

# **The American Dream**

## Barfly

*".....I'm proud to shut down the government for border security....."*

Why I'm watching this shit? Yeah, you fucking asshole, you fantastic deal maker! Yeah, the Mexicans will pay for it - your're nothing then a fucking liar! But that's nothing new - happy Christmas to all who work for this wonderful government! Have a nice celebration with no paycheck - I need my golfing in Florida.....

But what would be the alternative? Closing your eyes and your ears? This country turns into a nightmare - I have to leave this place.....

I decided to walk to the bar, the fresh air would help me. I never believed in the American Dream, but today? I'm from the States - best way to begin a joke nowadays. Was there a time this nation was proud? Today it was a shame to live in this nation.....

I arrived at the bar, a new young doorman. I nodded with my head and tried to enter the bar as he addressed me:

"Sorry, sir. Today we have a birthday celebration and a lot of other guests are in. Today no more guests....."

He shook his head - did he think that I couldn't understand him otherwise?

"Ask Jack, it will be okay."

"But he....."

"....do me a favor, ask Jack."

He stood up, not very motivated, and walked inside - I behind him.

"Can you please....."

"...no!"

For a moment he thought about the situation, eyed me up, but to my surprise he decided to continue his way - I behind him. I had to confess that the bar was obviously overcrowded. In the back part of the bar the birthday guests, a bunch of people, in high spirits - a bit too artificial for my taste. Another group in the front part - some with sweat suits? Okay, I not wanna sound arrogant, but in a bar? Obviously young people with money, modern times! The rest of the tables were filled with couples or groups of four. Surprisingly, apart from some people standing around there, obviously from the birthday group, the bar as such was empty - enough space for me! But I saw that Jack and his bar crew were very busy and I thought for a moment whether it would be better to look for another bar. But unfortunately I had my guide - we reached the bar and it took a moment that Jack saw us. The doorman started the conversation.

"Sorry, but he....."

"Hi Pete!"

"You know that I hate it when you call me Pete - Jack!"

"I know, Pete!"

Then he moved his head to the youngster.

"This is Peter. He can come in whenever he wants to."

Then he looked at me again.

"Sorry, it was my mistake. I not thought that you would come today and he's new, he's a last-minute sub."

"No problem, now I'm here. He's a good boy."

The doorman nodded with his head and returned to his place, and I took a seat on one of the bar stools.

"Very busy place today."

"Yes, thought that most of the others will have left before the birthday group will come, but.....you

see it!"

"I can look for another bar."

"Hey, for your drink I've time every time - the usual?"

The usual? Very often I decided to drink his fantastic House Old Fashioned. His version was a, at least for my taste, wonderfully well balanced mix of the ingredients. The taste of the Whiskey, a bit bitter, a bit sweet, and the wonderful harmony with orange was at any time a fantastic choice.

"I need something harder today."

"Stressed? A case?"

"No. I heard our wonderful president."

"Why you do such stupid things? Maybe I can help you?"

"Sure you can help me - Continental Sour, please."

Continental Sour, a Whiskey Sour with an addition of port - also a fantastic combination. It was more alcohol, I would need not that much of them. After a short time he came back to me.

"Your sour, Pete - you know where you can find the snacks....."

"Thanks, you neglect your other guests."

"They have time. Say, when you need a new one."

Therewith he started again to mix the drinks for the other guests. That was okay, he knew that I was not very much interested in a conversation.

I looked at the door, waited that it would be opened and "she" would enter the bar. I did this always, sitting here. You know her - or? Come on, we all know her! And maybe you will say now: Hey, and the doorman! Wow, every doorman would let her in, would let her in the most overcrowded bar you can imagine. It would be his death would he refuse her the entrance - yeah, "her".

There she was, tall and slim but not skinny. Her - dyed - platinum blonde hair, the waves who are playing with her large hat, the symmetric make-up. You're not sure, but it seems that she smiles a bit - and the rest? The classic costume, the hand gloves, the bi-colored shoes and of course the seamed nylons. You think about the nice things under the costume - but you also know that she will not come in. This only happens in Hollywood movies, unfortunately not in the reality. Therefore I looked at the other guests.

The birthday people in the back part - yeah, happy people. Chicks with their boys - I was unfair, but would they be fair to me? All the happy pairs around here. Well, nice and cool drinks - let's celebrate the decay. I thought about the young girl who died after she had been separated from her mother, caged like an animal. I thought about the dying in Yemen, but why we should be interested in? Our wonderful president was a buddy of the murderers in Saudi Arabia - you should choose your friends carefully. Let's be happy and celebrate while the world is turning on.....

I looked at Jack and his crew. Order after order they had to manage. But it was fascinating to watch their doing. I was always fascinated of bars. All the bottles, the different glasses, all the equipment you needed to mix all the different drinks. All the shakers, the little bottles with bitters and so much more - all the juices, the mint. They worked fast, but absolutely concentrated, every drink, every cocktail a masterpiece. They worked exactly, all this recipes in mind. I could watch them for hours, it was simply fascinating.....

"Another Continental Sour please....."

"It's your third then? You're very fast today Peter. At least very fast for someone who has no alcohol at all at home, for someone who drinks only tea at home, and coffee when he's on his way."

"I drink wine."

"Yeah, to a good dinner or at our jazz events. Should I organize you a hot coffee?"

"No, I have to kill me - in whatever way....."

## In The Office

I sat in my office and was bored, a privilege. I had the time and the possibility, to be bored. No case at the moment, but I was not really interested in getting one - the day after Christmas, the time between Christmas and New Year began now. The happy days were over now, the presents were unpacked now - a stupid time. Every year the same shopping fever - fortunately New Year was near, the fireworks waited to be bought. What a nice time, not for the civil servants - no money anymore for the police? Even his own GOP bootlickers were against it, calling his behavior "juvenile". But why should such a narcissistic asshole be interested in the feelings of others? "I wanna have my wall, I wanna have my wall, I wanna have my wall - and if not I'm butt-sore!" Billions for a fucking wall, but no money for people who would need it - oh, forgotten, the Mexicans will pay for it: "Indirectly"!

I leant back and looked at my small office. I had everything I needed, a small office and a small condo. Christmas time, holidays for the whole family, celebration time, the TV program even more worse then in the rest of the year - I took a sip, green tea from Japan. Too much alcohol the last days. Even when I had a cocktail from time to time, or a glass of wine, I wasn't used to alcohol so much. I not needed much to be drunken - and it was long ago now, that I was drunken for the last time, except for.....was I on the way to become an alcoholic? The phone rang.....?

"Yes.....?"

"Yes, I'm Mr. Maurer."

"Yes, it would be possible for me to take over a case."

"If its urgent, I'm in my office - you know the address?"

"Would be no problem, I have no plans for the evening. Take your time, I will wait till you arrive."

"No problem, you not have to thank me. It's my job."

I hung up, she sounded very desperate, I hoped nothing that dealt with marriage! She had said that she wants to talk with me personally - happy Christmas time. But to be fair, I really had no plans for the evening. My only concern was that a woman would sit here, cheated by her husband or something like that, and I should console her - that would be too much for me, at least in this strange mood.

She had told me that she would need at least an hour to come to my office - no traffic, I near the city center, outlying district obviously. A nice house with front garden, nice cut lawn, Christmas illumination, the family unified under the Christmas tree - obviously not.....

Mrs. Brewster..... - I was an idiot! It was simple, no minute, Internet, three weeks ago: Sarah Brewster, fourteen-year-old girl disappeared under mysterious circumstances - headlines in the newspapers and news channels, headlines three weeks ago! I tried to get as much information as possible before she would arrive. But there was not much, always the same.

