

Lino Casu  
Lamb-like

For Carmen

The cutest chick in the world! The love  
of my life.

**Lino Casu**

## **Lamb-like**

A life between light and shadow

**Autofiction**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction - The city breathes shadows

The camera clicked, a soft, mechanical sound that blended into the background noise of the city. Neon lights flickered restlessly across the sidewalk, while raindrops hit the wet asphalt from metal canopies. The sky hung heavily and gray over the streets, which were crisscrossed by the shimmering light of the billboards. A dull thump came through a rusty door on a dark street corner, the deep bass of a club eating through the walls and merging with the drizzle. Jimmy pulled his hoodie lower over his face, keeping his head slightly down as his fingers unconsciously clutched the small USB stick in his jacket pocket. The metal was cool and smooth, a reassuring constant in a night that felt increasingly unstable.

He moved with the crowd, adapting to the rhythm of the city, becoming part of the restless stream of people hurrying in all directions as if there was an invisible beat that they followed. No one really looked at each other. The anonymity calmed him down - at least for the moment.

He knew that they were looking for him. Not the people around him, but the algorithms that had long since learned to read faces, recognize patterns and analyze movements. Machines hunted with an efficiency that was almost impossible to beat. But Jimmy knew how to disappear between the gaps. At least that's what he thought.

The rain made the city appear softer. Reflections drew distorted lines on the wet streets, as if they were remnants of another reality. Jimmy stopped briefly at a window and looked at his reflection. Tired eyes, dark shadows underneath, but still that flicker - a spark he had to keep.

A night from the past

It was December 2004, another all-nighter that he would remember for a long time.

Back then, most people still believed in the freedom of the internet. Emails were sent unencrypted, and privacy was taken for granted. But Jimmy had looked behind the fade, scoured the dark corners of the net, found the gaps in the system through which information leaked out before it was absorbed by companies and states.

He sat in his room, the only light coming from the screen. The keys clicked under his fingers, an endless stream of commands, algorithms, encrypted messages. A kind of dance, an invisible duel between him and the machines. Then, after hours of trial and error, it happened.

One click of a button.

A connection.

*Object: Bass Source Stream, msg: Connection succeeded.*

For a moment, he felt invincible. He was inside. But the system recognized him. The door slammed shut. At that moment, he knew he would never be able to do that again.

An echo that would never be repeated. A data stream that had become a ghost moment that had touched him.

Then came the silence.

No noise. No thoughts. Only emptiness. Back in the present.

Jimmy blinked and returned to the here and now.

The café was almost empty, only the humming of the coffee machine and the distant murmur of a news program disturbed the silence. The stale smell of coffee and smoke hung in the air. The waiter gave him a quick glance but said nothing.

Jimmy took a sip of the bitter, too-hot filter coffee. A television flickered in one corner. Polished panic professionally staged. The world was shattering but doing it in style.

His hands tapped quickly across the keyboard. Encrypted messages, digital traces, disguised identities. They called him paranoid, but it was the others who staggered through life with their heads down and smiling emojis. They didn't see what he saw. They didn't hear what he heard.

An engine outside. Jimmy didn't even flinch. He looked at the black surface of his coffee as if he could find an answer in it. Somewhere in the distance, a siren wailed. A scream, too far away to matter.

He knew it was time to move on. The rain had subsided, but the cold remained. It crept into his bones, like the memory of all the places he couldn't stay.

He paid in cash. Always in cash. The USB stick was pressing in his pocket - a small, silver key to a lock that had long since been replaced.

Outside at night, the city was an endless labyrinth of shadows and flickering light.

Jimmy went hiding.



## Chapter 2: The algorithm of escape

The night weighed heavily on him. Not just because of the tiredness, but because of the memories that repeated themselves like a broken script in an endless loop. A dark street, a flickering light, a noise behind him - always a step too late, always a shadow too close.

His fingers flew over the keyboard. Commands, sequences, codes - a language he had understood since he first saw a terminal as a child and realized that behind every command was a door just waiting to be opened.

Jimmy paused. His breathing was shallow, controlled. In the darkness of the motel room, time seemed to stand still for a moment. The room smelled of old smoke and cheap disinfectants. The flickering light hummed softly. The cursor blinked on the screen in front of him.

One last chance.

One last door.

*Bass Source Stream. Connection succeeded.*

Back then, it meant everything. Today was different. The doors closed in front of him, one after the other.

A knock made him freeze. Muffled, then louder. Not a polite gesture - a threat.

Christmas 2004: the city lay silent under a heavy blanket of snow. In another reality, twinkling lights hung in the windows, Christmas carols blared from overdriven radios. But for Jimmy, there was only the glow of the screen in front of him, the clicks of the keyboard, the adrenaline of a moment that would never return.

It was a fragile access point, unstable and risky. But then, after hours of trial and error, the perfect adaptation of the code, the message appeared on the screen:

*"Object: Bass Source Stream, msg: Connection succeeded."*

A moment of pure euphoria - and then the crash. The door slammed shut. The system had recognized him. What he had seen disappeared. His track was erased - or worse: marked.

The knocking got louder. Back in the present. No more

hesitation now. No memory. Only escape.

Jimmy took a deep breath, forcing himself to calm his pulse. He reached into his rucksack and pulled out the worn USB stick - his last digital key. Then he heard it. A soft click. No more knocking. A lock pick.

No more time.

In a single movement, he grabbed the laptop, tore open the window and stepped out into the icy night. Beneath him was a rusty metal walkway, slippery from the rain. Not a perfect escape, but adaptation was the key to survival.

The door flew open. A dark figure rushed into the room. Jimmy didn't see them - he was already on his way downstairs. Down in the alley, spotlights flickered through the night. Voices reflected between the walls. Jimmy ducked behind a dumpster and pulled his hood low over his head. Time stood still. His heartbeat thundered in his ears.

He pushed the laptop aside and reached for his rucksack. A crumpled card, fake IDs, a few stolen credit cards. And the flash drive. His only way out.

Knock. Knock. Then a third time - harder, more demanding.

Jimmy had the feeling that he had experienced the whole thing before. He knew that it wasn't just about speed. It was about the next step. So he did the only thing left to do: he jumped up, pulled the window open wider and climbed out.

His foot found purchase on the ledge. The rain made everything slippery.

Stim- men behind him, a dull thud against the door.

He was not allowed to look back.

Not now.

The algorithm of escape had begun.

Jimmy's hands cling to the rusty fire escape. The rain has made the metal slippery, and his shoes barely have a grip. Below him, the clanging of the door as it opens echoes through the narrow alley. Voices, muffled, frantic. They are here. He pulls himself up, breathing shallowly, controlled. Any sound could give him away. One movement too many, one wrong step, and he ends up exactly where they want him.

The algorithm of his life runs in loops. Escape. Hide. Attack. Escape again. Not static code, but a dynamic script that adapts, evolves - always one step ahead until it is no longer. Once at the top, he crawls onto the roof of a dilapidated warehouse. Shards of glass crunch under his knees. The wind whistles through the broken window frames, somewhere an old tarpaulin flutters like the pale echo of a forgotten existence. Jimmy's gaze wanders over the endless sea of neon lights and dirty facades,

rippling alleyways. The city pulsates, lives at a pace he can understand. His muscles tremble from the exertion. He leans against an old ventilation shaft, pressing a hand against his ribs. No pain, but the adrenaline floods his senses.

he reached the bottom of the alley; the darkness drew closer around him. The narrow canyons of houses cast deep shadows in which the silhouettes were distorted, while the faint light from the few lanterns reflected on the wet cobblestones. The rain had already subsided, but the air still smelled damp, permeated by the smell of old concrete, garbage and a trace of stale smoke drifting out of an open window somewhere.

Jimmy pressed himself tightly against the cold brick wall of a warehouse and forced himself to calm down. His fingers felt clammy, adrenaline pulsing quietly through his veins, but he knew that any careless step could betray him. There was no sound except the distant rattle of a train and the occasional drip of rainwater from the overhanging rooftops onto the asphalt. And then he heard it.

Two men moved through the alley. Their steps were not hurried, not searching, but controlled and purposeful. Jimmy couldn't see them, but he knew they were there. Their presence was like an electric tingle in the air, a fine vibration that traveled through the narrow space. Then a voice dropped.

"He's around here somewhere."

The words were not whispered, but neither were they spoken unnecessarily loudly. The voice was calm, clear and completely free of uncertainty. There was no trace of nervousness or impatience in it, just an established fact.

Jimmy dared not move as he watched a dark figure appear at the edge of his field of vision. The man wore dark clothing, the material of his coat shimmering slightly as if reflecting the sparse light sources in the alley. In his right hand, he held a small usb device with a faint glow running through it. It looked like a scanner or a detector, perhaps a thermal imaging sensor.

His companion stood a few steps away and seemed to be concentrating on something else. While one was looking down, scanning the surroundings and working with the device, the other was looking up, as if sensing something invisible to the naked eye.

Jimmy held his breath. He felt his muscles tense involuntarily, ready to react to any change in his surroundings. The men seemed to have a system, a routine that played out like a perfectly rehearsed sequence. Without another word, they parted, each moving in a different direction. It was not aimless wandering, not an uncoordinated search of the surroundings. It was a deliberate division, a strategy aimed at increasing their radius and cutting off any possible escape route. They knew he was there. They just didn't know exactly where he was.

Jimmy's thoughts were racing as he waited in the darkness. He had to decide, but every option that crossed his mind seemed full of risks. He couldn't make a mistake. His gaze slid across the alley, searching for possibilities, for a detail that could give him an advantage. Time was running against him, and he knew that he would not remain undetected for long.

He took a deep breath and forced himself to suppress the rising panic. Nothing was lost yet. But he had to act - now.

He pulls out his smartphone. A few swipes. A command runs through the network. Somewhere at the other end of the city, deep in the branching server farms, encrypted data packets are released from their slumber. A terminal wakes up. And then - power failure.

A city block plunges into darkness. The neon lights go out. The streetlamps die. Only a few weak generators fight against the abrupt silence. Chaos. Honking cars. Shouting. An alarm goes off.

Jimmy seizes the opportunity.

He slides over the roof, grabs the gutter and carefully drops down one floor. The city is now a different code. A matrix of shadows and possibilities. And he has to rewrite it again in order to survive.

### **Chapter 3: The night eats colors**

On another of those endless, sleepless nights, he had packed his small bag again and gone out into the darkness. The city was different at this time of night. The people who filled it during the day with their noise, their endless paths and their bustle had disappeared, had their places, their conversations and worries behind them. The streets lay empty and wide before him, glistening with the light of the lanterns that made the wet pavement shine like liquid gold. The wind blew through the narrow alleyways, carrying the smell of stale rain, distant smoke and the sweet, indeterminable scent of some flower blooming secretly. It was a time when the city shed its mask, when it became something more real, a raw, untouched framework of concrete and steel, revealed only to those who stayed up long enough to see it.

He loved these hours back then. He was an owl, not yet a raven, a night person by conviction and not by habit. Darkness was not a place to hide, but a space that expanded, a space in which he felt light, in which he could breathe. While others slept, life began for him. The world was quieter, but not lifeless - it pulsed in a different way.

Jimmy pulled up the collar of his jacket as he quickly walked through the wet streets. The rain dripped from the metal overhangs, reflected in the glass facades of the banks and bathed the skyline in a distorted kaleidoscope of light and shadow. The ECB loomed over the scene like a monolithic sentinel - cold, unapproachable. The night felt like a repetition. A loop that he couldn't break out of. The words echoed in his head:

**"The repetition, of the repetition!"**

He lowered his gaze and into the entrance to the subway. The city hummed in the underground shafts, while the air smelled of oil, old train tracks and stale damp. The neon lights cast distorted reflections on the damp tiles. No one looked at each other. A rule that Jimmy understood.

He took the next train to the main station. The door hissed shut behind him and for a moment he felt safe. The rattling of the rails him, a recurring rhythm, almost soothing. But his instinct remained alert. He could not afford to become careless. It was December 24, 2004, a night that had burned itself into his memory, not because of the lights in the windows or the smell of hot food wafting into the cold from other people's homes, but because of a single, fleeting moment that had stuck with him forever. He had made it. The proof was in front of him, undeniable, clear, a signal that had flowed through the room like a heartbeat in silence. But while the realization swept through him, while his insides filled with triumph for a split second, he also knew with terrifying clarity that it had been the last time. Whatever he had done, whatever had made this moment possible - it would never happen again.

Then came the void. A sudden crack in reality, as if the world had frozen for a breath. The screen in front of him hummed softly, the light from the lamp cast flickering shadows on the wall, but everything suddenly seemed meaningless. The room around him was still there, the furniture, the soft crackling of the heating, the rain beating on the windowpane outside - but inside there was only silence. A complete absence of everything. No thoughts, no feelings, just a vacuum that held him, enveloping him like a wave that pulled him down. And then, when time seemed to start again, he held the phone in his hand. He glanced at the display, saw the name, hesitated.



He knew what was going to happen. Seconds later, the busy signal sounded. Luigi had pushed him away again.

Now he was on the train to Frankfurt. If no one was going to wish him a happy birthday, he was going to give himself the edge in Spacebreaks. The train rattled monotonously along the tracks while he sat motionless in his seat and stared out of the steamed-up window into the darkness. The lights of the passing towns blurred into a formless glow, while his thoughts were lost in the same aimless movement in which the landscape outside dissolved. It was his birthday, but no one had wished him happy birthday. No messages, no phone calls, not even a fleeting "Happy birthday". It was as if the day was meaningless, just another leaf silently lost in the flow of time. But if nobody paid any attention to him, if his own existence barely existed for the rest of the world, then he at least wanted to remind himself that he still felt. And that meant space breaks. Excess, lights, bass, disappearing into the music.

When the train pulled into Frankfurt Central Station, the city was already on the move, even if it was a different kind of life. Not the hustle and bustle of the daytime, but the restless drive of those who had nowhere to go but were still on the move. He got out, pulled up the collar of his jacket and let himself drift with the crowd, avoiding the hurried businessmen rolling their suitcases across the floor with tired faces and the travelers looking for some direction on the display boards. The noise of loudspeaker announcements mingled with the choppy conversations of strangers as the city swallowed him, as it always did. Then, as he walked away from the station, his gaze on something. high, strangely out of place, almost like a surreal guardian over the scenery, it stood there: the oversized green traffic light man. A symbol that had no meaning, except that it had burned itself deep into his memory.

He knew it wasn't far from here. His breath formed small, white clouds that dissolved in the wind while the city vibrated - pulsating, busy, indifferent. No one noticed him, no one cared why he was here. Frankfurt was like a giant machine that ran around the clock, regardless of its parts.

He knew the way. From here, all he had to do was follow the main road.

With every step, the surroundings grew darker, the shiny facades of banks and department stores gave way to gray walls, the faceless backs of buildings where no one worked anymore, their windows covered in graffiti. The air smelled of cold cigarette smoke, of asphalt, of beer that someone had carelessly poured over the curb.

Then he heard it.

The dull roar, the deep, throbbing thump of the bass that vibrated through the floor and spread through his bones. It is still a long way off, but he could already feel it.

And then he saw it.

On the wall to his left, on the wall by the entrance, was scrawled very succinctly: "**milchsack**".

He was right here.

He stepped through the bars, past broken windows, the smell of cold concrete and smoke in his nose. Inside, shadows swayed in the pale light. The bass was a living thing, pulsing through the bodies of the dancers. An upside-down Christmas tree hung from the ceiling.

To some, this may have seemed bizarre. But for someone who had his birthday on the eighth and had celebrated almost every one of his birthdays alone, there was something delightful about it.

The bass pulsed through the room, a constant wave of pressure and vibration that rippled through his body, settling in his bones, in his chest. He took a sip from the cold bottle in his hand, feeling the bitter, slightly stale beer on his tongue as he pushed his way through the crowd. The music enveloped him, rendering everything else meaningless.

He let his gaze glide over the room, over the distorted movements of the people who lost themselves in the beat, over the shadows dancing on the walls, over the old, rough stonework that had long known more stories than anyone here could imagine. He felt a memory quietly creeping up on him, an image that was not quite tangible.

He had here as a child, it flashed through his mind.

The idea was strange, almost absurd. He couldn't remember exactly when he couldn't hold on to the feeling. It was there and yet it was again immediately, like an old photograph that had been faded by too many years.

The memory slipped out of his hands, seeped away somewhere in the depths of his consciousness.

He would have loved to experience that evening again. But that's another story.

The bass was still echoing in Jimmy's bones when he left the paint factory. The music had been with him all evening, and even now, as he crossed the threshold into the street, he could feel the dull vibration in

his body, as if it was settling in his veins. Outside, it was strangely quiet, almost unnatural, as if the city had held its breath. The air was damp and heavy, and the darkness at the streets seemed to him like an inert fabric. Only the distant hum of the streetlights and the occasional crunch of footsteps on wet asphalt broke the silence, like a faint echo that always died down and then reappeared.

Jimmy was tired, not just physically, but mentally too. The alcohol hummed softly in his head; a gentle but persistent tingling that wouldn't let him rest. It hadn't enough really distracted him, not enough to banish the thoughts that moved around in his head like shadows on the walls. He could feel the tiredness growing inside him, but he also knew that he wasn't ready to go home. Not yet. Something was holding him back; a kind of inner urge kept him drifting through the streets as if he were looking for something without knowing what it was.

His gaze wandered through the alley as he strolled aimlessly through the city. The buildings on either side of him looked like silent witnesses, their windows dark and impenetrable, as if they had swallowed up all the secrets of the night. Suddenly his gaze caught on to something - a small, darkened pub that seemed somehow wedged between two derelict buildings. It seemed almost invisible, as if it had deliberately hidden itself from the eyes of the world. Above the door was written in faded Cyrillic letters: "Kalinka". The name sounded strange and familiar at the same time, as if it told a story that Jimmy didn't know but nevertheless sensed.

Jimmy hesitated. A Russian pub, in the middle of the night, in the middle of Frankfurt? He liked the idea, although he couldn't say exactly why. Maybe it was the idea of entering a place that seemed so far removed from everything he knew. Or maybe it was just

The desire to linger a little longer in the night before he was on his way home. He felt a quiet curiosity rising in him, and before he could convince himself that it wasn't a good idea, he had already opened the door and stepped inside.

Inside, it smelled of cold smoke, cheap vodka and deep-fried meat. The smell was intense, almost overpowering, and yet somehow comforting, like a familiar scent from another world. The light was warm but subdued, as if it didn't want anyone to look too closely. It seemed as if the pub wanted to keep its secrets, as if it would only reveal as much as was necessary to keep the customers, but no more. A few men sat at the bar, their voices deep and rough, with that Russian accent that reminded them of heavy winters and broken promises. In one corner, a radio played a soft tune that made Jimmy think of old Soviet movies, black and white images and long forgotten stories.

Jimmy sat down at a small table by the window, not too close to the other guests, but not so far away that it was noticeable. He ordered a schnitzel and a beer, more out of habit than hunger. The food came quickly, and he began to eat, his thoughts still revolving around the strange atmosphere of the place.

But then he heard it.  
Two tables away.

A rough, smoky voice, Russian accent, the words hard and choppy, as if they were coming from the depths of a cold winter. A second voice, German, but in a tone that rushed like a shiver down Jimmy's spine. Something about it was ... wrong. It wasn't just the content of their words, but the way they spoke, as if they were hiding something, something that wasn't meant for foreign ears.

