

My Sweet Little Sixteen

In the Office

It was late evening and I sat behind my desk, the door to the anteroom was open, I looked at the glass door - no nonsense anymore:

Peter Paul Maurer
Private Investigator

That was all, all what was needed. The business ran good, still no secretary, still no redhead behind the desk in the anteroom. I thought about what I should do with my evening, had no observation or suchlike this night - maybe a bar, a light dinner before or some tea and listening to jazz, maybe Chet Baker and Bill Evans like now.....

Or Santa Monica, the sunset at the beach, always something wonderful - not alone. It became more and more boring - yeah, as Yves had said, a woman.....

Yeah, a bar, an elegant bar downtown, at weekdays acceptable, at weekends horrible. At weekdays there were not that much people in there, often interesting ones, whereas at the weekends.....I was none of them, not even during the week.....

Maybe I should drive home, but I hated it more and more to be there, driving around while listening to the music only not to arrive at home. And when it happened, walking through the streets till the night ends.....

The door bell rang, I looked up - a woman through the glass. No, no large hat and no summer dress - or? I pressed the button for the door opener - she walked in....

She was white, around my size - younger, definitely younger, but not that young. Somewhat over forty - maybe, who could know such things.....

She wore blue jeans and a white sweater tucked in the jeans - I was somewhat disappointed. Yes, she looked beautiful, with her somewhat longer, straight, light blond hair and her dead black eyebrows. With her obviously nicely shaped body, her face - a certain picture of Marilyn Monroe came into my mind - yes, with curled and shorter hair! But in her eyes.....like another, the wonderful Eisensteadt picture. The one, the one in color, sitting on the lounge on her patio, for Live magazine, with her hands down, the one, on which she looks straight into your eyes - so beautiful and sad, so strong and vulnerable, so many tears.....I stood up to meet her.....

"Hello, I'm Mr. Maurer....I have to apologize but my secretary is not in. She's gone earlier today - have a seat."

I offered her the place in front of the desk and took a seat behind it.

"What can I do for you, Ms."

"My name is Nefedov, Alexandra Nefedov.....it's about my daughter, my daughter Caroline....."

"I'm all ear."

"She's dead, I...."

"My sincere condolence - can you tell me...."

"She was found dead under the Colorado Street Bridge...."

"Suicide?"

"No, it can't be!"

"Well, this bridge - hadn't they installed a fence as a barrier?"

"Yes, that's one of the things. But more.....she not left a suicide note."

"Not every suicide has left a suicide note.....what does the police said? Are there indications that it

was no suicide - the autopsy?"

"They classified it as a suicide. They say that they found no evidences to start an investigation."

"The suicide note. Why is this so important for you? Why is this so decisive?"

"So far she always wrote one....."

"So far? How often?"

"Three times."

"You mean without....."

"Yes."

"By the way, how old was your daughter?"

"Sixteen."

"Sixteen? How old she was.....the first time?"

"Twelve, and then with thirteen and fourteen - but then everything was good!"

"You mean she has attempted it three time, every year anew, at such an age? Why she was not...I mean...."

"A mental hospital?"

"I mean....three times? What does she did?"

"The first time, she took all pills that she could found at home. The second time, she bought rat poison and took it. The last time she cuts her wrists."

"And every time a suicide note?"

"Yes."

"You still have them?"

"No, I kept them for a while, but....as I said, it was fine the last two years. She not attempted it again - I threw them away, no longer this memories....."

"Too bad! You can remember the texts?"

"It was about that she has problems with the world, with the people - she had never much contact to others, especially not with same-aged."

"I should see her room - she had an own room?"

"Of course, I'm not rich, but I have all what I need. I have a good job and some asset from my deceased parents."

"You live in....?"

"Angelino Heights."

"Nice quarter, you own one of this nice Victorian houses?"

"Craftsman style."

"Sounds also very interesting."

"You're interested in architecture?"

"Sometimes I enjoy it to look at beautiful things. Buildings can be very interesting and beautiful. I like the Central Library."

"Really? I don't like this mishmash!"

"Yeah, it's definitely not Craftsman style. By the way, you work as.....?"

"I'm a specialist. I work in a special clinic - emergency operating room."

"You're a nurse?"

"I'm a surgeon....."

"Oh, sorry for that. I apologize, I not....."

"....no problem, I'm used to it."

"Another topic. You always use the singular, Mr. Nefedov?"

"We divorced as Caroline was ten years old. At the beginning, he looked after her, but then he married again and.....I even don't know where he lives today."

"Would it be possible that.....should I try to find him?"

"No, they had never a close relation."

"But with you....."

"I was the only one she had."

"The three attempts. Who found her?"

"I."

"All three times?"

"Yes."

"The first attempt, was it a life-threatening situation?"

"No, I have only nonprescription drugs at home."

"The second?"

"It was life-threatening, but the dose was not very high. I found her after my shift and started with the first aid measures at home. Then I drove with her to the hospital. She was able to buy a small package only."

"Who sold her, she was thirteen, rat poison?"

"She not said it, and the police was not able to find the store who sold her the poison."

"Okay, and the third time? You found her, I mean she cut her wrists.....in what a condition you found her - she cut deep?"

"Lengthwise, deep enough."

"Lengthwise! I mean, even someone with your skills - this should be a matter of seconds."

"I think you underestimate the blood amount - but I know what you mean. It was a free day, but then they had an emergency. I was on my way to the hospital, but then I got a new message. The accident patient was deceased, therefore I drove back home and found her."

"Even for a person with your skills and in particular with your routine this had to be a very critical situation. The time-frame, how much you would had could arrive later, to be still able to save her life?"

"A minute - maybe."

"A minute? I mean, to the hospital you drove fast, but then? No longer a reason to hurry, and this is L.A. - a minute is nothing. I not wanna sound.....tasteless, but....this sounds like a godsend."

"I'm not religious. But yes, even a person with my skills and with my routine and my work place had had a hard time to rescue her life. A bit later and even I would have had no chance anymore."

"Wow, and you kept her at home? Wasn't that had been irresponsible?"

"I not said, that she lived at home after this. She stayed for some months in a hospital."

"A psychiatric hospital, not the one you work in?"

"We have a psychiatric ward - better it's associated with the hospital."

"Well, which hospital?"

"Is this important? No public hospital."

"Well, I should work for you?"

She gave me a name, not unknown to me, the name. One of the things you know that exist, but you never will see, not as a "normal" person - Google Earth? Maybe I should have a look later....

"So, she came back as....."

".....the treating psychiatrist saw no longer a danger therein."

"And in fact, she never tried it again, right?"

"Yes, and that's the point. She never tried it again."

"Could it be, I only say, could it be that she tried it again?"

"No."

"Okay, assumed I would work for you with the task to show that she not committed suicide, but would find evidence that she did it. Or, what, and maybe this is most likely, when I will find no clear answer. Would you be able to accept this?"

"I would had to. And you're not the only private investigator in this city."

"Sure, and maybe not the best either. This leads me to the question why you think that I should be the one who works for you?"

"According to the media, this topic is nothing new for you....."

Caroline's Room

In fact, a nice house, better to say a very impressive house! White and light gray, three floors, two balconies on the street-side, a winter garden, a pavilion in the garden - even the way to the house impressive in white and light gray, past nice small hedges and green spaces. The way was such broad, at the parts with stairs a handrail divided the way in addition to the white middle part. Right and left the way was light gray. One side to enter, one side to leave? - I chose the left side and hoped that I not do wrong.....

Angelino Heights, at the other side of the Hollywood Freeway, Downtown West - a different world - yeah, a different world.....but, Latinos in Angelino Heights? Come on, someone had to cut the hedges and mow the lawn! - I rang the doorbell.....

She looked different today - her apparel? A white blouse with ruffles, not transparent, the first buttons not buttoned, with a simple looking pearl necklace but, I had the impression with this color and this size - but I was no expert. Her simple, pleated, medium long, white chiffon skirt, somewhat transparent, looked beautiful to the pearls - also her simple white flats.

After the greeting procedure and some small talk and my denial of drinking something, she lead me to her room - no surprise, upper floor, the room with the balcony who faced the road. But the room, what had I expected - a girl's room, a sixteen-year-old girl, three suicide attempts? No, I had not expected a black dungeon but, this orgy of pink.....

"More pink would not had been possible, or? And all the ruffles? A canopy bed? Wow, I always thought that such a room exists only in the fantasy of Hollywood directors, but not in real - I'm speechless...."

"You perceive this as a ridiculousness?"

"No, I meant this not abusive, it's only....."

"A kitschy ridiculousness?"

"No, it's amazing, it's like, to be in someone's dream, to be able to dive into someone's innermost - it's like.....where's the rabbit hole?"

"Caroline not Alice! And all is so, as she liked it. It's her room - and if you like to see it in this way, her world. She loved it, to be here."

"I can understand this, really. I really can understand this."

"Really?"

"Yes, really - sometimes I would like to live in such a world. But unfortunately such a world can exist only at such a place, a dream place. The real world is outside, with much less of pink....."

"You surprise me, or maybe even not....."

"I really think about how your sleeping room looks like....."

"You wanna see....we can have a visit."

"No, this is the place I have to see. Can I be alone for a while?"

"Of course, and mine is a bit different. Death is my constant companion, my clients have their worst moment in life, they are more in the other world than in this. I'm one of the best, but even my success rate is below 50%."

"You're religious?"

"No, definitely not. A nine year old child with awful burns of the third degree? I saved his life, if you wanna call this life, without limbs and face. I haven't seen God in the operating room....."

I looked around, a lot of unicorns, a lot of plush toys - this was no room from a sixteen-year-old girl. I wanted to ask her, wanted to went downstairs, as I saw the house telephone. I picked up the handset.

"Yes?"

"It's me, I have a question."

"Yes."

"The room, her room - all looks like a room from a much younger girl, but she was sixteen."

"After her first attempt we changed nothing anymore. It's the room, just like as she was twelve."

"Thanks....."

I hung up.

So I had to start again. The room of a twelve-year-old girl.....okay. Maybe still a bit strange, eight-year-old maybe, but why not. The point was, a twelve-year-old girl that planned her suicide - now the room appeared very strange. I looked around and searched after indications which would lead to the thought that the girl in this room had been unhappy, that she had struggled with the world outside, but I found nothing. Why?

One possibility would be, that this room furnishings in a special way documented her inner life. That this was the place where she was happy, a place that looked like a place for a eight-year-old. Or, that her mother not had told everything. She had thrown away her suicide notes - and in this room? Should I ask her? No, at least not now - but something else.....

"Yes, it's me again. I would like to ask how Caroline was at school? I think it was not easy for her in school?"

"We participated in a homeschooling program. She not attended a school."

"Thanks....."

I started again and booted her computer - the password? Caroline? At least I had no longer to ask her mother whether she has access to Caroline's computer or not. At first sight - nothing special. A program to download YouTube videos maybe.....but....I began to go through her files. "School" - in fact homeschooling. "Music" - now I was curious - and disappointed. Again, what had I expected? At least something by Nostalghia or Lana de Rey, why not Lorde or Iggy Azalea, but Britney and such stuff - too much pink.....

I copied some files, but nothing really interesting. I checked the browser, looked for last and often used files and folders - nothing interesting, too much nothing, her computer was cleaner than her room.....

I got more and more the feeling that this would lead into nothing - I went downstairs, her mother sat in an armchair in the living-room with a glass of red wine - a bit early.....

"And?"

"I'm not sure - why you not changed anything anymore after her first attempt?"

"Will you not sit down, a glass of wine? I have white wine also."

"Thanks, but no wine for me. I tend more to tea."

"No problem, I have tea also."

"No circumstances, but maybe a soda?"

"Sure."

She stood up and came back with a bottle and a glass. Had I expected that.....

"Sorry, I've forgotten to ask, whether you like to have ice or not?"

"It's okay, thanks."

"You asked why I not changed anything?"

"Yes."

"Maybe because Caroline wished it?"

"Maybe - should I see this as her.....sanctuary?"

"Refuge or shelter would maybe fit better, as I said, I'm not religious, nor was Caroline."

"She not went to school - when, for what reasons, she has left the house? She not stayed all the time inside the house - or?"

"No, we have a nice pavilion in the....."

"....you know what I mean."

"After her last attempt, when she came back from the clinic, she not left the house, the garden, that often. Have you seen the garden behind the house?"

"No, not until now."

"Then come...."

We stood up and went - yeah, we went through the house and I got more and more an idea about how huge it was. Seen from the front it was large, but now it was huge - three floors! And the two wings at the backside of the house, you not see them from the front, but now.....and the garden.....

"Now I know where the rabbit hole is....."

"Still no Alice, but I interpret it as a...."like"?"

"I don't know. It's like the Secret Garden - I wait to see a fairy...."

"Maybe...."

"Yeah, sorry for that, but I see you not as a fairy....."

"I'm a bit offended, maybe a too hard word. Let's say - disappointed."

"I'm sorry for that...."

"You can amend your faux pas....."

"How....?"

"I know a nice bar, or.....you drink tea only?"

"No, a good cocktail....."

"It's a whiskey bar, but I think the bartender will make you also a Cosmopolitan, if you ask him....."

"Maybe I surprise you, but I know cocktails with whiskey."

"Yeah, you liked Mad Man?"

"Manhattan, Whiskey Sour, preferable with the white from the egg....."

"....not bad for the beginning. Seven Grand, 515 West 7th Street, 2nd floor - 9.00 pm?"

"Today?"

"A problem for you?"

"No, not really - Downtown....."

"A problem for you?"