Obviously she was on her way home from the music school, she took singing lesson. It were two and a half blocks from the music school till the bus station, a very good neighborhood, 6:00pm, everything well illuminated, but she never reached the bus stop. A girlfriend accompanied her for almost a block, two other passengers came to the bus stop shortly before the bus came, she had five minutes time. A very limited time frame and a very limited area - but nobody had seen anything. Unfortunately no traffic surveillance in this area. A lot of speculations in the press.

A crime? A runaway? Obviously no blackmailing - at least nothing of that in the press. I had to wait till she would arrive - she would arrive! I entered the little bathroom, looked in the mirror and tried to do my best to look at least somewhat better. Then I cleaned up the office as good as possible - the phone rang, it was the ringtone of the house telephone.

"Yes, I await her.....yes, I'm in my office.....yes, also today and still. Please show her the way .....thank you, Phillippe!"

Phillippe from the reception desk - as I came his college was there. I had my office in an office building near downtown. Sounds maybe better than it was. The building was old and in fact not every office was hired out. But therefor I could afford the rent, at least for such a small office. I stood in front of my desk and waited till she would open the door.....

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I had opened the connecting door between the office and the small waiting room, a room I normally not needed. She opened the door and I walked up to her, to greet her.

"Hello Mrs. Brewster, come into my office and have a seat."

"Hello Mr. Maurer, thanks."

I looked at her as she took a seat - inconspicuous would be a fitting word.

"Tea or coffee? I can offer you also mineral water?"

"A coffee would be nice."

I had brewed some coffee, also I took one. She was a beautiful woman, but a woman who was not interested in to be noticed, not talking about, to be a conspicuous woman. She was dressed up nicely, but in a way also boring - standard fashion of an average American housewife.

"Sorry Mrs. Brewster, I was a bit slow at the phone. You're here because of your daughter?"

"Yes, I think so."

"It has to be a hard time for you at the moment - Christmas time....."

"Yes, the first Christmas without her - not knowing where she is....."

She started to cry and I handed her a handkerchief. I had to be careful with my questions.

"The police? I have only the information from the press. Can you tell me something about the actual state of affairs?"

"The police has no clear evidence about what happened, only some hints and theories. They say that it's a problem, that it's even not clear, whether it's a crime at all, or maybe not. I think they are poking around in the dark only."

"What do you think I could do for you?"

"I'm not sure, but sitting at home and doing nothing? Maybe you would be able to find something, maybe only a new starting point?"

"Why you have chosen me? There are much larger detective agencies in the city."

"I've read a newspaper article about you some times ago. I could remember your name."

"About the McAllister case?"

"About the young girl."

"Well, it's difficult to say, but....."

".....she was found dead - but at least her parents had certainty about her fate. We all know that.....the longer a person is missing....."

She started to cry again, and I waited for a moment.

"It's hard for me, but I have to ask you some questions. Also we have to talk about what I could do for you and what not."

"I hope not for a miracle, but I need certainty."

"Okay. Your daughter, can it be that she ran away?"

"It would be a consolation, would this be probable."

"No new friends, a boyfriend maybe, new behaviors? Anything that has changed, in the time before her disappearing?"

"No, also the police has asked this and did some investigations in this direction. They have asked her girlfriends for example, but no indications in this direction."

"You know, it's difficult for me. Sure, I could start now asking her girlfriends again, but I fear that will bring no new clues. What I can offer you is, that I will use my connections to the police to see what they know. Then I think it would be good to go different ways of getting information. I know some tipsters, some informants. Maybe they know something. The point is, that you cannot hope for

a fast success - if any, at the end."

"I'm aware of this."

"The McAllister case - I worked five months for them. And even then it was a fluke....."

"I'm only not sure if I can pay you for such a long time."

"Oh, I will not work every day on your case, that would make no sense. It depends. At the beginning I will do a lot, but then a time will begin where we have to wait. You have to pay only the hours when I'm working for you. At the beginning I inform you often, at least once a week. I will tell you also how many hours I've worked for you. Later....."

"You wanna tell me with this that I should not hope for a fast result, not to talk about a good result."

"The McAllister case - this is no Hollywood movie. If it would be one, I would tell you that I will bring your daughter back, and in no two hours you would embrace your daughter again."

"As I said, it's important for me to get certainty. Why you look at me?"

"Nothing, I was lost in thoughts."

"You can tell it me, what should be more worse than this situation now?"

"The McAllisters? The whole family broke into pieces, after the knew that the girl was dead. Your situation is terrible and I will not start therewith to say something like: I can empathize with you. Simply because, I cannot imagine how awful this situation has to be for you. I've no children, and unfortunately I've no magic hat, I cannot make the things better than they are."

"What happened with the McAllisters?"

"We should not talk about that."

"I can check on the Internet."

"Don't do it, concentrate on your daughter. I will begin tomorrow therewith to cast the nets. I know people who know people who know people. Give me two days - can we meet again then?"

"This would be at Saturday?"

"You have plans?"

"Definitely not! You're in you office at Saturday?"

"I'm in my office today - Saturday at 3pm? Would this be okay for you?"

"Yes, sure."

"Your husband knows that you're here?"

"No."

"Please tell him that I work for you. Maybe it would be good when he would also come at Saturday."

"We had a severe quarrel this afternoon - he has left the house."

"He will come back, and then it would be important that you're working together. It would be important for me, I need all your support. It can be that the next weeks nothing will happen, no new clues and then suddenly.....do it for your daughter."

"What happened with the McAllisters?"

"Her father committed suicide, her mother got institutionalized, her younger sister became drug-addicted, a prostitute, a small-time criminal. That does not have to happen!"

"She has no younger sister....."

## **A New Old Case**

I had a phone conversation with Yves, a friend from the police.

"Do you have some information about the Brewster case for me?"

"Why you're are interested in?"

"Mrs. Brewster was in my office yesterday."

"You've worked yesterday?"

"Many have worked yesterday - cooks and waitstaff, at hospitals and old folks' homes, at the police and more. Surprising, how many have worked during the last days."

"Yeah, she has hired you?"

"More or less. I said her that she should give me two days time. I've no real feeling for this case at the moment. I need more information. It would be unfair to raise her hopes - I've only limited possibilities."

"I'm a bit surprised that you consider to work for her."

"The McAllister case? Ten years are a long time - should I have send her home?"

"Such cases end all the time in a disaster. I'm happy that I have not to deal with such cases. But I know the responsible investigator, I could ask him."

"Do you think he would tell you something?"

"I will tell him that you asked me - yes, he will talk with me. He was involved in the McAllister case also, as a rookie in this department."

"Thanks for your support. Do you have some more information about what happened with the mother and the younger sister?"

"The McAllisters?"

"Yes."

"What I know is that the mother became discharged from the mental hospital. As far as I know she moved away."

"And the younger sister?"

"Foster family, street, in custody, street, foster family, street - no idea were she's at the moment. Maybe I get some information about her as well."

"Can we meet later?"

"Sure. How about 7pm in the bar here, next door?"

"Not too much police there?"

"Why, we do nothing illegal - or?"

"No, I don't think so."

"What do you plan?"

"You mean?"

"Well, do you hope for another stroke of luck as in the McAllister case?"

"No, that would be too much. As I said, my possibilities are limited and I have no real feeling for the case at the moment. Maybe I have to tell Mrs. Brewster that it will make no sense to work for her."

"Four eyes see more than two - you're very good linked-up in the city. 7pm?"

"Yes, thanks again!"

The McAllister case? A fluke? Yes and no. I had asked as much people as possible to keep an ear to the ground - and it had functioned. A homeless told my request another homeless. One evening he looked for a place for the night and sat down on the ground next to a bus stop. A man came and waited for the bus, he not payed the homeless man attention - why he should. A stinking shabby homeless, sitting there, starring at the street? Then a mother and her daughter walked along on the other side of the street and the man started to think aloud - why not, he was alone at the bus stop. He thought something like: Wow, nice little girl! With her one could have the same fun, as I with Tammy! Tammy was the first name of the daughter of the McAllisters. And the homeless? He heard him, and he reacted - but he was clever, a vet. He was aware of, that he not could address the man directly, or someone else - but he had a plan. He waited till the bus arrived and that the man entered the bus. Then he started to shout around, stupid things, nothing about what the man had said. His goal was that the bus driver, and the maybe the passengers, would keep this moment in mind. The bus stop, the time, and the man who entered the bus, right in the moment, when he started therewith to become annoying - and it functioned fantastically!