"We've had him on our radar for a long time."

Jimmy froze for a moment. His fingers twitched slightly, as if his body was reacting instinctively to the threat he sensed in those words. Then he forced himself to continue looking at his food, to take the first bite as if nothing had happened. But he couldn't stop his heart from beating faster, his breathing from becoming shallower. He could feel the tension growing inside him, like an invisible pressure surrounding him.

"When?" asked the Russian, his voice low and menacing.

"Soon. We'll let him believe a little safer."

Jimmy chewed slowly, too slowly, as if each bite took an eternity. He could feel his own heart beating loud and thudding against his ribs, as if it were trying to escape his chest. His mind raced, but he forced himself to calm down. It wasn't his problem. It was none of his business. But his instincts told him he was better off not being here, that he had gotten himself into something he didn't understand.

"And if he crosses?"

The German laughed softly, a laugh that was not cheerful, but cold and calculating. It was the laugh of someone who knew no scruples, someone who was prepared to do anything to achieve his goal.

"Then we'll do it the old-fashioned way."

Jimmy had heard enough. He quietly put down his cutlery, took a last sip of beer and reached for his jacket. He moved slowly, not hastily, because he knew that haste attracted attention. If you were hasty, you stood out, and that was the last thing he wanted. He stood up and moved towards the door, trying not to look, not to

hear. The two men paid no attention to him. Or pretended to. Outside, he took a deep breath, as if trying to calm the oppressive atmosphere of the pub behind him. The night had suddenly become colder, and the wind was icy on his face. He could the tension slowly falling away from him, but he also knew that he had heard something he shouldn't have. Something that would haunt him for a long time to come.

Jimmy pulled the door of the small pub shut behind him and let the damp night air fill his lungs. He probably should have finished the last bite, but his stomach was suddenly tight. As he walked past the bar, he handed the waiter a crumpled fifty euro. The man, a burly guy with tired eyes, had barely looked, had gone to the till with a routine motion to give change - but Jimmy had already been on his way out.

Now he was standing on the sidewalk, hastily pulling a cigarette out of his jacket pocket and holding it with slightly trembling fingers. The nicotine scratched his throat pleasantly as he forced himself to take a moment's rest in the darkness. He turned slowly to the side, letting his gaze wander through the yellowish windows of the pub. The glass was old, slightly smudged and difficult to see through due to the reflection of the streetlights, but he could make out enough.

The two men were still sitting at their table, their heads slightly tilted together, their postures relaxed, too relaxed. The German was leaning back and pushing a small glass to one side, while the Russian seemed to be responding to something with a brief nod of his head. Jimmy memorized the faces. Not that he planned to see them again, but if he did, he would be prepared. The German was in his mid-fifties, a square face, high cheekbones and a smile that didn't reach his eyes. His hair was short

Shorn, neat, but styled with no apparent effort. A man who was used to being efficient. The Russian looked younger, but his face had a hardness that betrayed his age. His eyes were narrow, his gaze sharp. A soldier, perhaps. Or something similar.

Jimmy inhaled deeply, the smoke filling his lungs as he walked slowly away from the pub. Every step felt controlled, but his mind was racing.

Who did they mean?

It could be about anyone. Things happened all the time in this city that nobody was supposed to know about. Maybe he had just stumbled into this conversation by chance. Maybe it meant nothing.

But his instinct told him that he was not mistaken.

He would not fast forget the name of this medium-weight bug. The last time he had met him in front of the parliament building, it had been an encounter that burned itself into his memory. The man had warned him urgently, in a voice that had nothing to do with a threat, but with an incontrovertible fact:

*"Just shut your mouth. Pay attention. You have no idea. I'm a steamroller."*

There were uncomfortable people of every color. But these two in the pub, like the bug, were among the most unpalatable. This was not how he had imagined his evening exit. The taste of vodka and smoke still lingered on his tongue, the bass from the club vibrated in his bones - and yet there was nothing of the numbing lightness of the moment. Now it was just a



dull echo, overlaid by a realization that he didn't like. He wasn't just annoyed about the lost bite. The schnitzel really hadn't been bad. Crispy, with just the right amount of fat and the tangy pilsner. A successful combination, if he hadn't had to get up and leave. But with these two unpalatable guys, it was time to disappear quietly and inconspicuously.

He only stopped briefly at a cigarette machine, slipped a few coins through the slot and paid in cash, not by card. The packet fell out with a thud as he glanced over his shoulder to make sure no one was following him.

Then he walked. Not in a hurry, not running - just at the unobtrusive pace of a man wanted nothing more than to let the night behind him. He could have taken the subway. Two stops, no more. But he knew that this kind of person didn't like it when someone moved away from them before they had decided whether they still needed him. So, he walked all the way to the station. The city was almost deserted at this time of day. The streets shone with rain, the light from the lanterns cast pale, distorted reflections on the asphalt. No wind, just silence. In the windows of the few open bars, he saw a few faces, dark figures hiding behind steaming glass, as he had done just minutes ago.

He hold a cigarette. The lighter clicked; the smoke rose into the cold air. At least a little distance from the before he reappeared on the radar.

He boarded the S-Bahn in West. The neon lights flickered across the dark platform as he climbed into the carriage with heavy legs. The doors closed with a hissing sound and the train began to move. Today he will be on a detour. He needed

not only distance from the pub, but also time to get rid of the lump in his stomach - that unpleasant mix of too much alcohol, too little sleep and the nagging feeling that he had just had something he shouldn't have.

The suburban train was empty. Not a single passenger, just his own reflection looking back at him from the opposite window. A tired, pale face with shadows under his eyes. The train rattled through the night, past the empty stations that lay like ghost stations under the pale light of the lanterns.

He got off the train in Flörsheim. The cold air hit him in the face as he walked down the steps and was moving. The path over the bridge stretched like chewing gum. Every step became heavier, as if the ground beneath him had turned into an inert mass that wanted to pull him in deeper with every meter. The wind whistled across the river, making the water ripple in the darkness. His hands buried themselves in his pockets, the lighter rattling against the cigarette packet. His legs burned, but he forced himself on. The city was silent, almost ghostly. Only the distant roar of the highway reminded him that somewhere out there the world was still going on.

When he finally reached his neighborhood, his body was like it was put through a meat grinder. Every muscle screamed for rest, but every step seemed to take another kilometer. The front door appeared before him like salvation, and with the last of his strength he closed it behind him. He dropped into bed, dressed as he was. But before he closed his eyes, he was hit by an acrid smell.

"Shit!"

Hackis. His second cat. That bastard had pissed right on his pillow again.

Jimmy closed his eyes and took a deep breath as the rage rushed through him like a hot wave. He would have liked to throw the beast out of the window, but instead he peeled himself out of bed with tired movements, tore off the sheet and flung it into the laundry basket.

His limbs felt like he lead as he stood up the bed, shook out the comforter and pulled a clean pillow out of the wardrobe. The whole procedure took what felt like an eternity, but once he was finally done, he knew he couldn't just crawl back under the covers. The smell was still lingering in his nose. So off he went into the bathtub.

The water was hot. So hot that it tingled unpleasantly on his skin at first, but he didn't move. He leaned his head back and let the steam envelop his senses until the tension in his neck slowly dissipated. Actually, he only wanted to stay for a moment. Wash his face, maybe loosen his shoulders. But then his eyelids became heavy. And as they slowly closed, he remembered.

The story of his grandpa.

Jimmy had never met his grandfather. To him, the man was just a figure from his mother's stories, a shadow from a bygone era that slowly took shape through her words. When she spoke of him, with a mixture of respect and a kind of quiet admiration, he had the feeling that he was living a little further on. His grandfather was a modern man, as she said, ahead of his time, cosmopolitan and calm, someone who didn't overreact so quickly. He was the type of man who took things in his stride, even when his uncle suddenly brought strangers home at night. Even then, he remained calm and even cooked for them. But there was one story in particular that stuck in Jimmys mind, a story that showed that even his

Grandfather, as level-headed as he usually was, was capable of decisive action in moments of danger.

Once, his mother had told him, his uncle had fallen asleep in the bath after a night of drinking. It was the middle of the night and everyone in the house was asleep, except for his grandfather, who was woken by a strange noise. He was immediately alarmed and recognized the danger - his son could be drowning. Without hesitation, he kicked the bathroom door. Jimmy could picture the scene vividly: his grandparents' old apartment, the bright splintering of wood as the door gave way under the force of the kick, the shock on the faces of everyone involved when they found his uncle in the bath, half unconscious but uninjured. It was a moment in which his grandfather, who was usually so thoughtful and calm, had acted instinctively without hesitation when he saw imminent danger.

Jimmy smiled at the thought, but it was a tired, exhausted smile. The memory of that story warmed him for a moment, like a last spark of something long gone. But the tiredness was stronger. It crept into his limbs, settled heavily on his shoulders and he gave to the tiredness. His breathing became calmer, more even, as if his body was finally giving in to exhaustion. The water was still warm. That would be very different when he woke up. His eyes closed quietly.

## Chapter 4: Taste of smoke and decisions

Jimmy was sitting on the terrace, the morning sun casting slanting light on the steaming latte in front of him. The air was cool, but not unpleasant. Autumn had already its first traces, damp leaves stuck to the wood of the table, and somewhere the wind rustled through the thinning trees. He was tired, not only physically, but also in a way that felt deeper.

His fingers stroked *Le Monde diplomatique*, which he had habitually opened at the breakfast table. But the letters blurred before his eyes, his head was too full of the remnants of the previous night. Next to him, like every morning, his parents - immersed in their puzzles. Sudoku, crossword puzzles, the usual ceremonial.

He sipped his coffee, the warmth was good, but it couldn't dispel the numb feeling inside him.

"Stomach is full, head is empty."

The sentence slipped unconsciously over his lips, a sober conclusion to the morning. His mother looked up briefly from her puzzle but said nothing.

Jimmy leaned back, sucked in the smoke from his cigarette and let it out slowly. His gaze fell on the ashtray in front of him, half-filled with the remnants of past hours. Thoughts drifted lazily around in his head, confused and incomprehensible.

"Why is everything so strange?" he thought. "So transparent and yet cloudy?"

He played with the filter of the cigarette between his fingers, looking at the glowing end as if it could give him an answer. The night still hung in his bones. The smoke in the pub, the words of the two men, the feeling that he had fallen in somewhere he didn't belong.

And then there was something else. Something that he suddenly became fully aware of at that very moment.

At that moment, he had "actually" stopped smoking weed. At least he had decided to. The decision had not been planned but had quietly taken root in him. A decision that hadn't come from a single realization, but gradually letting everything that surrounded him sink in. Too much dirt. Too much mire.

*"If you only deal with things like that, all you get is gray and brown sauce comes out of it."*

A friend had once said that to him, and today he knew exactly what she meant. He flicked off the ashes and turned the newspaper back in front of him. He read the first line that caught his eye.

*"The imagination is heated to a very high temperature in the body furnace until everything possible is believed and everything previously impossible is done."*

He read the sentence again, let it sink in. Believed in all sorts of things. Done the impossible. At the top of the page was the inscription:

*"The word disguised as flesh."*

Elfriede Jelinek on language, prizes and imagination.

Jimmy snorted softly, not even annoyed, just tired. Language could shape everything, move people, create worlds - and yet, in the end, he sat here on his terrace, a newspaper in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and wondered why his head was still so empty.

He had long since inhaled the smoke, but he didn't feel any lighter.

"Do you love me?" he murmured, looking at the ashtray.

The words seemed childish to him, but they had strange logic. So much of what had once held him was no longer there. Perhaps he just wanted to know if at least the cigarette was still loyal to him.

He took the last puff, pushed the stub into the ashtray and stood up.

It was enough.

He took the empty coffee cup and went back inside. His parents looked up briefly, then back at their puzzles. It was as if nothing had ever happened.

Jimmy himself a second cup. Today was a new day. Maybe it was time to do it differently. Jimmy swirled the spoon in his coffee cup while he watched his mother asking his father a question from the crossword puzzle. Their voices sounded familiar, calm, like any other morning. And yet everything inside him was in turmoil.

The memories were not welcome, they simply assaulted him. Without warning, without logic, just there, like a badly edited movie that played itself.

His mother had often talked about her time in the shared flat, about those dark years, which she now used as a cautionary tale. Whenever he didn't want to be lectured, whenever he thought she was exaggerating. Her stories seemed to him like distorted memories, sometimes scary, sometimes overdramatized. But were they really? How often had he contradicted her, only to experience similar things?

He could so many conversations, heated discussions with his father, whose face always took on an unhealthy blush, as if he couldn't stand his son contradicting him. The conviction that there was only one right way, that Jimmy would eventually understand how the world really worked - all this always resonated in his father's words. And yet he knew that it wasn't that simple.

He thought of the endless after-parties, the smoky apartments with their broken sofas, the people who sometimes behaved as if they were completely detached from reality. He remembered the kick he got in the chest one night just like that, because a guy was on speed and had to get rid of his excess energy somewhere. It had had nothing to do with him. Just bad luck. In the wrong place at the wrong time.

And then there was night in the puddle. That night he 't found his way home. The night when someone had simply left him lying there as if he was just ballast. He hadn't even put up a fight, he had been too exhausted, too stunned to protest. He had only woken up hours later, half-soaked, half-frozen, while the city around him had already started the next day. His fingers closed tighter around the coffee cup.

The memories wouldn't let go.



There were conversations with one of his former dealers, who told proudly about his weapons training in the forest as if it were the most normal thing in the world. The story had been nothing more than a backdrop for his own ego, for the idea that he belonged to something bigger than just the shabby apartments where he sold his wares. Jimmy had always known that he shouldn't take any of it seriously - the burnt those stories left on him had remained.

He thought of his cousin, who was chased into a psychosis after a long night at the *Omen*. Of those people who knew exactly what they were doing when they slipped her LSD while she was coming down from the pills. Her fear, her confusion as she looked through the bathroom mirror sprayed with shaving foam while others drew lines on her parents' antique mirror.

And then there was the son of the juvenile court judge. The same man his mother praised to this day because he "passed such fair sentences". But he knew it better. He knew that the judge was only so well informed because his own son was the biggest dealer in the neighborhood. He knew them all. It was the son who supplied them all, who kept the city moving. And the father? The judge who had always kicked him out? Of course, the judge had known too.

Jimmy rubbed his forehead. The past was everywhere, a chaos of fragments that formed a dark mosaic in his head. He looked at his parents again. They seemed to live in a different world, a world in which crossword puzzles and Sudoku were the most pressing questions of the day. A world that was so far removed from all the scenes that were racing through his head. He took a deep breath.

My stomach was full. The head was anything but empty.

## Chapter 5: A touch of revolution

Jimmy was sitting in one of the back rows of the lecture hall, his legs on the table in front of him, his hands clasped behind his head. In front of him was a professor who was talking in a passionate voice about absurd math - a subject Jimmy had discovered by chance one day when he had simply walked into the wrong lecture hall. It was a lecture that had nothing to do with his official teaching degree, but it fascinated him. It wasn't about formulas that had to be, but about ideas that pushed the boundaries of thought. It was a world where logic and absurdity went hand in hand, and Jimmy felt alive again for the first time in a long time.

Actually, he should have been in a compulsory lecture for his teacher training course, but that had long since become a minor matter. His studies had been a compromise, a concession to his mother, who had persuaded him to study to become a teacher because she was firmly convinced that he would have no future studying computer science alone.

"You need something solid," she had said, and Jimmy had given in, as he often did. But now that he was in the middle of the semester, he felt like a stranger in his own academic career. He had missed the introductory phase because he had been ill, and at a university as big as Frankfurt it was easy to get lost. So, he had simply started attending lectures that interested him - regardless of whether they had anything to do with his studies or not. It was a time when you could still say "study" without it sounding like a tight schedule in which you churned out homework like an assembly line. Jimmy enjoyed this freedom, even though he knew it wouldn't last forever. He attended lectures on philosophy, psychology, mathematics, the history of revolutions, the sociology of power - anything that broadened his horizons. But hardly any of the lectures were really compulsory.

Jimmy wasn't really active in the Asta, not in the strict sense. He didn't hold an office, nor did he regularly attend meetings. But the semester ticket, that little piece of paper that suddenly opened the doors to the whole of Hessen for him, changed everything. It was as if he had been given a key to a new world - a world that extended far beyond the borders of Frankfurt. And Jimmy used it as often as he could.

It was a time of upheaval, not just for Jimmy, but for the entire university. The tower where his mother had once studied was to be demolished and the social sciences were to move into the former CIA building. At the same time, the semester ticket was being negotiated, an issue that caused an uproar among the students. For Jimmy, it was the start of something new, something that shook him out of his lethargy.

The first time he took part in a protest march, he was nervous. The route was actually inconsequential, along a main road that promised nothing special. It was only when the crowd approached the stock exchange that Jimmy suddenly felt an impulse that he 't suppress. A police car had just turned left, and at that moment he shouted loudly: "Come on, let's go to the stock exchange!". It was as if he had struck a nerve. The crowd moved like a single organism, fleeing the police escort, towards the stock exchange building. Jimmy could hardly believe what he was unleashing. The students stormed the building where the IHK exams were held and even occupied the roof. It was a chaotic, but somehow liberating moment. Jimmy stood in the middle of the action, breathing in the breath of revolt that was in the air. And then, as if by a miracle, a short time later the semester ticket was introduced for the whole of Hesse. It was a victory that gave Jimmy the feeling that change was possible, that you could make a difference if you shouted loud enough.

The time that followed was characterized by constant rail travel. Trains became his temporary living rooms, stations the hubs of new adventures. He traveled to Marburg, where the narrow streets and medieval atmosphere reminded him of another time. To Darmstadt, where the Technical University radiated a completely different energy - more sober, but somehow also fascinating. To Kassel, where the Documenta had just left its mark, and the city vibrated with art and discussion. And then there were the smaller towns that he would never have visited otherwise: Giessen, Fulda, Wiesbaden. Each place had its own history, its own dynamic, and Jimmy immersed himself as if he were on a voyage of discovery.

It was a time of parties, spontaneous encounters and networking across Hessen. Jimmy met people from a wide variety of universities and training professions - prospective teachers who grumbled about the system, mechanical engineering students who secretly wrote poems, art students who saw the world through their cameras and trainees who dreamed of a better working world. Everyone had a new perspective, and Jimmy soaked it all up like a sponge. The nights were long, often ending in smoky living rooms, on park benches or on crowded trains that somehow brought them back to Frankfurt. It was a time when the boundaries between day and night blurred, when the world became bigger and smaller at the same time. For the first time, Jimmy felt truly alive, as if he was only now discovering the world - not through books or lectures, but through the people he met and the stories they told.

But despite all these new experiences, a part of Jimmy remained restless.

Again and again, pangs of conscience crept into his head because of his teaching degree, because of his parents' expectations, the question of how much longer he could go on like this. His mother, a teacher herself,

had repeatedly reminded him that he needed "something solid", and Jimmy knew that he would have to return to this reality at some point. But not now. Not yet.

One evening, Jimmy was sitting on a crowded train to Frankfurt, his legs on the seat opposite, his hands clasped behind his head. Outside, the lights of the suburbs flashed by and he thought of all the people he had met over the last few weeks. It as if he had learned a new language, a language that consisted of laughter, discussion and sometimes silence. He sensed that he was part of something bigger, even if he couldn't say exactly what it was.