"No, not really. But I prefer Downtown West or, at least the.....Old Downtown."

"You're a romantic?"

"Seeing this garden....."

Seven Grand

I arrived with the metro, only two and a half blocks to go. And I was early, thought I should walk a bit, to think about her.....

I started to walk along Flower Street, with no aim - I was unable to make sense of, of what I had seen, but especially not of her. Her daughter was dead - suicide or maybe even.....she seemed to be totally untouched, she talked about it, as if she would tell a movie plot. But maybe this was her way to handle it? Three times, and now? If not a suicide.....it was a suicide, only a feeling I had.....

I had done a little bit homework. Had contacted the police and the coroner to get the information I needed. I would get them during the next days. And I had googled a bit - her, and her working place. She was not a specialist, she was the best! Sheikhs let fly her in, when they needed someone for an special task. Or if possible, they came to her, into the clinic - if you would like to call this a clinic. Not, that I got that much information, but what I got, was enough. All the luxury you could think of, together with the most advanced medical equipment, and thereto the best medics - only a

place for the real billionaires.....

I could only guess what her income could be, but.....seen from this angle was her house in Angelino Heights.....more likely a bit small - or? And her daughter? I got more and more the feeling, that there was something I not saw, maybe something what I could not see, not now, but something that I should see, that I had to see, to solve this case. And definitely she was the key - not her daughter.....

I still had some time and asked myself, whether she would be already in the bar, by the time when I would come, or, and I was convinced about that, that this would be the case, that she would leave me waiting. I at least had decided, to enter the bar punctually.....

The "Seven Grand" - I had googled the bar also. Not necessarily the typical bar I usually frequented, but on the other hand, a bar where I should have no problems to gain access. I mean therewith, also without an appointment with her - at least with long trousers. Without any doubt it would had been a bagatelle for her, to embarrass me. Somebody with her social status, not to talk about her look and presence, no doorman would dare to bounce her, maybe at his last workday....why she had not chosen one of this very exclusive bars? One, where I had to wait in front of the door till she would arrive, because the doorman would not believe me that I would have an appointment with such a women. And later, everybody would laugh about me, knowing, that I was not one of them, that I was only allowed to come in because she allowed it - were my thoughts inappropriate? 8.55 pm - time to go.....

I entered the bar punctually after a short conversation with the doorman. Not that much crowded at the moment, but still an hour before the live music would start - soul and blues today. I looked around but not saw her, but one of the bartenders gave me a sign.

"Mr. Maurer?"

"Yes."

"Ms. Nefedov lets it be known that she will need a bit more time. She has reserved for the Jackalope - you want to wait there?"

"No thanks, I will take a seat here at the bar."

"You're welcome. The cocktail menu?"

"I think I should not start with the real stuff before she comes. Can I have....."

That was, how far I came. I realized instantly, that no bridge would be necessary - we would start together with the real stuff. But it was an interesting and unexpected variant - I mean, I not had to turn my head to know, who had entered the bar just now - the reaction of the other guests was enough. I waited for a moment, stood up and went to meet her.

"Ms. Nefedov, nice to see you."

"Oh please, we're in a bar - Peter....."

"Alexandra, nice to see you....."

"Much better. Nice to see you, too."

She looked at the barman, a hardly to see gesture and we strode through the bar. The smaller Bar Jackalope was our aim. She had reserved, that meant that she was a member of the Whiskey Society. Would be interesting for me to see her bottle, with her little chalk board, her motto.....

As said, not that much guests in the bar at the moment, but none of them who looked not at her, and maybe at the old guy who followed her, like a.....whatever, I also had to look at her.

What she wore, looked at the first moment very simple, very sexy, but simple. But apart, that she looked like the incarnation of every schoolboy's dream, it was obvious, that her breathtaking heels alone had cost more than everything I wore. Again her pearl necklace, this time with the fitting bracelet and a very nice and elegant women's watch around the other wrist - nice little sparkling diamonds.....

Her red ring, the only ring she wore, very interesting looking, very nice contrast to her black, short

and tight dress - and her black stockinged, simply outstanding looking, legs. I owned, but not wore, a nice ring with a garnet, a not that small one. This red stone was still a bit larger, but brighter in color - no, no ruby. I liked it to visit the Natural History Museum, to look at the minerals, to look at the gemstones - the diamonds? Not my taste, apart from the colored ones.....

We reached the Bar Jackalope - very nice looking. A barmaid welcomed us and lead us to "her" table. I agreed that we would start with her bottle - neat - and hoped that I would see the little chalk board. I became not disappointed and was fascinated by her hair. It looked a bit like, as if she would had got out of bed five minutes ago. But without any doubt had a coiffeur spent hours therefore to arrange each single hair exactly at its position. It was fascinating, without an ironic undertone.....

"You like this place?"

"Very nice.....and as far as I can assess it as a layman, a very good whiskey."

"You not looked like a layman as we talked about drinks?"

"Maybe not a complete layman, but still a laymen. What do I know from this whiskey? It's a whiskey from Japan, because there're Japanese characters on the label and I can read: Product from Japan. Oh, and hey, the whiskey is twenty-one years old - see on the label: 21 Years Old. And....."

"...and you know more than you like to show. Don't try to fool me."

"The truth is, that I like to drink a cocktail from time to time. Whiskey, gin, vodka, tequila.....whatever, I drink all. And I drink it not neat or on the rocks. Therefore I fear this whiskey is wasted. Not, that I'm not able to tast different flavors, but come on, this is a twenty-one year old whiskey. Do you think I'm able to cherish, what I'm drinking here? "

"You see this bottle, the one with: Eff Trump?"

"Yes, nice bottle....."

"Yeah, this bottle costs fifteen times more - not because of the name...."

"It's a bit like, as if you would compare a Viper with a Koenigsegg, while I use the Metro."

"At least you know Koenigsegg....."

".....and will not drive even a Viper in my life and I don't think that you suggested this..... well....."

"Appointment?"

"Appointment, that's a good word."

"Disappointed?"

"Why I should? I think in the other room you can find some disappointed men."

"Maybe envious men?"

"Why they should?"

"Because you drink the better whiskey?"

"Whom....I'm not able to cherish?"

"I get the impression that you have your difficulties therewith to cherish things in general."

"And I become more and more confused about, that I sit in this bar with you, drinking expensive whiskey and having a conversation with you about super sports cars - I mean, your daughter is dead....."

"And you think: Hey, it's okay that she wears black, but it's way too sexy, especially at her age - or what!"

"How old are you - or I should better ask: How old you were as you gave birth to Caroline?"

"Why you ask?"

"First career, then....but, say, you were around thirty, this all fits not your career. Pregnancy, the time after, I haven't your résumé, but I see no break?"

"You know nothing about whiskey - I knew that you're a liar."

"I'm a private investigator, and you hired me to find the truth. And the truth is...?"

"That you know the "truth""

"You adopted her - after your divorce?"

"Yes, and don't ask....."

"Not this question, but another....."

"I'm all ears!"

"Was she a substitute for him?"

"You're getting tasteless....."

"Really, at least she was your little princess....."

"I hired you, but....."

"You can fire me, yes. And I can stop to work for you..."

"Do you still visit the girl in prison?"

"Yes, as often I can."

"She's a cold-blooded murderer."

"Yes."

"Would I be a murderer, would you visit me also?"

"I don't think so....."

"Why?"

"We talked not about our grandmas, we ate no cake in front of Wonder Bakery, we.....only drank expensive whiskey and talked about unimportant banalities. A nice bar, really a nice bar. I should return, a good Old Fashioned or a tasteful Whiskey Sour, a small dish from the restaurant downstairs - 3rd Street, only some minutes to walk, I mean, using your legs, not your Koenigsegg."

"Forgotten? I live in Angelino Heights? Only a freeway between me and Downtown West - do you have the arrogance to think, that I.....what do you think of me?"

"I ask myself, whether you were annoyed, by the homeless in MacArthur Park, while you enjoyed your sandwich at Langer's?"

"Maybe I enjoy also other restaurants there?"

"First I would name them, at least most of them, not restaurants. But more important, what do you think? Would I ever had saw you, in any of this "restaurants", or even more at a food truck, what do you think? Would I had forgotten this? To see you? Unlikely, or what do you think? I try to be often in Downtown West, you also? And we never came across each other? Not impossible, but.....or?"

"Maybe you would show me some "restaurants", Downtown West - or a good food truck?"

"They are all good, at least for someone like me. And the barbecue....."

"Would you....."

"Now?"

"It's not late....."

"Definitely not for the food trucks....."

"So,....."

"And then we talk about what kind of....."

"Unnecessary shit?"

"Wow, we come ghetto!"

"You're a cynic."

"You hired me, the man who enjoys to visit a hideous murderer."

"Some say, that this....."

".....some say everything, and to say everything, is meaningless. And I'm not interested to waste my time with meaningless chatter any longer."

"Then we should have a walk towards Downtown West, I'm really hungry and you can choose the topic of our conversation."

"Caroline, obviously."

"Caroline, do you think I should cry the whole day?"

"People grieve in many, very different ways....."

"I've told you from the child, with the burns?"

"Yes."

"He died. I got the phone call while I dressed up and thought about which ring I should wear. I think it's better this way, death is my daily companion - I chose this one. Do you like the color?"

"It's a diamond, or?"

"Yes, a diamond with the color of children's blood....."

Tacos 3^d

We had decided to walk down Olive Street, passed by Pershing Square, talked about the lovely night. In fact, it was a lovely night. Somewhat cloudy, but this made it only more beautiful. When the clouds passed by afore the moon, it was half moon, then it looked a bit magic. And it was a bit magic, to walk beside her, to look at her, illuminated by the street lights and the moon - we reached 4th Street.....

"Should we use 4th Street to cross the freeway?"

"I think that's a good idea - after 10.00 pm, too bad, no Angels Flight this night anymore....."

"You use it? It's more for the tourists, or?"

"You're no romantic! It's lovely!"

"Yeah, and a nice metaphor for this angelic city - your Angels Flight begins and a few seconds later.....that's it! Really a nice metaphor....."

"And you're really a cynic! But you like "Old" Downtown and Downtown "West" - yeah!"

"You know the view of Downtown, from the bridge?"

"You mean 4th Street over the freeway?"

"Yes."

"I think you not asked, whether I, drove across it?"

"No, that's right. I meant, crossing it, by using your feet."

"Then I have to say: No!"

"That's sad, at least if you're a romantic.....!"

"Therefore nothing for you - or?"

"But maybe for you? And I bet that we will see people with cameras who photograph the romantic scenery."

"Then we should go...."

"And?"

"Never saw it this way - so quiet. All this small illuminated windows, so many people.....what do you think?"

"I think this could be everywhere at this world. Frankfurt am Main, Paris, London or Tokyo - it would not matter, only some high houses, a lot of glass. That's why Downtown is so boring for me - maybe the palm trees.....but this is not L.A.! L.A., the city that not exists, and what means city? L.A. City - even the city limits are a joke. Parts like Beverly Hills punched out, like with a die cutter. Not to talk about West Athens and more south - or north? L.A. County, not much better. Lakewood yes, Anaheim no. I can see only one gigantic urban settlement zone - name it L.A. or however you like, the fact is, that nothing looks alike, only a chaos of uncountable and undefinable fragments, some get named as towns or districts, quarters or areas, or howsoever - and often enough nobody knows where they start and end. But that's only the geographical side of the story....."

"And the other side?"

"You ask me this really?"

"Yes! I'm interested in, what you think....."

"How much your red diamond is worth of?"

"Quite a lot - why you ask?"

"We leave Downtown now. Maybe you should not wear it there, there where we will go. Who knows, maybe a bad Latino will steal it - or even worse?"

"You not answered my question?"

"Really?"

"I think so."

"This is nowhere land - on the left, Downtown. On the right, Downtown West. Sounds very similar, but.....two different worlds and both are named Los Angeles. Flower Street, Downtown - Broadway, Old Downtown - Crocker Street, Skid Row. Not only, all is named Los Angeles, only a few blocks, that's all! From the highest wealth to the deepest poverty - only a few blocks, a few

blocks within a web of lies, called Los Angeles.....and before I forget it - the beautiful fucking Hollywood sign!"

"You hate this city!"

"You said that I'm a cynic!"

"How you would call it?"

"A sick love."

"Even if it would be a sick love, it would be a love. I'm still not sure if I would be able to see your words as a confession of love?"

"Maybe I should say, that I hate the city, but that I love the people who live in there - at least the most of them."

"That sounds a bit more logical to me - really, the most of?"

"Absolutely definitely!"

"You surprise me!"

"It's so easy - or?"

"What's easy?"

"Fifty percent Latinos, say, to make it a bit more easy, ten percent Afro-Americans and ten percent Asian-Americans - voilà, seventy percent! Definitely the most of! And now you know why I love this city. Because of her people."

"I not wanna destroy this moment, here with you, on the bridge, Downtown."

"But....."

"Isn't it a bit.....naive?"

"Sure, but we are surrounded by lies, deception, betrayal, imposture... - oh, and not to forget, the first L.A. lesson. Opportunists and hangers-on are always welcomed. Because, the ones with power, influence and money are justified to do, what they do, all the time! Simply, don't talk about, at least as long as their power and influence not declines."

"I meant more, your disregarding of the white population."

"Why, I've just mentioned them?"

"Yes, because all Latinos are nice and good people - only to mention the largest portion of our population!"

"Don't think so. But I feel more attracted to the right - tacos?"

"With pleasure!"