It was easy for the police to find the bus driver. He could recollect the situation very well. And better? He had bandied some words with the man about the situation, he could remember that this man drove from time to time with him. He also could remember where he had left the bus, he could describe him very well. The police needed no three days to arrest him! He was a divorced man who

lived alone, with a good job and income - nothing notable, a normal average citizen. But then they searched his house. He had observed all the time various young girls, to kidnap one, if possible. He had had time, he had waited for a good chance and unfortunately he got his chance and Tammy was his victim. But he still continued therewith to observe young girls, waited for his next chance. He never would get another one.....

The press reported about me, I had provided the decisive hint, about the homeless nobody reported anything. And the McAllister family? The father drowned in self-reproaches, that he had not protected his daughter. Nothing helped him, not even the certainty that the murderer has given him no chance. The murderer had waited, for his unique chance. But he thought that the other fathers had protected their daughters - he not! He killed himself. For the mother and the younger sister this was the final catastrophe. A whole family destroyed because of the deed of a murderer.....

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I met Yves in the bar, he was not alone.

"Allow me to introduce. Peter, this is Benjamin, he's the responsible investigator in the Brewster case - Benjamin, this is Peter, a long time friend of mine."

"Peter....."

"Benjamin.....I'm a bit surprised to see you here."

"Why not, we have the same interest."

"I'm still not sure whether I should work for the Brewsters or better not."

"You should, any help would be good."

"You make no progress?"

"No. I tread water, to be honest."

"But please, do not hope for too much support on my part - you were involved in the McAllister case?"

"Yes, I was new at the department at this time."

"This will not happen all the time. I fear this case will find no quick answer."

"That's not my worst concern."

"But....."

"I've the feeling that this is only the beginning."

"You have indications for a serial killer?"

"No, not really - maybe I'm wrong."

"But....."

"The McAllister case? The killer would have killed again, wouldn't he had been stopped. But the point is, this all had started long before the murder."

"You mean the fact that he already had harassed young girls a long time before the kidnapping?"

"Yes, the classic career. At least we stopped him after the first murder. But.....why nobody reported him to the police earlier, before the murder? Tammy could live - maybe my feeling is wrong."

"You think this could be the beginning of a series of murders? That this is someones first serious crime?"

"I'm not sure, the circumstances? A few minutes, no two blocks, I think she knew him. Maybe no near friend, but definitively not unknown to her. Maybe it was not planned at the end - I mean, kidnapping her."

"That leads you to the idea that the offender is a person with a history and someone not unknown to her. Someone, who has harassed young women already before. Someone from her school?"

"Also my idea. The problem is: No complaints, no names. It can be everyone....."

"That she's a runaway?"

"We found her diary, for example. She knew that her parents respected her privacy - some entries are very private, about her dreams and longings. But no word about a boyfriend, that she plans to



run away or something like that. On the contrary! All in all she was very happy at home, loved her parents and had plans for the future."

"All in all?"

"Yeah, she dreamt about to become a singer, to become a star. But she was very realistic. For instance, she was highly focused on her singing lessons. She wrote about, that she will need at least one or two further years of intensive singing lessons, till she should consider it in a serious way to become a professional singer. She was cantor in the church choir - absolutely no hints that she ran away."

"Everything leads to a crime."

"Yes, three weeks and I have not a single serious hint about what has happened - it's fucking!"

"You think that she's dead - or?"

"Well,....."

"Dead or in a devastating situation....."

"Let's hope for the best, let's hope that this is not the beginning of more....."

### **End-Of-The-Year Review**

I had developed various activities over the last days, now I sat at home, in my small condo, and watched TV - I was bored because of the TV program. Tomorrow I would meet Mrs. Brewster, and hopefully also Mr. Brewster, in my office. Crackers and a herbal tea, time for the end-of-the-year reviews. The people who had luck, the people who had bad luck, the most important events, the people who died - wouldn't it had been enough to say: 2018 had been a fucking year! I hoped that the Brewsters would be strong enough to get together in this awful moment - easy to say, bored because of the TV program with crackers and herbal tea. Aretha Franklin - respect? What a strange word today, disrespect was the pulse of the time. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez? New hope in dark days? Would he be a serial killer, than we would have a bigger problem - it would be more difficult to get him, serial killers were clever.

I stood up - had talked with many people, unsurprisingly no instant results, what should I say the Brewsters tomorrow? Our announced withdrawal from Syria? Thanks Kurds, we will fool you again! I was in a fucking mood, nothing seemed to make sense anymore.....

Another tea and Christmas cookies now, but also this helped not much. I had headache and was tired, maybe I was wrong in my doing, maybe it would be cowardly not to try it. More and more I felt that Sarah would be dead, but what I feared more was, that I would have to say the Brewsters again and again, week after week, month after month, that it gave no new development. I decided to go to bed, not to sleep, I would find no sleep. I would lie in the dark, thinking about the people who had luck this year, about the people who had bad luck this year, about the people who died this year.....

### **Meeting The Brewsters**

Saturday, shortly after 3pm, we sat together in a threesome in my office - and I was relieved that we were three.

"It's nice to meet you also, Mr. Brewster."

"Thanks Mr. Maurer, my behavior towards my wife was very stupid."

"It's a difficult time for you both, we have to talk about this later. But I will start therewith that I will give you a summary about what I've done the last two days. Also I will talk about what you can expect from me, and what not. Should I begin?"

"Yes, I think it would be good for us both, to hear your estimation."

"I had a conversation with the responsible police officer concerning your case. Should I work for you, we would work together closely. I started therewith to use my connections in the city. The more people see and listen, the better for us. I visited the neighborhood where your daughter disappeared. I try to get a feeling about what maybe happened - yes?"

"Sorry that I interrupt you, but the police and also you.....nobody has in fact an idea therefrom what happened?"

"That's true, but at the moment the question is not what happened. Too many unknown aspects make it impossible at the moment to develop a sound theory."

"The asked us what we have done at the time in question. Also neighbors, girlfriends, classmates.....do they think that we are involved in it?"

"No, but as I said, too many unknown aspects. They start to eliminate as much unknowns as possible. Also they try to find a starting point. Can I give you an example?"

"Sure."

"Say, that a car is involved. The street, where the music school and the bus stop is, leads in both directions to a large crossroad with traffic surveillance. The police checked all cars who crossed the intersections during the time in question. No suspicious car so far, but in the case that the car turned into a side street? Then suddenly many possibilities pop up regarding the way of the car - a very difficult situation at the moment."

"Is this the moment, when you tell us that it can take a very long time, till we can hope for results - if ever?"

"The problem is, that tomorrow everything can find its solution, maybe never. It would make no sense to tell you something different."

"You said, "if" you work for us? I thought you would do so?"

"For me it's important that you see that the police does everything they can. I have limited options, I can support the police with my work, but I can promise you nothing."

"We understand this, it wouldn't be helpful for us, would you create castles in the air. We have to accept that our daughter probably became the victim of a crime - if not more."

"The problem for everyone is, that you not even can say this. At the moment we all are clueless."

"Would you work for us?"

"I have two.....wishes. First, don't give up! Most probably is will take a long time. Second, you both are responsible for nothing! Whatever happened, it was not your fault! You both are not to blame! If it was a crime, you know who is responsible and to blame?"

"The offender?"