As the train into Frankfurt Central Station, Jimmy smiled. The revolution he sometimes dreamed of may not have been tangible, but it was there - in the little moments, in the encounters, in the freedom that came with the semester ticket. It was the beginning of a wonderful time, a time when everything seemed possible. And Jimmy was ready to live it to the full.

But deep inside him there was also quiet uncertainty. How long would this freedom last? And what would come afterwards? But for the moment, he pushed these thoughts aside. He stood up, shouldered his rucksack and walked out into the Frankfurt night, ready for the next adventure.

## Chapter 6: Angel of the night

This time the party took place in an abandoned tower block, somewhere in a corner of the city that nobody really paid attention to anymore. Jimmy had gotten the address in a roundabout way - a passing reference in a WhatsApp group, a few blurry photos that aroused his curiosity. When he arrived, the building was inconspicuous from the outside, almost ghostly in its silence. The windows were dark, the walls covered in graffiti, and the front door stood slightly open, as if inviting him to enter. Somewhere on the third or fourth floor, the system had been set up, and the muffled thump of the bass penetrated down through the empty floors, as if the building itself were coming to life.

Jimmy climbed the stairs, every step echoing in the empty shaft. The air smelled of dust, paint and a hint of mold, but also of freedom - freedom that only exists in places like this. When he entered the room, he was surprised at how small the group was. Perhaps only 30 or 50 people, most of whom knew each other, but there were also a few new faces. The atmosphere was relaxed, almost peaceful, as if everyone here had some kind of unspoken agreement: Here, within these four walls, there were no rules, no expectations, just the moment.

A beer cost three euros, a Coke one euro fifty. Jimmy smiled when he heard that. It was a fair price, not overpriced, but not too cheap either, as if to say: "We're not commercial here, but we're not naive either." He bought himself a beer, opened the bottle and leaned against one of the bare walls. The setting of the party was somehow dystopian, but in a way that fascinated him. The walls were covered in graffiti, the ceiling lights were missing, and the light came from a few LED strips stuck wildly to the walls.

It felt as if he had landed in the middle of a role-playing game like *Shadowrun* - worn out, yet somehow futuristic.

The music, a mixing stream of drum and bass, pulsed through the room as if it were determining the heartbeat of the night.

On the way there, Jimmy had actually planned to dance his feet off, to lose himself in the music until everything else became unimportant. But now, in this moment, he felt that he needed something else. He didn't just want to dance, he wanted to soak up this feeling of radical freedom, into every fiber of his body. He had stopped smoking weed and, to his own surprise, he didn't miss anything. Here, in this room, three beers and the thump of the bass were enough to get him in the right mood.

He closed his eyes and let the bass flow through him. It was as if the music was carrying him, as if he had become part of something bigger. The people around him were no longer strangers, but angels of the night - beings who found their way in this dystopian world, who created their own rules and broke their own laws. Jimmy felt like one of them, like he belonged here, in this room, in this moment.

He opened his eyes and looked around. There was a woman with short, neon-colored hair, swaying to the rhythm of the music as if she were one with the beat. A guy in a worn leather jacket stood in the corner smoking a cigarette, his face was covered in half-shadow but his smile unmistakable. A group of people sat on the floor, surrounded by empty beer bottles, laughing at something Jimmy couldn't hear. It was a picture that was somehow perfect - chaotic but harmonious, like a painting that only existed that night.

Jimmy took a sip of his beer and felt the coldness of the bottle penetrate his hand. He wasn't drunk, not even

to some extent, but he felt light, as if he could fly. The music, the people, the place - everything seemed to have merged together, as if this was the only moment that mattered.

Sometime later, when the night was already well advanced, Jimmy leaned against the wall again and looked into the room. The party was still in full swing, but he sensed that he would be leaving soon. Not because he was tired, but because he knew that this moment couldn't last forever. And maybe that was the beauty of it - that it was fleeting, like everything else that really mattered.

When he left the building, the air outside was cool and crisp. The city seemed quiet, as if it were sleeping, but Jimmy knew that somewhere out there were other angels of the night. He smiled and walked slowly home, the thump of the bass still in his bones. It was a night he would not soon forget.



## Chapter 7: The sacred piece of vinyl

When Jimmy woke up the next morning, he felt as if the bass from the previous night had burrowed right into his skull and left its own echo there. The dull throbbing in his head was all too familiar - a mixture of too little sleep, too much nicotine and the constant vibration of the low frequencies that had become lodged in his body. A faint strip of sunlight filtered through the half-closed blinds, causing dust particles in the air to shimmer. Tired, he stood up, while somewhere in the silence of his room the phone suddenly rang.

He fumbled blindly for the device on his bedside table without really looking at the display. As soon as he put the receiver to his ear, he heard Thomas' voice - alert, excited, full of energy, as if he had long since had several cups of coffee.

"The record for Leo is ready," Thomas said, and Jimmy could hear the smile in his voice. "Are you coming to see him?"

Jimmy rubbed his eyes, still half in a daze. He remembered that Thomas had told him about this woman at some point - a legend from the seventies who had been one of the first to produce dubplates in Germany. "The good woman", as Thomas called her, like a figure that Jimmy only ever heard about in stories. She was one of those figures who remained in the background while influencing entire generations of musicians. Jimmy had never really found out how Thomas knew her, but Thomas had always been good at networking with the right people anyway.

"If you're taking me unwashed, then yes," Jimmy mumbled as he rolled out of bed and ran a hand through his tousled hair. "But I really need coffee first."

Thomas laughed at the other end of the line. "One hour. Be ready." Jimmy knew that an hour could mean anything in Thomas's reckoning of time - from now to sometime. Nevertheless, he forced himself to put himself at least halfway into a socially state. A strong coffee, three cigarettes, a few splashes of cold water on his face - it wasn't perfect, but it would do.

When Thomas finally drove up, Jimmy was ready, or at least as ready as he could be under the circumstances. They drove through the cityscape, which was slowly emerging from its morning sluggishness. They both looked like they had fallen out of a different era - long, unruly hair that could hardly be tamed and a certain unconcern that even then seemed of date in the stylish world of electronic music. Thomas' dark curls reached almost to his shoulders, while Jimmy's hair fell over his forehead in a wild mess, as if he had given up any attempt at tidiness at some point.

The journey took them east, somewhere between Offenbach and Hanau. Jimmy was barely aware of the route. He didn't know this area particularly well - it was one of those intermediate worlds in which the city slowly faded into the indefinite, in which old industrial buildings, abandoned industrial estates and scattered residential buildings blurred together. At some point, they drove into an area that at first glance looked like an ordinary industrial estate, but as they drove deeper into the area, Jimmy realized that this was no ordinary place.

"Leo sat in here?" asked Jimmy, as they stood in front of the massive building came to a halt.

An old US Army building stretched out in front of them - huge, made of concrete, with heavy, green-painted metal doors that looked like relics from another era. It had this strange atmosphere, as if it was a place that had been waiting a long time to on a new meaning and had now welcomed people like Leo.

Thomas grinned and nodded. "Yes, he's in his revolutionary phase right now."

Jimmy had to smile. Leo had always been the one who took things to extremes - in music, in life, in his ideas. The fact that he had now taken up residence in an abandoned military building somehow suited him.

As they walked through the dark corridors of the building, a strange silence enveloped them. The concrete swallowed up every sound, and yet music emanated from a few rooms, distorted, muffled, as if the sounds were only shadows of themselves. The long corridors seemed to lead into the unknown and only the occasional flickering of a light bulb reminded us that someone actually lived here.

A man with blond dreadlocks came towards them. Jimmy eyed him for a moment, then Thomas asked him about Leo. The man nodded casually and pointed to a door further down the corridor.

Leo's room was exactly as Jimmy had expected - sparsely furnished, minimalist to the absolute limit. A simple mattress on the floor, an old desk with a large computer on it, and almost nothing else. The only real decoration was the screen running a tracker program - the same software Leo had been using for years to produce his music.

When they entered, Leo looked up briefly and grinned broadly. "Hey," he said, making the words sound like a mixture of greeting and celebration.

Thomas pulled the record out of his pocket and held it in the air for a moment, as if he were presenting a holy relic. It was the vinyl with the track that was a kind of milestone for them both - the track that had also given Thomas' radio show its name.

Leo took the plate, looked at it briefly and then nodded in recognition. It was one of those silent gestures that meant more than any words could express.

Jimmy looked into the room. He had always seen himself as part of the scene, but never in the same way as Leo. While Leo worked with pure technical precision, writing code, developing programs and even programming his own audio plug-ins, Jimmy was more of a researcher. He looked for the breaks in the music, destroyed data, experimented with noise, manipulated signals, tried to find hidden patterns in hex codes. They were in many ways similar, but Leo was the better programmer. Jimmy knew that. And he didn't mind.

They didn't stay long. It was less a visit than a quiet moment of recognition, a ritual between friends that didn't need many words.

When they stepped outside again and the cold winter air hit their faces, Jimmy stopped for a moment and soaked up the atmosphere.

There were nights when everything seemed possible. Nights in which reality and utopia mingled so closely that you no longer knew where one ended and the other began. And while they returned to

Frankfurt, with the city lights in front of them and the music playing in their heads, Jimmy felt that feeling again - that vague knowledge that they were still somewhere between yesterday and tomorrow.  
And that the journey was far from over.

## Chapter 8: Tron

Jimmy was going through a phase characterized by inner turmoil and self-doubt. His parents had been on vacation with his cousin in Sardinia for two weeks. Before they left, his mother had asked him, as she often did, whether he was still seriously studying - a question that always left him with a guilty conscience. This time, however, driven by a mixture of a sense of duty and a newly awakened interest in mathematics, Jimmy decided to actually go to university in Frankfurt. He sat down in a crowded lecture hall where a lecture on set theory was taking place. The room was so full that some students had to sit on the floor or on the stairs. Jimmy, who had accidentally sat down in the middle of the crowd, felt uncomfortable. He hated crowds like that. Even then he knew that he was different from many others, even if he wouldn't have called it autism yet. He couldn't say exactly whether it was the narrowness of the room or the content of the lecture that put him off. Something prompted him to look up parts of the lecture on his cell phone.

While he was working on number theory, he remembered his school days in the 11th grade. Back then, he had developed a stochastic process together with Gigi and Simon in computer science class. The three of them had been allowed to teach themselves at the time, as their tutor, who was also their math teacher, had realized that he could no longer teach them anything new. Gigi, who regularly got top marks, had even taken part in "Jugend forscht". He had placed a cup on a potter's wheel, which Jimmy had organized and used a camera to calculate a 3D model - a revolutionary method at the end of the nineties. Jimmy wondered where this stochastic process, which they had developed back then, was still being used. He googled it and discovered that the founders of Google had developed the same formula in 1996, just six months after Gigi, Simon and he had come up with it.

had registered a patent for it. This algorithm had become decisive for the search engine. Jimmy was furious. In 1997, his Windows 98 computer had been formatted while he was asleep. At the time, he had suspected his brother, who had been annoyed with him. Jimmy's headstrong and sometimes obsessive nature had often led to conflicts in the family. But now he asked himself: "What if I was hacked back then?"

He searched through his memories, thinking about which IRC chats he had been on back then and who he had spoken to. Suddenly he remembered Tron. A year before his A-levels, he had told Tron that the encryption of PIN codes on credit cards was no more than 128 bits. He had learned this information from his uncle, who was involved in building computer systems for Italian banks, and from conversations with a former neighbor about the son of other neighbors whose parents' held patents for parts of ATMs. Jimmy googled Tron, who he hadn't spoken to for years, and learned that Tron had been found dead in a Berlin park in 1998 - hanging from a belt that wasn't his and seemed too big. The Chaos Computer Club had called for the investigation to be reopened, as the death had been classified as a suicide. It was too much for Jimmy. His nerves were on edge. He left the lecture hall in a panic, feeling that everyone was laughing at him. Even when he had left the room, the whispering and shreds of voices didn't stop.

Full of paranoia, he made his way home. "What am I going to do now?" he thought. His mind was overwhelmed, he experienced a state that he would later describe as "brain fog" - a kind of sudden loss of hearing in the brain. Once home, alone in the house, he was overcome by a feeling of helplessness. He called his parents, who told him that they were in hospital because his cousin had spit up blood. Jimmy knew about his cousin's serious illness, which had been diagnosed at the age of fourteen. He hung up and asked himself: "I need

Help, but who do I call?" The only person he could think of was the former second head of the laboratory at the hospital, a family friend. Jimmy called him, and the man and his wife came over immediately. But the waiting seemed like an eternity to Jimmy. As they finally arrived, Jimmy tried to explain his condition, but his words were confused and incoherent. The two decided to take him to the clinic.

When he arrived at the psychiatric ward, Jimmy was too exhausted to say much. The doctors insisted that he stay, although his companions actually wanted to take him back with them. The corridors of the clinic were lined with beds, some of which were fitted with strange straps. Everything seemed cold and strange. Jimmy was reminding him one of the cold green doors in Leo's new home, when he was shown to his bed. However, he was relieved to finally be able to lie down. Although he couldn't sleep because of the "brain outside", all he could think was: "I can't take any more. I need rest."

Jimmy awoke the next morning from a deep, almost comatose sleep. His body felt heavy, as if he had been run over by a truck, but the "brain buzz" that had been raging in his head like a deafening noise yesterday had now become quieter. It was still there, dull buzzing, but at least it allowed him to think without feeling like he was going to explode at any moment. His stomach growled loudly - he hadn't eaten for hours, maybe even a whole day. Hunger drove him out of bed.

He slowly straightened up and looked around the sparse hospital room. The walls were white and bare, the windows let in dull morning light. There was another bed in the room, but it was empty. Jimmy was alone. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed and felt the cold floor beneath his bare feet shake him awake. He pulled himself



put on his shoes, which were next to his bed, and set off to find something to eat.

As he entered the hallway, he immediately noticed the strange silence. It was not the reassuring kind of silence, but an oppressive, almost unnatural stillness. The corridors were empty, except for a few patients shuffling wearily along the corridor. Jimmy followed the smell of coffee that seemed to come from far away and finally ended up in front of a room that he would later call "the aquarium". It was a small room with a large pane of glass through which you could see medicine cabinets and a desk. A few patients stood in front of it. Further down the corridor, Jimmy assumed, must be the dining room.

Jimmy stopped and watched the scene. Some patients were standing silently outside the door receiving their medication. Jimmy felt his stomach growling again. He just wanted a piece of bread, something to satisfy his hunger. But as he approached what he thought was the dining room, a nurse gently held him by the arm.

"Where are you going?" she asked sternly. "You have to take your medication first."

Jimmy flinched and looked at her indignantly. "I'm not taking anything until I've spoken to a doctor," he said firmly. The empty "brainwashing" at least gave him the feeling that he could think and talk more clearly today. He wasn't crazy, he knew that. He had just got into crazy situations that had overwhelmed him.

"Can I at least eat a piece of bread first?" he asked. "I'd like to talk to a doctor first."

"You already spoke to a doctor yesterday," the nurse replied in a tone that wavered between impatience and maternal sternness.

Jimmy sighed. "Yes, but I was so exhausted yesterday that I couldn't say two sentences. Why don't you at least let me have breakfast and then talk to the doctor again?"

The nurse opened her mouth to apparently talk back, but at that moment Jimmy noticed another patient walking into a room further back after taking his medication. Jimmy cut the nurse off and asked: "Is that the dining room?"

Without waiting for an answer, Jimmy set off resolutely in the direction of the room. He was proved right: It was indeed the dining room. The room was brightly lit, the walls painted a pale yellow, reminiscent of faded sunflowers. Long tables with white plastic covers were lined up next to each other, with simple chairs in between, reminiscent of school furniture. On one side of the room was a counter with thermos flasks, bread baskets and small packs of butter, jam and Nutoka. Jimmy walked purposefully towards it as if he had visited this place a hundred times before. He reached for one of the thermos flasks, which he thought was coffee, and himself a cup. The smell was faint, almost non-existent, and when he added milk, the liquid was more like a pale beige than a rich brown. He took two rolls from the basket, which looked surprisingly fresh, and a couple of portions of Nutoka before sitting down at an empty table.

Jimmy sat down on one of the hard chairs and took his first sip of what he thought was coffee. The taste confirmed his fears: The drink was watery and weak, almost like a caricature of coffee. As half a coffee sommelier who had been the art of perfect coffee for years, he knew immediately that this was not high-quality Arabica - probably not even caffeinated. He grimaced slightly, but his hunger was stronger than his

culinary demands. He bit into one of the rolls and immediately started a feeling of relief through him. It was fresh, soft and had a slightly crispy crust. He spread some Nutoka on it, and the sweet, nutty flavor blended perfectly with the bread. Jimmy ate slowly, almost reverently, and felt his body slowly calming down. He was quiet and introverted, as if he was conscious of every second of this moment. The sounds around him - the soft clatter of dishes, the murmur of other patients - seemed distant, as if he were hearing them through a thick pane of glass. For a brief moment, it felt as if he had regained control, as if the chaos in his head had receded into the background, at least for those few minutes.

When Jimmy left the dining room, he was intercepted by the nurse, who asked him to come with her. The doctor had time for him now. She led him into a small, sparse room where a woman with dark hair was sitting at a desk. The doctor seemed distant, almost absent-minded, as she asked Jimmy to present his concerns. Jimmy sat down and began to talk - about the lecture, about his memories of Gigi and Simon, about the stochastic process they had developed and about his suspicion that he had been hacked. He talked about Tron, about the encryption of PIN codes and about Tron's mysterious death. He tried to explain everything as clearly and precisely as possible, in the hope that the doctor would understand that he wasn't crazy, but had ended up in a crazy situation.

But the longer he talked, the more he realized that the doctor was hardly listening. She nodded from time to time, but her eyes kept wandering to her documents, as if she was more with her own thoughts than with what Jimmy was saying. When he had finally finished, she said curtly, "OK, let's stick to the medication." Jimmy was perplexed. "What do you mean? What is this medication and what is it for? What's the name of the medication?" he asked sharply. The doctor leaned back,

with a dismissive posture and replied: "If you really want to know, it's called Risperdal. I think you have a drug-induced psychosis."

Jimmy was upset. "Drugs? Apart from coffee and cigarettes, I haven't taken any drugs for months. I insist on a drug test." The doctor shrugged her shoulders as if his request was irrelevant, but she agreed. No sooner said than done - Jimmy's blood was taken. The result of the test was negative, and he still has proof to this day. But despite the negative result, the doctor stuck to her diagnosis: drug-induced affective psychosis. This was unbelievable for Jimmy. He hadn't used drugs for months, and yet he was given this label. He was practically told he was fantasizing, even though he absolutely sure about the computer and math topics he had talked about. These topics were real to him, and they were one of the many origins of his later nervous breakdowns. The fact that the doctor ignored this upset him deeply and laid the foundation for his aversion to the so-called "help" of psychiatry.

Looking back, Jimmy would rather identify traumatic experiences and situations as the origin of his crises - not the drug use he had engaged in during his adolescence. He saw this as more of a secondary problem. He was much more influenced by events such as the death of his father's cousin, who drowned telling five-year-old Jimmy: "Don't go in the water, it's too dangerous here." Or the cheating of his first steady girlfriend, who had cheated on him with someone from his math class - in the same year that he had last spoken to Tron. The person his first steady girlfriend had cheated on him with had later held a gun to his head when Jimmy confronted him about why he had stolen his girlfriend and still expected Jimmy to help him move. These events had taken such a toll on Jimmy that he spent 185 days

He was only admitted to the Abitur by way of an exception confiding in his principal.

