

## 9. KAROLINA'S SOLUTION

Karolina is a fan. She has been reading my novels. She thinks that she has found a puzzle in them. She wants to challenge me with her knowledge. Our emails become so frequent that we turn to instant messaging.

Karolina writes me with her discovery, "I have discovered this abstract design in your novels. It is what holds them together like a spider's web. I call it the *crystalline shape of the Shepherd's Watch*. It is the intersection of all the points of observation that you describe in your works. In its truest form, it is the portrait of the author."

I am fascinated. I want to learn more. Is this idea only a rudimentary sketch, an impression? Or does it represent something more?

"It is a very rigid exposition. It is almost like doing astronomy. Like traces the paths of light from the stars. I have broken it all down to a set of equations. I have solved for the unknowns, and this is my result."

Either it is gibberish or she really has discovered something.

"There is the primary axis, the axis of power. All the power of the universe moves along this axis. It accelerates slightly faster than the propagation of life. So over time it builds up an energy stronger than the life force. From this line we discover our will. It marshals all the forces in our biology. But it provides them with a new purpose."

"This is what energizes us day to day. It is what gives excitement to our daily breath. "

I work to concentrate on the image of this primary axis, this show of force. The primeval spirit. It moves through everything. And ultimately it pushes towards the summit of all existence.

"Already you understand about one of vertices of the primary axis. It is an origin, the source of thought and belief. So we have thought and belief projected against the backdrop of the force of the universe. It seems radical to say this. But thought and belief move even faster than the primary force. And in the discrepancy between these movements we have the perception of time. Note that time can be measured as articulating the primary force. But the observer perceives time as the discrepancy between these two movements."

For the moment, this is all a little abstract. She adds to the exposition.

"It's like a constellation in the sky. The Southern Cross, for example."

After that brief attempt at explanation, she continue in an equally convoluted manner. I am trying to keep up.

"We have the primary force and lived time. And lived time moves at different velocities. Sometimes it tracks the primary force. Other times it juts ahead as if it is full of all this confidence and energy."

She talks about time as if it is human."

"The only thing that resolves all these contradictions is the observer. To feel time is to match the path with the movement of the primary force. This means reflecting the force off of a satellite, an object for observation. In this reflection, the primary force is dissipated. We have a separate articulation that first moves contrary to the primary force."

"This reflection offers the explanation to all experience in the universe. The universe vibrates between the primary force and its reflection. And in observation, we try to capture that

fluctuation.”

Karolina is implying a deeper relationship than only the physical realm. She suggest that this is the role of the Shepherd. He shepherds the universe. He guides us from a world of appearances to the force that moves all things. It is this belief which excites the Shepherd. It is almost a sickness on his part. He see all this in a vision. It inspires him. It fills him with the spirit. And under the influence of this revelation, he mends the break in the universe. He restores the myriad of reflected light back to its original source.

For Karolina, this insight is her own inspiration. She can feel the rhythms of the universe as if she is a clock and is tuned into the eternal ticking. I am interested if she notes the discrepancy between the toll of each vibration and the moment in time that it represents.

“Don’t you feel the universe move in a direction contrary to itself?” I ask her.

She is interested by my question.

“And it is the role of the Shepherd to restore everything back to its primary form.”

“I thought that was your suggestion.”

“That is the role of the constellation. He recognizes that what has been torn asunder must be rebuilt in the form that it existed previously.”

I discover a problem with the exposition, “The Sheperd contradicts the notion of lost time. But that is almost a mania on his part. He dreams of putting back together what has already been torn apart.”

“That is what is so splendorous about his vision. He seeks to restore the harmony of the universe. He knows that it sings in this wondrous interplay of tones. We have become deaf to the sound. He reawakens that feeling.”

“There is something almost presumptuous on the part of the Shepherd. He wants it his way. And he will only become frustrated if he can get his wish.”

“But that is what is so fascinating about his dream. He desires something more. He works step by step to piece together the patchwork. He is steadfast.”

“The only thing that holds it together is his zeal. In a sense, that is almost psychotic.”

“A visionary is naturally haunted by the world around him. It pushes him to edge of reality. Of course, it’s going to seem psychotic to normal people.”

“No, it’s more than that. The Sheperd has this vision of the universe that gives him the excuse to spy on other people.”

“He’s not spying. He’s seeing for them.”

I don’t want to sympathize.

“That just makes him seem OK. But he’s not, not at all.”