"Here we are: El Tarasco! And for sure, not only tacos. If you need a coffee, I definitely, on the other side of the street is a 7-Eleven. And not to forget, one coin laundry on this side, behind us, and another one on the other side - if you need one....."

"Do you think I would need one?"

"Not at all! You also a coffee?"

"Yes, let's go....."

"You wanna come with me?"

"Should I stay here alone till you come back?"

"That's a point. Do you allow me to ask, how often you were in a 7-Eleven so far?"

"You know the answer...."

We crossed the street and entered the 7-Eleven. A few people were in, who now had some difficulties to continue their shopping. We walked to the backward where you could find everything your heart desires - concerning to coffee. Various sizes, roastings, blends, flavors, sugars, milk or cream and so on. We decided for a large, but not the largest size and a Colombian for me and a Brazilian for her.

"We can take something sweet for free with this size. I like the cakes they have at the counter."

"Fine with me - as dessert after the tacos?"

"Yes."

We had to queue and the man behind the counter, we knew us from seeing, also had some problems

to do his work now. He looked at me, he looked at her, and me again. He smiled at me, and I asked myself whether it was skeptical astonishment or, that he asked himself, whether he still was able to understand this world. As said, this was not the first time I bought a coffee here, but usually, okay always, alone. And maybe everything would had been not that strange for all, if she.....I really was a bit astonished about that she still wore her red diamond - without any doubt she could buy the whole shop, and I mean with the building, plus the food truck, for that what she would get by selling her ring. And there still were the pearls.....

I payed and we fetched the cakes. As we left the store stood "he" on the other side of the handrail of the ramp that you had to walk down. "He" was a homeless who stood from time to time there, always asking the same question: Do you have some change? I always had to fight with me. I could give him some coins, but what would this change? He would need support, that somebody would care about him, but come on.....sometimes I gave him some coins, sometimes not - it always was a fight. We gave him all our coins - I didn't felt better.....

We reached the food truck again.....

"I nearly had forgotten! If we need something harder than coffee, we have a liquor shop next to the coin laundry."

"I've seen it, but....."

"Hey, 7-Eleven was not that worse, or? You would like it inside....."

"I don't think so. And I also don't think that you buy your liquor there."

"I confess! I think I bought a pair of scissors there last week - or was it Dollar Tree, Alvarado Street....."

"Should I believe this?"

"Yes, because I'm really often here, because I really like it to be here. I was last week here and needed a pair of scissors - it's as simple as that. Tacos or something else?"

"Tacos for sure!"

"They are famous for their tacos Al Pastor, but I start with two cabeza and two chorizo."

"So you plan to stay here for a while?"

"Sure, we have large coffees and desserts, a wonderful kitchen in front of us and some chairs behind us."

"Are this chairs belong to the laundry shop or to the food truck?"

"Who cares, we are allowed to sit on them....."

"Then, also two with chorizo and two with asada for me."

We had get our tacos and sat on the chairs and had a problem, to start with our conversation - the conversation.....

"You wanna talk about Caroline?"

"I don't know - it's so strange to sit here, with you."

"Really?"

"That's a joke, or?"

"You're really often here....."

"Yeah.....to eat tacos - behind the 7-Eleven is a nice seafood restaurant....."

"Good food?"

"To be fair, I eat more often at other places. But yes, I was always satisfied."

"Maybe we should.....?"

"It's closed now."

"I don't meant now."

"They way you look, we should better chose one of the more genteel restaurants, say at the Sunset Strip - wow, would I have a chance with you, to gain access to the Chateau Marmont Hotel?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Because it would be not your first time - yeah."

"Because it would be not my first time - and Caroline liked it very much to be there. She liked the

poolside there....."

"I think I can understand her, even when I never was there, and never will be there."

"You show me this, why I should not show you that?"

"Because it's not my world."

"But, this is your world? Tacos at midnight at 3rd Street?"

"No....."

"And what's your world?"

"As if I would know this....."

"You're too much alone!"

"You're also alone now....."

"I have my work."

"With death as companion."

"As far as I know, not so uncommon to you."

"I've killed one person, in Azusa - and you?"

"You think I've killed my daughter?"

"Your adopted daughter - did she know it?"

"I told it to her."

"As she was twelve....."

"Yes....."

"I need some tacos Al Pastor....."

We both continued with three tacos Al Pastor.....

"Can I ask you something?"

"Why you ask?"

"Because it's a.....I don't know, it's something that puzzles me."

"You asked me whether I killed my daughter, therefore....."

"In Caroline's room, not one picture of her. I not saw the complete house, but as far as I saw it, no picture of her - it's a bit strange?"

"I guess you also saw no picture of me?"

"That makes it definitely not less strange!"

"I have one on my nightstand, in my sleeping room."

"One of her?"

"One of both of us."

"Maybe I really should see your sleeping room, we talk often about it."

"Whenever you like....."

"Now....."

"Why not?"

"As I said at the bar: I'm not interested, to waste my time with meaningless chatter."

"You think this is meaningless?"

"You know, that I know, nothing any more - it was a very nice "appointment"."

"It was more - and you know it. You really go?"

"You have no long way - 3rd till Lucas Avenue, then Lucas Avenue till Beverly Boulevard and round the corner till Tolucan Street and directly towards Edgeware Road. Cross the freeway and you're at home - Angelino Heights!"

"That was really, really funny! You would like it, to see me walking through the streets here, dressed like this?"

"At least it would be interesting. How about a taxi? And of course, as a gentleman, I wait till it arrives."

"And you?"

"I don't wear a million dollar ring, and also no fancy pearls. And okay, also no.....breathhtaking heels."

"Therefore....."

"I will walk till Westlake Metro Station, it's not far."

"You take the metro, exemplary! I'm sure about, you would like it also, to see me in the metro, at this time, dressed like this - or?"

"Would be interesting certainly. Some things would be interesting, to see them....."

Colorado Street Bridge

The Colorado Street Bridge - no music video, no bad baby that jumps therefrom, no summertime, but a lot of sadness - and a statistic in the L.A. Times which tells you that six people jumped during the last four months. Three men and three women, younger or older than you - and one, one will occupy your mind: female, 16.

I had get information from the police and the coroner. Everything suited a suicide - to good? I walked over the bridge and looked at the fences that had been installed in order to make it....yeah, what? Impossible to jump? Obviously not! I stood between two of the beautiful bridge lanterns, looked at their pedestals. First I climbed on the stone balustrade, that was not difficult. Next the pedestal - even for the old man who I was, not really difficult. There I stood, on the pedestal, no fence anymore, two steps and I would fall - should I?

Jumping off of bridges - I wanna fly? Not my world - hers? I looked down and moved forward, yeah, the bridge was really high, no chance to survive - why should there be a chance? I moved forward to the edge and felt an arousing feeling, I wanna fly - and I thought, that this would a really stupid moment that it would happen again, but it was so wonderful to look down and to know, that only one inch would be enough - I wanna fly, I wanna fly - and.....was this a canary that sang in the trees? I smiled, too much music, or simply not enough - who would know an answer? Maybe the old man that jumped from the bridge, at the beginning of the year, or the women, middle-aged - who would know an answer? Definitely not a sixteen-year-old girl, definitely not! I closed my eyes and looked down and saw..... - not now!

I stood on solid ground again, on the pavement, with tears in my eyes - why? Why should a sixteen-year-old girl commit suicide? An old man like I, disappointed by his live, his wasted live - maybe, but a young girl.....why? She would still have a whole life to live, so much could happen, so much would happen.....so much! I sat at the pavement and cried, looked at the cars passing by - why? Why, why, why - WHY? There would be, in the whole world, in the whole, no reason could be found there, in the whole world, no reason therefor, no reason, no reason - why? It was such a senseless deed, so senseless - sixteen years.....

Yet still, it looked like - does Courtney killed Kurt? Who knows, would this be better, more easy? Easier to hate Courtney, that to grieve for Kurt - or? Always it was the cheapest to hate, should I hate Alexandra? No indications that she did it not alone - and Alexandra had an alibi, I had verified it. At least the clinic confirmed that she stood in the operating room during the time in question. Even better, the whole operation had been filmed, a total new method to operate a special heart disease - had forgotten the name.....

And now? Excluded this the possibility that she had drove Caroline to jump? But this would be hard to prove - impossible? I stood up and looked at the pedestals, stood between them and looked down, down there she had been found, from one of this two pedestals she had jumped - why.....why with sixteen years.....

Las Vegas

We had made an appointment, but I wasn't in a good mood, and I thought she would be also not in a good mood. Actually we had an appointment a few days earlier, but.....but something interfered, something.....something that occupied her for some days. But now she should have time again, at least as long as nothing would interfere again, no emergency, no massacre, no bloodshed.....

I had a conversation with Yves before, I had called him, I needed someone to talk with. I needed his opinion, his professional opinion, about this case, about Alexandra, about that I.....yes, I had a problem therewith, to keep a professional distance towards Alexandra - Alexandra? Ms. Nefedev would had been definitely better! But I had to confess, that I had more and more a fascination for her, that I was more and more under her spell - even then, despite the fact, that I still was able to reflect about this circumstance. And graver? I still had no idea, how I should see her relation to Caroline. It was obvious for me now, that the temporal framework, the chronology of her suicides would be a key element to understand this case, to solve the case maybe. I had to talk with her about this, but how I should, would this reveal, hat I still mistrust her - her, one of this heroes and heroines of the last days, who had worked around the clock and had tried to save as many lives as possible, who had tried to stop the extermination of human life, who had tried to stop the extermination of relations, families, spouses, children, friends.....what should I say to her? I still not trust you, but I am fascinated by you? I thought about, to call her, to cancel the appointment, to be a coward.....

But I had to go, even when I would be late now, even when I would not be able to find the appropriate words, simply because there would be no appropriate words. What should I say? Hadst some hard days, honey? In a 40's Hollywood movie maybe, not in 2017, not in reality.....

She was already there, sat at the bar.....

"Sorry that I'm late!"

"Never mind, had enjoyment...."

She pointed at her nearly empty glass - Martini obviously, the olive was still unharmed.....

"But I fear our table is gone....."

"Never mind, have no hunger."

"I also. Some drinks?"

"Why not, but you're in the lead."

"Only....how much?"

She looked at the barman....

"That's your third, Madam. What can I do for you, Sir."

"An Old Fashioned, please."

"A special Whiskey?"

"No, only Whiskey....."

"And for me another Martini...."

She dried the glass, not forgot the olive, and looked at me.....

"You still think that I killed my daughter? Oh, sorry, my step daughter!"

"You've an alibi - why you not said this straight away?"

"Not thought that I need one!"

"My mistake!"

"You saw the video, the operation?"

"No."

"Um, but you know, that I have an alibi?"

"I don't think that the clinic would lie."

"Wow, not thought that's that easy to satisfy you...."

"Should I watch the video?"

"It was a master stroke, five hours, you should watch it!"

"Maybe later - you saved a lot of lives the last days, you should feel good....."

"Why do you think that I ain't feel good?"

"Too much Martini?"

"Yes, I saved lives, this time even more than normally, but not my daughter's life – sorry, my step daughter's!"

"You're in bad shape, maybe it would be better for you to go home, some sleep would do you good."

"Alone at home, that's a fine idea! Maybe I get into mischief?"

"Sitting here and getting drunk?"

"Good idea, very good idea!"

"Maybe it's a bit dumb, but you said that death is your daily companion. What's different this time?"

"December 14th, 2012?"

"I don't know? I only could guess."

"At this day.....there was not that much work for me to do. Dead bodies are not my domain, my domain are the ones shortly before, but there.....all the children....."

"Sandy Hook?"

"Yes. And I thought, after this, after this madness, something will change. But,...the answer was more weapons, better weapons, tools to make them even more effective. Ten minutes, only ten minutes, ten minutes like in 2012 - only much more effective!"

"Can I help you?"

"You already do - and for sure, you will have some questions about Caroline."

"I don't think this would be appropriate at the moment!"

"Why not, or should I entertain you with some stories about the last days?"

"No, the pictures were enough."

"You're a bit a sissy.....!"

"I don't meant the pictures in the TV, I meant the pictures in my head...."

I beat around the bush for a while, till I finally felt safe enough to start with the topic.....

"You said that Caroline was twelve, when you said her that she's adopted - does you said that it was at her birthday?"

"Yes, it was at her twelfth birthday."

"On what day she had birthday?"

"Her birthday is at - was at the 13th, in June."

"When did she tried it for the first time?"

"Ten days later."

"June the 23rd?"

"Yes."

"And the second time?"

"Exactly one year later."

"Sorry that I say this, but, were you not warned, because of the first time?"

"In hindsight? She recovered very well. Nobody expected this."

"You meant, that it looked like that she had accepted it, to be adopted?"

"I've adopted her as she was two years old. At this time I was - happily - married. We divorced as she was ten years old - for her a very bad time. But then "he" was more and more occupied with his new love, he has no longer time for me, what was not important, but also not for her. She always asked, why daddy had no longer time for her - then I told her, that....."

"Did she appeared depressed? - I mean after you told her that she was adopted, as she was twelve?"

"It seemed that it was liberating for her. Now, that she knew, that "he" was not her daddy."

"And her mommy?"

"Even before, I was more an older sister for her. I thought this would continue....."

"Did she ever ask about her real parents?"

"No."

"This.....pink wonderland - how old was she, as you created it?"

"We "created" it together. Maybe it appears stupid to you, but she loved it."

"I already said before, that I can understand it and I meant it exactly so."

"The little girl in you?"

"No. But I think from time to time you wish to have a place where you.....yeah, where you feel safe and secure."