Such traumatic experiences weighed more heavily in Jimmy's eyes than the drug use, which may have been harmful to a developing brain, but was not the root of his problems. If anything, it was an interplay of external circumstances and internal conflicts. Jimmy was stunned that the doctor stuck to her diagnosis despite the negative drug test. He was used to the fact that hardly anyone in his family understood what he was really doing on the computer, but this form of ignorance on the part of the doctor was incomprehensible to him. It was not only a rejection of his reality, but also a devaluation of his intelligence and knowledge. For Jimmy, this was the beginning of a deep mistrust of the psychiatric world - a world he perceived as superficial and ignorant, rather than helpful and understanding.

Reluctantly, but annoyed, Jimmy now took the tablets every morning. He had actually considered putting them under his tongue and flushing them down the toilet later, but when he received the first dose, he quickly realized that these tablets dissolved immediately in his mouth on contact with saliva. There was no hiding, no trickery - the medication was unavoidable. He was given Tavor as a permanent medication and Risperdal, two substances that he was told would both calm and stabilize him. But for Jimmy, it is as if they were not only taking away his restlessness, but also part of his personality. He felt alienated, as if he was no longer in control of his own mind.

A week later, his parents returned from their vacation. They picked him up accompanied by the two friends who had taken him to the clinic. The atmosphere was tense. His parents seemed

exhausted, not only from the long journey, but also from worrying about Jimmy's cousin, whose health had deteriorated during the vacation. The double stress - her cousin's illness, Jimmy's stay in hospital and the general strain - had clearly taken its toll on them. They insisted that Jimmy should see psychiatrists in a psychiatric outpatient clinic regularly from now on. It wasn't a request, but a demand, made with worried looks and an undertone of helplessness.

Jimmy agreed, but less out of conviction and more out of a mixture of a guilty conscience and the desire to avoid further discussions. His studies had come to a standstill anyway, a lottery life that he could no longer justify himself. Perhaps, he thought, the outpatient clinic could help him find structure again - even if he was deeply skeptical of the psychiatric approach he had encountered so far. He had the feeling that he did not understand that his problems were reduced to drug use and psychosis instead of getting to the bottom of the real causes - the traumatic experiences that had shaped him.

But Jimmy also knew that he had no choice. His parents were at the end of their tether and he himself felt like he was in a maelstrom of powerlessness and anger. So, he took the medication, went to the appointments at the outpatient clinic and tried to adapt - even if he continued to rebel inwardly. It was clear to him that the tablets and the therapy were only a temporary solution, a compromise he was making to buy time. He didn't want to be trapped forever in this system that labeled him as a "patient" instead of seeing him as a human being. But for the time being, he had no choice but to the path that others had planned for him.

## Chapter 9: Power through dependency

Jimmy sat at Station 19, aimless and exhausted. The train ride through the area had not calmed him down but had only made him more entangled in his thoughts. His face clearly showed how exhausted he was - his eyes tired, his shoulders heavy, as if he was carrying the weight of the world. He thought of what he had told his mother: "*Time does not heal wounds.*" And yet he tried to convince himself that he was still alive, that he could still carry on somehow. But how? How was he supposed to get rid of this chaos in his head that seemed to be devouring his soul alive?

Weeks earlier, after another argument with his parents about his aimless studies, Jimmy had stormed out of the house in a rage. He had slammed the door behind him and simply set off, without a destination, without a plan. His backpack with the camera dangled at his side as he stopped at the edge of the tracks. The thought that everything could come to an end was tantalizing. He sat down on the tracks, the chaos in his head screaming calmly. But a passer-by had pulled him off the tracks at the last moment, just as the train was pulling in. Jimmy stood back on the platform, trembling, confused, but somehow also relieved. "Let it come to you," whispered the voice in his head. "Fine, I'll let it happen ... but I don't really feel like it!" he replied loudly. The passer-by looked at him worriedly, but Jimmy didn't say a word. What could he say? "Thank you"? Or should he tell him his whole story? Where should he even start?

They both got off in Mainz. The passer-by disappeared into the night and Jimmy was left alone. There was no train back. What should he do now? The street didn't seem to be a solution - it was cold, and Jimmy felt lost. He saw a group of eight young people playing cards next to the station forecourt. They looked like a colorful mixture from different countries, and Jimmy approached them

hesitantly. As it turned out, they actually came from the continent: Sam from Canada, Chris from America and José from Mexico. They were all studying economics in Oestrich-Winkel and seemed to come from wealthy families.

The card game they were playing was completely foreign to Jimmy. They explained it to him patiently, but he still didn't really understand it. Sam explained that they were just waiting for an opportunity to get to the airport and wanted to kill time playing cards. Around four in the morning, an Italian woman in her fifties approached them. Jimmy, half Sardinian, started a conversation with her, in which Chris also joined in. The woman said that she wanted to go to Italy, but by train. During the conversation, she rolled a joint, which she shared with Chris and Jimmy, and gave Chris a fifty-penny coin. Two minutes later, a very thin, lanky boy with a baseball cap that said "CHE" appeared. The woman and the boy disappeared towards the tracks.

At that moment, Jimmy plucked up courage and asked the group if he could go to Rome with them. José grinned and said: "Rome is where the fun begins," and nodded in agreement. Jimmy felt a spark of hope, a hint of adventure, which made him out of his lethargy. Perhaps this was the escape he needed - an escape into another world, far away from his parents' expectations, the reproaches and the chaos in his head. Rome sounded like a new beginning, a place where he could perhaps find himself again.

When he arrived in Rome-Ciampino, Jimmy suddenly found himself alone. José, who had been waiting at the bus station, had disappeared when Jimmy returned from the toilet. Depressed and exhausted, he staggered back to the wet rooms. He had noticed a door on which the handle and lock had been sawn out. "Maybe I can hide here and get some rest," he thought and entered the room. A long line opened in front of him.



corridor. There was no door to the left at first, but then he saw several gray lockers, all open. Jimmy took a gray trench coat and put it on. He left the black baseball cap behind. He also grabbed an umbrella and suddenly found himself standing in front of a fuse box. "OK, I'll wake them up now!" he muttered, counted "ENEMENEMU" and flipped the biggest fuse to zero.

With the earbuds of his MP3 player in his ear and dancing steps, Jimmy entered the now dark check-in hall. No one seemed to notice him. After half an hour, he gave up. "If it's all right, then it's all right," he thought and went straight to the carabinieri's office, whom he kept calling "Cagabichieri". They asked what he wanted. "Aqua," Jimmy replied. He drank the bottle of water in one go and then shouted: "Cosi non si fa ... Cosi non si fa ... Cosi non si fa ...!" He then took a deep breath.

The leader of the carabinieri now had Jimmy's golden phone book in his hand and said: "Maria, vedo un paio di sette qui." Jimmy didn't understand exactly what that meant, but he sensed that the situation was getting out of hand.

When Jimmy arrived at the clinic in Frascati, the first thing he heard was the screaming of a woman locked in a room who kept banging on the door of the isolation room. He was allowed to smoke a cigarette in the locked area outside. There he met a patient called Angela, with whom he chatted briefly. But the peace and quiet didn't last long. As soon as he was back in the building, two nurses asked him to drink two cups of a yellowish to brown and a clear to milky liquid. He reluctantly obeyed. Today he suspects that one Atosil and the other Haloperidol. When his brain spasming and knotted up inside, the thought of escape crossed his mind. Even though he was on the second floor - when he pulled himself up in the smoking area and carefully stepped onto the outside

If he hung on the wall ledge, it would only be a single floor that he would fall. He went outside, lit a cigarette and continued with his plan as the other patients went back into the building.

The impact was harder than he had expected. Both knees hurt like hell. He tried to run away, but the pain and the effects of the haloperidol made him very slow. The nurses quickly caught up with him.

A week later, Jimmy woke up from a fixation. There was a bar of chocolate next to his bed. He had called his Italian cousin in Turin before he had decided to try to escape and asked him for help. He had probably told him to bring chocolate when he had asked if he needed anything. He hadn't noticed his cousin's visit due to all the sleeping and psychotropic drugs. Drunk as he was, he couldn't remember it at that moment, so he was delighted with the chocolate. When he opened the door and stepped out, he couldn't believe his eyes. The glass front in front of him was broken, a large piece missing. Slowly and unsteadily, he approached the light and looked down. Downstairs lay the woman with the short dark hair who had banged screaming against the door of the isolation room when he arrived - dead. A nurse called from downstairs: "Throw down the sheet."

At that moment, Jimmy stopped dreaming at night. Reality was bad enough.

José had said before the trip: "Rome is where the fun begins." But this was definitely no fun. Jimmy had already experienced a lot in his life, but even in his desolate, psychotropic drug-fueled state, he knew that he couldn't fall any lower. His experiences in the clinic in Frascati had shaken him to the core. The death of his fellow patient, the fixations, the drug treatment - all of this had pushed him to the edge of his mental capacity.

A short time later, his father appeared to pick him up. Visibly upset with both Jimmy and the hospital staff, he negotiated Jimmy's release with the nurses. His cousin had obviously told him about the restraint and Jimmy's father was furious about the conditions in the clinic. When Jimmy told him about the death of his fellow patient, it was the straw. His father shouted at the staff, his voice echoing through the corridors of the clinic. It was an outburst full of anger and helplessness that vented all the frustration about the situation.

The return journey was characterized by silence and tense stillness. Jimmy could no longer let go of what he had experienced. The images of the woman who had banged on the door of the isolation room and her death haunted him. When he read on the internet that the clinic in Frascati was to be closed because a dementia patient named Mastrogiovanni had died during a fixation, he realized how deeply the system had failed. Mastrogiovanni, typical of dementia patients, had resisted treatment and had been admitted to the very place where Jimmy had been weeks earlier. The circumstances of his death had only come to light thanks to the relatives' hidden cameras and made it onto Italian television.

Jimmy felt obliged to make a statement to the police. He wanted the truth to come out, that the conditions in the clinic would not go unpunished. But when he arrived at Station 19, the atmosphere was anything but encouraging. Behind the policeman on the cupboard was a sticker that simply said "Stop". The rest had been torn off. The policeman's reaction was indifferent, almost dismissive. Jimmy sensed that his words wouldn't have much effect here. To this day, he doesn't know whether his statement ever made it to Italy.

That was the reason why he was here now - at Station 19, aimless, bitter and full of questions. José had said that Rome was where the fun began,

But for Jimmy, Rome had only brought pain and despair. He had hoped to find a fresh start, but instead he had deeper doubts than he ever thought possible. And now, alone on the fourth floor, he wondered if there was any way back - back to a life that wasn't characterized by psychotropic drugs, fixations and broken dreams.

## Chapter 10: Deaf ears

The next weeks and months passed slowly and were characterized by rituals that forced Jimmy into a kind of trance-like everyday life. He no longer attended university. Although he was still enrolled, this was solely due to his semester ticket, which him to travel around the region at no extra cost. Programming projects that had once inspired him lay dormant. Music was the only thing he had left. After breakfast with his parents, he usually retreated to his room, closed the door and immersed himself in sounds - sometimes he listened to music, sometimes he made it himself. It was his place of retreat, his shelter from a world that he no longer understood and that no longer wanted to understand him.

He hardly heard anything from his former friends. The contacts had broken off, as if his life had taken a turn that they couldn't or didn't want to understand. He went to the outpatient clinic every two weeks, a ritual he hated but which he complied with. The conversations with his therapist always followed the same pattern: after about 15 minutes of trivial conversation - because there was hardly anything going on in Jimmy's life that he could talk about - the psychologist looked at the clock on the wall and ended the conversation with the words: "We have to get to the end." She usually printed out a prescription for him, which was signed by another practitioner, and sent him on his way again.

Years later, Jimmy was to learn that this practitioner did not even have any clinical training. She said this in front of a witness he had brought with him. Legally, she would only have been allowed to work as a consultant in companies or give team-building seminars or, at most, work as a social worker in a day care center. She would actually have been prohibited from doing therapeutic work. This realization shed a significant light on the quality of the "help" that Jimmy had received all those years.

had received. The psychologist played down everything Jimmy said. Even seemingly trivial details, such as the fact that his uncle had worked for the Hessian Road construction office and was a secret agent

- Among other things, he managed files on the blasting sites of bridges -, were classified in the files as psychotic or narcissistic. Jimmy later learned that narcissism was removed from the ICD-10 a few years ago and completely reclassified in the ICD-11. This diagnosis no longer officially existed, but it had become deeply engraved in Jimmy's files.

What annoyed Jimmy the most, however, were the constant references to a workshop for the disabled or assisted living. Nobody said it explicitly, but the message was clear: they wanted to talk him out of work. His actual experiences, his abilities and his history hardly played a role in the assessment of his situation. Instead, he was pushed further and further into the corner of the "chronically incurable".

One day, when Jimmy got loud in the ambulance and said: "I can do without this shit. I don't want to eat this shit anymore!", the situation escalated. The front door was locked, the police and an ambulance were called. For Jimmy, who didn't know at the time that his practitioner had no clinical training, this was the moment when his last bit of trust in "outpatient help" was shattered. He decided that from then on, he would only tell people what gave him an advantage in life. He had finally buried the idea that talk therapy could be something like you see in the movies - maybe not a couch, but at least a place of understanding and healing.

Jimmy had understood: "Only a sick patient is a good customer." The system was not designed to cure him, but to keep him dependent. And so he withdrew further into his music,

into his rituals, into a world that he could control himself - even if it was getting smaller and smaller.

## Chapter 11: The airless room

It was one of those admissions that were initiated and enforced by the outpatient clinic. In one of his sessions, Jimmy had been working on until he finally agreed. The constant flashbacks that had been haunting him for days would not let him sleep. He only asked to be allowed to go home first to pack a bag. He wanted two hours to confer with his parents. But while he was still sitting with them at the kitchen table and stammering out sentences like "I don't really want this", "They're just fixing me again anyway" and "But I don't know how else calm down", the doorbell rang. Two police officers and an ambulance were standing in front of him.

The ambulance staff were obviously worried that Jimmy might run off on the train again. Inside at the kitchen table, the police officers *standing there, his mother with a heart condition listening helplessly to the officers*, Jimmy wanted to reach for a handkerchief while sitting in his jeans. At that moment, a female officer grabbed her holster and shouted: "Hands where I can see them!" Totally perplexed and shocked, Jimmy's mother asked: "What's this? Can't you see he's just reaching for a handkerchief?" At that moment, Jimmy and his family realized that there was no freedom of choice. Hospitalization was not an option; it was an order. It was moments like this that made Jimmy realize that the privatized psychiatric system was part of the state's regulatory power.

When he arrived on station 13, accompanied by his "popular friends" - the police officers - he dutifully checked in, showed his papers, including a living will, and pointed out that he had a certain aversion to the universally popular coercion. After being shown to his room, he went cheerfully to the smoking room. On the way there, he greeted Charlie, who was in the



smoking room followed. They shared a cigarette and exchanged the latest news.

The first day was quiet and slightly contemplative. Jimmy stayed awake in the lounge at night, smoking a cigarette here and there and listening to music on his MP3 player. At around 1:30 a.m., he went to reception and asked if he could have a caffeinated drink, preferably warm, to calm him down. He wanted to sit down and write down his thoughts. But he was told that caffeine was not available on the menu at that time of day. Frustrated, Jimmy went to his room, where he was greeted by unrhythmic snoring and consequently kept awake.

At around 3:30 am, completely exasperated, Jimmy went to the "Aquarium", where the receptionist was preparing the bill and the second breakfast. "Good morning, Mrs. R., would you have some earplugs and a valerian tea for me?" he asked. A "newcomer" was sitting at the entrance accompanied by the ever-popular friends. Accompanied by Mrs. R., Jimmy went into the kitchen and helped prepare breakfast. He made himself a valerian tea and then went into the smoking room, where the newcomer was now sitting. Jimmy gave him a light and introduced himself. They drew the smoke into their lungs in silence, although they could have gotten enough nicotine just by being in the room.

On the way out of the smoking room, another insomniac came in. The awkward was alive, day and night. There was a certain silence that could suddenly turn into real life. The atmosphere was mostly depressing, and there was always a certain air of fear in the air. Everyone was watching everyone else. Those who were there more often and knew each other usually greeted each other happily, and there was an unwritten code among the smokers: *what happens in the smoking room stays in the smoking room.*

Another reason why Jimmy couldn't sleep was that there was once again someone who couldn't get out of bed and expressed their anger and helplessness at irregular intervals - by moaning, swearing, pleading, begging, pleading, crying. The sounds penetrated the walls and kept Jimmy awake. So he sat down in front of the

"Aquarium" and looked for the non-existent fish in the big one. He thought about what the cleaner fish would think on a small scale.

"Does he also have the desire to flee the aquarium?" he asked himself. Mrs. R. sat in the big room and wrote curves in her papers. Meanwhile, Jimmy wondered whether he should take advantage of the situation to use the Segufix key he had secretly brought with him and put the poorest of the poor out of his misery. Still lost in thought, the gate opened, and the early shift came in. Jimmy dismissed the thought of the subversive liberation operation and went back into the smoking room.

When Jimmy returned to the aquarium, a new girl was sitting there waiting to fill out the welcome papers and meet the AVD (medical representation service). The view was not deceptive: the newcomer was either there for the first time or only very rarely. Dragi had also gotten up in the meantime. It was about 6 o'clock in the morning. Dragi and Jimmy stood together at the entrance to the aquarium and pursued their favorite pastime: giving the staff a hard time.

Jimmy ate a Nutoka roll for breakfast, deliberately asked for peanut butter as usual - which was never available - and left a spoon on the way to his room. After stowing it in his room, he went out to get some cigarettes. Jimmy also wanted to go to house 9 to see Mr. Glasmann. Someone from his group committed suicide a few months earlier, and Mr. Glasmann had co-led the Pefi group six months previously. With an uneasy feeling, Jimmy rang the doorbell on the second floor of House 9.

As always, the conversation with Mr. Glasmann was constructive and good. The friendliness and positive manner of Mr. Glasmann brought

A good mood, a calm feeling and serenity returned sooner than expected. Jimmy could feel the tension in his body slowly easing. Mr. Glasmann had a way of listening and answering that gave Jimmy the feeling of being understood - something he often missed in the clinic and on station 13.

But even after this conversation, Jimmy knew that the peace would be short-lived. The awkward, the anxiety, the depression and the constant observation would soon catch up with him again. But for that moment sitting with Mr. Glasmann, he could breathe easily. It was a small ray of hope in a world that often seemed so dark and airless.

The story of Dennis weighed heavily on Jimmy. Dennis, a fellow patient from his therapy group, had frantically called his father during his last stay on this earth and said: "They're going to kill me." When his father arrived, all he found was Dennis' body on the ground outside the ward building. The police report claimed that Dennis had forced the window open and then jumped out of it. But Jimmy doubted this - and he wasn't the only one. Dennis' father didn't believe this version of events either. After the incident, Jimmy had informed both Dennis' father and the hospital manager that the windows on station 13 were not so easy to open by force. He knew this from his own experience. During one of his first stays on 13.1 - which, unlike 13.3 on the second floor, was on the ground floor but had identical windows - his roommate, who was an alcoholic, repeatedly peeled out the window seal and carefully lifted the glass pane to on night-time excursions. He called it his "Station 14" - a pub nearby. Jimmy had caught him doing it once but hadn't told him. At the time, he thought the knowledge of how to open the windows might come in handy at some point.