“He doesn’t want to harm anyone. He just wants to share his understanding. He wants to warn them about the future.”

Karolina will not relent in her defense of the Shepherd. Even if his ideas are confused, she has given him a clarity. I do not think that it is deserved. She is almost a fan who is willing to act out his desires. I think her reasoning is allied to her study of philosophy. She imagines the Sheperd as an incarnation of Plato or something such. For her, he offers a wisdom about the universe. And if he is willing to place himself in precarious situations, so be it. She accepts that part of his nature. He puts himself on the line for his ideas.

The Sheperd refuses to countenance any disagreements about his mission. That is where

I feel he is dangerous. It is my duty to stop him, to warn everyone about his true nature.

Karolina offers a different point of view, "He is the Shepherd. He is not the Wolf. He is there to offer eyes for his sheep. He does not want to lead them down the wrong path."

"He protects the sheep for now. Eventually they will be slaughtered." I cannot close my eyes to that outcome.

"You are offering a metaphor that does not apply. He is not like that."

Karolina has been entered in a ping pong match against Adam Ellis. For Karolina, this is almost like life and death. She needs to win. She hasn't traveled all this way not to be ping pong champ

"It's not going to be a real competition. Besides, why do you want to go to Salt Lake?" Emilia has reminded her. But she takes the trip anyway. She wants this to mean something.

When she finally confronts Adam, she is ready for the match. This is more than a game. It is a battle between good and evil.

She tells him, "You think that you're going to win this game. I've got the spin mapped out in my head. When it hits the soul, it's going to be something stupendous. You won't be able to stop me. And the aftershocks are going to change the world."

"I haven't the vaguest idea what you're talking about Karolina."

Karolina adjusts her pose by the table. She holds her racket with a casual grip. I am the only one watching their game. I barely know her, and I have heard people talk about Adam. I really don't like to play games so I am wondering why I even care about the outcome. I guess that I want to believe her inflated assessment of the challenge.

Karolina has to time her return perfectly. She wants to send her shot speeding towards the back end of the table so that it careens in this deadened trajectory just below his swinging paddle. She can tell how he is setting up to smash this shot. He will swing at dead air, and as he fans his momentum will make him look ridiculous. He will hit nothing because in his heart, he is nothing. There is nothing with which to make contact.

I consider his vacuity to my particular advantage. But he is playing the game. And I am a mere spectator. I have none of that special star quality to attract her. So I play my role as the dim-witted fan.

She glances over at me and wonders who is this guy. I am a little eager as I try to envision her strategy. I follow the twisting balls and the clacking sound of the rackets hitting away. I start to get excited. I want her to show him her finesse. To just rip him to shreds.

Adam is a worthy opponent. He prides himself on how well he knows the game. He learned how to play when he was hardly out of his teens. He was a champion in college and even went pro for a while. Now his big picture window overlooks the mountains and the Great Salt Lake is in the foreground. Adam has amassed a fortune from designing computer games. He has adapted his flair for competition to actually designing intriguing play in the digital world. He believes that he has devised an equation for excitement. It is on this axiom that he has built his empire. He also hopes that same genius to guide his victory today.

Given his prowess, she will have to use all her skills to make his network unravel. She is looking for the loose thread that she can disengage and just pull apart the whole fabric.

Both players have warmed up. They have sized up each other from a few practice shots. Now they are ready for the fight to the finish. There is a ref who is monitoring play. And ten or

so fans gathered around to watch the match.

Karolina wants to wear down her opponent by pushing him deep into his zone and then coming back with this spinning shots that drop by the net. Her strategy is successful at first. She is already ahead 5-0. He needs to come back if he is going to get stay in the game. He gets a little more aggressive and works to counter her searing shot technique. Even though he gets back in the game, he has lost some of his edge due to fatigue.

His skills enable him to hang on as spinning shot is matched with spinning shot. Her lead is cut to a point. After a number of meticulous volleys between the two of them, he picks up the lead. It seems like his champion technique will hold sway. But she beats him back to take the first game.

He is a little shocked to lose in his own place. But he is not going to surrender his crown so easily. He just batters her down and racks up nine straight points. It looks as if he finally has her number. She barely makes it over to the ball as it skims off the table. She looks helpless as her return seem to find only net. It hangs there for a brief second and then slide over to his side. He is mortified. There is no way that he can even attempt a return. The score is still in his favor. But she adds point upon point until she has a six-point lead. She has got her groove back.