"Yes, and this was Caroline's place."

"And also yours?"

"Mine is the operation room."

"Pardon?"

"It's the place where I feel - as you said - safe and secure."

"Death is my daily companion, even my success rate is below fifty percent - to quote you!"

"They not die because I was imperfect. I said you that I'm a specialist, some say that I'm the best. You do what is possible. When they die, than it was impossible. Maybe I'm good, but I'm not God, unfortunately I'm not able to perform prodigies."

"When did you laid out the garden?"

"After her second attempt."

"The time after?"

"Everything seemed to develop in a positive way. She stayed at home, in her room or in the garden....but she seemed to be happy."

"But it happened a third time - again at the 23rd?"

"No, and I wasn't naive. I stayed at home during June at that year. At least as much as I could. I also had two nannies at this time. Around the 23rd I was at home all the time, nothing happened. I relaxed more and more, and as I got an emergency call at the 28th I thought, it would be okay to leave her alone for a while. No nanny was with us at this moment. But that was a mistake.....nearly a deadly....."

"So, the third time was at the 28th of June?"

"Yes."

"And this time at October the 1st."

"Yes, that was totally unexpected. The year before everything was good, and also this year. Nothing happened at June. I can not believe that it was a suicide."

"But isn't that the problem. Let us assume, that it was no suicide - a murder?"

"Oh, your favorite topic. Did I murdered her?"

"At least you were not at the crime scene. And if we assume that you not driven her to jump, then we have a big problem. She not committed suicide, you where not in the game - who murdered her? Any idea? "He"?"

"Hell no! But I not hired a private investigator to answer the questions! It's your task!"

"I have a certain problem. She not left the house - right?"

"Yes."

"Whom she met in the house - house-cleaner, gardener, home tutor.....?"

"Tanaya, my housekeeper for many years. She and I were the only persons who were alone together with her."

"You mean, when, for instance, the gardener or the home tutor was in, either you or Tanaya were also in?"

"Yes."

"Always?"

"Yes."

"When....don't know.....the plumber was in?"

"Yes."

"A bit difficult, to meet your murderer then - how about the neighbors, when she was in the garden?"

"They avoid us."
"No boy in the neighborhood who was interested in the strange girl...?"
"Maybe via internet?"
"Her computer was cleaner than I after a two hour bath - but I think you know this. Britney as schoolgirlie was the most shocking that I found - you know something?"
"No."
"Cool, no clue in sight - clueless as Alicia....."
"You wanna quit?"
"You wanna still pay me? I mean, the chances of any kind of success do not stand well."
"It's not for the money - I need an answer, I need somebody who's able to find one."
"One answer, or the answer?"
"At the moment it looks more like you're not able to provide neither the one or the other."
"I said it already in my office, you maybe will not like the answer - what then?"
"Depends on the answer - or?"
"Yeah, that's definitely correct - I need some time to think about some points."
"You mean, whether you will continue or not?"
"No. I have a meeting with a police officer tomorrow, we are friends. I will discuss the case with him. Maybe he will have an idea. I think there's something I not see - better I see it but not realize it. He's a specialist, you know, four eyes....."
"That's a good idea. And now?"
"Our glasses are nearly empty....."
"Good idea!"
"Las Vegas....."
"After all.....some stories?"
"What did you felt - I mean, they listened to music - country not mine, but that's not the point - they were happy, they were couples, lovers and friends, they were daddies and moms and children, seniors and midst in their lives - I would not be able to bear this...."
"Don't think about it!"
"But I have to...."
"I meant, a person like me, a paramedic, a firefighter, a surgeon - whoever - don't think about it! If you do, you're dead - you kill yourself, cheers!"
"Cheers...."

Yves

We met at Ollie's Duck & Dive in Malibu, near Point Dume, early evening.....
"Malibu? You surprise me!"
"Why not?"
"Because it's not Westlake or Crenshaw?"
"We can go to Lily's Malibu if you like - it's in the next building. A huge selection of burritos, perfect for a Latino like you....."
"You know that I'm not crazy about Mexican food."
"You're more the Long Beach type....."
"And you're definitely not the Malibu type! Why here?"
"It was the first day that I stayed in L.A.. I used the bus to see a special house at the Pacific Coast Highway....."
"The Getty Villa?"
"Not exactly, but I stayed in the bus, after driving past, and enjoyed the ride."
"Always public transport, very exemplary! And you left the bus here? Why not till Zuma Beach?"
"Well, that's another story....."
"Hey, you've secrets?"

"Some stops before, a young woman entered the bus. A bit over twenty I think, with her skateboard, a cool longboard. And I thought: Hey, that's L.A.! With her longboard at the bus stop, wearing very tight yoga pants, or something like that, and a very nice sports bra. Okay, the bus was nearly empty, so a lot of space for her. I sat in the back, and I don't know why, but she chose the seat beside me - I have to confess, that I was a bit surprised. But that was not the point. She started to read, and as she finished reading, she closed the book and I looked at the title - you will think it's a joke!"

"It was.....?"

"Tantric sex practices for women - and if I interpreted the graphic illustration correctly, that I had glimpsed before, with the two women, for lesbian women. I wasn't sure about, maybe she was only a cool Californian girl, but the bus was nearly empty....."

"And this place here?"

"She left the bus at the busstop here. I thought, looks interesting, and I was a bit curious what she will do - I have to confess I followed her!"

"And she came here?"

"No, she entered SunLife Organics, it's next door. But I thought, that this would be too much for me - first tantric sex and than such much healthy stuff! And, I thought it would be a bit too intrusive to follow her. So I decided to enter this place and to eat something - Ceasar's Salad, very tasty."

"You're a bit crazy sometimes - but she also a bit...."

"Really, I would like to ask her, why she sat beside the old man, having ninety-nine other possibilities - it was simply a baroque moment....."

"By the way, your first day in L.A. - I know that you're not born in L.A., but...."

"Maybe another day, I asked for this meeting because I have two problems, two severe problems....."

We decided to have a small late lunch, or maybe rather a small early dinner, before I would start with my problems. Yves chose the 7 Chiles Calamari and I the Seared Ahi Tower. Both was very delicious and we both had a mocha thereafter. I told him about Alexandra and Caroline, about my problems.....

"There are two levels. First I would like to ask you as a police officer what you think about the case. Then I would like to ask you as a friend about my.....don't know, "relation" with Alexandra. But I would like to start with the case."

"Sure, go ahead!"

"I definitely don't believe in the murder theory! Okay, sometimes the most unbelievable stories are the true one, but only sometimes! Most of the times the solution is nearer, very often very near - or, what does the pro says?"

"Based on what you told me? I see no indication of a murder. It looks like a suicide."

"My problem are the first three times. She was always there or near, always she found her daughter, rescued her life - come on, that's no coincident!"

"That would be really a hard to believe story, especially the last, the third time. All looks totally constructed and planned!"

"She controlled her daughter?"

"It looks like - how high is her success rate?"

"I also had this thought, that she plays God in the operating room. But, I did some research. She's considered as the best - she not lied, in saying this. Always the same, always they say things like: When she's not able to rescue your life, then nobody!"

"That not excludes that she plays God from time to time - but you're right, maybe in single, rare cases, but not in the way of a mass murderer, a psychopath. Do you think she's a psychopath?"

"At least you have to admit that the relation between her and Caroline was, yeah....."strange"? But I quarrel therewith, to say, it was a sick relation."

"Really?"

"You think....."

"You not!"

"I'm not sure....."

"What's said about Caroline? Sounds a bit as, that she was an autistic person."

"Asperger's syndrome, but you know how difficult the differentiation are. She had a very high IQ, but developed no extraordinary ability. She was no savant. But she lived in her own world, I think this is obvious. And I think, nobody knew really what she thought and felt - I think even Alexandra didn't knew it. And when I say this, maybe that was her problem!"

"She was definitely a control freak - and she controlled Caroline's life, in the deadly meaning of the word!"

"She decided about her life - at the clinic?"

"In the clinic she was not able to decide, at least not in every way. She would be able to let somebody die, but not gift somebody life....."

"I'm no God, that she said, I'm not able to perform prodigies."

"Do you think at home she was God?"

"I think that the first three times were no suicides. No suicide notes - only a women who plays God. Till Caroline decided - this time it was a suicide, this time she wrote a suicide note."

"About what you ponder?"

"There was a young boy with awful burns, I think she killed him, released him, redeemed him - but I think you will find no prove."

"In which way you will go on? The suicide notes - the key for everything?"

"Absolutely! She said that the first three times she wrote one, the last time not - a total lie! The exact opposite is true! And she said that she has thrown them away - again a lie, because they never exist! The conclusion? Caroline wrote a suicide note this time and Alexandra kept it, and I know where I can find the suicide note!"

"Where?"

"In her sleeping room....."

"Why?"

"She mentions the room too often, and.....she said that I will find there a photography with her and Caroline - the only one in the whole house! The photo and the suicide note, they are together!"

"Then, an easy play for you! She's the widow and you're the single man, turn on your charm! - And, I have not to say that you have to be extremely careful - I've the feeling she's capable of everything! Be careful, what leads me to your second problem and man, I fear, that's your real problem....."

"Yeah, I'm totally fascinated by her. I mean, when we're together.....she's so impressive....."

"You know, how normal people name this condition?"

"Nonsense, I'm not in love with her!"

"No, only head over heels - hey man, I know this feeling, I'm the married guy here! And I would be very happy for you, but.....this looks no good! What you wanna do? It was a suicide? Then no crime! The first three times? Do you have a prove for our theory? What should be the charge? The boy in the clinic? My question is: Why she hired you?"

"Yeah, that's a good question - and I know where the answer is to find...."

"In her sleeping room....."

"Exactly....."

"Again, it should be easy for you....."

"Easier than you think, she already invited me several times to be there....but, does she wishes that I find the suicide note? Would this make sense?"

"Maybe for her?"

"It would be obvious then, that she's a liar - but, what would be the consequence? I would know, that she's a liar.....but again, what should be the charge?"

"Maybe that's her aim, that you become her partner in crime?"

"And then? What she would expect?"

"You're widely known as a person with attitude, with principles, as a loyal person. Maybe she needs you as a substitute for Caroline?"

"Then she makes a big, big mistake! She asked me - why did she not understand my answers then?"
"She asked?"
"First, whether I would still visit Minh in prison, and then, whether I would visit her also, if she would be a murderer."
"And you answered: Yes - and I fear: No!"
"Yes!"
"I fear she's jealous!"
"Maybe, but if we're on the right path, then she's no murderer! She rescued her all the time!"
"She's no murderer so far, but....."
"Do you think she wanna murder me?"
"I think this will depend on your reaction when you will find the suicide note."
"What I not understand?"
"Tell....."
"She knows exactly how I feel, when I'm with her. Why all this.....circumstances?"
"She controlled Caroline totally. After the three "suicides" she was hers, at least she thought this. Two years she thought this, then she had to discover that all was no real, a con. Or maybe it was real and something happened, something that changed Caroline, something like a neighborhood's boy or something else. Whatever, Caroline escaped her - in a terrible way - but she had to realize that her little girl was gone. Now she looks for a new little girl....."
"Fuck, she's better than I thought!"
"She manipulated you?"
"Totally! I also mentioned the neighborhood's boy.....and she mentioned the little girl. She got me! She knows that I will have to make a decision after I found the suicide note. I betray her, or I will be hers forever - this are fucking options, both!"
"'Cause you love her!"
"Idiot!"
"If not, "betray" would be no problem, 'cause it would be no betray! You've forgotten, you're a private investigator!"
"No...."
"Your real problem is, that she will not accept it when you will reject her!"
"Your advice?"
"I see two possibilities. First, maybe our theory is wrong, you let things take their course. But this will be definitely a risky thing when our theory is right. Then it would be better to confront her with our thoughts and see what happens - and definitely you would do this with backing. But if we're wrong.....honestly! You love her?"
"Not sure - never felt this way....."
"Then you love her, believe me! The point is, would our theory be wrong and we would confront her therewith.....yeah, you know what then....."
"Cool selection, give me a bit time, I can control it."
"You're enamored! What do you wanna control?"
"Don't forget, it's her sleeping room! As long as I'm not in, nothing can happen. If our theory is right, I have to find the suicide letter first - it's simple! Stay away from the sleeping room!"
"That's not always that easy! But seriously, when you will see her again?"
"Tomorrow."
"You both lose no time! Where?"
"Exposition Park, the rose garden - Exposition Park Rose Garden....."
"Two Turtledoves In The Rose Garden - very romantic.....keep me informed! Yes?"
"Yes, thanks for you advice and your help - thanks!"
"You remember that I said that you need a wife in your life?"
"Yes, but I fear you intended something different. It's good to have a friend....."
"Peter as turtledove....."

Exposition Park Rose Garden

Today was a cloudy day, it has rained somewhat during the night, not the best setting for a romantic afternoon in the Rose Garden. I had walked the few block between my apartment and the Rose Garden and I arrived at 2.45 pm at the Park Fountain where we had made an appointment at 3.00 pm - I was first. I was a bit disappointed about the weather, I myself wore a sweater and a light jacket, what I normally did not. I thought about what she would wear - at least too cold for a nice summer dress, apart from, that it wasn't summer. Trousers, I feared! We not have to discuss, that trousers, at least sometimes, are more easy to wear. That, wearing trousers, a statement can be. That, to have to wear skirts, because men say so, because it is "appropriate" and "adequate", is simply annoying, not to say, that I, would I be a women, would be totally pissed off due to that! But I have to confess, that I liked it always to see a women in a skirt, so as not to talk about, in a dress, so as not to start, with blouses and shoes! Come on, I was born 1965 and raised up in the 70's and 80's - should we talk about stereotypes? Behavior, gender, social, thinking in.....stereotypes.....