"Yes, without a question mark! Don't start to search for your responsibility, there is none! You did nothing wrong! Maybe with our society, our country, some people, something is wrong - but you did nothing wrong!"

"But the grief and pain?"

"Express your pain and your grief! Talk with friends and neighbors about it, there's nothing to hide! Your daughter's destiny is unclear - who would not suffer in such a moment? Don't suppress your feelings, this are noble feelings, this are important feelings."

"Will you work for us?"

"Sure I will!"

## **New Year's Eve**

I sat in my condo, no TV today, would be too much for me today. My head ached strongly, I was tired - was my behavior correct? The Brewsters, no good time for them - still time for Sarah? Was it okay what I said to them? Was it only unctuous talking? What should I have told them? Hey, I'm the private dick! When ever you need help, I'm here for you! Your daughter is missing? - No problem! I will find her, I will bring her back home - unharmed, of course! She will fall in love with

me, but I would know that this would be only the puppy love of a young girl, while she would look in the eyes of the man who would have saved her life! Cool, doubtful whether she still lives at all, like Tammy? Bringing back a dead daughter again? You've nothing to lose, when you know that you will lose in any case.....

I switched on the TV, zapped around and.....Ladies and Gentleman, The Rolling Stones playing: Sympathy For The Devil! Was never the biggest fan of them, but at least some of their songs were icons - this was one of these. Already the beginning, the drums, the vibrating, the piano - and yes, also the lyrics and the voice of Mick Jagger. But be honest, the song begins as such in the moment, when the guitar playing starts, not to talk about the final. Who's the coolest? Well.....Jump?

I decided to watch some footage on YouTube - yeah, an outstanding song with some good questions and some good answers, a very up to date song! Today you had not to ask about his name, and not about the place where you could find him.....courtesy? Yeah, have sympathy with him and fuck him, this man of wealth and taste.....

The two other songs? Well, Under My Thumb - it's the vibration, I like the xylophone, for me a wonderful pearl in an endless ocean! And of course: Give Me Shelter! What one should say - the guitar? The intro is simply not from this planet and always the same feeling - why he starts therewith to sing? But okay, drown in the guitar, a song to listen to for hours, to forget the things around you - *Rape, murder! / It's just a shot away.....*

## **New Year's Day**

"One of your fantastic Home Old Fashioned, please."

I sat in the bar, kindly he had open the bar today, and I looked forward to my nice mix of whiskey and orange.

"Here you are, Pete. The first cocktail of the year comes on the house - enjoy it!"

"Very kind, Jack! You know how to pamper your regular customers."

"Sure, it's my business. I think it's too early to ask about the Brewsters?"

"Sure, no new information. We have to be patient - easy to say when it's not your daughter."

"I've also no children like you, but I would run mad in such a situation."

"It's hard to imagine what it means for such a couple.....the first Christmas, the first Happy New Year - without her? I wish you a Happy New Year - yeah, at least the liquor store would have a new best customer."

"Hey, you would go to the liquor store?"

"Your cocktails are fantastic and definitively worth their price. But as a lush, for every day? Sorry, beyond my possibilities!"

"You would get quantity discount! But seriously, do you think the Brewsters will bear this situation? Apart from the question whether her daughter is still alive or not."

"Difficult to say. I think it really depends on the development during the next weeks and maybe months."

"And if there will be no development at all?"

"It has to! It's one of this unbelievable nonsensical questions - why nobody has seen anything? Many people disappear and you get never an answer to the question: Why, what happened? It's a fucking situation!"

"The same as in the McAllister case?"

"Well.....their daughter was much younger, only nine years old. This time you still can think about the possibility that she ran away, even when it seems unlikely."

"You mean, should this case find no solution, the parents still will have the possibility to hope, to hope that their daughter is still alive."

"Yes, it's more difficult when your daughter is just nine years old."

"It's strange, again and again such cases which find no solution - okay, it's too early to say this

regarding this case, but I think you know what I mean."

"Yeah, only too good. Think about JonBenét Ramsey? Her dead body was found in the house of her parents - till today only theories, but no hard facts? You would think that this should be an easy case - and then? Sure, lies and chicaneries, but on the other side DNA samples and a strange ransom note - still today an open case. And we have nothing.....and you're not sure about whether you should see this as positive or negative."

"Yeah, this is no good beginning of the new year. A situation, when even I think about to pray, even when I think that this would be meaningless. Another one?"

"No, I have to walk around a bit."

"Would accompany you, but I have some other customers."

"It's okay, you do a lot for me. You know, what I feel?"

"I have some ideas about."

"I've seen a statistic, you also? 2017 we had again, after many many years, more dead people by gun violence then by traffic accidents. I've the feeling that everything decays."

"You have only to think about Las Vegas? Yes, I know the statistic. More than the half were suicides, but that not makes it better."

"Definitively not! Even when you subtract the suicides, we have a gun death rate of nearly 5! Normal European countries have gun death rates around 0.2 till 0.5 - with suicides! This is devastating! Sorry, but I need some fresh air....."

I started to walk around the streets, so much contrary developments at the moment. The whole world laughed about us, because of our wonderful president. But on the other hand so much new, young and forward pressing new faces appeared in policy. But the next two years? Get rid of this fucking president - and then? Mike Pence? The choice between the devil and the deep blue sea, between the rock and the hard place - that we have had yesterday? But what should went wrong? That the democrats back the wrong horse again? If this should be, then this country will perish - without style! Again street fighting? Maybe sometimes you have to, maybe the democrats have learned their lesson, maybe this all makes no sense.

And Sarah? Maybe it would be time to pray, even as a nonbeliever.....

## **A New Case**

The phone rang, the ringtone of the call forwarding - I lay in my bed. I had no plans for today, no appointments, no reason to hurry up. But someone, a potential client, called me - I took the phone.

"Agency Maurer, private investigations. What can I do for you?"

"Yes, it's me personally."

"No, my regular office times are mainly in the afternoon. The mornings, and nights, I need mostly for my investigations."

"Yes, we can settle an appointment for the afternoon. Would be 4pm good for you?"

"Fine, then we will meet at 4pm."

I looked at the clock - 11am, a lot of time, no reason to hurry up. I had not asked about his concern, but mostly it was unpleasant for the people, to talk about their concerns at the phone. Therefore.....I would come to know it later. The Brewster case? The time of waiting had begun. The difficult time had begun, the difficult time for the Brewsters. For me the normality had begun again. Waiting for new cases, waiting that, maybe, a new development in the Brewster case would happen. I was on the happy and easy side.

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3:45pm and I sat in my office. The coffee was brewed, hot water was prepared, mineral water and juice waited in the fridge. It would do me good to have a new, another, case - aside from the fact that I had to earn money. I thought about what it would be - the glamorous side of private investigations? Most cases were standard cases, nothing for the big screen. But who would be interested in them? Who would be interested in the daily life stuff? The outside door became opened, as the sign recommended: Peter Maurer / Private Investigator / Please Step In.

In case that somebody opened the outside door? A short buzzer sound was to hear in the office then. I stood up to open the between door, to greet my guest in the waiting area - and was somewhat surprised! I had awaited one person, a male voice? But instead of one male, five persons entered my office - two men and three women. Two of them were Afro-Americans, one Latina and two Asian-American - I had not enough chairs in my office! But that was no problem at all. We took the chairs from the waiting room and everyone got a seat.

"Sorry, that I not said that I will not come alone. But it was not certain, who will come with me. But I should have warn you."

"No problem at all. We all have a chair to sit on - what can I offer you for drinking? I've coffee, tea, mineral water and various juices?"

After everyone had something to drink, I started with the conversation.

"What can I do for you, Mr.....sorry, I've forgotten your name."

"I'm not sure whether I told you my name at the phone or not.....it's a bit a delicate subject."

"Mr.....?"

"Oh, sorry! I'm Mr. Johnson and this is Mr. Chang. Mrs. Chang, Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Martinez."