She moves forward. He doesn't seem to stand a chance. He gains a couple of points near the end. But his mastery appears done.

Little does she realize that he has something to spare. He manhandle her in the next game. Again, she wonders if she can match his finesse. But she is not going to give up. The fourth game is arduous. They exchange the lead over and over again. He ekes out victory. The exhaustion now hits both of them. She needs to reach down into herself to defeat him in the final game. She is surprised that he has been able to make it back.

In the final game, she has to apply her skills of analysis. This is the mental game. She needs to calculate each shot. She has been relying on her intuitions and that has let him back into the game. He is full of earnestness. He knows that she is close to being on the ropes. He wants to use that feeling to inspire him. But that is where he is vulnerable. His shots are now too eager. And she punishes him with her returns. She tries to wear him down. At first, he hits too early. He is full of venom. Then he works to compensate. He is hitting too late. She recognizes that he is losing his game. But she doesn't want to be overconfident. She slowly builds up a slight lead.

Karolina feels that she is playing for something bigger. That her life is somehow on the line. Even as she is winning, she knows the risk. It makes her play with more fierceness. This is no longer just a game. It is a competition between two different views of the world. He plays in order to dominate his opponent. He is not just seeking victory. He wants to devastate her personally.

On the other hand, she wants to subdue his ferocity. She wants him to face himself. Her style is completely the opposite. She plays against his weaknesses. She forces him to expose himself.

The middle game is full of long volleys. Neither player wants to give in to the strategy of the other. Each is trying to apply the whole being in this contest. She works to mine all her skills in breaking him down. She tries to peer deep inside. What makes him tick. What is the great fear that motivates him?

He is over-confident. And she has exposed this weakness from the first game. In the final game, he seems unable to focus. He has never faced an opponent who has analyzed him so well. He is disturbed by her acumen. She is able to translate her knowledge in a series of actions. And he comes face to face with this strategy as if he hits a wall.

She gets a kick out of watching him sputter. He is more and more zealous. And his application is fast becoming his undoing. She extends her lead to four points. And he can feel the pressure. He is not ready to give in. He answers back with three quick points. She is within his grasp. They battle for a single point for what seems like an eternity. She is so involved that she does not feel the ball hit the paddle, she is barely aware of her movement. She has become one with her surroundings.

He is more than a little frustrated when he sees that he cannot break her concentration. He is playing against a machine. Each return is met with an equally-devised reply. This is what the game is about. If he lets up now, he is done. The two players meld in this interlocking dialogue. She does not want to lose his intent. They both fall to the spirit.

Karolina realizes her sole escape. She must vanish. He has been hitting the ball so that it might elude her. She needs to remove the reference point. Now his only guide is the table. His return volleys are slightly weaker than before. And the balls seem to come at him from the fog. He doesn't know how to react to the present situation. He does not want to yield on this point.

Adam senses that his only refuge is his strength. He increases the back-spin on his returns. He wants her to reveal herself. But she can tell what he is doing, and she will not react. Her brilliance is already in his shot selection. He does not let up. This is the match.

Adam is revealed as desperate and angry. He knows that if he fails now, that his character will be on the line. He cannot hide under the guise of a good sport. If he retreats, his fate will be even worse. He will look as if he just quit. She taunts him from her invisible vantage point. And that is her final realization. He sends a shot to her that is the ultimate in his method. It glides over the net and then comes crashing down with its heavy spin. He has timed it perfectly. Already confusing, it becomes even harder to track as it edges the table. She lunges at the ball as it hits, but she cannot adjust. Her body is way out of alignment to make the shot. It is all in the wrist. That is all that she has left.

He is so impressed with his selection that he cannot believe that she will be able to ever make a return. Indeed, he stands there admiring how well he has succeeded. And in this display of pride, he is finally undone. Her return goes completely across court and careens off of the side of the table. Even with his best effort, he might have never touched the shot.

Karolina has not won the match. But she might as well have. He no longer can patrol the court with the same mastery. He looks lost as he loses all of the final points.

Adam really hates losing. Not only is he on his home court, he also has put so much of himself in the match. Her approach has been much more mystical. Under these terms she has scored her victory. She has won by eschewing the competition. For Adam, it has been a contest of ego. Each will has been pitted in battle. Here and there, she became susceptible to his influence. On these occasions, she appeared just as competitive as he. But she eventually learned how to resist. She stopped showing herself. She played to the game not to the opponent.