I loved it to be here, among the roses, their different colors, shapes and scents - all beautiful in their own way, and all roses, even when some looked not like, when you, at first, not came to the idea: This is in fact also a rose. But that made it yet much more interesting to look at them, to become surprised, how different a rose can be. And what made this place even more wonderful? Not only roses! Shade-giving trees, fascinatingly shaped trees between the park and Exposition Boulevard - and further on! More trees, bushes and plants at the Natural History Museum next door - and further on! Not to forget the Jesse Brewer Jr. Park - what an outstanding assemblage! It was easy to spend hours at this place, so near to the place I lived, I loved to live. And finally one should mention, not only plants, not only animals in the Natural History Museum, not only technology in the California Science Center, but also the California African American Museum.....

She surprised me! She wore a knee-length, elegant skirt, very nicely patterned, black and brown, and made of cotton, a wonderfully elegant white blouse, made of silk, there over a simple, thus even more elegant, black bolero jacket, perfectly corresponding black ankle boots, made of suede, but most of all.....wow, not that often to see in California, opaque black woolen tights! Yes, I'm aware about, but.....see above! And, she looked simply fantastic! Today, a very elegant and gracile silvern watch, again a pearl necklace, but today a very simple looking one, a bit more understatement possibly, and, maybe as the colorful counterpoint, her red diamond.....and as a result overall? For me she looked like an elegant European lady, say in Frankfurt, Paris, Madrid, Milan.....

"Hello Peter, how are you?"

"Hello Alexandra, fine, thank you! And you?"

"Fine too!"

"If you allow me, you look.....very beautiful!"

"Thank you, so flattering today?"

"Apart from that, that it's simply the truth - I think I should be."

"It does you good no longer to think that I've killed my daughter - I think it's okay for you when I call her "my daughter"? It's simpler."

"I said only, that I no longer think that you were on the bridge, when she jumped."

"Thank you for this clarification! A fine basis to walk with you through the park, while looking at, and enjoying, the roses!"

"Would you tell me, in an honest way, why we are here, together, at this afternoon? I mean, I'm the private investigator that you hired - I'm the one, to be honest on my part, who feels insecure about, why he's here today, with you, but also why you hired him."

"Well, then I have to say, to be honest on my side also, that I'm not sure about how I should interpret this. Positively, that you're not sure about your feelings, or negatively, that you're not sure

about my feelings."

"I decide for the third possibility - neither nor.....",

"Or maybe the forth - as well as!"

"How about a fifth?"

"Wow, now you surprise me! I'm all ear!"

"We're both liars?"

"That's really a very interesting variant - I think I would like it!"

"Would?"

"I'm not sure about whether you lie or not?"

"That answer implies that you lie....."

"I lie, when you think I lie....."

"That's a bit too easy!"

"Vice versa! And you know this!"

"Now, now I'm all ear!"

"You know, you know exactly that it's impossible for me to prove anything. How should I prove, that she has written suicide notes the first three times, when I have thrown them away? How should I prove, that I not driven her to jump? I'm able to prove nothing! I hired you - or?"

"You're right, you're absolutely right! And that's my problem, because also I'm unable to prove this things. But maybe I would be able to prove that it was a suicide - I said this the first day in my office, already in this moment I feared that I would find an answer which will be not satisfying - for both of us!"

"You would be able to prove that it was a suicide? I mean "to prove" it - not to guess it, not to hypothesize it? How should this be possible?"

"A suicide note maybe?"

"But there was none - or do you think I found one....and then? Then I hired you to find evidence that it was no suicide, because I knew that it was a suicide - that's a bit creepy....."

"Neither nor, I was honest..."

"This is no Hitchcock movie - or? I'm the crazy woman? Ah, how can I forget! Forget, that you're the man, you're the protagonist, you're the hero, you're the one who will solve the case - Mr. Marlowe!"

"Neither nor - I've no idea, no Marlowe. I only fear that I would be able one day to prove it, that it was a suicide."

"And then? The consequence would be that I would have to accept that she did it again, that I not could help her this time? Why you would have a problem with this? I would have to accept it!"

"I think you know it already, because you knew it all the time, because you found her suicide note...."

"But, suppose that I would know that it was a suicide, it would make no sense to hire you. - Unless one would have some very weird ideas - maybe you've the role as crazy guy in this movie?"

"You can fire me whenever you want....."

"I don't think it's a matter of firing you or not. I'm not here to meet "my" private dick in this wonderful Rose Garden. I not thought that this would be a work meeting?"

"You implied that you're a liar?"

"Small talk, Peter - I thought that this is not meant totally serious! A man and a woman who meet in a Rose Garden sometimes do such things. What do you think about me? That I'm a monster? A psychopath? What?"

"Her room, the garden, her attempts, always you were there, the third time a matter of minutes. This time, not the smallest hint that it was no suicide - all is so strange. Your job, "you", you're strange! Everything around you is strange....."

"Says the man that was fascinated by her room and the garden - you loved it to be there, right? How was it, to be alone in her room? You would like it, to be alone in the garden, searching for the rabbit hole. Little Alice!"

"I'm sorry for everything - I quit the job. One last question. How is it, how does it feel to rescue

somebody's life, somebody who's far more dead than alive? I only know how it feels to kill somebody."

"Would you answer me first?"

"Yes."

"How does it feel to kill somebody? I ask, because so far I killed nobody...."

"I only can tell you what I've felt. Shortly before, adrenaline, an adrenaline rush - thereafter, I felt relaxed, totally relaxed, relieved, totally relieved - ready to die.....and you?"

"I will not satisfy you, but it depends. The boy with the burns? I hoped he will die, but I rescued him - for what a life? I felt relieved as he died soon after. Once I rescued a dictator's wife's life, she was happy after, squandered the money all the more, the money of the people who starved all the more, starved to death - it was a job! Only sometimes it's, like you assume it, but then, then you're a God - that's it what you wanna hear - yes? And the crazy thereon? It's the truth! It's the truth, you feel like a God!"

"I always feel like a dead loss. I only dream about, at least only one time, I would have the chance to feel, at least somewhat, a feeling like this - to feel like a God...."

"Or like a Little Girl in a Pink Wonderland and her Secret Garden?"

"With a lot of unicorns.....I dream about that the world would be a Pink Wonderland, but the world isn't pink, the world is blood-red, and we all stand ankle-deep in it, wade through it, and some wallow therein - the world isn't pink."

"You would have loved her...."

"Whom?"

"Caroline of course!"

"And you? Would it be possible to love you?"

"I fear, this question can be answered only by you."

"Neither nor...."

"You love roses? It was your proposal to meet here."

"Some, some are boring....."

"Can a rose be boring?"

"Sure, everything can be boring."

"Which roses you love most?"

"The white ones are the most elegant ones."

"Remarkable choice - apart from the white roses?"

"The black ones are the most fascinating roses."

"Black and white - no red?"

"Maybe very dark red ones are also nice."

"Does this mean, that you gift a woman, a woman you love, white and / or black roses?"

"Good question?"

"I don't understand - do you have or do you have not?"

"Not until now."

"Now you really confuse me! You mean, so far the traditional way - red roses, but....."

"So far no roses!"

"You never gifted a woman roses? That's now a bit weird! No roses, but...."

"Okay, one time. I was sixteen, but I was not in love with her - I liked her older niece. Once I stole a rose from a garden for her, for the niece.....but that was obviously long ago."

"And since then?"

"Isn't there a social agreement, that you should love this woman?"

"Yes, you should love her, you should show her with the roses that you love her.... - you never loved a woman?"

"Not sure, not sure what does this mean, how does it feel - to be in love...."

"You really would have loved Caroline, really. What kind of bouquet, what roses you would gift a woman today - assumed, that you would fall in love?"

"A bouquet consisting of seven white and five black roses. I think such a bouquet would look

gorgeous...."

"Yeah, definitely. Should we look at the roses? Maybe you will find also a red one you're able to love?"

"Maybe? Long enough we've sat on the rim of the fountain - let's have a walk....."

We began to walk through the rosery and looked at the rose beds, but we both were absent-minded.

"You're still assailed by doubts, but I cannot help you - at least I don't know how."

"There would be only one possible scenery in which you would be able to help me - the most fucking one....."

"That I would lie, that I would had found a suicide note, that I betray you, that I use you....."

"Yes."

"And?"

"And?"

"And, why you think I would do this?"

"I've only batshit ideas - why should a woman like you spend her time with a man like me, walking around here and making stupid conversation?"

"Do you really think that our conversation is stupid?"

"I think about, what alternatives you would had."

"Do you think I would had a lot of?"

"You fool me - your look, your position - how much?"

"What do you mean?"

"Your diamond with the nice color - is one million enough, to buy the beauty?"

"Nowadays? I don't think so."

"Well, that's not my price category - only cheap thrills, more I cannot offer, no exclusive Whiskey, only a sour from time to time: And by the way, most time I drink tea - at least at home....."

"Maybe I would like to drink tea with you, at home."

"Still the question, why?"

"So doubtful?"

"Maybe the wrong word."

"Really?"

"Uneasy, I would use uneasy....."

"Interesting - unfortunately I'm a surgeon and no psychologist."

"Yeah, sure! - But!"

"But?"

"Somebody said to me: There's always a but, linked to such a story. I fear the "but"."

"Who said this?"

"I."

"And?"

"You not fear the "but"?"

"You said to me that you're surprised about my behavior, considering that I've lost my daughter. I am alone now, but....."

"Really? "I" said this? I can remember to have said that one can grieve in very different ways - there's always a "but"! But it's not that clear what the "but" will be."

"Do you think that I grieve?"

"Not looks like you would, but I'm not able to see your feelings, sometimes people hide their feelings, their true feelings."

"Like we two?"

"I fear, I know, that you hide your feelings from me - and I know that I'm not able to hide anything from you. A bit a mismatch?"

"Funny! I thought this would be my sentence....."

"Yeah, and I'm the clown, just plain dumb that nobody laughs....."

"To be honest? I think more that you're the magician - and your tricks are fucking good....."

"You think I try to cheat you?"
"At the moment, definitely!"
"But how I should, when you hide nothing?"
"I hide my feelings, like you, and I thought, that you would be someone to whom I would be able to come to trust. But maybe that was only a crazy idea?"
"Maybe it would help me when I would understand why you came into my office?"
"I said it to you....."
"I fear I missed it....."
"The Chinese girl!"
"Do you think I would also visit you, I mean now, that we.....yeah,....."
"Well, that's "my" problem! Do you think we talked about our grandmas now?"
"Not really."
"But I would like - but you not trust me!"
"That's right - she was such a nice girl, sitting and talking in front of Wonder Bakery. But all the time she knew what she will do - strange or?"
"But you supported her all the time. During the trial, and also now in prison. One could say that she betrayed you in an awful way - but you!"
"Sometimes you need a friend. Was Caroline your friend - or maybe the better question: Did she have a friend in you?"
"At least I wasn't a sufficient friend - she's dead....."
"Do you think she betrayed you?"
"My problem is, I cannot visit her anymore - yeah, at the graveyard maybe....."
"So, you say me, that you chose.....because of the Chinese girl?"
"And some other things - I had the feeling, that you would be possibly somebody I would be able to trust in."
"But therefor I would have to trust you - who starts?"
"Do you think you love me? Would you present me seven white and five black roses?"
"I would present you a Rose Garden - if I would be able to."
"Then do it!"
"I'm not the guy for schmaltzy fuss: I bestow you this Rose Garden! And I'm not the fucking rich guy that would be able to: Look honey, what a nice Rose Garden I've bought you!"
"But twelve roses, even a bit fancy colored, that should be possible - or?"
"Yes, think so."
"Then I will wait....."
"Do you allow me a question?"
"Yes, sure."
"Do you love me?"
"I've no idea what love is....."
"Wow, that was the answer, that I wished to hear....."
"Maybe I should start? - I trust you!"
"Really? - Sorry that I ask!"
"It's okay that you ask - it's good that you ask! I'm not sure....."
"Neither nor - or?"
"Yes, neither nor! - I give you my diamond, as a pledge - but please don't lose! It's the only one that exists with this special color - unique, like every single being....."
"I need no pledge, even it would be a very beautiful one - unique.....I would fear that I lose the ring. This gem is priceless, or?"
"Sure, worth, whatever one would pay. One or ten million - one hundred million, the stone is unique, unique things have no price...."
"And what should I give you as a quid pro quo?"
"I really hope you know the answer....."
"Sure....."

Yves

"And?"

"I'm not sure - I'm absolutely unsure! I'm sure about that it was a suicide, and I'm absolutely sure about that she has wrote a suicide letter! I'm absolutely sure that Alexandra has this letter and she wants that I find it! I not sure about why she plays this game with me - and the worst?"

"Say....."

"I'm absolutely unsure about the first three times. I've more and more the feeling I do her injustice - it's fucking!"

"I've more and more the feeling that she twists you around her little finger - you're still objective?"

"Definitely not! How I should?"

"Okay, at least you're still able to be self-critical. What you wanna do?"

"I thought about, that I should enter the next level - a nice dinner together....."

"Okay, I think Elizabeth will have no objections - you pay!"

"Sure! I have a nice restaurant downtown in mind....."

".....come on, Long Beach!"

"Not Long Beach! Not the one where you asked Elizabeth if she wanna marry you!"