"Don't be shy, what's said in this room, will stay in this room."

"Yes, we have heard that you're a trustworthy person - and a person who's not interested in the appearance of someone."

"I guess we not talk about clothes?"

"No, definitively not about clothes."

"And what else does you have heard about me?"

"That you're affordable?"

"Well, clients who can give more, give more. And clients who can not give that much, give less. But so far every client has paid me."

"I fear we have no real financial scope."

"As long as you pay me, I see no real problem at all. What can I do for you?"

"The police is involved....."

"The police as such?"

"No, not as such - we come from the neighborhood around 25<sup>th</sup> and Main."

25<sup>th</sup> and Main - not the part of the city were you live, because you wanna live there. Poverty and one of the highest death rates by gun violence in the whole country - a devastating combination.....

"Take a deep breath and say what you have to say. You know that I have connections to the police?"

"Yes. But it's said also, that you have still connections to the ordinary people - and that you judge people by their doing, not by their social status or skin color."

"Say it right out, don't hesitate."

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"You know, we have a lot of problems in our neighborhood, but we don't need anymore of them. Two new young police officers patrol often in our neighborhood, since two or three months now. Don't understand me wrong, please, it's good for us that the police shows up. We're not interested in the 70s, 80s or 90s anymore! Every day we had dead people in our streets - today....."

"Today we have a murder every twenty hours - refereed to the whole city. One could call this progress."

"And we know that our neighborhood contributes its share to this statistic - and not only to this one."

But nevertheless, it got better over the years, even when it's still bad. We try and do our best....."

".....sorry therefore that I interrupt you. You maybe know that I also stay in your neighborhood from time to time. I know that you try hard to change the things for the better. And how much everything has changed! In my youth? It would have been my death sentence, to come up with the idea to walk around in your neighborhood. Today I can do it - at least at daytime. And in the major streets even in nighttime. Can we return to the two young police officers?"

"Yes of course, sorry."

"You not have to apologize, for nothing."

"Well, some have other ideas, especially again today - the police officers! Yes.....we think that they try to provoke us, especially younger people."

"What do you mean with this?"

"They behave sometimes like hooligans, like a person who seek after quarrel."

"Okay, but we live today. We all have smartphones with cameras - why not recording them? You could go to the police with the footage, to the local media, or you could post it on YouTube?"

"Sounds good, but have I to say it? We tried. But they became aware of it and threatened us that they would lock us up, because it wouldn't be allowed to film them."

"Okay, what would you expect of me?"

"You have connections to the police, maybe you can use them for us."

"I need evidence first....."

"We can try it again."

"No, no! It's too dangerous for you and your people. I have to do it, I'm the private investigator! Do they have their routines? Times, routes, places?"

"No, not really. Mostly they drive around and look for their opportunities."

"Then we try the following. When they are on their patrol in your neighborhood the next time, you call me. I will come then and will observe them. This will maybe not function right away at the first time, but.....I have to see them, their behavior - I have to get an idea of the situation."

"This will be all?"

"I have to have something on them, before I can act - something that's unambiguous. A distinct situation, caused by them. Maybe I will need some time. Very important would be that nobody will respond to their provocations - would this be possible?"

"We can do our best and talk with the people."

"But very important is that you not mention me."

"Yes."

"I will spend some time tomorrow in your neighborhood. Can you recommend me a good restaurant?"

"'Good' is relative....."

"Well.....I think.....I would prefer soul food tomorrow - any recommendations?"

"I own a restaurant.....?"

"Fantastic! Then I will walk around a bit in the morning, and later we can talk in your restaurant, without attracting attention. Maybe we're lucky and also they will appear - maybe not."

"Your payment?"

"First I wanna see what I can do for you. Then I have to be successful. After that we can talk about the payment."

"But as we said, when it would need a longer time, we have no big financial scope."

"As I said, everybody payed me so far....."

### **Not The Best Neighborhood**

I looked down the avenue, the large construction area, the new metro line. Not the best moment for the people who lived here, especially for the shops and restaurants. They feared, that they would have to go out of business, before the metro would be ready. Sure, the metro line would bring new

life into this area, but in the meantime? All the businesses around this area complained about a decline in sales, and the shutdown made it even worse. Many people in this area needed social aid, food stamps and more to pull through - and now? Public offices and institutions were closed, thanks to our fucking asshole president! But this affected the poor the most - and the businesses where the poor bought their stuff. Not enough with the problems caused by the construction of the metro, now less and lesser people had money or food stamps to buy things. Bad for the people, bad for the businesses - but as said, this affected the poor people, so.....

Garbage on the streets, homeless people staring at the streets, I felt like an alien. My clothes were new, I had enough money to buy the things I needed, I could even save money. I had a job, I had a perspective! Most people here had no perspective, especially the youth. What perspective they should have? Bad education led to bad jobs, if any. The feeling, the certainty, that nobody cares for you - especially the politicians. Billions to give the rich, billions for a fucking wall, but nothing for health care and supporting the poor. Nothing to improve the education system, not in such areas, not for the "normal" people! I always wondered about, why they accepted this - only sometimes violence erupted. No, I not argued in favor of violence, I simply could not understand, why they accepted it - staring at the streets.

Rob all hope of the people, let them no hope, no perspective - nothing to lose anymore. No, that not meant freedom, that meant burning blocks, death and violence. A problem? Why? As long as they burned down their own blocks, as long as they killed themselves, as long as "we" had the national guard?

Only a few decades ago, in this neighborhood only Afro-Americans lived. But then the Latinos came, even some Asian-Americans. And during the last years more and more white middle-class families, who no longer could afford the rents in the "better" quarters. Today this was a very heterogeneous area, an area on the move, not everyone was happy about it. Especially the older population, the long-time residents, feared about their future. The rents started to rise, more money in the area. That caused, that this area became more and more interesting for investors. Time for the homeless and the poorest to look for another place.....

And the solution for that? There would be no solution, history would take place, the poorest will be the losers, as always. I decided that this was enough for now and entered Mr. Johnson's restaurant. He stood behind a counter, some guests were there. They looked at me, knowing that I was not one of them. I decided that it would be stupid, to act as if I wouldn't know Mr. Johnson.

"Mr. Johnson."

"Mr. Maurer. Should we talk that openly?"

"I think that will make no difference at all."

I looked at the other guests.

"Yes. You not look like, as if you were from this neighborhood. Hungry?"

"Not that much. Lunch time is not so much my time, I'm more the man for dinner. Something with chicken and vegetables? Not too hot, not for lunch."

"I arrange you a plate if you like. A beverage?"

"A coffee, thanks."

I sat down at a free table and after a very short time Mr. Johnson served me a plate with roasted chicken, a mix of vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy.

"I hope you will like it - it's soul food. Not everyone's taste."

I knew what he meant with that. This was a place, where you could stave off your hunger on the cheap. But that not had to mean, that this not could be tasty.

"Looks like housemade."

"Sure, everything is housemade. My wife runs the kitchen, she never would accept anything else then housemade soul food!"

"And it smells very good - well, sometimes hunger comes while eating."

"We have also very good sweets - but now I will no longer keep you up from eating."

He returned behind the counter and I started with my meal. Well, the gravy was very rich, but tasteful. As he said, everything was housemade, and obviously his wife was a very good cook. The chicken was very well flavored and roasted, and the vegetable was, of course, cooked from fresh vegetable. I enjoyed the dish!

"Wow, your plate is empty."

"Yes, it all was very tasty. Well, the gravy. A bit too much and a bit too rich for my taste, but also very tasty."

"Something sweet?"

"Not now. Can we talk?"

"Yes, here?"

"Yes. It will be no problem that the people see us."

"Okay, another coffee?"

"Yes."

He brought me my new coffee and took seat at the table - also with a cup of coffee.