Adam has never known this style of command. He has been completely dominated by her insight. She has refused to surrender her being to the game. She has always held back

something of herself. He is so frustrated by her. She has denied him entry into her private world.

Now and then, he seems to have disrupted her fortitude. But this never lasted. She would always return to the calculated and professional character of her play. This is her genius. He hates to have encountered such power without being able to penetrate its surface.

In a sense, Karolina has hurt him deeply. He bears this wound the best that he can. But his strength is not sufficient to ease the pain. Usually he can offset such anguish by seeing how the other player has been equally affected. But she hides all that completely. He has never entered her world. But she has cut a wide path across his.

Adam is particularly devastated on a personal level. His masculinity has been exposed. He has expressed an interest in her. She has more or less ignored him. He even thought that was his advantage. That she would not be able to resist his personal magnetism. She will have none of this. She has a life. And she keeps it separate from the game. She is no more vulnerable after the match than before.

She sits in an easy chair with a drink. Karolina accepts his hospitality. That is where it stops. She sees no carry over of the intensity of the game. In fact, that has been the hallmark of her victory. He has been vanquished by her commitment. So she has little to offer him at this stage. She is the winner. At best, he is only a spectator on her life.

She has made her way around his place without the least effect on her inner being. This makes him want her more. But it is to no avail. He has been spent by the play. And she is offering up no more of herself to his pursuit.

Karolina finds him laughable. The rest of us in the room hold her in awe. She has been complemented for her play. She has been polite. But that is the extent of her interest.

I decide to approach. I want to congratulate her for her game.

“Have we met before?” she asks me.

“Not at all.”

“I don’t know what it is. You seem familiar.”

She sees that I am even more cagey than she is. She likes that. But she doesn’t want to play any more games in this location.

“I loved the mental side of your game. As I watched you, I felt that I was taking part in a geometry lesson.”

“I don’t want to seem boastful. But that was the key to my victory. I didn’t let him phase me. He is so good at the psychological game. And I almost gave in to that. But I soon realized what was happening. I refused to provide him with a psychology to break down. For him, that is the mental game. He wants to play analyst. I gave him a blank to work with. He didn’t know what to do. There is nothing spiritual about his game. It is the classic contest of man versus man.”

“You succeeded because you are female.”

“Not exactly. But he is so used to domination. And I gave him none of his traditional reference points.”

“Did you take a lot of time planning your game?”

“I have videos of his play. I studied those. I needed to learn the abstract space that he constructed with his play. There were even weaknesses in his geography. He was never exhaustive in mapping the court. There were also all these gaps around the table that proved to

be his undoing. I needed to play in those directions.”

“Wasn’t it hard to discipline yourself to return with such precision.”

“That was all part of my preparation for the match. I knew that I would have to apply myself if I was going to be victorious.”

“Fundamentally, this is a mystical quest.”

“Of course. I even made a spiritual journey with my lover. He and I shared that same thirst.”

“Does he play?”

“A little. But not in the same way.”

“Is that a weakness?”

“I don’t see it that way.”

“But there’s a side of you that he doesn’t know.”

“No one knows that.”

This seems even more intense than her match with Adam. We are both absorbed by the discussion.

“Don’t you long for the chance to share that side of yourself?”

“David and I share in other ways. That makes up for the gap.”

“But does he know that there is a gap.”

“There really isn’t one.”

“But you said...”

“That was just a manner of speaking.” She smiles and takes a sip of her drink.

If she has resisted Adam, she is certainly going to resist me. There is nothing physical in our interchange, so she can escape completely unscathed. Even with her resolve, Adam has gotten too close. She can not let him know that. That is why she has been so open with me. I want to know more about her spiritual journey.

“When you made your pilgrimage with David, did it resonate more than the feelings that you felt in the game?”

“In some ways it registered in a deeper way. It was not a game. But I need to be honest. Adam was able to break down my defenses. This was completely new to me. I did not want to play his game. But he is relentless. And he knows how to get under my skin.”

“If your enlightenment wasn’t sufficient to totally resist his influence, don’t you seek something greater from life.”

“We all do. But it’s not like you think. When I did the journey with David, we went through all the same stages awareness that I applied in my ping pong match. In a way, we went much further. Adam simply wanted me to deny that part of myself. So his affect was totally negative.”