"Hey, it's very romantic! You should have a ring with you, just in case you would need one....."

"I need you and Elizabeth as critical minds, not as pimps!"

"Who knows?"

"Yeah, as I said before. My problem is not to come into her sleeping room, my problem is to avoid it! And what the ring concerns - I would have a nice red diamond....."

"Peter, you maybe not know it, but the traditional ring is a sparkling white diamond - why you have a red one?"

"The ring is hers - she gave me the ring as a pledge."

"As pledge for what?"

"Trust, do you trust Elizabeth?"

"You should trust your partner, otherwise it's a bit difficult to live together...."

"What would be.....when she would betray your trust.....?"

"Well, another bitter experience. Life offers you them - from time to time.....not that new to you - or?"

"It would be new for me related to.....people?"

"You mean, partners - a life partner?"

"Yes, sure..."

"In a relationship you've only on chance - trust your partner totally or - let it be!"

"But I have no relationship with Alexandra - and never will have!"

"But you would like!"

"Fuck off! - Sorry, not you! It's only.....this fucking feelings - yeah, I'm in love with her!"

"So far there's nothing what would be a crime - a....say.....strange relation, to her daughter, her step daughter. And even this is maybe the wrong term! Assumed that her daughter was.....say strange, then this relation would be automatically....."strange". Is there no possibility to get information from a third party?"

"Very difficult! Only very few persons had contact with her, and most of the time Alexandra also was there. Home teaching? No chance! Doctors? No chance! The housekeeper, Tanaya? No chance - absolutely no chance! Believe me, the only chance is she! Wow, there it is! Trust, should we trust her, should we trust this, what she says about her daughter?"

"It's a vicious circle - Caroline or Alexandra, who's the origin. Is all this so bizarre 'cause of Caroline or 'cause of Alexandra? - No chance, the housekeeper?"

"No way! She's also a strange figure. She's the only person besides Alexandra that was allowed to be alone with Caroline, the only person Alexandra has allowed, to be alone with her - I've a fucking weird idea....."

"Tanaya is Caroline's natural mother?"

"Yeah, and "he", her former husband whom she only names "he", is her father - she said to me that it's not necessary that I try to find him, she said she not would know his today's abode, because.....because he would be the third party!"

"You should find him, I help you! She has adopted her, there are documents! Should be not that difficult!"

"And our dinner?"

"Let's see how quick we are! We have to find him and have to see what information he has. Then we should have a dinner, a dinner altogether!"

"And his information? According to Alexandra he has betrayed her - maybe with Tanaya?"

"Sure, we have to be critical, but now we have the chance to get information about how this all had begun."

"She has said, that he has married the women, with who he had betrayed her. He's definitely not married with Tanaya - or maybe? Wow, that would be finally bizarre, totally baroque!"

"We will check whether she's married or not and with whom....."

"Maybe with the home teacher - that would be....I'm running out of words...."

"Therefor your imagination runs wild!"

"Hey, this is L.A. - maybe I should think about to start a career as Hollywood scriptwriter! At least I would be no young actress....."

Alexandra

"Hi Alexandra, it's me, Peter."

"Hi Peter, why you call?"

"I was a bit busy the last days, but would you like to have a dinner with me?"

"Oh, sounds like a date?"

"Well, we would be not alone....."

"Ah, come on - not really!"

"Sorry, but I have to amortize a debt. I would like to invite a married couple, they helped me trough dire straights. I thought, I invite them to a nice dinner, but my problem is always, that such evenings are very frustrating for me."

"You mean in a threesome?"

"Yeah, exactly...."

"Would you tell me about your debt?"

"I had mental problems, I stayed in a clinic. They visited me very often and helped me a lot."

"Problems with suicide?"

"I not attempted it, if you mean this. I collapsed - I collapsed in connection to a case. I had some problems to recover."

"The Chinese girl? What was her name?"

"You know her name - Minh!"

"Okay, I know her name, and it was in the papers - that you were hospitalized. But they not said why."

"I collapsed at the police station. Please forgive me, but it's very difficult for me to talk about this. Maybe I should tell you that I know Yves, the male part of the couple, because of my profession. He is a police officer. He was there as I.....you know."

"You talk with him about me?"

"Sure....."

"At least you're honest!"

"I was honest before - it would be the restaurant were Yves proposed marriage to Elizabeth."

"Oh, come on - you will not kneel down there! Don't start playing fucking games with me! I tried to call you several time the last days - no time for your wife-to-be?"

"I've saw it, but I needed time to think about the Rose Garden, about the red diamond, about my

problem to trust someone, and.....I have to work."

"Is my payment not enough?"

"All is too fast for me! It was good for me to be away for some days. I was in Orange County, near Anaheim."

"Professional secret?"

"You should know this as medic...."

"Sure, trust....."

"Yeah, trust."

"So,.....no wedding proposal?"

"I fear no. But that's not the point, the point is that I'm a fifty-three-year-old single man. I would like to have the whole package!"

"That means?"

"No marriage without engagement!"

"Then maybe, who knows, it would be a very interesting evening?"

"Maybe?"

"Will Yves and Elizabeth decide this?"

"Not this....."

"But whether I'm a psychopath or not?"

"I stayed in the clinic...."

"Like Caroline - you both have a lot in common. You really would have loved her....."

"Did you love her?"

"She was the only one I ever loved!"

"Do you love me?"

"Can I trust you?"

"No."

"Then I love you - it will be a pleasure for me to get to know Yves and Elizabeth...."

"This....."

".....don't destroy everything - what will happen will happen. That's the fucking game - you would have loved her...."

Long Beach

"Hi, it's me, Alexandra."

"Hi, why you call me?"

"Should I pick you up, when I drive to the restaurant? Your apartment is more or less on my way."

"Yeah, why not! Would be my fist time in a Koenigsegg....."

"You know, that I not own one, but if you like, I will rent one."

"Please not!"

"Now what?"

"Can you imagine how this would look like?"

"You think I wouldn't be able to drive it?"

"That's not the problem. Imagine you would stop in front of the restaurant, you would open the door, and everybody would see the wonderful lady behind the steering wheel. Then you would get out of the car, with an elegant move, while on the other side an old man would try to escape the car. He would manage it finally, with the help of the lady and the man from the valet parking service. No, please no super sports car!"

"What would you prefer?"

"I think that you own more then one car - choose one."

"What do you think, what for cars I own? I own three cars."

"Come one, no games..."

"Then a bit different - what cars would make you happy, would I own them?"

"I'm no car enthusiast - I use them."

"Now you, come one! Everybody has some favorite cars...."

"American or European?"

"That's an interesting beginning. Say.....American cars....."

"A 60's Corvette."

"Wow, that was fast! No pony?"

"Nope!"

"I thought you would be the perfect Mustang guy. Hey, Steve McQueen in the streets of San Francisco?"

"Yeah, San Francisco.....and yes, the fastback is cool, and Steve McQueen was the coolest, and together.....the first time I saw the movie I thought: Wow, the other car is fucking cool - the Charger!"

"Sorry, no Corvette, no Mustang, no Charger - should I rent one?"

"No, simply choose one of yours. One of this modern cars, one of this boring cars."

"Maybe I own at least one classic car?"

"An American classic?"

"Okay, you got me - it's a European car."

"Oooh, don't say that you own one of this nice European roadsters!"

"Maybe?"

"If I would have the money, I would buy me one of this wonderful elegant Alpha Romeo roadsters, one from the 60's!"

"Sorry, British!"

"Also the classic British roadsters are very fine cars. Don't let me guess! One from the 60's?"

"Yes, a Sunbeam Tiger, a Mark II."

"Okay, Sunbeam is not unknown to me, have seen a few. Mark II?"

"The Mark II is very rare, only just over five hundred had been build. Mine is from 1967, the last year of production. An interesting footnote?"

"Always...."

"One of the prototypes had been build by Carroll Shelby, back to the Mustang!"

"Yeah, the Mustang, and yeah, Carroll Shelby, but I would like it very much if you would pick me up in a Sunbeam!"

"Then the Sunbeam....."

"Hi Yves, Elizabeth! Sorry that we come too late, but there was an accident on the freeway. You both had no problems?"

"Hi Peter - no, no problems. We still have to wait till our table is free. Have a seat! And...."

"Sorry! Alexandra, this is Yves and his wife Elizabeth - Yves and Elizabeth, this is Alexandra."

"You're the police officer - Elizabeth, would you allow me to ask what your profession is?"

"I'm a kindergarten teacher."

"Then you should be good with kids - I had my problems therewith, Dirty Martini for me please!"

"Martini, always a good choice, but for me a Dry Martini, please."

"So, in this nice restaurant you asked Elizabeth if she would marry you, Yves?"

"Yes, and to my pleasure she said yes."

"I hope, I do not offend you both, but, isn't this a bit kitschy?"

"Maybe, but at least it has functioned...."

"You're divorced? How does your former husband had made his wedding proposal?"

"Nice question, Elizabeth - I asked him. Why should I wait till a man gets the idea to ask?"

"And as so often, the single guy sits at the sideline and has not much to say...."

"Then permit me a question!"

"Sure, Alexandra....."

"Would it be disturbing for you, as a man, when a woman would ask you? I mean, traditionally the woman has to wait and to hope....."

"Sometimes I think, this would be the only chance, not to die as a lonely man - that a woman would take pity on me and would ask me. But that would mean that a woman would be able to imagine that I could be her husband. I mean, I'm a fifty-three-year-old bachelor....."

"Don't give up, because, I believe there's a place."

"Nice quote....."

"I not wanna disturb the conversation that our singles have, but I think we can go to our table - should we?"

"Sure, I think we're all hungry, at least I am. A nice dinner, a nice wine and a nice conversation - what else you need? Yves, you know Peter since the Trifunovski case - or?"

"I not told you that?"

"Really - Yves....."

"Your loup de mer looks very good, Elizabeth! Unfortunately were not in Europe! There it would no problem to try therefrom, but here in the US we've definitely a problem with laissez faire. At least in such a restaurant - at third street it would no problem...."

"No, sharing your tacos is no problem at third street. Eating at a food truck is a very relaxed thing - but your lamb looks also very good, Alexandra."

"I would offer you some, but this is not appropriate in such an ambience. You like eating tacos with your man in Downtown West?"

"I enjoy them, he hates them...."

"Too much in your youth, Yves? - If this is no politically incorrect question?"

"No, and no. But you not necessarily have to correspond to every cliché. I like the European, the Mediterranean, culture. Italy, France, Spain, Portugal.....it's nice to be there."

"Wow, now you surprise me! You really stayed in all this countries? I mean, I love it to be there! I have the feeling Elizabeth and I should change places. She and Peter can eat tacos at a food truck, and we both tour the Mediterranean and enjoy the wonderful climate and the fabulous cuisine - what do you think, Yves?"

"I've the feeling now, that it's in any case, too long ago that I stayed there. But unfortunately for you, also Elizabeth likes it to be there."

"Wow, also you stayed in all this countries?"

"Not in all, but for instance, our honeymoon included Portugal and Spain. Andalusia was wonderful, Seville!"

"Yes, all the Muslim testimonies, the flamenco, the proud and wonderful women, with a rose in hair like the Andalusian girls, the men abounding in machismo - did you like the corrida Elizabeth?"

"We were not there...."

"You missed something - I like it, especially when the torero is a woman. You not tell me that you disdained the testicles!"

"I enjoyed more the fish cuisine....."

"Try them! Eat them in a small bodega, surrounded by young Spaniards - they taste delicious! But never, never, never in the States - that's bullshit! You Yves, did you like them?"

"Also I was able to live without this culinary delight."

"Okay, Peter I haven't to ask! My, my! Then I'm the only one at the table who had the pleasure to eat them - we four should have a trip to Mexico!"

"Mexico?"

"Peter! As said: In Texas shit, in Mexico cool! Maybe we both should have a trip to Mexico?"

"Tijuana? You can see your bullfight there - and some other things!"

"I said Mexico, no fucking brothel for American jerks! And don't tell me now that Tijuana has also nice places! Maybe you would enjoy a dugout at the river...."

"MacArthur Park and Skid Row are nearer, nearer to Angelino Heights - you're a bit irritable?"

"Why I should? What kind of game we're playing here?"

"I said it bluntly, that Yves's a police officer."

"Yves, do you allow me to ask, how far along are your investigations regarding my person?"

"There's no case, therefore no investigations."

"Yves, please! Not as a police officer in duty, as a the friend from the police - a private investigator has always a friend who's a police officer - or? A friend who helps him to find the truth."

"As a police officer I have to tell you that, "to find the truth" is, like to hunt for a very shy animal. Sometimes it's more, like to hunt a unicorn. You have seen them on pictures, but....."

"That sounds very philosophical - your credo as police officer?"

"Harvey Weinstein? What's the truth? That everybody knew it? That nobody talked about it? By the way, do all the women tell the truth? Did Courtney Love say the truth? Did she pay the price therefore? Why nobody was interested in, what she said? Ah, and I've forgotten - now everything will change in our wonderful city, like in New York, Chicago, Miami, Dallas and so on. And also not to forget, we've a nice president who loves to grope women and to kiss them, especially when they refuse. Have I forgotten to mention, that some think that it's appropriate for a man to marry a fourteen-year-old girl, so that he's able to "form her" due to his wishes. The truth - well,....."

"And the truth about me? I mean, Peter has no idea, but this is because of his emotional connection towards me - you have none, also you, Elizabeth."

"Should I be honest - Alexandra?"

