some medicine who temporarily had become quieter, I put on coat and cap. The presence of the invisible one faded and died out when we drove to the veterinarian.

My wife has a significantly different, before all more extensive, complete memory of that Tuesday afternoon. On the return

from the hospital, where she was the first one in our hotel room and I still down on the parking lot, she found Chicola in deepest sleep. She had heard neither the intentionally loud key jingling nor cheerful greeting calls, whereupon she at other times used to react joyfully. My wife had to awaken her by vigorous shaking and then sat her upon the urinated paper in the lavatory corner for bladder emptying. This expectation Chicola fulfilled extensively. Subsequently, however, vomited, her breakfast was still undigested. Then she fell over sideways. My wife had stood beside her, straightened her up immediately, took her on her lap, cleaned her and thought it best if Chicola would also empty her bowel. Yet that could hardly be expected in the lavatory corner where she had just fallen over. But outside at the birch it could succeed. While she carried Chicola there, I came into the room, changed clothes and went unsuspectingly to the indoor pool. My wife had little success with Chicola at the birch. The weak doggie tried indeed, could not press, the first sign of defecation my wife took out with the paper handkerchief.

Back in the room then Chicola began without plausible reason to lament strongly.

That increased heartbreakingly to clear “owa-owa”. This loud “owa” weeping resembled not the yelping up I afterwards heard, the upward curve of piercingly clear tones with sudden decrease in deep growl. Of this, what I heard, my wife in turn has no recollection. To whom her sister-in-law, however, attested that by one of her own Chihuahuas she had also heard the unmistakable pain suffering lament "owa". And that she was present when years ago Chicola at excruciatingly complete loss of balance by vestibular overpressure syndrome in the arm of my wife cried "owa". The since then never again heard “owa-owa” set my wife into panic after she had in vain tried to help the poor Chicola with analgesic and sedative medicines. Desperately, she at 15:30 phoned our hometown veterinarian practice. The doctor was still not there, the assisting girl knew no advice, noted the phone number of our hotel room, so her boss can call back. But what could she really do?

Since there was no phone book in the rooms and the reception desk, too, would have to search by computer, without my wife being able to indicate a specific town, she remembered

the hotel's housekeeper. She must know who had previously treated the dog of the hotel owner's family. The immediately reached housekeeper knew a veterinarian in Garmisch only, the to her knowledge only one in the whole area. For further inquiries there was no time now, my wife made a phone call to Garmisch, she could come right away. It was a lucky coincidence, in retrospect rather a heavenly providence that contrary to our original plan we had not traveled by train, but in winter had to take the car. So no taxi had to be called awkwardly from afar up to Lake Eib. Without lining my wife wanted to drive down herself. I then was in the swimming pool, steam room, sauna or at the gymnasium. But to let me know she at least wanted to try. When opening the door to the indoor pool I just came her direction. Coincidence? Providence?

The phone call shortly before 16 o'clock that I noticed while dressing, and paying attention to the scornfully intrusive presence of death ignored, was the conversation with our veterinarian from home. Who first presumed Chicola had perhaps got a chill. My wife denied. Further presumptions and inquiries my wife preempted. Who anyway had not

hoped for a useless remote diagnosis and from the Rhine to the Loisach an impossible injection, medication. She rather just wanted to ask for information, if it is "now", as the doctor after the examination last Thursday foresaw with "a caring eye". Had she perhaps given Chicola only the five days to this day? "No", was the stunned answer, "it was not meant thus". She recommended my wife should give a painkiller and otherwise consult a veterinarian. The medicine my wife had brought with her, already given it, and to the veterinarian we were just starting off.

When we sat Chicola in the dog travel bag, her kyphosis emerged extremely. Never was her hump as round as today. She had become more silent, probably exhausted, too, by the long wailing. In the car she moaned whimpering, threw herself violently around in the bag. My wife is familiar with the navigation device and inserted the address of the veterinarian while we drove down to Garmisch. So we found the small side street on the left of the Loisach rather quickly. In the practice there was lively activity, we were to take a seat in the waiting room, but urged to be allowed in immediately with

the fatally ill doggie. Nevertheless the physician's assistants first insisted on completion of the questionnaire and signing the obligation to pay. Chicola whined loud, the doctor let us in out of turn. Already while my wife still gave information on the case history, he set a venous catheter. Chicola screamed. Not "owa", but of pain at being stung into the thin little leg. This self-pity at injections was new to my wife. The injected painkiller did not work, the wailing continued. For the physician, it pointed to no chill, he suspected herniated disc. He remembered his mother, in her case everything imaginable had falsely been diagnosed, where in reality it was the disc. On the other hand he could do nothing for our doggie at the moment. Yet neither must Chicola suffer and cry. I asked the man who became sympathetic to us, who in Chicola's case thought of his mother, whether morphine would help more. The doctor was not averse, took methadone, injected it through the venous catheter. Chicola cried and whimpered on. The veterinarian offered to admit her into the medical ward. This in turn we did not want to do to her, that she feels abandoned by us. The friendly doctor gave us his mobile phone number, in three

hours we should call if Chicola's condition does not improve. We paid by debit card, it was 16:54, carried Chicola to the car. But all the way there she did not stop screaming. We went back into the practice, now to have her admitted to the ward.

