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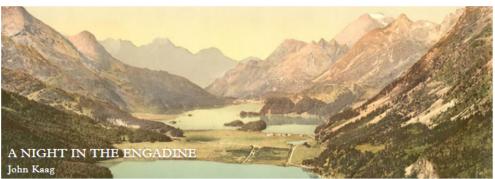
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The alpine valley of the Upper Engadine, stretches eight miles from the Maloja Pass, on the edge of the northeast Italian border, northeast, across three crystal-blue lakes – Sils, Silvaplana, and St Moritz – and terminates in the hotel-studded city of St Moritz, the mecca of the rich and famous. We weren't rich or famous, and we weren't going to St Moritz, but rather to its more modest sister town, Sils-Maria, the one-time home of the German iconoclast Friedrich Nietzsche. It was his place, perhaps his only place, in his words: 'my proper refuge and home.'

The car was quier. Our six year-old daughter Becca had fallen asleep, and Carol and I were alone with the lake, the mountains, and a blessed moment of calm. I'd fallen in love with her in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, a hidden place where we'd escaped two marriages that really deserved to die. The road construction ended and we picked up pace as we rolled toward Silvaplana. After the switchbacks of the Julier Pass at 7493 feet, the stretch between Silvaplana and Sils-Maria was a welcome relief. It curves gendy around the lake, which, as I remember it, was ruffled by the wind. But today, it was perfectly still, creating a perfect aquamarine table on which the mountains were firmly set. When the glaciers flowed through these valleys in ice ages, they excavated the land and over time, the water filled in the massive depressions that were created. How many rains, day after day, year after year, did it take to fill such a lake?

I caught sight of the wooded hills above Sils-Maria and, over the trees, the white turret of the Hotel Waldhaus. It had been sixteen years since I'd last visited Sils-Maria, or for that matter, thought about Nietzsche, and I had an uncanny sense of homecoming.

'Oh, my,' Carol shivered and let out a muffled gasp, 'God.'

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Nietzsche once lamented that, 'God is dead,' that we moderns had entered an age when belief in divine was next to impossible. On this day, God was alive and well in the Engadine: he snuck through clouds and emanated from the water and converged where the light met one's eyes. I couldn't see is from the car, but I knew what traced the edge of the road we were traveling: a walking path that I often frequented in my youth, the same one that carried Nietzsche to his Zarathustra. When he walked this trail, skirting the water, Nietzsche wrote that he frequently wept 'not sentimental tears, but tears of exultation.' When you read Nietzsche in a library or coffee shop, it is possible to mistinerpret this as hyperbole or the

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