"Honesty is never a mistake - said Courtney, while she got no further movie offers, drugs and alcohol....."

"I don't know that much about Courtney Love, but a bit I have the feeling....."

".....come on, please - isn't that a bit pathetic. My career isn't destroyed, even not now!"

"I don't referred to the career."

"To what then? Do you think you know even a little about her emotional life? About my emotional life?"

"At the end, and we all know this, you never can be sure about what happens inside the head of your counterpart."

"Peter, it's your turn!"

"Trust, at the end, always the same! Trust....."

"After this wonderful desserts, who wanna start? Elizabeth?"

"Ah, with what?"

"The résumé of course! To which conclusion you came, Elizabeth? - About my person, finally in the end the reason why we're here, so nicely and altogether."

"As I said before, you can not see what happens inside the head of another person, but.....I think you live in the right city - everybody wants to be an actor here, and you're a very good, a fantastic actress! No, I've no idea who you are and what you are, but you've learned it very well, whatever it is, to hide it - well, this would be my résumé...."

"Thank you for this nice compliment - I've the feeling that you're very good in your profession. I would entrust my daughter to you, but unfortunately.....Yves? Or, would you prefer to talk to Peter in private first - the whole evening, you both not disappeared down the restroom together, not even one time! A bit confusing, I have to confess."

"Why we should? We can discuss this evening tomorrow. I think there's no reason to hurry the things up. And I think it's to early for a résumé - I prefer, to sleep on it for a night."

"That's very clever - on one side, but....you never know what all can happen in a single night, sometimes you should not hesitate too long."

"Will something happen?"

"Maybe we should ask Peter, maybe he has some plans?"

"Most of all I will try not to be kitschy. Therefore I think nothing will happen."

"Oh, no plans - now I'm a bit disappointed."

"Tcha, I think I will pay and we will move to a bar for some drinks and then, then we all will drive home."

"So, no words from you?"

"No."

"Nothing? Are you that much insecure?"

"No, I think only, this would be the wrong place. There's another place, a place which for me is the only one, of which I can assume, that it would be the appropriate place."

"Would it be comfortably for you, would I know this place?"

"Have we talked about this place - I'm not sure?"

"At least we not talked about the place which I've in mind."

"Why then, you should know this place?"

"I'm not sure, maybe I've read something about it in the newspaper? Whensoever, I know a lot about you - I'm assured of my feelings, unlike you. How much time you still need, how many investigations? How many people have to be questioned in addition? Tanaya! You not have questioned Tanaya so far - maybe you should!"

"Maybe, maybe not, who knows. I would like to be together with you....."

"Tomorrow at your special place?"

"Tomorrow....."

"....you're an asshole! How many time you need, to talk with Yves? It's crappy enough that you have to talk with him before at all!"

"I'm anxious, sorry for that....."

"Than it would be better....."

".....it's not you, it's me! I fear that I will screw it up, that I will do or say the wrong thing at the wrong moment. I try to protract it, to delay the moment, when I have to take a stand, when I have to adhere to my feelings. I'm a coward - I said it to you already shortly before, only a bit more flowery."

"Then I fear, again, the woman has to take charge of it! Tomorrow, your special place - time? When do you think you will have finished your discussion with Yves?"

"It's not because of Yves, but I would like to be there.....at sunset."

"Wow, now you start to become romantic - according to the weather report we will have a wonderful day tomorrow. Sunset should be very beautiful tomorrow.....one hour before?"

"Yes, but....."

"....don't fear that much, I'll be there....."

Santa Monica Beach

I stood at Santa Monica Pier, at the very end, and looked at the ocean, at the tender waves. It would need some time till the sun would set, I needed time, time which I not had anymore. One hour before we had said, no definite place, would she find me - and then? I had a long conversation with Yves, a very long one - so full of doubts and insecurity. But now I would have to show my colors, not knowing them, not liking them. I was fatally attracted to her, addicted to her, knowing that she lies, as I was lying all the time. Does she loves me?, was the question I had to answer - not knowing what love should be - as she said, already before. Would it be possible that two people fall in love into each other, not knowing what love is? Could this end in a kitschy Hollywood happy ending, or was the nightmare inevitable? Maybe she would search the beach and not find me - maybe I should leave and say later that she not had found me, that my place is a secret beach, like a secret garden, like a thirteenth beach - but what a shit this would be, I was a coward, but no impostor. If this would be my idea, my answer, then it would be better, more honest, to tell her, that I'm only a measly wannabe, that we never should meet again, that it would be better for me to die as an old, senile and lonely man. I looked at the ocean, this for me so special place, not noticing that she already stood beside me.....

"Oh, I've not noticed you at all! You're a long time here?"

"No! Only just! It was a bit impolite not to call attention to myself, but it seemed that you look absentminded at the ocean - you like the ocean?"

"Yes, she was my first aim in Los Angeles....."

"She? And, first aim?"

"Haven't I said it to you? I'm not born in Los Angeles. I arrived in the afternoon, drove to my motel - at this time I had no fixed abode in Los Angeles - and laid to rest, after a light dinner at Gus's, because it was a long travel. But the next morning I stood up early, took the Metro Exposition Line to Santa Monica, walked down here, stood here and looked at her."

"At her?"

"The ocean is gorgeous - or?"

"Yes, without any doubt!"

"Then the ocean is a "she", simply because everything that's gorgeous, female is."

"I'm not sure if this is very poetic or simply stupid?"

"You have to decide, that's not my task. I only say it, that's all."

"I like it, I like you....."

"Why you knew that I'm here?"

"Is this important? I'm here....."

"No, it's not important, we're both here!"

"Hadst thou some doubts, to be here?"

"Friggin' unbelievable many!"

"I also, do you fear that we're too much alike?"

"Are we? I mean, you not lived in the Pink Wonderland, Caroline lived there. You said, that I've a lot in common with Caroline - but when this is true, and we both have a lot in common, then this would imply, that you and Caroline had a lot in common. But I have always the feeling that Caroline and you were very different - it's not that I not trust you, it's only....."

".....don't become panicky! Elizabeth is a very good observer - and I'm a good actor. And also not because of trust - Yves and you? I'm simply curious...."

"Our conversation today? Well, no definite solution - you're still a mystery...."

"And your investigation?"

"Nothing spectacular. Nothing, one can blame you for, nothing to....."

"Caroline committed suicide, that's the result of your investigation, I've hired you for? Well, then it would be absurd to say, that there is nothing one can blame me for - or? Looks not as if I had been the perfect mother - or? Maybe...."

"No, that's no solution.....believe me, I know what I'm talking about....."

"That was one of the reasons why I hired you - not in Los Angeles?"

"In San Francisco....."

"You're joking! You're born in San Francisco and moved to Los Angeles - a bit crazy, without an or!"

"Thought, this would be a smart idea - definitely the nicer beaches!"

"Maybe! And what else?"

"Well,.....I was here for a holiday - I mean, we not have to talk about that this is no nice city, that you....come on, have we to talk about Skid Row, have we to talk about all this tourist shit, have we to talk about the fucking Hollywood sign and all the lies around it, no we not have to! But, I felt in love, not knowing what love is, I cried as I had to leave, was depressed, back again, I knew that I have to live in this city - and what the hell! I'm an old single man - I have nothing to lose! But maybe, maybe a lot to win - hey, we all know: Down on the west coast, this is the place were everything can happen!"

"Can - or?"

"Yeah, can! But at least - can....."

"Then maybe we should have a walk? I like it to walk, where the salt water meets the sea strand...."

"So do I - maybe we have in fact a lot in common..."

"It's beautiful, when the water wets your feet from time to time, it's like nature bestows you a moment of safety, a moment of calm, a moment of comfort, as nature would gift you a little piece of

vital energy - you smile?"

"I always smile, when I'm insecure and shy. It's an automatism. I feared my whole life to talk about my feelings, but now I have to - now it's the time to fall silent forever, or you confess to your feelings. I feared this moment my whole life - wow, this wave was large...."

"Yes, my skirt is a bit wet now - oh, this is a bright star! It's not dark and you can see that distant light already."

"It's not that distant and it's no star. It's one of the other planets."

"Venus?"

"Too kitschy! Jupiter, the largest planet, the one with the great red spot."

"Venus would be romantic, not kitschy!"

"Romantic or kitschy - always the same, only seen from different angles. Some like jazz, some not - some who like jazz like fusion, some not - some who like fusion like it when Miles Davis plays only single notes while showing his back to the audience, some not - I like it, but what does this means? Is it important whether it's Venus, Jupiter or a distant light - it looks beautiful, only the young crescent is missing, then it would be perfect....."

"Yeah, that's true. Deep in you heart you're a romantic beyond reclaim!"

"Deep in my heart there's a little place that dreams about to be romantic - whom it's allowed to be romantic."

"Who prohibits it?"

"The human world, the reality - this city...."

"You mean a place like Skid Row?"

"I mean all the suffering, not that it exists as such, but that it not would have to be, at least not in our modern world - we would be able to change this!"

"You could try to change this.....some say, everything can be changed....."

"Some say, I'm without hope....."

"Some say, I feel no love...."

"Do you feel love?"

"When I'm with you - and don't look at me in this way, you have to decide."

"You would be the first person I would trust, I mean in that way that I would offer you all my feelings, you know what this would mean - fantastic actress...."

"I would offer you all my feelings in my sleeping room, and you know, that I mean this not in a kitschy Hollywood sense. In my sleeping room I would stand naked in front of you, would be vulnerable, you would be able to destroy me!"

"Maybe I fear this most?"

"To destroy me?"

"Yes."

"Would you destroy me - if you would be able to?"

"I fear that I would destroy you in a moment when I should destroy me...."

"Now I fear, that I have some problems to follow you...."

"No problem, only stupid babble. I fear, that one of us will be destroyed at the end, and I hope it will be not you."

"Don't fear, at least I'm a roly-poly."

"Then I feel reassured - a lot of stars now, not long and the sun will set."

"We should sit down and enjoy it...."

"Yes, a bit romantic would do me good now."

"Yes, sometimes one should forget this world."

"Yes, but it's not that easy at the end."

"Maybe it's easier, not alone?"

"Definitely, without any doubt - all this suffering that you see every day, is it really that easy, not think about it, simply not allow it, that it affects you - is it such simple?"

"No, don't forget - I'm a fantastic actress!"

"I'm no good actor, do you think we could play together?"

"Maybe we simply should try?"

"I'm a lousy actor!"

"There's a nice place! Now we should hurry up, the sun nearly touches the water!"

"The sun starts to drown - so long ago and I'm still not able to remember....."

"Oh, that was a bit unexpected - the setting sun does you really good, knew that you're a romantic!"

"I only accepted a piece of advice....."

"Advice from whom?"

"Prince....."

"Wow, you're learning from the best....he definitely knew.... - but to what do you refer?"

""Clouds", a song from his last album "Art Official Age"."

"I fear I missed something - can you quote?"

"You should never underestimate the power of a kiss on the neck - When she doesn't expect.

Obviously he was right - yeah, Prince was Prince, unfortunately I'm not him....."

"But the beginning was not bad. Maybe.....you know some other quotes?"

"Hell a lot of, but.....twenty-five positions - or was it twenty-seven? What ever, I fear it was a mistake to start with this - hell, I'm not James Brown, I'm no Sex Machine!"

"I can calm you down, only twenty-three! And if I'm not wrong, than "sex" means "to dance" in this song."

"Really, only twenty-three, then I'm in the running again - but I'm a lousy dancer!"

"But your kiss was not that bad - look, the sun is halfway through! How fast it goes!"

"Yes, too fast - should we calculate?"

"Calculate?"

"It's a simple calculation how fast it goes - not very romantic, but easy!"

"It's a bit a break now, but....."

"Was meant as a joke - nevertheless it's easy, but as said not very romantic....."

"But now I'm curious...."

"The sun's diameter is half a degree, the sky - half a full circle - one hundred and eighty degree, therefore the sun's diameter is the three hundred and sixtieths part of the sky. At the equator - here a bit less - the sun needs twelve hours from sun rise to sun set. So we have twelve hours, or seven hundred and twenty minutes, divided by three hundred and sixty. The result: two - two minutes! But that's not absolutely correct, only at the equator. The inclination angle is important, here I think between two and a half minutes and maybe nearly three minutes. Therefore we should hurry up, not much left and maybe we will see the green light!"

"Yeah, would you take me into your arms?"

"Nothing would please me more....."

"That was the green light - or?"

"Yes, your first time? By sunsets over the sea you can see it relatively easy and often. The water is the ideal horizon, but I think, no more physics now....."

"And I'm not that uneducated, obviously it's related to the light refraction!"

"That's true, but really your first time that you saw it - you live here, at the ocean!"

"Isn't that a bit arrogant?"

"It's the sunset over the ocean - not your first time you saw it, you were a married women - with "him" at the beach?"

"He wasn't that romantic - you not asked him?"

"Not that - and with Caroline?"

"Caroline was not interested in beaches and sunsets. I not said, that you both had everything in common - and you're getting very unromantic now!"

"Sorry, I feel sorry, really! Should we jump back to Prince and the quotations?"

"You had some trouble therewith!"

"With twenty-three positions? Definitely! That sets the bar too high for me, I mean....."