We were immediately allowed into the consulting room. The veterinarian saw how the screaming poor Chicola bends and twists in her dog bag. My wife said that we ask her to be admitted to the ward. "Look yourself, doctor ..." But he did not have to examine the trembling Chicola once again, but rather looked at us. We nodded. Mindful of the too long putting off the inevitable death at Mimi I did not argue against the doctor. Still bedded in her red, lined with down bag we laid her on the operating table, stroked and caressed her. To speak none of us was able. The anesthetic syringe made Chicola whine up again and on account of the previous pain and morphine injections worked very slowly. After a while the veterinarian examined with his finger Chicola's eye reaction. There was none, she would no more feel the grace syringe. I squeezed the doctor's

hand gratefully and left the room. My wife stayed. She accompanied Chicola up to the end. Profoundly with her, with "caring eye" gazing after the already passing away she surrendered, had to let go what the "loving eye" for so many years had guarded, kept alive.

Chicola remained in the red bag for her final journey, too, bedded on downs for freezing at the veterinarian. Him the task of having to kill instead of being able to heal also touched, the euthanasia fee he disliked to take today, that we should pay when picking up the small body only. For us began the sapping experience of emptiness, of missing the doggie that lived with us. Upon the return from Garmisch to Lake Eib it was almost unbearable not to open the hotel room with "Hello Chicola", everywhere to see her stuff. Her resting place in front of the bed. Her water cup, feeding bowl. The bag of treats. And to dinner not to take along the small plastic container into the restaurant, in which we always brought her something delicious. Her "great life" existed no more. The intellect of both of us knew that. Our usual feeling nevertheless thought by looking at the plates, how fine this or that would be for her. At night, we turned off the

light meant for her and then on again. She did not need it any more. To us, however, it was necessary for a while in the dark without her. Even the attempted distraction next day by the drive to Mittenwald failed. It was rather painful, everywhere to be reminded suddenly how she once behaved here, at another time there or where she had done what.

In the Garmisch hospital I still had a second appointment. This examination also produced a friendly diagnosis. That of course I heard with relief, satisfaction. But then in the hotel pool I could not to be as happy as after the good notification Tuesday at lunchtime. When I thanked the dear God also for Chicola's birthday. I did not get rid of the absurd thought that her life had been taken in exchange for mine. To my reason the senselessness of this assumption was clear, which since time immemorial has overcome many nations and brought forth sacrifices. Dog sacrifices including, quite possibly in Chihuahua land. The perceiving of death, even before the veterinarian found Chicola's death being unstoppable had become imprinted into my memory. My wife knew nothing about it, the quest of meaning for Chicola's

being taken away that now followed me into the pool I likewise kept to myself. It was pointless also to ponder again about whether and where something is left of Chicola, what animated her body, determined her existence. Upon the death of our first and later the second dog, who were not Chihuahuas, we in stunned state searched for an answer. Which nobody knows. Now in our remaining days at Lake Eib the issue was not metaphysical speculations. But only the dignified burial of our last doggie. For the freezing we had asked the veterinarian, because we wanted to take Chicola home with us. In the hotel or in the trunk of our car we could not keep her until the journey home. Again on a Sunday like the journey here And as ideal for cremation in Alsace we hoped to get an appointment on Monday. We did not want to put her in a collective cremation. But individually under personal supervision let her become ash, and knowing that it is her's we bring back in her, our home.

Eventually our plan succeeded. Before departure then my wife put a few twigs from the birch at the hotel into the transport basket on the back seat, into which this time only

Chicola's utensils went. Her body traveled stiffly wrapped in the bag she liked. In the trunk, there it stayed cool. It was a miserable feeling no more to be able to care whether en route she was well. For a while none of us said what occupied both us, so as not to depress the other. Then however an opportunity arose not to sadden each other by touching episodes. I asked my wife for details of her information given to the veterinarian about Chicola's diseases. Of those I knew less than about those that passed off dramatically of the other ones. How had Chicola as the weakest survived the others, younger ones? The factual conversation turned out to be helpful, because we neither had to shun the Chicola topic nor thereby sink into depressing sentimentality.

On the first Monday after the birthday-Monday ended her final journey. In France at the crematorium. We took the cold, hunch-backed, narrow body out of the down bag. In which she had died and, as we now saw, completed the defecation she had not been able to at the Lake Eib birch. Poor, dear Chicola! My wife put the birch tips brought along on her shoulder

took a picture, cut a lock of hair from the long pompom by the ear. After one hour she received a small package still warm ash. We drove Chicola home. She has not been abandoned somewhere.

The photo stands on the urn shelf above my wife's desk. Where all have their spot. The photo is also in my study. A beautiful, peaceful image. As if there had been no heart-rending agony. Her eyes are not quite closed. As in life. When slumbering she could look up without having to move.



Solely the witnessing of her death gives me the certainty that from the now deep slumber she awakes no more.

From our last four doggies I had for years no special relationship to Chicola. That changed when I noticed that she ages with me and faster than I. I lost a Chihuahua who was personally close to me.

The peaceful farewell photo soothes my mourning. It shows her as she was. A good one. All were good doggies. May He who created them reward their having been good among us.

Josef-Gerhard Farkas:
Dirge for a Chihuahua.
Translation of the German
“Totenklage um eine Chihuahua”
by the author.

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As to the use of *Google Übersetzer für Unternehmen:Translator Toolkit* see Josef-Gerhard Farkas “Dirge for a Chihuahua - Totenklage um eine Chihuahua - Vorlage zur Studie maschineller Übersetzung“, 2016.