"You walked around?"

"Yes. As I said, I was here already before. But it's important for me to get impressions about a place. I've a question."

"Okay."

"The businesses around here, do they have no video surveillance?"

"Some none, some have fake cameras - only a very few have a real one."

"And I think that the police officers know, which camera is a fake and which not?"

"Of course."

"So, this is no way....."

"No."

"I have changed my plans. We have to set a trap for them."

"Okay?"

"Are there places - I mean businesses - where they are more often?"

"Yes.....I think so. I would have to ask around a bit. But for instance, at the grocery down the street they are regularly."

"And I guess that they have no video surveillance."

"A faked one."

"That's cool. We need some places with faked video surveillance. Then we will replace with working ones. Then we have to wait."

"Well, no bad idea at all, but....."

"I will be there also."

"But how this should function? You can not be everywhere all the time? This would be a fluke, when you would be in, when they provoke someone."

"Depends on the direction."

"I don't understand?"

"They will act inappropriate and we have the footage. In the best way, we have at least two or three incidents. The last time, I will be also an eye witness."

"You mean you will lie? They will simply say, that you weren't there."

"But we will have footage, that shows that I came in before them, and that I left the shop after them. I will say, that I not interfered because, I had doubts about the situation. Later I had a talk with you. Some time before, I discovered your restaurant and I liked the food very much. You told me, that this police officers do this more often. Well, I'm a private detective! I discovered, that footage exists about this incident, of which I'm an eye witness, but also from other incidents, that happened before. That's it."

"The footage where you've entered and left the shop?"

"Modern times?"

"You will fake this? When this comes to light?"



"This will be no big deal. At least not, when the police is wise. I will go to the police and talk with them. They will not examine the footage in a strict manner."

"What about when they will not be wise?"

"Apart from that, that everything will depend on what misbehavior we can prove with our footage - the press?"

"And then?"

"Let us begin first of all. We need a list of businesses who come into question. Then we have to replace the faked video surveillance with real ones. This has to happen unobtrusive. Do you think this will be possible?"

"I think so!"

"Then we have to wait. We need good footage - it has to be more, than only two unfriendly police officers! After this I can interfere."

"Okay, I've understood my homework. And.....about what we have talked today?"

"About your fantastic dishes, that this will be not my last time here, that I have to have something sweet now."

"My wife's apple pie is very famous by the people around here."

"With whipped creme, please....."

## **Bar Talk**

"Hello Jack, kinda empty today? Or I'm too early?"

"Hi Peter. Thanks to our wonderful president. You know that I've a lot of customers from the public institutions, which are around here. Some are completely closed. And to get a pay check with a zero on it? They are not interested in my cocktails at the moment - especially not in mine."

"Maybe you should serve cheap hooch?"

"Maybe I should close doors till this shit has stopped."

"Well, would be interesting then: Who will have more staying power? The jerk in the House, the democrats or Jack? I bet my money on Jack."

"And without Jack?"

"I hope he will declare a national emergency."

"Why?"

"They would fuck him then."

"Who's 'they'?"

"The people on the streets, the democrats, the Supreme Court for instance."

"Are you sure?"

"If not, then we deserve him the whole eight years!"

"Mitch McConnell is the filthy pig! One word from him and the haunting would be over."

"Do you really think that this bootlicker would embarrass his master?"

"No, and I hope he will pay the price therefor one day. Hundred thousands of people with no wage, only because this sucker cries like a baby!"

"Yeah, he wants his lolly - unbelievable how many have to suffer because of this relentless asshole. His narcissism is more important then the finances of our nation and the welfare of our inhabitants - you have to set priorities!"

"By the way, what can I do for you?"

"Don't know? Can you make me something with power in it?"

"Sure."

I looked at the door, but.....

"You not give up?"

"One day.....what's this?"

"Try it."

"Okay.....okay, not bad.....not to say that it's fucking good, but.....?"

"I think it's better for you when you go without alcohol tonight."

"You're a real friend - what's the name of this one?"

"Jack's Special - only for the closest friends....."

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I wasn't sure about, whether he fooled me with his "Jack's Special" or not. It was the first time that I saw this cocktail here, that I saw this cocktail at all. Coconut milk, he knew that I loved coconut milk, but then it became difficult. Bitter? Juices? Lime? Cane sugar? Every sip tasted different - a fantastic creation without alcohol. And of course the better choice – it was good to have friends.

I had watched the news before I decided to spend the evening in the bar. Better, the news had been the reason therefore that I decided for the bar. Affected people talked about their problems, how to deal with the situation. Loans had to be paid, some lived from their savings now, others not knew how they should handle the situation. And one of this conservative assholes babbled in TV about the cool situation for them - they could make vacation now! What a fucking asshole! That was too much for me and I decided to go to the bar - now sitting there with my wonderful non-alcoholic cocktail. I wasn't sure, but I had saw a movie about the eve of the French revolution once - I could find parallels. But maybe I was too optimistic - 80 percent of the republicans were for the wall? 5.7 billion dollar for a shit and our infrastructure, as an example, was in a pitiful state? Billions and billions tax break and a civil servant had no idea about, how he should pay the next installment for his loan. The decay of a nation caused by the greed of a few - this could not meant seriously!

"Another one?"

"Yeah, what's in it?"

"It's a secret."

"Never saw that you've made one of these?"

"Sure, that was my first one."

### **A Hint?**

Sitting in a restaurant for a quick lunch, I got a phone call:

"Peter Maurer, private investigations. Mr. Maurer at the phone."

"It's me, Benjamin. Have heard nothing from you anymore."

"Not that I would not tell you everything, it's simply that I have nothing to tell. Makes it not better, to talk with the Brewsters from time to time."

"Yeah, but maybe I can give you an update. But to say it plainly, no real hint. We have talked about the people from her school, as you maybe can remember. We did some background checks."

"And?"

"Nothing substantial. We found a teacher and a few students with some "history", but nothing that would lead to Sarah. The teacher has an alibi. On the other hand we got some information from some female students, that some male students would not behave always as they should. I say this in this way, because the information is still vague at the moment. But I thought that you should know this."

"Thanks Benjamin. I will inform you when I have something."

"Then bye for now, Peter. Hopefully we will find something soon."

"Would be good. Bye, Benjamin."

Yeah, still nothing in hand. I hoped that Mr. Johnson would give me a call, at the moment no progress at all. Not in the one case, not in the other case. But that was a part of the game.

Sometimes you had to be patient - yeah, have patience. Maybe your daughter still lives, maybe not. I had talked the last time with the Brewsters four days ago - could wait some days till I would have to call them again, to say them once more, that there was no new development. Maybe - definitively - Benjamin would give them the information that he had given me, but that was also not much. Such cases were always a burden - I could not imagine to work in a corresponding police department. All the time such cases, no surprise when they were burned-out after some years. And thanks to our fucking president, now without salary - what a shit was that!

I had no distinct plans for the afternoon and the evening, therefore I decided to walk around a bit - maybe in the area around 25<sup>th</sup> and Main.....

## **The Normality of Life**

No developments in the Brewster case and with Mr. Johnson I had an appointment for tomorrow. Therefore it fitted very well that I had got a request for a new job - defamation! Sounded very interesting, obviously related to a dispute with a neighbor. Everything was prepared and I waited for Ms. Palmer, who was very punctual. Five minutes before the appointed time she opened the front door. I stood up, to welcome her in the waiting room.

"Ms. Palmer, nice to meet you. I'm Mr. Maurer. Can I attend you to my office?"

"Yes, thank you."

I offered her a seat.

"Something to drink? Coffee, tee, a juice or mineral water?"

"An orange juice?"

"With pleasure. Can you tell me more about your problem?"

"Well, it's a bit delicate. I'm not sure about which is the best way to start. I've problems with my neighbor, and now there are rumors about me in circulation? I think both is related, but I cannot proof it."