"Twenty?"
"Well,....."
"Okay, eighteen, but that should be possible....."
"During how many nights....."
"Always this old men, where are the good old days, where we all were young....."
"Apart from, that you're still young, you only need a younger man - should be possible to find one in the city....."
"Yeah, the boy who delivers the vegetables? Maybe the vegetables....?"
"Now you surprise me a bit....."
"Why, too bluntly?"
"No, not in that sense, but....also not that romantic?"
"Would it be romantic, would I have it off with the boy?"
"That at least would be pure Hollywood, the dream of every American boy...."
"I'm not Stifler's mom - that's shit!"
"That's Hollywood - that's what Dreamland tells...."
"That's Hollywood shit, I'm not a stupid mother who waits to be get fucked - I'm no mother at all any more!"
"Sorry again.....now I fear, I've destroyed all what's romantic....."
"Don't apologize all the time! Our conversation developed this way, that's all! Not my fault, not your fault!"
"I'm still so awful insecure - I would like to kiss you....."
"You already did....."
"Not such - real....."
"Than do it - dummkopf.....!"

Too Much Hollywood

I stopped my car in front of her house, used the right part of the way to her house and had not to ring the bell - she had given me the key. We had made a date at 8.00 pm, a nice dinner and then.....whatever.....

It was exactly eight o'clock as I turned the key, sure, that she was not ready to go out - not because she was a woman or such a thing, but because.....

I entered the house, no sign of her.....so I said out loud:

"Alexandra, are you ready?"

She appeared at the end of the staircase to the upper floor, wrapped in a towel only.....

"Sorry, you know - women! Come up!"

"I wait here, I think that I will find something to drink in the kitchen....."

"You're no boy, or. We can talk till I get ready!"

"Why not....."

I went upstairs, welcome kiss, and I followed her into her sleeping room - no Pink Wonderland, but.....

"Surprised?"

"You said, I will find a picture of Caroline in your sleeping room, but this...."

"Oh, I really said one?"

"Yes!"

"I hope you not think I lied?"

"No,...no....."

I looked at the flood of pictures, sometimes only Caroline, sometimes together with Alexandra - I started to count.....

"You not count – or?"

She vanished in the bath room, to appear again.....

"Oh, I forgotten, my clothes for tonight....."

She snatched the little black something, that laid on her bed - only the little black something, to vanish again, not closing the bathroom's door completely.....

"By the way, you're looking cool in your tuxedo - borrowed?"

"Yes - borrowed! I think it's a must for such an occasion....."

"In any case! In such nights you never know what will happen - after all you're at least in my bedroom already....."

"Should I interpret this now?"

"As long as you not start to become childish, you know, this stupid men's jabbering - by the way, you already found what you're looking for?"

Yes, I had! It was not that difficult - to easy! All this pictures, I was not through with counting them - but one was special, the one on her nightstand. It had a wonderful frame, gilded, gracile, entwined - you would fear damaging it, by touching it. The picture showed Caroline and Alexandra, only their faces, smiling - like two fairies.....I moved the picture only, turned it around, to see the envelope, affixed behind - To "Mom" and Mom.....

"I fear.....yes, I have...."

"Fine - another question: You carry a gun under your jacket?"

I sat on her bed with the envelope in my hand, the bathroom was on the other side, but I had not to turn my head to know that she would have a gun in her hand, pointed on me.....

"No, wouldn't it be a bit strange to appear armed to a date?"

"Maybe, it would be smart?"

"At least it would show that you not trust your date...."

"Trust! Let's see.....you talked with....Erik...."

"Yes."

"Trust, do you trust him, what he told you about me?"

"He's an asshole, if you wanna hear this?"

"He's a billionaire! He worked hard for his money - crappy shit! But I think you know that....investigations....."

"Yes, as said, he's an asshole!"

"What did he say about me?"

"At the end not that much. A lot of meaningless babble - he likes most to talk about himself. I thought of, to talk with you about this later. I would be more interested in what you would say about this marriage."

"I was young, finished my study summa cum laude and had a fantastic job offer, yeah.....and then I met him. He was a successful business man, he said that he would love me, that he would make everything possible for me - and I married him! But I was only a trophy! He said to me - no, he commanded me, to spurn the job offer! He said, that he would not allow me to work, to work like a poor bitch! His wife would have to be at his side, to support him, but that was not the truth! For him was important that I would end my career for him, like a blessed concert pianist, from now on only playing for him, no longer for the ordinary people! I had to relinquish everything, for him was important, that he would have full control over me - I shot at him!"

"Well, you missed him?"

"No, I hit my aim, exactly - but I rescued him also! After this he thought, it would be better to look for a more user-friendly wife - he found her!"

"Yes, I saw her - no police?"

"Come on, no scandal! On the contrary - a nice diamond as farewell gift, he always was very generous....."

"Okay, so far, but then.....you started with your career, what a career!"

"Yes, a fantastic career....."

"And then you adopted Caroline?"

"The career was cool, but my life was empty - I met her real mother as she was pregnant with her. She was desperate, I offered her and her child a home and future."

"The only condition was that Caroline should be your daughter and not hers?"

"Obviously."

"And Tanaya is the mother without inverted comma?"

"Don't pretend, as you would not know this!"

"It was more a rhetorical question - would it possible to you not stand behind me?"

"Sure.....better?"

"Yes, nice dress - has Tanaya saw the letter?"

"Ah, come on! What do you think?"

"I think that you said Caroline who her real mother is - shortly before October 1st. Right?"

"Yes....."

"And Tanaya knows nothing, nothing about the letter, not that you said Caroline that she's her real mother - or?"

"What do you think?"

"That you hired me to proof that it's no suicide - but that's not possible! What story I should tell Tanaya, what story she would believe?"

"I've told Caroline, that she's adopted, and I nearly killed her with this! It was a hard time! Now I told her, that Tanaya is her real mother - and I killed her! What do you think, I should tell Tanaya - I killed your daughter?"

"What do you think, I should narrate her? A fantasy story, a fairy tale.....every story would be that absurd - what kind of story you told her?"

"The same story that I told you - this time no suicide letter!"

"Okay, you need me therefor, that I fabricate a story for Tanaya! Thank you! Thank you, that you shared a sunset with me! And stop therewith to point this fucking gun on me!"

"Maybe I need it?"

"For what? To shoot me!"

"Maybe?"

"What fucking story this should be? If I like to, I stand up and walk through this door - and then? You shoot me from behind - that would be an interesting story, the story for the police! When you would be able to explain this to the police - no story for Tanaya?"

"Maybe it's a test?"

"Trust?"

"Yes."

"Okay, assumed I would be able to find a plausible story, a story Tanaya would believe - and then? Then you would trust me?"

"We would have a secret....."

"This already not functioned with Caroline, why it should function with me?"

"Because you're a man?"

"I not totally understand you....."

"You were.....I'm not sure what word I should use.....say, restrained? You know at the beach. On the other side, you liked it very much - obviously! I can offer you a lot - you like it?"

"Yes, looks beautiful, but sorry that I say this - you behave now like Erik....."

"Yeah, sure! But because he's a man, because he's rich, it's okay when he behaves such a way! You have seen his little puppet? Everybody loves her, and he's a fantastic player - maybe he will become president one day! And I? Is it too much, that I wish a bit tenderness for me, that I dream to have a family life? In the operating room, at least sometimes, I can do miracles, not like God, but like a magician, sometimes it's pure magic what I'm able to, when I'm in the operating room. Outside.....outside I'm the fool! I thought you would help me....."

"But, and please listen to me. I have no idea what I should tell Tanaya, nothing that would make sense. That's my problem!"

"Tell her.....that you found no evident, that it was a suicide! Tell her, that.....you not wanna help

me!"

"Why you showed me the suicide letter, can I read it?"

"Sure, but it's not that interesting. She only says that she can not live in a world where the two persons she trusted, betray her. Especially me, for the second time. But she also says, that it would had been better, not to tell her the "truth", that I destroyed her paradise once and for all, that she now has no place to live anymore. Is it too much wished, that you would help me, not to destroy Tanaya's world also?"

"Would it be possible for you to put down the gun? We could go upstairs, drink something and talk about what we can do? I'm honest, I have no distinct idea how we can handle this, but this?"

"No way, I not let you destroy everything! I revealed you everything, I not let you go! You wanna see the rest, that I would stand naked in front of you, that I fall on my knees, that I beg for your help? I thought that you're different - why you're still visiting the Chinese girl? I thought that you would be loyal!"

"I said it to you already once before, we've talked about our grandmas. Would this be a fucking Hollywood movie, then your dress would lie on the ground, you would stand naked in front of me because you wear nothing under it, I would stand up, would take away the gun from you and we would have a fucking hot sex scene - but this no dumb Hollywood movie! The Chinese girl and I, we're interwoven...."

"And you and I?"

"Only the fantasy of an old man....."

"So, you not wanna see me naked? No sex scene? Too much Hollywood - or?"

I knew that it would be a fucking answer, but I had to say it - and what should happen? I was an old man, who had wasted his life, not capable to do it by it's own. I looked into her eyes, felt relieved, now that it was over - she would do it for me, she would be my.....

"Much too much Hollywood....."

She pulled the trigger - after putting the gun into her mouth.....

Yes, her bosom was very beautiful, and also the rest of her body, laying on the ground - at least most of it.....

Into The Rose Garden

"How do you feel today?"

"Fine, thank you for all, Yves - also you, Elizabeth."

"No need to say it, Peter. We were gravely worried about you, we still are. But it's good to see that you managed it at least to this point. Not that long ago it looked not very good."

"Yeah, it was a total misjudgment - I really thought she would shoot me, really! Wow, I absolutely not realized what happened at this moment, my brain was not capable of, to understand that she not has shot me, but instead.....strange, totally strange...."

"But this mechanism helped you to survive, and we're very happy about that! It would had been awful to lose you!"

"You will need some time, but they told us that they think you will recover totally."

"Don't lie! You know Sam Fuller's movie Shock Corridor?"

"We've saw the movie together at an art-house cinema - you're not the protagonist, Peter!"

"No, no...not the reporter! I know, when I would stay longer here, not to think of, for a real long time....I would become.....the nigger!"

"We are here for you - don't fear!"

"They impose the white costume on me, soon I will start with my hate speeches!"

"Say it with simple words - the medication?"

"Yes, I hate it, to be happy because I've swallowed something - that's shit, American shit!"

"You have to be on firm ground again, they try to stabilize you!"

"I never had firm ground under my feet, my whole live - functioned, more or less.....I dream not about, to be happy the whole day! Why should I! This world is no happy one! How many murders you had last week? How many rapings, how many suicides? One at least - how long I'm here?"

"Longer than a week, much longer to be honest.....in the city? Five murders, forty-five rapes, two hundred and sixty assaults. And suicides? You know that more people die, because they commit suicide, than we have deaths from drug overdoses or car crash fatalities - eight the last week."

"This is a sick city - I have to leave this fucking mental hospital! They will kill me, this city will kill me!"

"Where you wanna go?"

"San Francisco."

"To Cecily and Dashiell?"

"No, no at all! I'm not in touch with them for a longer time now. San Francisco is my city....."

"Come on, you said that you were not born in Los Angeles - but San Francisco!"

"Why all react in this way when I tell them this? Yes, San Francisco - I have a date there, in my city of birth."

"A date? With whom?"

"Not with whom - it's a monument....."

"Don't tell me that's a bridge!"

"I've a date, on the Golden Gate Bridge, right in the middle."

"You not think I would let you go to San Francisco, to....."

"Don't panic! I'm not the guy who jumps from bridges - and don't forget that we have our own Golden Gate Bridge....."

"Okay, assumed you would drive to San Francisco for your "date", what would you do?"

"I'm not absolutely sure, but definitely I would not jump, not my style."

"Your style?"

"For guns I'm to stupid, I nearly drowned as a boy, I think drowning would be interesting, drowning in the ocean."

"Because San Francisco has no beaches and no ocean....."

"You need a special beach for that, you can't do this everywhere, you need your thirteenth beach..."

"And your "thirteenth beach" is in L.A.?"

"Yes, therefore it would be good for me to leave this city, at least for some time. I have to think about myself, about all the things that happened in this city, about my future - you have to help me! I have to escape!"

"This will be a bit difficult, to be honest. But maybe with the coroner's connections.....you know what it would mean for us, when you would drive to San Francisco to commit....."

"Yeah, trust, all the time the same problem - trust! What would have happened, would I had trusted her? Maybe I would be a married man now - who knows! A wonderful house in Angelino Heights, an elegant Sunbeam Tiger, a beautiful wife and not to forget, a million dollar ring! I think it would had been okay for her, that I would had wore the ring from time to time - or? All the time, whenever I looked at the ring, I thought, not bad, but surrounded by smaller black diamonds.....outstanding! How long I'm here you said?"

"Two Months."

"How often we had a conversation like this since then?"

"Often.....every time....."

"Not your first visit - or?"

"No....."

"I'm not crazy - or?"

"No, not crazy, but.....it was an awful shock for you.....you need time."

"No, I have no time anymore! Two months? Help me to get out! Two months - Minh will be sad, I hope she thinks not that I've forgotten her, that I betrayed her. You see, I have a lot to do! Here, at this place, I will become crazy.....no I'm not crazy! Trust! Hey, trust me!"

"I trust you Peter! Today I trust you!"

"Thanks for that Elizabeth - and you Yves?"

"I'm concerned about you, still.....I'm no good friend....."

"You would be no good friend would you lie to me. You're only scared for me, you only care for me - that's real friendship! But maybe you're able to trust your wife for a moment?"

"You're in fact in a better shape today, smart gambit - touché! But it will be not easy, and I fear not fast - I trust you!"

Thanks, trust.....why I did not trust her? Would I had trusted her, this story would had a very different ending. Too much, much too much lie in this story - much too much senseless death. Too little, far to little trust.....