One of these windows could certainly not be opened by force. Either the police report was inaccurate - or it was faked. Jimmy couldn't imagine that Dennis, who had seemed so desperate and anxious in his last days, would have had the strength and composure to force the window open. The story didn't fit. It was too smooth, too convenient. And it left too many questions unanswered.

Jimmy could feel anger and helplessness spreading through him. Dennis had not simply "jumped out of the window". He had been driven - by fear, by despair, perhaps even by the circumstances in the clinic itself. Jimmy knew what it was like to be trapped in this airless, oppressive atmosphere. He knew what it was like to have the feeling that no one was really listening, that no one really wanted to help.

When Jimmy had finished talking to Mr. Glasmann and went back to station 13, he felt the memories of Dennis haunting him. The awkward was as usual: a mixture of depressive silence and sudden bursts of life. The patients watched each other, suspicious, , sometimes friendly. But there was something bubbling under the surface - an underlying tension that everyone could sense but no one spoke to.

Jimmy sat down in front of the aquarium again and stared at the empty walls. He thought of Dennis, of the windows, of the lies and half-truths surrounding his death. And he thought about how easy it was to go under in this system - how easy it was to disappear without anyone really asking.

"What happens in the smoking room stays in the smoking room," one of the patients had once said. But Jimmy knew that some things couldn't stay in the smoking room. Some things had to come out into the open - no matter how uncomfortable they were. Dennis' story was one of them. And Jimmy was

determined not to let them fall into oblivion.

## Chapter 12: The escape

When Jimmy had just returned from Ward 9 and was standing in front of station 13.1, he heard loud voices from the stairwell above. Dennis' father was standing outside station 13.3 and shouting: "Let me in!" The staff shouted from inside: "We know this is all difficult for you, but do we have to call the police?" Jimmy could feel the tension building in the air. He went up the stairs and approached his father, asking him to go downstairs with him. Together they sat down at one of the outdoor tables in front of the station. Jimmy smoked a cigarette while his father cried.

Jimmy told Dennis' father about the story with the windows on station 13.1 and swore to him that he would never forget it. His father slowly calmed down. Jimmy said he didn't know what exactly could be done about it, but if he ran amok now, it would only land him in prison - and Dennis would never come back. After they hugged each other goodbye, Jimmy went back to the station.

It had just been afternoon coffee. At 4 p.m., they always had this concoction they called coffee. Jimmy arrived upstairs just as everything was being cleared away. Like cigarettes, "real" coffee with caffeine was a currency on psychiatric wards. Patients usually smuggled in soluble coffee, which they drank secretly with hot to lukewarm water from the bathroom. In their eyes, caffeinated coffee the sedative effect of the psychotropic drugs. At the very least, according to Jimmy's experience, they were minimally less foggy.

Jimmy didn't care that he'd missed this plonk. He had been in the coffee shop on the hospital grounds on his way out. They served real coffee there, as guests from outside were also seated with the visitors. You didn't have to tell everyone what kind of coffee was served here.

Jimmy was left pretty much alone until the evening. But after dinner, the circus started.

"They haven't slept all night and refuse the medication.

camete. I'll give you something now."

"I'm not taking anything."

"Then we have to act!"

"I don't take that stuff. Haldol doesn't make you feel good; it makes you hollow."

"Okay, then I have to act."

The beeper was activated, and the alarm went off. Suddenly, eight people stood in front of Jimmy in a threatening posture. At that moment, he realized that there were only two options - fixation or swallow and escape.

"Okay, I'll take the stuff, but then make me a proper cock tail, emphasis on cock ..."

"Then I want Haldol, Atosil, Diazepam, Risperdal, anything you have, just no Leponex or Lizium, please. But I emphasize, this is blackmail."

The situation calmed down. Some of the nurses went back to the wards they had rushed from. Shortly afterwards, one of the stati- on nurses came and handed Jimmy two cups. One contained a dark liquid, the other a milky one.

"Okay, as I said, I don't want that, but if I at least eat at the breakfast table tomorrow and do not go to bed but go to the toilet, I'll give in to the blackmail. Give me the dirty stuff."

When the nurse had left, Jimmy looked at his watch. It was a quarter before nine. "Okay, I don't have much time."

He barricaded the room with the bed by placing it at an angle between the wall and the door and tightening the rollers. Then he took the tablespoon and peeled the rubber seal out of the window. Someone had often gone out here, Jimmy thought. It was far too easy and too quick. In less than three minutes, Jimmy had freed the glass and lifted it out.

When Jimmy was already halfway through the night, he heard someone running behind him. But he ran for his life, faster and faster.

"They won't get me!"



## Chapter 13: Cold cat

When he arrived in Strasbourg, Jimmy took his time to look around the station. He bought himself a coffee and sat down on a warm bench. He struck up a conversation with the person sitting next to him. The man introduced himself as Pasquale and said he was also from Sardinia. Jimmy didn't quite trust this - Pasquale was normally a typical Neapolitan name. When Jimmy mentioned that he wanted to go out for a quick smoke, Pasquale, who had obviously lived on the street much longer than Jimmy, asked if he could have one too.

They were together at the entrance, sheltered from the rain, and smoked. Jimmy struggled with himself: "Should I get stuck in or not?" Then Pasquale said: "I'm going to get something to eat, will you come with me?" That was enough for Jimmy. He hadn't really eaten anything for two days. After buying the ticket, there was only enough money left for two coffees and a croissant.

So, they went to Rue de Rempart, around the corner from the station. There they ate together. There was stew, bread and fruit. Anyone who wanted could take something from the leftovers at the end for the next day. Pasquale was about 20 years older than Jimmy. His teeth were black and barely there. He reminded Jimmy a bit of Diogenes and a bit of Charlie. Despite everything, he could laugh out loud, which sometimes had a frightening effect on the exhausted Jimmy. "What am I doing here?" he asked himself.

First, time had stood still and overrun him at the same time. Then Jimmy was the one who ran. And suddenly he was standing in the eye of the hurricane. Pure calm. Time stretched out like rubber. Outside, the hurricane raged, the fear and the cold still crept into his limbs.

If he had been here on vacation, Strasbourg would have been a great city

had been. He criss-crossed all the bridges. Pasquale had given him a tip about the Rue de Fritz-Kieniger. But it didn't open until 5 pm. At a quarter to four, he met Pasquale again on the corner of Rue de Zurich and Rue des Battelier. They went to Café Treff together.

A coffee, some soup and, above all, finally some warmth awaited Jimmy. After that, they parted ways for the time being. Jimmy could feel the tiredness and tension slowly slipping away from him, but the question of what he was actually doing here remained. Strasbourg was beautiful, but he wasn't here to enjoy the city. He was on the run - from himself, from the expectations of others, from a life that was slipping away from him more and more.

It had become dark in the meantime. While wandering around, Jimmy noticed a container on the Boulevard de la Victoire, near the Lycée Technologique Jean Ro-stand. Something was being built at the college. "I'll see if I can sleep there later, when there's no one else here," he thought.

When Jimmy returned later, the container door was unlocked. He lay down in the anteroom but had a severe coughing fit. Suddenly the door to the back room, a crack. Jimmy's heart dropped into his pants. It turned out that there was already a couple there who had had the same idea as him. They warned him urgently not to stay.

The pounding in his chest and the sweat of fear were slow to subside. Jimmy was frustrated, tired and at the end of his . At some point, he let himself slide into a doorway. "This night really is the coldest of my life," thought Jimmy and finally fell asleep.

If only he had known what was to come ...

Kicks woke him up. Jimmy instinctively reached for his dog tag on his neck and with his other hand for the leg that had kicked him. The concierge faltered. Jimmy hurried out of the entrance, not without making a mental note of the door. "There should be a circle with an arrow and a sign that looks like a mountain," he thought, memorizing the crook's tins he had seen somewhere.

When he arrived at the station, he used the last of his change to buy a coffee and sat down on the same bench where he had first met Pasquale. He watched the people walking past and thought about his situation.

"If I go home black now, I'll end up back in station 13 one way or another."

"Why is he looking at me like that? Has he never seen a finished person before?"

"That one nice."

"I don't really want to beg, but a coffee would be really good right now."

"Hmm, if I can hold out until the evening and sleep somewhere maybe that will work?"

Suddenly he heard a familiar voice: "Hello Jimmy, where have you been?" Pasquale was standing in front of him. Jimmy told him the story of the previous night and the morning. Pasquale listened attentively, nodded from time to time and finally offered Jimmy a cigarette. 'Come on,' he said, "We'll find a way. You're not alone."

"When summer starts, I'm going to Madrid. I'm changing houses!" said Pasquale with a broad grin, as if he was dreaming of a new life. Jimmy looked at him skeptically. Jimmy asked in amazement: "What do I want in Spain? Aren't you tired of living on the streets? I've been living like a dog for a few days now and I'm at the end of my tether." Pasquale shrugged his shoulders. "I don't have a choice. After twenty years, do you think I can go back anywhere?"

Jimmy nodded thoughtfully and then suggested: "Why don't we go south?" Pasquale shook his head. "I know the places in Madrid."

Jimmy laughed softly. "And I'm not slowing you down?" Pasquale grinned tiredly. "If you bother me, I'll tell you! Do you fancy some wine?" Jimmy nodded wearily. "Red wine, yes, the white doesn't suit me." Pasquale replied: "I've got claims too."

They didn't go far. Pasquale entered a small store and soon came out with a bottle of red wine. Back at the station, they sat down on their familiar bench and drank more in silence than in conversation. Slowly the bottle of red wine emptied as the night grew colder. Jimmy told Pasquale: "I'm an idiot, I didn't bring anything to eat yesterday. I went back to where we been last time, but everything was closed." Pasquale patted Jimmy reassuringly on the shoulder.

"They open every two days. Later, we'll eat in peace. I'll show you a few things."

At this time, the French railroad company was on strike. All the trains were parked in and around the station. Nearby, Pasquale had his "bunker", a hidden place that he knew well. He had also mastered the art of opening the doors of the carriages. They spent the first night in different cabins. Jimmy slept fitfully and was plagued by nightmares. "Get rid of me, you wankers!" shouted as he woke up in a cold sweat. Pasquale was already on his way. It was still dark, but Jimmy could already see a glimmer of dawn on the horizon.

The next day was characterized by cold, constant running, two coffees and a croissant. Because of the sudden escape, Jimmy was dressed far too thinly and had no blanket. When Pasquale made a joint on the train in the evening, Jimmy recklessly dismissed any fear. But

Woken in his sleep, Pasquale attacked him. Jimmy felt the situation coming to a head again and wondered whether he would ever be able to break out of this cycle.

The author leaves what exactly happened that night in the dark in order to preserve the dignity of all those involved. It is a moment that will not be described in detail, a section of the story that deliberately remains unclear. Sometimes, it seems, there are things that are too personal, too painful or too complex to put into words. Jimmy himself would later remain silent about it, as if he wanted to erase those hours from his memory. Perhaps it was a moment of weakness, despair or even violence – who knows? The truth remains hidden, like a shadow that cannot be grasped.

The next morning, Jimmy was alone. Pasquale had disappeared, and the cabin of the train where they had spent the night was empty. Jimmy felt shattered, both physically and emotionally. The cold of the night had eaten into his bones, and the events of the past few hours weighed heavily on him. He didn't know if he would ever see Pasquale again, and somehow, he didn't care. It was as if this encounter, this night, was another piece of the puzzle in his chaotic life that he would prefer to forget. Jimmy left the train and staggered back into the cold of the early morning. The station was silent, almost ghostly in its emptiness. He sat down on a bench by the station and stared at the tracks. The question of what would come next hung heavily in the air. Should he keep running? Should he try to go home? Or should he just stay here and wait and see what fate had in store for him?

At that moment, Jimmy felt fatigue and despair overtook him. He was at the end of his tether, at the end of his will to carry on. But somewhere deep inside him, there was a spark that

not extinguished - a little bit of hope that kept him going. It was probably the only reason why he 't given up yet. Maybe it was the only reason he was still here at all. Jimmy closed his eyes and took a deep breath. The cold enveloped him like a cloak, but he hardly felt it anymore. He was tired, so tired. But he knew he couldn't give up. Not now. Not here. So he stood up, stretched and got ready for the next step - whatever that might be.

## Chapter 14: Brumat

Jimmy's stomach growled and rumbled incessantly. The red wine from the previous night had not satisfied his hunger, his stomach hurtled stronger. His hunger was endless, and he couldn't stop thinking about food. There had to be something to eat somewhere. The day care center should be open now, Jimmy thought. So he hurried to the Rue de Fritz-Kieniger.

When he arrived, it was time for a shower. After a coffee and a piece of bread, which he got at the day care center, he heard a noise outside. Curious, he left his rucksack inside and watched the spectacle. Someone had just been cuffed outside the daycare center. Jimmy watched the scene with mixed feelings. "Hmm, should I go back home?" he thought. "Yes!" answered the invisible voice in his head.

But instead of hiding, Jimmy almost defiantly got behind the wheel of the police car. Behind him, the other arrestee and the blonde policewoman were having a heated conversation. The handcuffs clicked faster than Jimmy had expected. "That was quick," he thought as he felt the cold metal rings around his wrists.

At the police station in the waiting area, the other detainee scrawled angrily: "Turkey, do it to a turkey." - "Whore, you're a whore." There was something about the blonde policewoman that really impressed Jimmy, but she was clearly out of his league. "Depends on how hard she squeezes me when she hugs me," Jimmy thought as the blonde policewoman sat on the reclining other and said things Jimmy barely understood. Only fragments reached him: "You brought this on yourself. Stop it and shut up. It's your turn in a minute."

The cells were arranged in a circle, with a glass front to the center. There was no blanket, no mattress, no wood - just cold concrete. Jimmy sat down on the floor and tried to reflect through the night as best he could. The concrete was hard and cold, and he couldn't stop thinking about food.

The next morning, Jimmy asked the police officers for a map of the city. He explained his situation and asked if he could go home. "That's too much trouble," they said. He could have the map and next night he should stay at the homeless shelter. Jimmy nodded wearily. "No sooner said than done," he thought.

But at around three in the morning, the blonde policewoman and her colleague were suddenly standing by his bed in the homeless shelter. "We'll help you," she said. Jimmy was skeptical. "Fiddlesticks," he thought when he arrived at the clinic shortly afterwards. He was left alone on the first day. Smoking was not possible, and the hours dragged on endlessly.

The next morning, he was offered an interview. "You can rest for now and we'll organize everything. But you have to take the medication," they said. Jimmy tried to explain to them that this was exactly why he had gone out onto the street. He'd had enough of the streets, but he didn't feel like taking medication. "I don't want to take any more pills," he said resolutely. But the looks on the doctors' and nurses' faces made him feel that his words were barely being heard.

"So, we have to move her," said one of the nurses with a resigned sigh. Jimmy only half heard the sentence, but he sensed that something was wrong. Arriving in Brumat, he realized that this place was similar to Station 13 - only with stricter rules. Smoking was only allowed at certain times: in the morning after breakfast in the outdoor area, after lunch and after dinner. Around 4 p.m.



the smoking room was unlocked, and that was the only time you talk to fellow patients undisturbed. Jimmy didn't trust anyone - except Celine, George and the woman who always had a lemonade with her.

On the second day, Celine was completely distraught when she saw the carers. "I don't want any medication. I'm pregnant," she said in a trembling voice. Jimmy, who was standing nearby, felt a lump forming in his throat. "Oh my God, where am I?" he thought. "I have to get out of here. Help, my ass! They don't even stop at the unborn."

After lunch, while smoking in the outdoor enclosure, Jimmy tried to run off. The woman with the lemonade had distracted the keeper and Jimmy seized the opportunity. He jumped onto the fence, pulled himself up and was over it. The nurse, who had more on her ribs, shouted desperately: "Stop!" But Jimmy strolled leisurely to the road and held his thumb out. The first car that came along stopped. Inside sat the other orderly on duty. "Come on, get in. Don't do anything stupid. I thought you wanted to go home," he said with a tired smile.

Back at the ward, Jimmy explained what had happened to Celine and asked to speak to the doctor. When the conversation was over, the doctor told Jimmy he would help him to go home but told him that he now had to go to the "hole". "I have no choice," she added.

The isolation cell was a place that reminded Jimmy of a cold, sterile bunker. It had a small anteroom with a toilet and a shower, which also functioned as an air lock. The inner cell was separated by a door with a small window, behind which a bright light burned day and night. In the cell itself there was a plastic mattress, a plastic blanket and a plastic chamber pot. Those who had hoped for rubber were disappointed - apart from the "blanket", nothing was made of this material.

Material. The outer wall was made of glass blocks, which made it impossible to sleep during the day. At night, the light penetrated through the airlock door. The floor and walls were lined with white to beige tiles. The exercise area was limited to about three by two meters. Nothing more than push-ups and futile attempts to sleep were possible.

When Jimmy was let out after what felt like three days, he asked for a cigarette. "I need to calm down. Can I please go to the smoking room?" he asked. But the answer was curt: "No, no cigarette." Pissed off, Jimmy went to his room and found a forgotten cigarette in the bedside table. "Okay, where do I smoke it now?" he mumbled. "I'll ask again."

When he came back, holding the cigarette in his hand, a nurse tried to take it away from him. Jimmy ran into the kitchen. "At least two puffs. They'll put me back in anyway," he thought desperately. After what felt like a week and a half, he was finally allowed to take a shower and was released from isolation. But on the day, he was transported back to Station 13, something happened that shook Jimmy to the core. Ten minutes before the trolley, the pregnant Celine was locked in the very room from which Jimmy had just escaped. Jimmy could only watch helplessly as the door slammed shut behind her. "This is no place for help," he thought bitterly. "This is a place that breaks people."

## Chapter 15: A trip to Moabit

Since he had been released from the clinic, Jimmy had been further and further into himself. The days lost their contour, becoming a monotonous flow of rituals that gave him a touch of structure, but not enough really pull him back into life. He spent most of his time in his room, where the hours on, while outside the world seemed to go on as usual. Only in the evenings did he appear for a short time at his parents' dining table, not speaking much, eating in silence, occasionally nodding to a casual comment from his mother before retreating back into his usual isolation.

The days and nights passed without any real change. He got up in the morning, made coffee, smoked his first cigarette of the day and switched on the radio, which kept him in a kind of half-sleep with its eternal scraps of news and music. Afterwards, he mechanically leafed through the newspaper as if he were looking for a hidden message that could give him some meaning or direction in his life. Walking was now as much a part of his daily routine as making coffee again and waiting for calls that he knew never came. In the hours in between, he wrote poetry, listened to music, and played with sounds until his eyes grew square from staring at screens. He had long since worn his parents down with his irritable silence and restlessness. Then came dinner, going to bed, the nightmarish nights. And the next day, it all started all over again.

But that night was different.

A dream woke him from his sleep. Inside him, he raced through an endless labyrinth, narrow corridors, branching paths, and repeated turn-offs that led to dead ends. There had to be an exit somewhere, but the faster he ran, the further he got.

He was in a cold sweat, panting, the words echoing in his head: *"I have to get out of here!"*

It was the end of October 2006, and as he stared at his glowing digital clock, he knew he would never fall asleep again. The walls of his room suddenly narrowed, as if the room had contracted during the night. The thought of simply go for a walk to clear his head was immediate, but his desire went further.