"Let's start with the problems with your neighbor."

"I'm a single woman and I live in a suburban area. My neighbor thinks that I'm a bit too loud - therewith its started. Well, as I said, I'm a single woman, I have no committed relationship."

"Let's name it "male acquaintances"?"

"Well, someone has spread the rumor that I would take money from men."

"That you would work as a prostitute?"

"Somewhat more indefinite. More in the way, that I would be a slut, that I get kept by men."

"Only that I have a background. You have varying partners?"

"As I said, I have no committed relationship. I like it to have some fun at the weekends, but I take no money and I'm no slut."

"You have a job?"

"Yes, of course! I work full-time in an office. I have a good income, I need no extra money."

"So you think it started therewith, that your neighbor was upset about you, because he thinks you're too loud? And now he started therewith, to spread rumors about you, to get rid of you?"

"Yes. He had hired a private detective to proof that I'm too loud."

"And the result?"

"Nothing. Everything I do is within the limits of statutory regulations. I even came towards him! Maybe I should say that weekdays, after work, I enjoy the silence of the suburban area. But is it too much, to have at some, not every, weekends some fun, at the normal times. Maybe a BBQ, maybe sitting in the garden with music. But he wishes absolute silence at the weekends - that's nonsense."

"And the other neighbors?"

"They have - should I say had - no problems with me. But now, the rumors?"

"What would you expect from me?"

"That you can proof that he spreads this rumors, that they are wrong."

"Are you're thinking about to report him to the police?"

"This situation is no longer acceptable for me."

"Is social media involved?"

"No, the rumors pass on from mouth to mouth only. But it's obvious that he's the source."

"Okay. I have to tell you that it will be very difficult to proof that he's the source of everything. Even when you could proof that he would tell somebody rumors about you, he could simply say that he has heard them - you know, all this rumors about you which are in circulation. Can you give me information about your neighbor - family, places where I could meet him, something like this?"

"He's married, but the children are older and live no longer at home. I'm not sure where you could meet him - why?"

"The only chance I see is that I would have a conversation with him. Maybe he would incriminate himself? Maybe I will have a better idea later, but can you compile me a list of places where I could meet him? Even a supermarket, good would be a bar or something like this. A sports bar maybe - you know, a place where you drink a little bit, where you talk a little bit?"

"I understand. What about your fee?"

"Compile the list at first. I have to think about it. Then I will make you a proposal about my next step. You can hire me then or not. Payment after success."

"That sounds fair. Can I send you the list via e-mail?"

"Of course."

Trouble with the neighbor, a quite ordinary problem. And yet, a very difficult to solve problem. What if I could prove that he's the source of all this rumors? That not solves the problem as such - maybe it escalates it only. Should I recommend her to move to another neighborhood? But why she? Always this difficulties, when there was more than one human. The suburban life - better with a pretty family and some nice kids. Why Joan Crawford came me to mind? Blue Öyster Cult.....?

## **Soul Food**

I had gotten a phone call from Mr. Johnson, his list of possible locations for the video surveillance was ready. For that reason I had decided to have lunch in his restaurant. As I entered it stood Mr. Johnson behind the counter, and a young man beside him.

"Hello, Mr. Johnson. What do you recommend today?"

"Hello, Mr. Maurer. This is my son Arnold - say hello to Mr. Maurer."

"Hello, Mr. Maurer."

"Hello, Arnold. You're helping your father today?"

"Yes, we have no school this week - vacation."

"He helps me during lunchtime."

"Many customers today. At such a day, a helping hand is always a good thing."

"Today yes, but the last days were very disappointing. Very changeable business at the moment."

"Still some months till the metro will be done. Bad time."

"Yes. We had every noon a full house before they started - and also the evenings were good. But now? Even many regular customers are coming only from time to time now. The stew is our today's favorite - still have some."

"Then I take the stew - can I have some bread?"

"Sure, a slice of bread fits well to a hot stew. Sit down please, I bring you the stew - coffee?"

"Yes, thanks."

I sat down at a table where already an old man sat - in fact no free table anymore today. I greeted him

and he greeted back. You had not to ask, that he not lived on the sunny side of life. He smelt, but that was okay. It was life, that you smelled, not artificiality. Mr. Johnson came with my coffee and my stew.

"Is this table okay for you?"

"Yes, of course. Every table would be okay."

He walked back behind the counter and waited till I had eaten my stew. Then he came with a tablet, on it two cups of coffee and two pieces of plum cake - with cream.

"My wife has baked plum cake today - I hope you will like it."

"Looks fantastic - and even when this cake will taste only half as good as the apple pie, would it be a pleasure to eat it."

"My wife will like it, to hear your praise."

"Where is she, maybe I can tell it her personally?"

"She not likes it that much to be among the guests. Her kingdom is her kitchen."

"Then tell her that I enjoyed her stew very much. - And as I can say now, the plum cake is at least as tasty as the apple pie."

"Maybe we have a new regular customer now?"

"At least I have to come from time to time. Shall we talk about the case?"

"Yes, of course. Your here for that."

"And to have a good lunch - I mean this so! But to start therewith, can you show me the list?"

"Yes, here."

"You have eight places listed - are they in a specific order?"

"Yes. I talked with the shop owners and I think the first one is the most interesting one. And then so on."

"We start with the first five ones. I will give you a phone number. The shop owners can contact a friend of mine then. He's a techni, he will install the video surveillance for us. Of course, this has to happen unobtrusive, best at night."

"Yes. But what came me in mind is, that we will have pictures only? But it's not that much their action which is provocative, more their words and talking."

"We will have sound recording also."

"Is this allowed?"

"Is it allowed to behave in such a way?"

"No, but will this footage and the recordings legal?"

"I'm a private detective - but that's not the point. The point is, that I need something in the hands before I can get active. My first step will be to talk with the police - unofficially."

His son stood behind us for some time, the old man had left the table already a while ago.

"You plan to talk with the police about two police officers who act inappropriate? That's a cool idea!"

"Arnold! Mr. Maurer is here to help us!"

"I not see how....."

".....go into the kitchen and help your mother!"

"It's okay. Let him say what he wanna say - take a seat."

"I think I should help my mother."

"No, come on. Mr. Johnson? I would be interested in his opinion."

"If you think so....."

Arnold took the seat opposite to me - one could see that he was tensed.

"You don't think that it would be a clever idea to talk with their supervisors?"

"They are all police officers."

"But also the police is not that much interested in negative headlines."

"Yeah, that's why they have no problem therewith to kill us - especially when we're unarmed and in the back! Too much has happened in the past."

"I'm no idiot, therefore I know what you mean. But you're also not look like an idiot."

"Hey, look at me! You see me? And if this wouldn't be enough, I live here!"

"I think that's enough now, Arnold! You should be happy to have a home!"

Arnold stood up to go into the kitchen. He was angry and I could understand him, but his words hurt his father. His father was proud to have achieved something - his restaurant. Even in this neighborhood, maybe especially in this neighborhood. For many who lived in this area a place of warmth, a moment of comfort. But I could also understand Arnold, he wanted more, more from life. In one way this was very positive, in another way a great threat - education or crime. At a place like this, very near together.

"Sit down again, please. Let us talk about it. Let me say this: Apart from that, that this is a very fucking time especially for the Latinos, I try to see the different viewpoints."

"Ah, you can understand a police officer who shoots an escaping man in the back - it's a matter of color, or?"

"I think it's more a matter of our relation to violence, especially gun violence. Can you imagine how stressed a police officer has to be to know, even at a normal traffic check, even when it's a very normal car, that it must be assumed, that the car owner has a gun in the car's glove locker? And that he maybe will use it? And to answer your question, before you will ask it: No, that not justifies police violence - and it's a shame that this happens too often. And it's even a bigger shame, how this cases - often - were handled. But it's also a reality, that the threat for you to get killed by a police officer is much lesser, than the threat that you get killed from someone from your neighborhood. This is not meant evaluative, I think we can agree that this is a fact. Another question will be than, why this is so."