“But negative or positive, it’s all force in absolute terms.”

“Absolute force. Don’t you mean primary force.”

We both smile. But we say nothing more about our realization. We continue the discussion.

“OK, primary force. That force is more encompassing because it includes both the summit of your journey and the devastation felt during the match.”

“Don’t forget that I won.”

“Because the game allows you to close off that part of yourself.”

“You’re playing a psychological game with me. And it doesn’t really apply. It’s almost saying that your reasoning matters more than my connection with my lover because your exposition is full of a deeper understanding. But that assumes that you are my lover. You have none of that deep connection with me that fills in for the conceptual lack in my connection with David.”

“So you admit a lack.”

“That is all the making of your construct. But it has no relationship at all to the real thing between David and me. We feel it as something real. You are offering this model and then telling me that the model fails to satisfy my needs for a spiritual understanding.”

I do not want to retreat from my insight. “But I am offering way more than that. My model is all-encompassing. I am introducing language to talk about it. In discussion, it has a breadth that is as great to anything else in our experience.”

“What I am trying to tell you is that you haven’t mined that special part of my soul. Of our souls.”

“But you are pretending that you can’t express that side of yourself in language. But you are doing just that in our discussion. You are completely involved in the exposition.”

She smiles back at me. “This is an entertainment. For me. And primarily for you. You love the mental construct that you have put together. And you really want it to match what you’ve seen on the court. But the mental game is only one part of the training. You cannot match the spins that I put on the ball. You have not returned my serve.”

She continues, “In the personal realm, David and I have played our game. We have come to know each other sensually. You can observe all that from the outside. You can use your language to learn all the intricacies of our interchange. But none of that substitutes for the real thing.”

“But what makes it real is that it can integrate with everything else in our life. Everything else is imaginary.”

She has given too much of herself to our discussion. She is exhausted.

“I’m sorry to cut you off,” she says. “It is getting late, and I need to sleep.”

On Karolina’s view, I have reversed the order. I have attempted to abstract the geometry from the game. But it has not been an exercise. She has lived the spatial balances. I have only watched. And my watching lacks an element. I still believe that there is a mental component that goes beyond this surface geometry. That is why she was so provocative in her emails. I do not let on what has led me to this point in Utah. I needed to watch her first hand. I needed to see how she has applied her inner eye to the outer world. I have seen her poetry.

Just like Adam, I have been frustrated in my quest. There is a part of herself that she has withdrawn from her discussion. If she had not, she would have been an exhibitionist. I want to possess that part of her. But if she makes it available to me, she will offer it to any man. I can only watch from the outside.

The next day Karolina returns to her world. She makes her trek back to Rochester and school. I will continue to communicate by email. But she will not know that she has met me. She will continue to discourse of the Shepherd’s Watch.

On her return, Karolina complains about her world of reflection. She can feel it lead her



back and forth on its emotional roller-coaster. I wonder why her deep spiritual connection does not offer her a way to escape these influences.

Karolina answers me indirectly, "There is a place in my life where I am connected spiritually. And I wish that this connection applied to everything that I do. But I get worn down by the day to day grind. Studying, do essays, just trying to survive."

"That is what is so depressing. I know what I need. I am not there yet."

She has such confidence about her path. She is also willing to admit a side of herself that she did not show in Utah. She cannot let me know the full nature of her despair.

"It's not like you think. No person or no thing can fill that emptiness. That is something that I live with."

"But there seems to be another realization in that moment of despair that implies a greater influence on your being. That is even more pervasive than your spiritual connection."

"If I found that spirit, there would be somewhere else where I again found it lacking. That is the story of my life."

"You could give up on the spirit."

"You know that I feel that we have had this conversation before. Although I know that we haven't. It reminds me of something that I was saying to someone in Utah."

I will not reveal my identity, even in the characteristic imprint of our present discussion. She will not be able to reason back to who I am. I deftly move the conversation to its conclusion.

"Does the Shepherd have the insight necessary to maintain the spiritual intensity in all his interactions?"

"That is what he wants."

"But you strategically deny me that integral realization. You deny that you can be known except in a more haphazard way."

"I have friends. Close friends. I have my lover David. We share something deeply. That is the most that I can offer. That is what the Shepherd sees. That is why he fascinates me."

"But the Shepherd would be jealous of your connection with David. He would assume that you and he could see more provocatively into the chasm."