"How big do you want the walk to be?" he murmured into the darkness. It was just a rhetorical question. Actually, he had long known where he wanted to go. He thought of Giovanni, his old friend whom he hadn't seen for far too long. If he called him now, he probably wouldn't him out the door immediately. They had known each other for years and shared too many memories for Jimmy really regret an unannounced arrival. But a phone call in the middle of the night was not an option - not even for their friendship.

But just drive off? Why not?

He pulled himself together, got dressed and left the house. The cool night air felt liberating as he walked through the empty streets.

His first stop was the airport. Not because he was actually planning a trip - his bank account wouldn't have been big enough for that anyway - but because it was one of the few places where you could something to eat at any time of day or night. He sat in the bright, sterile hall of the terminal restaurant with a steaming cup of coffee and a dry sandwich, observing the few travelers who were out and about at such an early hour. Some looked exhausted, others were excited or tense. Most of them were on the move. He envied her.

But there wasn't enough time for a flight. So he decided to go in a different direction.

He bought a ticket to Berlin. Central Station.

It was a cheap ticket, just enough to leave him enough money for a return journey. As he boarded the train, he felt something like anticipation for the first time in a long time. A different city, a different picture, four different walls. Maybe that was exactly what he needed to keep from losing his mind for good.

When he arrived at Berlin Central Station at a quarter to six, the city was still bathed in the cold, pale twilight of an early Saturday morning. The streetlights were still burning, but their light already seemed dull and unnecessary in the growing dawn. The people moving through the station at this time of day were either in a hurry or looked as if they had pulled an all-nighter.

Jimmy stepped up to a large glass wall and let his gaze wander into the void. The thought suddenly occurred to him: *Maybe I'll take a look at the Bundestag first.*

He was tired, his head felt heavy from the night's sleep, and for a moment he just let himself drift. It was only when movement stirred behind the glass that he realized he was not alone. A policeman was sitting at a desk on the other side of the glass. The man looked directly at him, with an expression somewhere between irritation and suspicious curiosity.

Jimmy only now realized that he had been staring into space, lost in thought, the whole time - right where an officer was sitting who now clearly had his eyes on him.

And then he came out of his office.

*What is this about?*

"Good afternoon, please come with me."

Jimmy frowned. "Good morning. Has something happened?"

The policeman looked at him without answering directly. "We'll see in a moment."

He felt an annoyed heaviness spreading through him. *Oh no, what are you doing now?*

Inside, his rucksack was searched and his papers checked. It was all routine - until one of the officers in front of him with a small find in his hand. A tiny crumb of hashish, no bigger than the tip of his little finger. Maybe 0.1 to 0.3 grams.

Jimmy stared at it.

*I'm an idiot.*

He had quit two months ago, but instead of throwing the last of it away, he had kept it. *You never know*, he had told himself.

Well. Now he knew.

"Okay, please come with me."

It wasn't long before he found himself in a holding cell. The minutes passed agonizingly slowly, and his body reported another, more urgent reality: he had to go to the loo.

He rang the bell.

"What's up?"

"I have to go to the bathroom. Please. Urgently."

"Not possible now."

Jimmy groaned. "Okay, I'll pee in the cup then."

He had been given a cup of water during the search. Now he filled it with was left - but a few drops missed the mark.

He rang the bell.

"Well, the cup is full, but I really have to pee."

The door finally opened.

"Throw the cup in the bin."

Jimmy grimaced. "There's pee in there."

"Throw it away anyway and come with me."

On the way to Moabit, he heard the driver say over the radio: "*I have a Strobel here.*"

What the hell was that supposed to mean?

When he arrived at Turmstraße 21 in Moabit, Jimmy recognized the place immediately. *Oh no, not again.*

He already knew what to expect. The barred balcony where people smoked, the view of the famous prison.

And six months later an invoice for fifty euros for cleaning a holding cell.

The reader should keep this in mind for the next chapter.

## Chapter 16: A night at Alex

From his room, Jimmy could see the television tower. It stood there like a silent sentinel over the city, its red and white light flashing at regular intervals and drawing Jimmy's gaze upwards again and again. It was a reassuring feeling to have this fixed point in the sky - something constant at a time when everything felt uncontrollable to him.

There were only eight other patients on the ward, a manageable group that nevertheless consisted of characters who gave Jimmy the feeling that he had landed in a bizarre theater performance. There was Conny, who argued with Maria until one of them went into her room in a huff. Maria, who kept listening to the same scratched CD of Robbie Williams with a mixture of pride and vulnerability. Chris, who usually sat quietly in the corner and stared into the air in thought. Hashem, who persuaded Jimmy to pray with him one evening with a seriousness that brooked no objection. Bejan, who sat tirelessly on a chair, bouncing his knees so nervously that Jimmy could hardly bear it. Then there was the woman with the party mood, who took every opportunity to throw her energy around the corridors of the station, and the rocker with the leather jacket, who gave the impression that he'd ended up here by mistake because he'd had a run-in with a bouncer. And finally, there was the mute. He wasn't really mute, but he hardly spoke a word - at least not to Jimmy.

On the second day, Jimmy entered the lounge and immediately witnessed a brief exchange of words.

"You're clever," Maria said to Conny with a mixture of irony and mockery, turned on her heel and disappeared into her room. As soon as the door closed behind her, her



Room Robbie Williams' voice droned on in an endless loop. The CD obviously had a skip, because a passage kept repeating itself with little hitches that turned the song into a strange sound epic.

Jimmy sat down, leaned against the wall and unconsciously began to his foot to the rhythm of the hangers. It was as if his mind was trying to complete the melody that kept interrupting itself. After a while, he closed his eyes and thought to himself: *Finally play it to the end.*

Annoyed, he stood up and strolled in the direction of the exit. A nurse was standing in front of the ward exit, counting the patients. Some were allowed out into the garden, a privilege that Jimmy 't quite figured out yet. He joined the patients waiting and took the opportunity to ask a question.

"Can I come out for a moment? I'd like to get some cigarettes."

The keeper looked at him briefly and replied dryly: "Only the good ones get into the garden." Jimmy shrugged his shoulders. It was news to him that he wasn't one of the *good guys*.

The next day he tried again. Same question, same answer. And no change the day after that either. Jimmy had slowly had enough of this game.

When he came into the dining room on the third day with a pile of plates, he loudly: "I'm about to have a stag party."

His voice was calm, but inside he was seething.

"I've been here for three days now and haven't seen a doctor, a judge or anyone else. I want to talk to someone now!"

One of the nurses who had been watching Jimmy over the last few days raised her hands placatingly.

"The doctor is not in the house," she explained. "I promise you that you can speak to him tomorrow."

Jimmy lowered the plates and looked her straight in the eye. "If that's not true, I'm playing bachelorette party."

The next day, the nurse kept her word. Jimmy was allowed to speak to the doctor. The conversation was brief and unexciting - a bureaucratic necessity that didn't lead to any deeper insights but at least had the one result he had hoped for: he was allowed out. As soon as he was out, he bought a pizza and a pack of cigarettes at the first pizzeria he found. As he scribbled on the pizza box and felt the warmth of the carton on his thighs, he knew that he would sleep more soundly if he had an answer to one of his most pressing questions at the time. He drove to the main station and went to the police station. He could see through the glass that the police officer who had cuffed him was not there.

*Well, I'll be back. I want to know what this is all about. I'll ask politely. As politely as he did. I'll say please. And then he should explain to me what this omnipotent behavior is all about.*

He returned to the clinic but arrived fifteen minutes late.

"The pizza had taken so long," he lied casually.

"It's all right," said the nurse and let him back in.

But it was the same story the next day. The policeman wasn't there again.

*He must be on vacation*, thought Jimmy as he sat down at the bus stop, disappointed. The sun had long since set and the streets were awakening to nightlife.

It was now 6 pm. He stopped brooding.

*Now I'm two hours late.*

A glance at the twinkling lights of the city made him smile.

*Now I can just look at Berlin.*

Night fell and the television tower shone above the streets.

His first stop was the roof of the Bundestag.

Jimmy stood on the roof of the Bundestag and let his gaze wander over the city. The television tower rose into sky like a steel phallic symbol, the Brandenburg Gate lay in the distance in the warm light of the streetlamps, and below him people moved around like little figures in a giant playing field. He was tired, but that night he felt restless - too much adrenaline, too many thoughts buzzing around in his head.

He toyed with the idea of playing a joke. Maybe he could act as an impromptu bouncer at the entrance to the restaurant on the roof. *"Sorry, the restaurant is closed today. Closed company, as always. And no, my name isn't Karlsson on the Roof, even though I look like one - just fifteen years older."*

A small grin flitted across his face. But it remained a play of thoughts. When he reached the bottom, another idea came to him.

A black limousine was parked nearby. Without giving it much thought, he opened the door, sat inside and said in a confident tone:

"Once to the Ritz, please. And have the champagne chilled. Angie will be here soon."

The driver turned around to him with her eyes wide open. Jimmy could almost feel her horror.

"She apparently doesn't even know the way," he thought with amusement and

got out again. *"I think I'd better take the next cab."*

He bought a day ticket and got on the subway at *Unter den Linden* station. The night in Berlin had a strange magic - a mixture of freedom, anonymity and a latent restlessness that drove him on and on.

He got off at Alexanderplatz. He for a moment let his gaze wander over the huge area. People were standing together in small groups; tourists were taking photos, and someone was sleeping on a bench somewhere. He crossed his arms and looked at the monolith.

*"And that's supposed to be so great? A phallic symbol for megalomaniacs."*

He could never decide whether he found Berlin fascinating or exhausting.

At some point during the night, he couldn't remember exactly how he found himself in front of *Rosis*. The music was coming out of the building in muffled bass, and he could already tell from the door that drum & bass was playing here.

*"Okay, I'm not completely wrong here."*

He entered and let the music carry him away but soon realized that something was wrong. His body felt strange; his thoughts blurred. The medication he had been taking for some time was beginning to make itself felt.

*"I have to eat something."*

He left the club and walked a few streets until he stopped in front of a small, cozy pub. It was warmly lit and he could see a few couples and small groups sitting at the tables through the windows.

*"If I had a girlfriend, I would invite her here."*

He ordered a vegetarian meal with a glass of white wine and took his time. The taste of the warm food did him good and calmed him down. Finally, he treated himself to a strong coffee while he thought.

He had had enough for that night. He decided to go back to the clinic and sleep there. When he arrived back at the station, he was immediately intercepted by one of the nurses.

"Where did you come from? We worried."

Jimmy smiled calmly. "I was relaxing. That's actually what I came to Berlin for. I only had one beer, so don't worry. Everything's okay."

The answer seemed to reassure the nurse.

Later, on the balcony, he met the **rocker**, whose name he knew to this day but would never be revealed. They smoked a cigarette together and had one of those conversations that didn't have to be profound to be memorable.

That night was strange. But it was over.

As usual, Jimmy slept through breakfast. This time, however, so thoroughly that even lunch was almost over when he finally got up. He quickly grabbed something to eat before joining Hashem and Bejan, who made their way out.

They went to a nearby apartment. As they entered, Jimmy paused in the hallway, unsure whether he wanted to venture further in. He watched as Hashem and Bejan looked around, talking briefly to someone. After a while, they came back to him.

"Come on, let's go. I have something to show you."

Jimmy followed them silently through the streets.

After a while, they reached a small, almost hidden cemetery. As soon as they were there, Hashem began to build a bag.

Jimmy looked at him and thought, *"Well, if I do this now, I'll drive another movie."*

But before he could say anything, Hashem was already holding it out to him. Jimmy took a puff. another. At the same moment he inhaled, he saw Bejan running back and forth between the graves in the corner of his eye. A sight that made him shiver in an unpleasant way.

He felt something tightening inside him. A dark, oppressive feeling that crept through his bones.

*"Never. Never. Never. Never. Never. Again."*

He hastily pushed the bag back into Hashem's hand.

When he returned to the station, he was approached directly by a nurse at the entrance.

"Someone called for you."

Jimmy frowned. "Who does? Nobody knows I'm here."

The nurse hesitated briefly before answering.

"Your mother. Tell her to call me back."

With a lump in his throat, Jimmy reached for the phone.

When he heard his mother's voice, he felt a knot tighten in his stomach.

His **cousin had died**.

He held the receiver firmly in his hand, listening to the words, letting them flow through him without really being able to process them.

Only one sentence echoed in his head:

*"Never. Never. Never. Never. Again."*

He entered the smoking room in a daze.

Chris raised his head and scrutinized him.

"What's going on?" he asked.

Jimmy opened his mouth, but no words came out.

Then Chris said, "Just a minute, I'll get something. Wait a minute." And came back with that text:

## **Body words**

In the beginning there was a word that was actually a double word.

The task of the word was one ... the shell for another

Be the word,

protect it, hug it, hold it, love it.

This other word was soul. Deep within this one word was another word.

This word was I.

But one me became several. In the beginning, everything was still in balance. At the plumb line, these 'I's oscillated in that order:

Superego

Ego

I

Underneath it was another ego, which disguised itself under the name of subconsciousness.

At some point, the egos swung so much that the plumb line suddenly snapped. This caused them to lose their grip. They lost the anchor point after they had aligned everything,

also themselves.

Panicked and completely disoriented, they ran in all directions apart ...

and tore apart the last remnants that held them together.

Now everyone was shouting: "How can I get back on track?

How do I mend a torn and disoriented soul? The word that stood at the beginning became many.

Body words became body words.

There was a lot of work waiting for these body words. The words that live in my body;

At first I usually feel them stirring in my stomach, not all of them, some stick to my appendix,

the others move leisurely across the chest to the forehead,

and then, there and then - to settle - to nest under my mop of hair,



in my head, in my  
brain.

The words that live in my body, that also  
move towards my heart, they are never  
still,

they must always strive for freedom. Are  
they pushy,

I try to talk them down, but they  
resist,

by sweeping over my scalp like whirlwinds - floating around me,  
now and then, on my tongue, the words  
that live in my body.

They had a lot to do. Somehow they were to be pitied.

Without knowing why or wherefore, more out of a sense of duty  
conscious, Jimmy stammered, "Thank you."

Chris then ended his linguistic digression:

"We have to Sisyphus as a happy man."

*And they still haven't finished everything in order. Let's hope that they  
will manage it one day.*

Astonished and speechless, Jimmy looked at Chris.

Chris then recited the following:

*Normal enough to be schizophrenic Our  
love is a reproach  
our emptiness is a mirror  
We never reveal a secret and  
never give a letter and seal Our  
tears are made of steel and our  
fists are made of wax  
in conspiratorial will we drink ether to false salmon our dream  
castle firmly anchored we live in flight our longing will be the  
return home to every addiction to existence normal enough to be  
schizophrenic  
Our love is a reproach Our  
emptiness is a mirror  
We never reveal a secret And  
never give a letter and seal*

Just then, the woman in the party mood stormed into the smoking room, put the boombox she was holding down near the socket and thought it was probably the right time for a party.

Exasperated, Jimmy out the cigarette, which he had not so much smoked as held onto, and went to his room and went to sleep.

## Chapter 17: Nutoka with peanut cream

When Jimmy opened his eyes the next morning, Giovanni was already standing by his bed. For a moment, he thought he was dreaming - it had been years since they had last seen each other. But the familiar silhouette in the morning twilight left no room for doubt. His mother had probably called him and asked for help. Jimmy didn't know whether it had been Giovanni or her who had spoken to the hospital staff. But the outcome was clear: he was allowed to leave the clinic - with Giovanni by his side.

Without much ado, he packed up his few things and they left the building together. The cold Berlin air hit Jimmy as they drove through the city. It was quiet in Giovanni's car, but it wasn't an uncomfortable silence. Rather, it was the kind of silence that exists between old friends - full of unspoken words, but free of the need to say them immediately. It had been a long time since they had last seen each other, but their friendship stretched back to the early years of their childhood. They had known each other since kindergarten, had had countless adventures together and had been in the scouts together. They had shared more memories than they could catch up on in a single conversation.

When they arrived at Giovanni's apartment, they made themselves comfortable. Old stories surfaced as if they had been waiting for this moment. "Do you still remember the *Solala summer camp trip*?" Jimmy asked with a grin as he sank into Giovanni's sofa.

Giovanni laughed dryly. "How could I forget that?"

It was this one trip where Jimmy almost crashed in the Alps in Alsace. They had planned to go on a forced march to a remote lake at the time, exhausted, hungry, legs heavy with

of the endless route. And then there was that moment when Jimmy took nearly the wrong step - a brief moment of carelessness and he would have tumbled down the rock face.

The memory was heavy in the air. But before the conversation got too serious, Jimmy steered it in a different direction. "Tell me, do you still have the old video we made back then, before our rover group finally disbanded?"

Giovanni raised his eyebrows. "What do you want with that?"

Jimmy hesitated briefly. This video had been made at a time he would have preferred to forget. It was the time when his girlfriend at the time had cheated on him - with a guy from Jimmy's math class. The guy had later threatened him with a gun. It was one of those memories that lurked somewhere in the back of his mind, never really fading, but always forcing its way into his consciousness when he least expected it.

"I just want to look at it again," Jimmy finally said. Giovanni sighed and stood up. "You're welcome to. I can turn it on for you in the other room, but I'm definitely not watching that shit again."

While the video was playing, Jimmy delved deep into the past. Two months before the recordings, the group had set off for France together - with two cars packed full of tents, provisions and plenty of youthful exuberance. But the first big discussion had already broken out on the second day.

The original destination had been the Pyrenees, but not everyone agreed. A heated debate broke out about whether they should

should stick to the planned route or take a different direction. In the end, a decision was made in an unconventional way: with a game of chess.

Jimmy's ex-girlfriend at the time was in the supporters' car. He himself was traveling with the others. As Jimmy had been playing chess against his father since he was a child, he was chosen as the player in his group. He won the game with impressive ease. But instead of accepting defeat, the supporters defiantly declared that they would go to the Pyrenees anyway. Jimmy's group, on the other hand, decided to turn back. A mistake, as it later turned out.

Instead of resting for another night, the others insisted to the return journey. Navigation devices were still rare in those days, so Jimmy was entrusted with the task of showing the way using a paper map. While the others took turns driving and at least took a nap in between, Jimmy had to stay awake all night to keep them on course.

But at some point, when they had already left Nice behind them, the inevitable moment came.

"You have to drive now too," the others demanded.

"I can't," Jimmy tried to defend himself. "I'm completely through."

But they didn't let up. They pushed him again and again until he finally gave in.

It couldn't go well.

Shortly before the border, in a small village it happened: a moment of carelessness and Jimmy overlooked a small traffic circle. He drove straight over it and heard the rude crash under the car. A cable had come loose, and now only the third gear was still working.

At the border, they stopped at a service station and tried to repair the damage. But the car was damaged.

In the end, they made it home - but the car had engine and gearbox damage.

This trip had caused the group to break up for good. The debriefing after their return was nothing more than a formality. They had decided to set up a small video box in which everyone could anonymously leave their opinion on what should have been done differently in the group.

And now, years later, Jimmy was sitting here looking at the result. When the video ended, he took a deep breath, stood up and returned to the other room.

Giovanni looked at him. "So, did it do you do any good?"  
Jimmy dropped onto the sofa and ran his hand tiredly over his face.  
"No, not really. Rather the opposite."

The next morning, they had breakfast together.

