

Zacharias Mbizo: The Agnesbründl (The Agnes Well)

3. The Green Tourmaline



"The healing stone that was supposed to give me access to the Fountain of Youth glistened in my hands like a spiral mist. In its innermost core, the fountainhead of all life seemed to spring forth."

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Cosmic Reflections

Never would I have thought that a stone could be so alive. For me, stones had always been the epitome of dead matter, the antithesis of the dynamic principle of the living, which is subject to growth and decay.

The stone, however, which I now held in my hand, was permeated by such a rich veining that it seemed to me not only like an image of being, but almost like a miniature version of cosmic life.

At first, I had the impression that I was looking at it through a telescope. The rosette-like pattern in its center seemed to me like the core of the universe, from which innumerable clouds of stardust and millions of sparkling galaxies branched off.



At times it seemed to me that the glittering dots were forming larger geometric shapes. They reminded me of something I had seen long ago,

something elongated, hanging from a ceiling ...
Yes, they looked like stalactites, like stalactites
in a grotto, where the wandering light of the
lamp creates the illusion of an underground
starry sky.

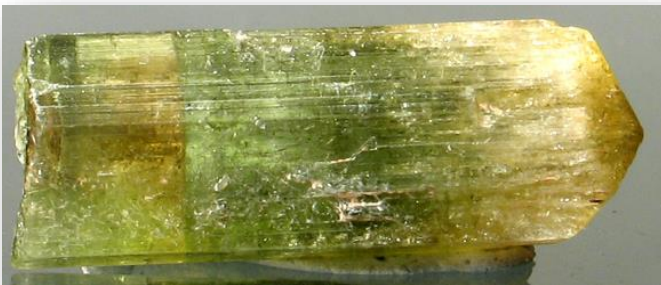
Thus the stone united in itself to a certain extent
the opposite poles of being – light and darkness,
above and below, rise and fall. Therefore, I could
understand that a special healing power was
attributed to it.



The Stone Whisperer

The man who had placed the stone in my hand seemed very young, hardly older than his late twenties. He had very delicate, almost girlish features – an impression that of course could also stem from the horse's tail into which he had tied his hair.

"A verdelite," he explained to me in his soft, slightly vibrating voice, which made the name of the stone sound like "Werde Licht" ("Let there be light"). "A green tourmaline – a particularly artfully cut specimen."



"And you think that the stone helps against pancreatic cancer?" I asked him.

Actually, I had entered "healing water + Vienna" into the search engine. But since the healing power of water is inseparably connected with the minerals dissolved in it, I inevitably came across the "healing stones". These in turn led me to various gemstone dealers, of which I had chosen – because the store was near my hotel – the "Crystal Cave". Surely nothing would be wrong with a non-committal visit, I thought. Perhaps a new, quite unexpected clue would emerge in this way.

Unfortunately, my hopes did not seem to be fulfilled: The young man shook his head in response to my question.

"No," he explained, "that's not what I meant. You see, a stone is not at all comparable in its effect with classical medication. A product from the chemical kitchen of the pharmaceutical industry is like an arrow shot at a certain part of your body. Most of these products have an an-

tagonistic effect: they are supposed to eliminate something, make it harmless, remove it."

Thoughtfully, he added: "A healing stone, by contrast, always enters into a dialogue with your whole body. Thus an interaction is created,



of which you can never know in advance what it will lead to in the end. All we can say from our experience is that certain stones influence certain developments in the body in this way rather than in another."

I couldn't hide my disappointment. "Oh, well ... In this case, it's probably not the right thing for me. Unfortunately, my mother's disease is already quite advanced. There's simply not enough time for longer dialogues with stones."

Instead of an answer, the young merchant reached out a hand for the stone. At first I thought he wanted to take it away from me again. Instead, he spread his hand over mine, so

that our palms enclosed the tourmaline like a seashell.

Immediately I felt an intense warmth emanating from the stone. Our hands seemed to grow together under its influence. It was as if the stone had a magnetic effect on them.

"Well?" he asked me. "Do you feel the power of the stone?" It was as if the tourmaline itself spoke from him.

"Yes, indeed," I murmured. "You really can't escape it."

Slowly, his hand detached itself from mine again. "So you can see," the slender magician triumphantly said, "I didn't promise you too much. The effect is there – you just have to lead it in the right direction. And this can be supported in different ways."

"Really?" I asked, gaining new hope. "Could you perhaps ... I mean: Would you have some tips for me on that?"

"The most important thing is to enhance the healing power of the stone with water," I learned. "With the right water, you can



significantly increase the chance that the stone will unfold the desired effect."

I looked at him expectantly. "And what kind of water would you recommend?"