"He would not have to be jealous. I know that he can already see things with more depth. That is why I embrace him."

"David is not the Shepherd," I wonder.

"Not at all! The Shepherd is greater than David. I will never tell him that."

"David has nothing to worry about?"

"Nothing!"

I will continue my discussion with her another day. It is beginning to make sense.

Karolina is a student of Harris. He is a bit of a skeptic. He teaches Philosophy of Math. This is where she has developed her penchant for the analytical. For these exercises, she has transformed the self into a cipher, a design on the page. There is something mystical in the process. All contrary feelings, all thoughts that do not contribute to the mathematical dialogue are pushed to the side.

This is the style that influenced her in the ping pong game. She becomes the machine. Nothing that interferes with her play is allowed. This line of reasoning would seem to eliminate the spiritual as excessive. If the player didn't need such influence, she could get rid of it. But it

is the centerpiece of Karolina's exposition. I need to know how both are compatible. That is the basis for our next communication. I am ready to play.

I present her life as the roller-coaster ride. She feels the ups and downs. She is totally lost in the game. But the proprietor of the ride pockets the admission charge. His return grows over time while she plots the same path over and over again. Each high is met by a low. Each intense realization is met with an equally intense low.

I impress her with my logic. How will she respond?

"How do I learn to become the owner. Is that your question?"

"I guess that would assume that you want to run the amusement park. Once you see acquisition as the source of the game, doesn't that change your interest?"

"I'll admit that it does. But most people love amusement parks."

"Only for the short term. When the acquisitive urge take over, you can't earn fast enough from the amusement park. You want a better game."

"And what is that?"

"That is where spiritual enlightenment comes in."

"It seems like it would be just the opposite," she suggests.

"Forget it!"

"What does that mean?"

"In enlightenment, it appears that you subdue the highs and the lows of the game. But enlightenment is completely predicated on the domination of unitary high. It shuts out all the lows. How do you think that you can manage that? What would Harris say?"

"He would say that there has to be a contrary force."

"And that is the issue. It is all about the movement of these forces. And here it becomes aggressive."

"That goes back to the Shepherd. He notes the aggression so that he can bypass it."

"Or marshal it in an even more intense way. He does not want to give in. He sees the world as complete because it is complete for him. You might see this as spiritual. But it is entirely psychological."

"Wow!"

I leave her with that impression for now. I have to return to my writing. But she has seen the hole in her reasoning. That does not make her love David less. It only connects her to him more. What will the Shepherd think?

*I am so close to what I desire that no one can stand in my way. For a long time, I thought that this was a mental quest. Now I realize that it is physical. I must find her. I must let her know my secret. That is why I am here. That is the source of my journey.*

*I know that she is finally yielding to my appeals. It has been a long journey. In the beginning, I believed that my only way to achieve success was through force. I have gotten over this presumption. I have discovered the subtle laws of the universe. I have communicated them to her. She accepts my teaching.*

Karolina now lives behind the door. She has yielded to this intense power. She lets herself slip under its spell. In the night she can feel these forces work on her. She worships these feelings. She gives herself to physical pleasure.

It is all part of the same concentration that she brought to her victory in the game. This is

the formula that she has worked to communicate to me. She has realized that she only provided one part of the puzzle. But that has hardly affected her. She now continues her quest without such influence.

“If the physical seems so real but lacks a critical component of your spiritual journey, perhaps there is something physical that is more real.”

“You sound like you’re pushing drugs.”

“If there was a drug that you could take that makes you feel like god, would you take it?”

“Who’s to say that isn’t what I’m on?”

And that is the journey of the Shepherd. His inner states have this feeling of complete enlightenment. This gives him the power to transform the world.

I consider the other possibility. There is simply a belief of completeness. A belief in the spirit. He has used his imagination to piece together these bits of experience. This is his centaur, a man’s body imposed on that of a horse. He has simply combined elements that already exist into this weird hybrid. But it really implies nothing about the real world.

The Shepherd will not let go of his belief. It is as if Karolina has given him the justification that he lacks. She has bestowed an insight on him that he appears to lack.

When I challenge Karolina, she retreats to the refuge of her experience. She shows none of the bluster that she offered when I saw her proficiency at the table. What is happening?

“You are asking for too much. I can perform like a machine because I am not a machine.”

“But behind the closed doors, you perform automatically. You lose the critical sense that motivates all your other lessons.”

“That is how it has to be!”