"Nutoka or peanut butter?" Giovanni asked as he tucked into his bread.  
lubricated.

Jimmy grinned tiredly. "If it's all right, it's all right. Both."

Jimmy's mother arrived in Berlin later that day.

They would start their return journey together the next morning.

To be continued ...  
or better not to be continued!

## Epilogue: Robber's tale? No, thank you!

Words have a strange power. They can obscure things, shroud them like thick fog, hold your breath for a moment, distort reality - or reveal it more brutally and unsparingly than you wish. Sometimes they get caught up in contradictions, go round in circles, become judgments, prejudices, judgments made up, always knowing better, viewed from the outside without ever really having been there. You only see what your own imagination allows you to see. The cry into the wind often only reaches the person you don't actually mean.

When I write "*to be continued*", it's not to keep a story artificially alive, but to show that there are things that don't end as long as you keep touching them, as long as you don't stop digging into wounds that never heal. That there are places from which you can never completely escape, even if the doors are open at some point. Anyone who has ever been shackled - with words, with diagnoses, with sedation so deep that all that remains is a babbling echo of one's own thanks - knows that there was no "easy" way to go on living. Sometimes I can still see it inside me. The shadows that haunt me in my dreams, the memories that catch up with me, no matter how hard I try to escape them. And that's why I talk about breaking the wheel, because there is no single word that could ever describe what it means to have been murdered inside.

As you readers may have already realized, Jimmy is not my real name. The truth is: I have tried to look at my story from an outside perspective. I have changed the names to protect those who were on this journey with me. But the memories - they are real. I have written down what I remember, what happened to me, what I experienced myself.

But who am I?

This question is not so easy to answer. I am many things to myself that I am not to others.

Perhaps that is the most honest answer I can give.

You can only approach the truth up to a certain point. At some point, the pain becomes too intense to go any further.

I could list what I have done in my life. I could list all the things I *haven't* done. But in the end, it doesn't matter.

I stopped believing that what I was trying to do had any real value for others a long time ago. It used to be important for me to know that my life wasn't just meaninglessly passing others by. That there are people who don't *literally* miss out on everything. That perhaps I could have become *something else* - something other than this lonely, embittered, struggling for attention once hopeful, now almost 37-year-old, psychiatrized and full of plans in his youth that never became reality.

I used to want to work in psychiatry. Today, I wish I could shake off the feeling of being nothing more than a stranded case myself. I am a man who has often withdrawn. And if you long enough, there comes a point when you ask yourself: *what's left?*

At least a few words. Words that hold on to what I could no longer hold on to myself.



I would like to take a brief look back at my last visit to 13.2 - and the visit afterwards, which showed me once and for all that this door would not be open to me any time soon.

Then comes the end. Perhaps  
only for the time being.

Because sometimes I get the urge to record something. But as I'm planning to print this text out - maybe even put it into book form - I'll say goodbye at this point.

From you, dear reader.

From you, dear reader.

## Why "Robber's tale? No, thank you!"?

I could have just written "*epilogue*".

But I wanted to make it clear from the start that in my eyes - officially diagnosed as schizophrenic - this text is closer to the truth than any made-up story could ever be.

This is not *a robber's tale*.

I have seen six guns in my life.

And I don't mean metaphorical words shot into the air.

I mean real weapons.

I encountered the first one on a New Year's Eve. But I actually have to go back even further.

Even as a child, I often stood outside. I preferred to observe rather than actively participate. I stood out - so much so that the nursery schoolteachers asked my parents if I was autistic.

An old man lived near our kindergarten, known around town as Krämer-Willi. Always walking with a stick, introverted, he walked along the street as if he was no longer part of this world. We children only knew one thing: when he passed by and you said quietly: "Hey Willi, the Russians are coming", his stick became a weapon.

Back then, we didn't know what war does to a person.

We only knew that, small as we were, we could frighten an old, helpless, traumatized man so much that he would forget who he was.

Today I'm the village idiot.

But back to Krämer-Willi and the first pistol. At some point, we had overdone it.

And one day the old man didn't just come with his stick.  
He came with a gun. At least that's how it seemed to me as a small child.  
Suddenly he was standing in kindergarten - in my child's eyes, with a pill in his hand.

At the time, I didn't realize what was happening. It wasn't until years later, another New Year's Eve, I realized what fear of a gun really meant.

In 1997, there was a night that stayed with me to this day.  
There was a party cellar in Kelsterbach with real airplane seats. I had invited myself and a friend - but because I no longer knew exactly where this cellar was, we wandered the streets for an hour and a half to find it.

When we finally arrived, the first corks were popping. The cheap booze flowed freely and at some point, I was so drunk that I didn't know whether I wanted to sleep or keep partying.

I staggered to the door, opened it - and saw someone outside wielding a Deagle. A weapon I knew from video games.

But this time it wasn't just a game.

I was drunk, but the reality hit me cold.

*This thing is real.*

And then:

**"Bang. Bang. Bang."**

Until the magazine was empty.

Since that moment, I hate every banging noise. I hate firecrackers.

I hate shooting.

I hate the senseless barking that people use to draw attention to themselves.

Maybe I should never have told this story. But it is a part of me.

Just like all the other things I've tried to suppress.

There are things that burn in you, even when time has long since passed them by. Things that have dug deep into the flesh of your memory, so deep that they never really disappear. You can bury them, cover them up with words, give them other names - but they remain there.

When I see adults shouting at children, scaring them or using absurd methods "teach them respect", something boils up inside me. An impulse that makes me forget who I am for a moment.

I'd love to lash out and hit these mostly old, male ignorants in the face. Not out of a desire for violence, but out of anger that has built up over the years. Maybe then they would finally understand that fear is never a game, that shock and pain are not humor, no matter how much sarcasm they themselves like.

A child never deserves fear. No one deserves fear.

It's enough that I had them. I don't wish it on anyone.

Even if no bullet ever hit me, the shock of the unexpected haunts me to this day. Even now, as I write these lines, I can feel the echo of all those moments when I was confronted with weapons.

I came across the next gun a week before my first steady girlfriend confessed that she had cheated on me - with, of all people

someone I had given a home, an ear and a promise to help. I had suspected it.

He spent a lot of time with me after seeking advice from his violent father and his drinking mother, especially from my parents. I should have known. I gently hinted to him that suspected something, but before I could say it, he interrupted me.

"Wait a minute," he said, "before you go on talking, I'll show you something."

He reached behind his bed, pulled out first an air rifle and then a pistol.

Two days later she lay naked in my bed, admitted everything and said:

"But you're still lending us your parents' car for the move, aren't you?"

I looked at her.

Then I got up, got dressed and just said:

**"Go fuck yourself."**

I saw the next pistol at station 13.2.

After my first night there, under diazepam and other downers, I staggered out of bed. Sixteen hours of sleep 't given me the rest I needed. As I walked down the corridor, an object caught my eye in the nurses' break room.

It looked like a pistol - but different.

The grip was dark brown, almost black. The barrel was short, red, and unusually wide. Something inside me screamed that something was wrong.

There was a silver flash inside the barrel, as if something was moving inside.

I stood there for a moment, staring at the thing. Then

the nurse came around the corner.

His voice was sharp, authoritative.

**"Go on!"**

I wanted to ask: *"What do you need this for?"*

But I didn't ask the question.

I knew I wouldn't get an answer.

Back at home. A friend told me about a martial arts instructor who had messed with the wrong people. He wanted to help a young man free himself from the clutches of an aggressive drug dealer. The drug dealer shot him dead. I told him about my fear, he told me about his. We sat there, each with our own images in our heads, while the night drew in outside. Shortly before my next and - hopefully - last stay on the 13th.

I was sitting at my parents' kitchen table. Tired, exasperated, irritable. I reached for a handkerchief.

One of the two policewomen who had come to pick me up reflexively grabbed her holster.

**"Hands where I can see them!"** she barked.

Everything was quiet for a moment.

My mother, who had a heart condition, sat frozen at the table. My father looked like he wanted to say something but couldn't get a word out. And what about me? I was tired. Tired from lack of sleep. Tired of the noise in my head. Tired of life.

All I wanted was a damn handkerchief.

But instead, I had to get used to the idea that these two village whores in uniform had unnecessarily frightened not only me, but also my mother.

Because I had a night when I couldn't sleep.

Because a fly seemed like an elephant when I had a headache.

On 13.2 I spoke to a nurse.

I told him things I didn't tell anyone else. When I left, he looked at me and said:

"I hope for the best that we never see each other HERE again."

I almost wanted to answer:

"Goodbye."

But at the last moment, I stopped. I

breathed in.

And then I said:

"Thank you - and always happy to see you again elsewhere."

What I actually meant was:

"Thank you - and if we ever meet again, I'll offer you a beer."

**Just one more thing ...**

I dedicate the last few lines to my little big brother.

Without you, without the knowledge that despite everything - despite having such an idiot like me as a brother - you have mastered your life, sometimes more, sometimes less, but always in the end, none of what I have written here would ever have made it onto paper.

With deep gratitude:

**Thank you for being here.**

Of course, this thanks also goes to all those who were really there when everyone else - who never cared about me anyway - was not.

Carmen, Lelle, Dissy, Guido, Gigetto, Gigi, Isa, Pino, Luca, Hubert, Rolf, Franco, Anna, Johannes, Zacka and Mario ... just to name a few. In the end, it was above all my family and the few real, true people who care about me - or at least must care about me (I haven't been sent packing yet) - who helped me out of the deepest hole.

I would like to thank three women in particular:

**Dissy, Carmen and Isa.**

And yes, not every psychiatrist or psychiatric trainee is an asshole. I hope you can see that in the last few lines.

**Despite everything I would have been spared a few low blows.**

For example, the fixation on my grandma's last birthday. Perhaps my view of some things would be more benevolent today if I had spared such moments.

But don't worry - I'm still undergoing treatment.



**In memory of two lost friends**

There are people you can't just let go. Not because they are still there, but because they have left traces that even death cannot erase.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember two people who passed away in 2020 and 2021. Two lives, two stories that ended too soon in different ways.

**Mario.**

Mario was a former guard, a child in a home, a person never had it easy in life. He became a father who was deprived of his child. His son took his own life because his mother refused to tell him where he could his father, even when he was of age.

Mario was only allowed to know his daughter for one year - just one year - before he died of a brain tumor.

He and I had long, honest, profound conversations shaped me more than I perhaps wanted to admit at the time. It was Mario who finally convinced me that suicide is not only senseless, but above all deeply unjust to those who remain.

**"Then you're giving the last shirt off your back. Nobody wins - except maybe the people you want to punish. But the only one you're really punishing is yourself."**

He was right.

**Thomas.**

Thomas was found dead in his apartment. The official cause of death: heart attack.

But if you look at it closely, it was nothing more than a very slow but successful suicide. After his divorce, he literally drank himself to death.

We had known each other since our youth.

We have spent countless hours together on the radio for over 20 years.

I feel especially sorry for his children, **Maya and Fabio**. Shortly before he died, I tried to talk him out of drinking. I visited him with a dry alcoholic and tried to convince him with his help. But he wouldn't even let us back into his apartment.

His children can no longer make up for lost time.

**Suicide - whether slow or fast - is not a solution.**

No matter how much suffering you have experienced or think you have experienced, the suffering you leave behind is even greater.

Mario had said it perfectly:

**"You'll only give the shirt off your back. Are you crazy? Isn't it enough to have little? Do you want to throw that also away what little you have left?"**

Anyone in their right mind knows that the only answer to this is **"NO!"** must read.

### **The rest?**

Hopefully it will remain private.

I would like to call out to the many unsolicited commentators on my current new journey from the deepest honesty:

**"Kiss my ass! Mind your own business and leave me in peace!"**

I would be ashamed of myself if I were you.

It's stupid enough that I've been ashamed my whole life of things I've never done myself. That went through all that shit. That I had countless sleepless nights because I shouted over the fence as a child in kindergarten:

**"Hey Willi, the Russians are coming!"**

Believe me, I've seen one or two Russian love movies in the meantime.

Yes, the Russians can indeed come.

You can pick apart and reinterpret any letter, no matter how kindly it is meant, you can read whatever you want into every subordinate clause.

And believe me:

At the time, I didn't even know that I could come myself. There is this moment when you realize:

No matter how much you adapt or don't adapt - there will always be someone who will twist your neck to get a rope out of you.

At precisely these moments, I think of the joke about the pigeon:

Two statues have stood in one square for centuries.

One day, an angel comes by and brings her back to life for 15 minutes.

"You have time to do exactly what you've always wanted to do."

The male and female statues look at each other, grin - and disappear together behind a bush.

After seven minutes, they come back beaming with joy. The angel looks at them and says:

"You have eight minutes left. If you want, you can do it again."

The female statue then turns to the male statue and says:

**"This time you hold the pigeon - and I poop on it!"**

To get excited about someone else falling into every imaginable fat hole.  
has stepped on the toe ...

If I were you, I really would have better things to do. Yours  
sincerely,  
your Pope Lino, elected for fun.

**Humor is when you laugh anyway.**

“Helau.”

When I look at the world, it seems as if every night and every day is one endless carnival.

I can be happy, even if I don't sound like it.

Whether voluntarily or sometimes involuntarily - when I listen to the radio or make radio, I often have no choice but to laugh about it.

Joke, come out, I think I'm still in the basement.

Should I laugh?

But believe me: when I hear myself singing, I could almost kill myself sometimes.

Not that I would ever do it.

But there is a point at which self-irony is the last anchor to hold on to before the seriousness of life finally engulfs you.

Do you also want wine from the area near Bingen?

That's what it sounds like when German Romans are supposedly spinning. If I could, I'd bring it back for you.

But I'll stop now and come to the end ...

As if I would go around asking for a donation.

If I have to keep putting my ass on the line, then I would at least like to have the appropriate ID -

One that I could take up and down this damn terrain.

To put it mildly, I'm fed up with asking to be allowed to stay alive.

Long story short ...

I was in it - and that was only because I learned early on not to simply track.

Because for me, freedom means that I can say whatever comes into my head.

That I can decide how I live and where I am.

Are you seriously trying to tell me that because I've never been a good, wanted

was a child,  
Should I remain lonely and naughty to this day?  
An eternal mommy's child, forever of the norm? Fuck that.  
I only said it for one reason: because I didn't know  
what to do.  
OK, I'm crazy.

PS:

**Long live life and freedom! Never give  
up on yourself!**

## Epilogue: The art of lamenting

Finally, I would like to practice once again what I have been accused of most in my life: Skilled suffering, dramatizing and lamenting and telling an anecdote from the time when I finally managed to get an education after all.

My mother was particularly generous with her praise. She often said I had a talent for it. Well then, I don't want to disappoint her. So here is an attempt at a text in which I try my hand at imitating the failed Messiah, the false prophet or the holy devil.

Incidentally, this text was written during a German lesson. It was about language levels - about the question of how to translate "Hansel and Gretel" into youth language. While the noise level in the room steadily increased, my head simply switched to silent mode.

The imposed conformism clashes with the psychiatrized pseudo-anarchist who has been decried as an antichrist.

And he thinks to himself:

*"If only it were simply a clash of cultures."*

The teacher at the blackboard - the preacher in the classroom - does not educate people to think freely because he himself is trapped in pigeonholes.

Instead of opening up the space for knowledge in order to the way out of pigeonholing and into an open society, it only reinforces the old structures.

It would be so simple. A smile, a little looseness, a gesture that shows that youth culture has its own right to sovereignty of definition. But no.



Instead, pigeonholes are thrown around as if there were nothing else. No freedom, no real dialog, just the eternal upholding of the principle of authority.

It leads to the same result every time. The volume increases.

Every exchange fails because of a basic attitude that leaves no room for maneuver.

I'm sitting there in 2015, 36 years old, wondering why I'm back to school. I'm here to avoid jumping the cliff that the system keeps throwing at me.

A system that I once wanted to infiltrate as a student teacher.  
Now I'm sitting here - ironically on the other side of the barricade  
- and ask me whether everything hasn't already been said.  
Haven't we been through this before?  
Wasn't that the 70s? Or was it  
the 60s?

Never mind, we're all familiar with that kind of talk:

*"At some point, I threw the dream of marching through the institutions overboard."*

And me at the same time?

Disillusionment comes in many forms.

Most of the time, the idealist is met with a fatalism tinged with hatred and contempt.

What remains is a dull feeling that has nothing to do with the enthusiasm of the early days. It is the realization that the mills cannot be turned if those who move them do not want them to.

And so we are left with the question:  
What do I actually want? What  
do you want?

Don't you have anything better to do than define yourself by divergence?

If right and wrong exist for you - what are your reasons? Do they stand up to criticism?

Or is it ultimately just an eternal game of perspectives, while I'm lying on the beach far away listening to the waves?

But it whines again, the poorly fed, good conscience. Somewhere in the back of my mind, a voice echoes, a sentence from Hader, like an echo from another time:

*"The Meran are never there."*

On the other hand, the devil whispers seductively:

*"Do you want a Tyrolean hat?"*

And out of nowhere, from the depths of the forest, it suddenly sounds like a divine revelation:

*"CUCUMBER SALAD!!!"*

But well. Let's get back to the serious side of things.

You really can't - no, women/men really can't look at the serious side of life. And you should have an opinion. If you haven't been given one, then you should at least enjoy the teacher's one. There must be a reason why the three kings came with their gifts.

Or not?

"I don't care," drones the sleep-spared head, somewhere between Defiance and resignation.

"Come to senses," murmurs the ever-denied priest in me.

"Okay, on with the text. Where are we now? Hansel and Gretel were standing in the

Garden - completely still and  
silent." And then ...

"Well, are you fit in the crotch?"

"You douche."

Oh no, Hader, I wanted to write a serious text. A quiet, resigned  
sigh.

"Correctly crass - how do you translate that into proper German?"

I digress.

My head has once again landed in one of those endless lectures on social  
theory.

Today's topic: rectum vs. Edammer.

And while the world continues to turn outside, my eyes slowly close.

## STAY AWAKE!

Brain training is also good for under-40s! Sudoku has nothing to do with math!

The eternal mantra of the counterrevolutionary who still lives with his parents in his mid-30s at the crossword puzzle marathon breakfast table unleashes unexpected forces.

A half-opened eye catches sight of the text you have begun, its words echoing in your head.

Arrogance and ignorance are not opinions but merely instruments of power for exclusion and oppression. Ignorance in particular is rarely legitimate. In most cases, however, it is about intimate zones. In the toilet, for example.

History shows that ignorance has often made the worst crimes possible in the first place. Those who look away are not only complicit but also become part of the crime.

Harry Graf Kessler once said:

*"It is the rule of the small middle class, the dictatorship of the unintellectual. The mind, the intellectual, the artist, the writer no longer counts for anything, has become completely meaningless. But that is precisely what the philistine has always wished for, what appears to him to be the ideal state."* And then, in the middle of the stream of thought, an image creeps in: *"Please translate 'Du Opfer' into High German, Serdar."*

Doesn't that sound pretty damn familiar to you?

Farin Urlaub gets to the heart of the matter:

*"As long as there are people who can do nothing, know nothing and have achieved nothing, there will also be racism. Because these people also want to feel good about themselves and be proud of something. So they look for*

*They choose someone who is different from them and think they are better."*  
And there it is again, this mental loop, this eternal self-affirmation tourism with projection surfaces and deflection debates, perfectly constructed to distract us from the dark sides of our own soul - if we have one at all.