The stone whisperer bent over the tourmaline once more, so that its green colour was reflected in his eyes. "Near Sievering, just outside of Vienna, there is a source that harmonises quite excellently with the verdelite – the so-called Agnesbründl," he explained to me. "As it happens, my grandmother lives close by there. If you want, I can call her right now. I'm sure she'll be happy to guide you to the source – and also

give you the necessary instructions on how to use it."

Instructions? What the hell was that supposed to mean? I briefly considered whether it would be better to leave the whole thing alone. But by then the man with the fingers of a piano player had already pulled out his mobile phone and was gazing at me expectantly.

His solemn look hardly allowed for anything other than an approving nod. Five minutes later I had an appointment with a healing water expert in Sievering for the same evening, and my purse had lost considerably in weight.



Hunting for a Mirage?

Shortly after I had left the shop, my mobile phone rang. It was my mother.

"Well, boy?" she asked. "How's it going?" Her voice sounded husky.

"Guess what, I just bought a healing stone for you – a tourmaline," I told her, animated by the momentum my new plans had given me. "It really has an amazing effect. I would never have thought that! Seems very promising."

To my surprise, my mother did not react immediately to my words. I even had the impression that she held the phone away from her. For a

moment, only an indistinct murmur of voices could be heard. Perhaps the television was on in the background, or maybe the line was unstable.

"Mum?" I asked. "Are you still there?"

"Yes ... yes, I'm still there," she replied hesitantly.

"Aren't you happy that the search is making progress?"

She took a deep breath. "Of course I am. It is touching that you want to help me so much. It's just ... I ... I don't know how much ... how much time is left for me. And if suddenly something ... something should happen to me, then we have ... I mean, then my last days will be wasted on this chase for a mirage."

I faltered. Instinctively, I sensed that she was right. What if I was only deluding myself into thinking I could save my mother with my restless search? What if I was actually just running away from her misfortune, from the sight of the unstoppable decay of her body?

"Listen," I decided on the spur of the moment. "The thing with the stone shall be my last attempt. If it is another dead end, I'll come back home right tomorrow."

My mother breathed a sigh of relief. "All right, my boy – that really sounds reasonable."

Unexpected Appearance

When I left that evening for the arranged meeting with the grandmother of the gemstone dealer, I was torn between confidence and a kind of last-minute-panic. On the one hand, I had put myself under time pressure by promising to conclude the matter quickly.

On the other hand, paradoxically, I had the feeling that I had come closer to my goal precisely because of this time limit. Perhaps the compulsion to concentrate on the essentials would indeed prove helpful.



The agreed meeting place was the tavern "Zum Agnesbrünnl" on Hunter's Meadow (Jägerwiese) – a popular starting point a popular hiking destination at the Hermannskogel, one of Vienna's local mountains. From there it was only a stone's throw to the source that my stone whisperer had so strongly encouraged me to visit.

He had assured me that the tavern would be easy to find even for out-of-towners. In fact, Hunter's Meadow could be reached by a short walk from Sievering. But when I arrived in front of the inn, I looked in vain for my contact person. A green scarf – in accordance with the green tourmaline – was supposed to serve as a sign of recognition. But nothing of the kind was to be seen anywhere.

Despite the rather late hour for an autumn evening, the tavern was still bustling with life. Apparently, a male choral society had made an excursion there and was now belting out one beery serenade after another.

However, my eyes were rather attracted by a woman standing apart with her back to me. In her henna-red hair, which reached down to her hips, the evening sun was caught like a crackling fire eating its way through a pile of half-burned brushwood.



When she heard my footsteps at her back, she turned to me.

I winced. I had expected to see the dreamy face of a young girl. Instead, my gaze fell on a weathered face with deep furrows. Only now did I detect the lime-green scarf that the woman had tied around her neck.

"Ah," she said in a voice raspy from smoking, "you must be the young fellow my grandson has

set me up with." She laughed in a dark, throaty way as she flicked away the cigarette she had been holding between her fingers.

"Yes ... that's right," I replied hesitantly. In the sunlight, her wrinkles shone like the frozen traces of the wind in the snow. Involuntarily I had to think of the rock, already half decomposed by water veins, which I had passed on my way to Hunter's Meadow.

The woman fixed me with her eyes sparkling in the sunset. "You must be wondering why I turned around just now." She paused for a brief, meaningful moment. "Well, of course I've sensed you approaching me all along."

Not exactly a feat, I thought. After all, we had an appointment right at this time!

"Really amazing!" I replied politely.

The woman laughed again in her rattling way. "I was joking, of course!" Getting more serious, she added: "But it's still good that you believe my words. It shows that you trust me – that will make your initiation easier."

She pulled a hand-rolled cigarette out of a colourful box and lit it. Then she slightly touched my arm. "Come on, we'd better get going right away. Otherwise we'll end up missing the light for your enlightenment."

Laughing, she shouldered the backpack she had placed next to her and marched off.



Picture Credits

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