Because when a confrontation approaches or even the hint of a trace of gratitude touches the seemingly non-existent conscience, unpressed restlessness rises up.

Handing the shadow of a friend's shoulder, knowing full well that if the bow is overstretched, it could devour you with equal relish.

And while you struggle to understand yourself, a question arises:  
*"Why do these creatures always choose their own butchers?"*

The words sound like hollow phrases to your own ears.

What if Job turns around and spits on those who spit on him?

If everything is irrelevant - is your own existence irrelevant too?  
The horizon has not even reached his own nostrils yet, and yet the person laughing his head off believes he has ever had a spoon to consume wisdom.  
And what do I do?

The effort one makes to pass on something that can neither be bought nor sold appears like mockery in the distorted grimaces of self-pity.  
Can I say that?

And then I look in the mirror - and all I see is my own grimace.  
Distorted by the constantly tangible pathos, which I use so often that it has  
become my second skin.  
Too much of a good thing and yet so bad. Self-  
indulgent wheel breaking.  
My words.  
My soul stone. My soul stone. My soul stone. I only weep  
for myself.  
Mine.  
Yours.  
Being.  
A halo.

So, I shudder to myself.  
How it falls into me, feasts on me and shapes me into something that is  
alien even to me, something that even I don't like.  
Then I lose all sense of direction.  
Up or down - where was that now really?  
What I did or didn't do - if so many claim it, why don't I remember?  
My stomach curls as if it has known the truth for a long time. My own  
words, once intended as a shield against the darkness, lie heavy as lead on  
my chest and drag me down.  
I had only just torn myself away, wanted to leave the helplessness behind  
me, faced up to it, tortured myself out of my mind - and yet the circle closes  
again.  
How blind does all this make me?  
I dreamed I was in a movie.

It was Christmas, and at some point, he appeared - the Santa Claus. He  
looked at me and said, in a voice as soft as

sounded relentless:

"That's enough now, my child. You don't need to be afraid of being an adult. You've often said yourself: 'I think I'm crazy'.

And if you keep repeating this for a long time, you won't become blind - son- It's just stupid."

Then he dug out a bottle of grappa, drank the last sip of espresso - black, not shaken, not stirred - and poured himself a small glass.

"Cheers, congregation. The priest drinks too."

And that was the end of the evening. Peace and quiet returned.

And why they had argued was - as so often - simply postponed indefinitely.

In the end, it was quite simple.

You just had to admit it to yourself: At some point, someone had started lying to themselves.

And who exactly it was no longer mattered after so much back and forth.

Of course, there was always a grain of truth in all the chaos. Of course there were interests here and there that overlapped, interlocked and meshed like rusty gears.

But if it was all about the Egg of Columbus again, then I would consciously close my ears, hum to myself and start an absurd little song:

*"Lalalala ... that I am the only true Heino."*

Because it had to be someone.

It's the same excuses over and over again. And they're not bad at all.

Why is it so hard to admit that sometimes you're just stupid?

was?

You assure yourself and others that you will *never* smoke - only to find that at almost 40 you are still clinging to a cigarette as if it were the last thing you had.

You swear you'll always prefer wine to beer - only to enjoy a cold pilsner in some smoky pub one day and wonder why you ever said otherwise. Or you endlessly debate whether coffee with or without milk is better - only to realize at some point that it doesn't matter at all.

As the sun shines - so will the day.

*CUCUMBER SALAD!!!*

And the rest?

Maybe I'll tell you that one day, in , in peace. Or maybe not.

Perhaps on another day.

After all, a little something has to remain private.

When I look at my own story of my far too long puberty, I sometimes think I was the very last primate.



Once again, the teacher entered the classroom with the same confident expression as always. Without another word, he turned to the blackboard and wrote the topic of today's politics lesson on the board in one fluid movement:

**Rules for good behavior**

I frowned.

Shouldn't it actually "**a**" good behavior?

As I thought about it, my gaze drifted off. My brain rewound the memories of a passage I had read some time ago:

*"However, school quality is of course more than just measuring student performance against standards. The mission of school education goes far the functional requirements of educational standards. It aims at personal development and world orientation, which result from the encounter with central objects of our culture. Pupils should be educated to become responsible citizens who can shape their professional and private lives responsibly, self-critically and constructively and participate in political and social life."*

That all sounded wonderful. Almost poetic. But what did we do instead?

We were given multiple-choice questions to mark with a cross. One of the questions was:

A business partner comes into the office. How do you greet him properly?

1. I greet him with a handshake.
2. As a man, I have to stand up and greet him with a handshake.
3. That depends on how well I know the business partner.
4. Whether man or woman - standing up and greeting by hand is mandatory.

I leaned back in my chair.

So that was the path to becoming a mature, self-critical and responsible citizen.

The next task:

*"Explain in at least 5-7 sentences the difference between Höf- and friendliness."*

I sighed inwardly. All right, .

But as I picked up the pen, I couldn't stop my mind from wandering - to all the situations in which people with impeccable politeness could be cruel. And to those who showed sincere kindness without much formality.

There was a big difference between the two. And it had nothing to do with rules and regulations.

As I was with my thoughts down on paper, I realized how much this topic extended into all its subtle ramifications. Politeness and friendliness - two terms that were so often used as synonyms yet could hardly be more different in their essence. I began moderately, as if I wanted to enter into the conformist framework:

"Politeness is considered a good communicative style that is seen as a door opener."

But as soon as I had finished the sentence, I couldn't help but give in to my inner urge.

"Nevertheless, many old rules are outdated today. What is polite is rarely questioned."

Politeness, I thought, was often regarded as the benchmark for good behavior, without many taking the trouble to critically question origins and function.

The famous Knigge, the time-honored book of "good manners", was written in its original context as a guide to behavior in the society of the time - a society that was deeply entrenched in hierarchies.

Kindness, on the other hand, I reflected, was less a form of behavior based on rank and order. When it was sincere, it came from the heart, unsolicited, out of genuine human affection.

In the past, I remember, compliance with rules of politeness was even enforced by force - in schools with corporal punishment. Disregarding prescribed norms of behavior was considered disobedience, disrespect for authority. The fact that you were no longer beaten if you violated etiquette was seen as progress in civilization.

But where would we be without humanity?

Politeness was not always humane - on the contrary, it often had to do with disorder.

Some would use the words "stilted" and "submissive".

There were two types of subordination: calculated, purposeful and forced.

Enforced subordination was often lumped together with strategic, deliberate politeness. Always with the same proverb serving as the final explanation:

"As it sounds in the forest, so it sounds out."

A sentence that served to immediately nip any discussion about criticism of the system and power imbalances in the bud.

But politeness was almost never an end in itself.

The following could be noted:

- Being polite could be used to break down barriers.
- Friendliness was usually shown voluntarily.

In an enlightened society, the original meaning of politeness - as a means of asserting rank and status - had lost its importance. Today, it is mostly limited to official and work-related situations. An instrument, a door opener, because you wanted something from the other person.

Politeness was associated with seriousness.

Friendliness, on the other hand, was associated with familiarity.

Politeness was a must, especially in "fine society" - but how fine it really was was another matter entirely.

Because politeness often happens out of pure expectation. Friendliness, on the other hand, arose from genuine - or feigned -

Affection.

A play on words suddenly in my head:

*"You can kniggen that."*

Adolph Freiherr Knigge's work was written at a time when there was a strong reverence for hierarchical and military structures. It was not only a book about good manners, but also about adapting to a society that expected conformity.

And what did we know about conformism today?

We knew where it could lead.

An authoritarian, hierarchical, militaristic society was vulnerable - vulnerable to fascist, racist, pigeonholed structures, classism and social exclusion.

Elias Canetti's work "Mass and Power" described how mob behavior could develop, take on a life of its own and ultimately devalue people.

How quickly did politeness, when it was not voluntary, turn into an instrument for exercising power?

How often has "polite behavior" been used to belittle others?  
to control, to manipulate?

Wasn't it the most perfidious form of violence when it was hidden behind a smile?

While Canetti tried to analyze the dynamics of masses and decipher the psychological mechanisms behind blind obedience to authority, I was inclined to share the more pessimistic theses of Gustave Le Bon and Sigmund Freud. Both argued that mass phenomena were often accompanied by a regression of the mind - a concept that convinced me more than Canetti's anthropological perspective, which saw humans as driven by archaic instincts.

The fundamental difference for me was that Canetti's approach almost removed responsibility from the individual. If mass movements were a mere anthropological phenomenon, fed by deeply rooted drives, then that meant that there hardly any choice. You were swept along by the masses, whether you wanted to be or not. But Le Bon and Freud saw things differently: they saw in the masses not only an uncontrollable vortex, but also a danger - a dissolution of individual judgment in favour of collective, often irrational thinking.

And this is exactly where my own train of thought began.

### **Politeness as a means to an end**

In many societies, politeness was praised as a sign of culture and civilization, as a necessity for orderly coexistence. But was it really? Or was it rather not a means of gaining access to an interlocutor - especially if they themselves were narrow-minded?

Because those who were polite were playing a game.

They pretended to the other person, letting him or her believe that were in control of the conversation or even the situation. And the other person felt safe in this belief.

But that was precisely the danger.

This tragedy ultimately led to the restriction of free speech. Those who submitted to the dictates of politeness filtered their own thoughts, reined in their words, modified their statements - and often not even consciously.

Wasn't that a restriction on freedom of expression?

Politeness did not mean speaking your thoughts. But it did mean that you packaged them in such a way that they sounded more pleasant to the other person. But what if it wasn't about pleasant things? What if the truth was uncomfortable?

Then politeness turned into an intellectual alignment.

Individuals were forced to rethink their values, not because they were convinced of them, but because they had to subject them to the expectations of social order.

Sophia Loren once put it in a nutshell:

"In life, you constantly have to choose between sincerity and politeness."

And this was the crux of the problem. Was it really necessary?

Was it really impossible to be polite and sincere at the same time?

Or was politeness ultimately nothing more than a sophisticated form of lying?

Then it was time to read aloud. The question was:  
"How many sentences do you have and who wants  
to read?" "four"  
"ten"

...

Me: "Four pages, but I don't think I'm allowed to read  
aloud." "Yes, four pages is too much."

In the end, however, only three people wanted to read aloud and the  
lesson still had twenty minutes left.

"Ok Lino one side."

...

"Okay, that's enough."

Then a checkbox questionnaire was handed out. Here another question for  
illustration:

1. What topics would you choose for small talk?

- Politics and religion
- Family relationships
- Culture and sport

I'll opt out and let the others do it.

"Politics and religion"

*roaring laughter*

"Who still talks about politics today?"

"... in politics lessons," I wanted to add.  
doorbell rings.



The moment when the absurdity of the situation finally manifested itself came with a loud ring - the signal to flee, the end of a lesson that was somewhere between pedagogical routine and unintentional real-life satire. I lowered my pen and looked around. Some students were still laughing at the idea that anyone wanted to talk seriously about politics and religion, while others were busy packing up their things.

I, on the other hand, remained seated for a moment, letting the moment in. A politics class in which talking about politics was considered absurd. A polite discussion that did not have any depth. A teacher who wrote rules for good behavior on the blackboard, but at the same time promoted a culture of discussion in which any real debate was avoided.

It was not an isolated case.

It was symptomatic of a society in which people no longer dared to address real issues. Everything had to be filtered, digestible and innocuous. Small talk was the only accepted form of communication.

I felt a slight sense of frustration rising within me.

As I stood up and picked up my things, my eyes fell once again on the multiple-choice questionnaire.

What topics would you choose for small talk?

I stroked my pen demonstratively over the four options and scribbled underneath:

**"None at all. I prefer to talk about things that really matter."**

Then I got up and left the room, while outside life went on as if nothing had happened.

## **Last words: NORMAL CONSTANT**

"What is (already) normal?"

Almost everyone will have come across this sentence in a similar or identical form. Does it even exist and how exactly do you have to formulate it in order to approach the concept of normality? Most people will agree that breathing, for example, is a normal action.

This is because breathing is a life-sustaining and therefore vital human characteristic and is therefore accepted as normal by almost everyone without objection.

It is therefore part of the common law.

But not everything we do out of habit is just as much a customary right in other places and is disguised as normal.

In Sardinia, for example, there is a delicacy that is considered totally disgusting and "abnormal" in other countries. Casu Marzu is a sheep's cheese to which maggots from flies from a rotting sheep's stomach are added, thereby liquefying it to a consistency similar to yoghurt. If it is genuine, it is eaten with live maggots and is practically maggot excrement itself.

What is a totally delicious and normal meal for my father is totally abnormal for me.

But there are other examples that illustrate subjectivity even in the case of "social normality".

Among some indigenous peoples, people who hear voices are sacred. They are perhaps credited with a special connection to the

deceased ancestors.

If I stand up in the supposedly developed world and say: "I hear voices", I can quickly be considered schizophrenic and abnormal. Yet the sentence, taken on its own, only says that I perceive voices. Whether these are imaginary voices or real ones, the sentence in itself does not say.

Or let's take any religion. It can never be proven that a god or gods exist, but distinctions are made between an alleged schizophrenic who, in his alleged psychosis, believes in, for example, unprovable, or at least unperceived by others, allegedly non-existent and allegedly imaginary friends, and believers who believe in an allegedly real God.

One is normal, the other is not, although neither can be refuted or proven.

You realize that with normality it becomes difficult at some point to define certain things, actions and points of view as universally valid.

Nevertheless, more and more people who are supposedly not normal are immediately branded with a label, often excluded from society and/or even locked up. 's tolerance limits are sometimes very thin.

In the end, normality is nothing more than the consensus or majority opinion of a society. Depending on how tolerant this society is, the wider these boundaries are interpreted.

But since perceptions of normality, i.e. the perceived truth about an allegedly universally valid normality, is often an exclusion criterion for all those who do not fit into the same pigeonhole, the concept of normality always remains a concept of power, power over those who are supposedly different.

People.

But people are never just normal or abnormal. People are made up of hundreds, if not countless facets. They are never just the (external) diagnosis alone.

I doubt whether there really is THE one normality. Many people also assume that there is THE reality. We only know one, but everyone perceives it differently.

For one person or another, the respective green is always different. The fact that everyone always perceives colors a little differently and that we can only agree on a wavelength range but not on an exact frequency means that ultimately there is no such thing as THE reality. If there was THE reality, we would all be one and the same person. Only then would it be possible for us all to always perceive the same reality.

From what do individuals or society then derive to really divide everything into normal and abnormal?

When did we become binary thinkers? There is black or white.

There are also gray and colors.

At least there are colors in our perception.

Why is this text called "Normal constant"?

Normality is never constant; it is being redefined and redefined by the majority.

For this reason, I say quite calmly: "I don't like to be reduced to a normal constant", because that would not be normal in my circle of logic.

Nevertheless, it is clear that a society needs to agree on certain common terms in order to communicate.

because of.

Nevertheless, blind obedience, or even an addiction to conformity, has always taken on excesses in human history that I, as an "abnormal" person, would not exactly consider healthy.

With this in mind, have the courage to be different.

... because otherwise the world is only black or white and at most now and then  
sometimes gray, but very rarely colorful.

Life is about joy and color, not anger and gray!

## **Author's note on reading age and book intention:**

This book is not suitable for children due to its drastic depictions to give color to reality.

This book is recommended for ninth grade at the earliest, but only with professional guidance.

Since the incidents began with the main protagonist, but mainly in later puberty, it can also be used as a warning and guide, with the help of therapeutic support, in adolescent psychiatry for people of adolescent age, provided they are accompanied by trained staff.

However, this book is expressly recommended for projects such as Ver-Rückt-Na-Und, which are anti-stigmatizing, are intended to raise awareness of the issue of bullying and prevent drug use, with professional support.

There are enough young people of an older age who may not have had or are having such extreme experiences, but for whom this book could be a wake-up call not to follow this path, and to outline the possible course of such a path to them in good time in order to prevent them from doing so.

However, expert professional classification and moderation will be necessary.

As with the Ver-Rückt-Na-Und project, this can also be done with additional support from former real psychiatric patients. Above all, it should raise awareness the fact that you can slip down such paths more quickly than some people of that age would think and therefore also promote understanding for people and fellow students,

Parents, relatives of people who do not go through life crisis-free.

The book is written so bluntly in order to make the problems described more tangible and give them color.

This book is by no means intended to be a guide to doing the same as the main protagonist. The opposite is the case. It is intended as a warning against the "blunders" in life that you can stumble into more quickly than you might think.

In addition, even if it describes very long stretches of destructive and self-destructive action, especially through the words at the end, it provides important arguments FOR life and, through the preceding substructure, is not limited to platitudinous words.

This book should be more than just a "TSCHAKA you can do it". Because the word "somehow" always resonates.

If it at least raises the question of the "somehow", the "where do I get the power", "quo vadis", "why", "wherefore" and "why", then the first step towards a possible understanding has been taken.

Without at least half a degree in psychology and sociology, it is impossible to do justice to the overall complexity.

It is therefore not advisable for minors and people who could be triggered by these topics to read this book without guidance.

The book should therefore read as an introduction to the subject, for people who want to approach the seemingly impossible with enough inner distance.

The questions that the book raises are a proper beginning, but by no means the end, when unraveled, of many small debates with related origins.

For once, it should honestly make it possible to find real problems. Real final answers can only be found by each individual in the end.

Therefore, even if it contains answers that the author considers too important to only whisper behind closed doors, this book is without absolute truths in many areas, even if it pleads for at least agreeing on the basis despite possible unspeakable experiences ...

No to death!

Yes to life!

If this book saves at least one life, then it was much more than a silent, ashamed nothing.

If only one person says YES to life more clearly or finally after reading it, the author has achieved his goal.

Take of yourself and your loved ones!

... and say YES to life and NO to death. 🐟



## **Closing words:**

### **Remembering means taking responsibility**

My grandmother, Margarete Herrmann, told me a story during my research for the Stumbling Stone Initiative that must not be forgotten. A Jewish neighbor, Karl Linz, lived in Schäfergasse - where she and I spent the first years of our lives - who stood in the middle of the street one day and shouted loudly:

**"Himmler and Hitler are the biggest assholes of all!"**

They took him away for this sentence. He was deported.

This story shows in a depressing way that in history it was far too often the louder voices that were silenced while the majority remained silent - or were wrong. People like this neighbor of my grandma's are forgotten far too quickly.

**This book is therefore a plea not to look away.**

It is a call for responsibility - for oneself and for one's fellow human beings.

Because those who remain silent, let the major crimes happen.

And those who are only looking should contribute to ensuring that history does not repeat itself.

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Karl and Melanie Linz were the children of Moses and Mathilde Linz. Moses Linz was Rüsselsheim's first Opel dealer. He died in 1935 and is buried in the Rüsselsheim forest cemetery. His wife Mathilde Linz, née Wimpfheimer, died on May 21, 1938.

Due to the district-wide persecution of Jews, the Jewish families of Rüsselsheim also moved closer together. It was the house at Schäfergasse 20 that provided a last refuge.

Siblings Karl and Melanie Linz were also accommodated here after they had to sell their parents' house at Mainstrasse 13.

Karl Linz was deported in 1942 and died in Poland.

Deported in 1942, murdered in the Izbica ghetto in Poland

<http://www.stolpersteine-ruesselsheim.de/seiten/LinzKarl.php>

Interview with Margarete Herrmann:

<https://youtu.be/p4ZAJlrzRQ0?feature=shared&t=68>