"For me the question is, why I have not the same chances in life, why my life is not worth the life of a white rich guy, that's my question!"

"Maybe because this is a fucking country?"

"Wow, the white man is angry. This sounds to me like you would be ashamed about that "Native Americans" have to live in pitifully reservations. You would support, that they should live in nice reservations - very courteous!"

"Say, tomorrow a white racist police officer would murder you - he would tell a story thereover that you acted inappropriate, that all was self-defense. Say, tomorrow you would walk to school and you would be at the wrong place at the wrong time. A drive-by shooting, two gangs. What do you would prefer?"

"That's hypothetical."

"No, only that the second is much more likely then the first - and that's a fact. But my point is, that when you're dead, then you're dead - would it be important for you what skin color your murderer has, would it be important for you that he killed you because he's a racist or because he "defended" his sphere of control? Both is unacceptable, both has to be combated."

"I don't think that you would say the same, sitting on my chair - no pa! Yes, he maybe helps you, but he get paid for that. But I'm the loser who gets no chance, I become judged because of my skin color and my dwelling place."

"That's true. My parents weren't rich, but far away from being poor. To be white was definitively no disadvantage. Life offered me many opportunities, most of them I squandered. This country is unfair on you, everything else would be a lie. It's the question about, what should be the consequence thereof? This question can only be answered by you - I would have only an advice."

"Which?"

"Don't believe the ones who have easy answers, live isn't easy. Don't believe the ones who shout out loudest, only lies need noise, the truth can be outspoken silently - can, not have to!"

"Thanks, I will think about it. - I will see what mother is doing."

He stood up and left.

"Sorry for his storminess, he's a good boy."

"Yeah, it's not easy for him. It's not an easy time."

"Well, we cannot offer him much. We tried our best, but that's all what we achieved."

"You achieved a lot - we have not to talk about, that the idea of equal opportunities was never more than a delusion, not to talk about today. Today we have to be very attentive that we not lose

everything, for what people like you struggled over decades."

"Yeah, isn't it strange? We thought, that everything has changed, that a new time could begin - Yes we can! And now? It's like a nightmare, something so unreal. What shall I say to my son? Everything will be good at the end? I'm happy that he's interested in so many things, that he thinks a lot, that he not becomes radical or criminal."

"The fucking point is, that there're various groups who would be very happy would he become radical or criminal. They would like it, that would confirm their fucking worldview. It's very difficult for a young person like him to find his own way."

### **Talking With The Brewsters**

"I feel sorry, but I have no news for you."

"Also the police said this to us. Do you think we still should have hope?"

"Well, at least....."

"At least so long as they not find her dead body?"

"It's not nice to say this, but yes. I've talked with the responsible police officer two days ago. They got some response in the course of the articles in the newspapers and the reports in TV. But unfortunately nothing substantial. But sometimes it takes some time - yes, you still should have hope."

"It was a good advice from you that we should try to live our normal live, but from day to day it becomes more and more difficult."

"Yeah, and I know no easy solution for that."

### **A Jazzy Evening**

"Hi Pete!"

"Yeah, funny - Jack!"

"Will be a fantastic concert today, cool that you're here - Peter."

"You know her?"

"Yes, you will like her voice."

"Then I look forward to hearing her, singing Ray Charles' music. Ray Charles had a very special way to sing, not easy to compare with him."

"That's her advantage, she not tries to sing like Ray Charles. She has in fact a very different vocal range, but that makes it much more interesting and I'm sure that you will like it."

"Fine - the usual, please."

"A rosé wine - the cuvée?"

"Yes, thanks."

"Here you are! Interesting days, the last days?"

"Yeah, I hope that the democrats stay strong. This was a fantastic victory for them. More and more people, even in his own camp, are realizing that he's only a scaramouch. He will get a lot of trouble now."

"I've read a poll that nearly half of all conservatives think, that an opposing candidate within the party for 2020 would be good. Sounds not as if his internal backing would be still good - it may will be that the next two years will become very interesting."

"Yes, even Fox News reported that most Americans blamed our fucking president for the shutdown - unjustifiably of course!"

"Thanks for the midterms, not thought at first that the impact would be that strong."

"But only when the democrats will stay together during the next weeks and months."

"And the people on the street maintain their pressure."

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The concert had begun and I was impressed from the first moment on. Yes, her voice was very different compared to his, but that made it yet much more interesting. "Rainy Night In Georgia" was very impressing and I thought about "Georgia In My Mind". Many interesting songs, not only one was unknown to me, or at least not a song, in which I was aware all the time. And not only she was fantastic, also the band – drums, guitar and bass. Of course also a piano, but it was cool that they not tried to imitate Ray Charles, they interpreted him, and their interpretations were fantastic.

Then the second session started, and the announcement was obvious: His best known song! And what should I say, it was like to hear a well known song that you never have heard before. Sure, Ray Charles is impressing, and it was wonderful that she gave the audience interesting information about his music. His roots in the gospel music, influences of Latin music, how he arranged songs, about his beginnings and about the last years and so much more. But the way she sang this song? In a way it was a totally different song, interpretation at its best! The piano reduced, her voice very soft – I had tears in my eyes, seeing Ray Charles sitting at the piano, singing this a hundred times heard song, this a thousand times sung song. The merging of a great artist, his most famous song and fantastic musicians on the stage – the highlight of the evening!

Often such concerts were only a mere sequence of "hits" and about how fantastic the artist was – you know what I mean. On the other hand. Good musicians, musicians who inhaled the artist's music, who were capable to catch the artist's music by playing it in their own way, in their own arrangements, could create something very special. And this evening was something very special. But the point was.....well, I sat in Jack's bar! Why I thought a second about it at all: Ray Charles? A tribute? Why I not said right from the beginning: It's a concert in Jack's bar! It was impressive, how he was able to present concert for concert impressive artists. You maybe say now: Well, he knows his customers, their taste in music and so on – but that was the point! It was impressive how different the concerts were, but always impressive and interesting. At one evening some young musicians, the next evening an eighty-year-old veteran, who had played with an impressive list of musicians during his long, very long career as musician. At one evening classic jazz from the 20s and 30s, the next evening musicians from Brazil, playing their jazz, followed by a free jazz concert. But whatever he presented, it was dead sure that it will be a fantastic evening! I enjoyed this evenings very much.....

"And?"

"What should I say, Jack? Wonderful, simply wonderful."

"Another wine?"

"A hot chocolate, please."

## **The Normal Job**

I had an appointment with Ms. Palmer in my office, she had done her homework and came to give me some information.

"Ms. Palmer, nice to meet you again."

"Catherine, my first name is Catherine – Mr. Maurer."

"With pleasure, Catherine – Peter. You've information about your neighbor for me?"

"Yes, I did some research – I asked around a bit."

"It's not important how we name it. Important are the results."

"You mentioned a sports bar?"

"Well, it would be nothing strange when he would visit one from time to time. To meet some friends, maybe workmates, to spend some time with them drinking and talking."

"Bull's eye - every Thursday! Here's the address."



"That's cool, that will give me many opportunities. You also know his favorite sport?"  
 "Of course – football!"  
 "Oh, that's fine! Only a few days till Super Bowl. If this is no nice circumstance....."  
 "Do you have no plans for this evening?"  
 "I'm no sports freak – and well....."  
 "The Patriots?"  
 "Oh, you're a fan?"  
 "Definitively not of him!"  
 "Yeah, sometimes success can become boring."  
 "I think it's no matter of his successes."  
 "No, but it's always difficult to judge about people, you not really know."  
 "He's a buddy of our president!"  
 "Yeah, but changed a bit over the last years - at least it seems so. But this shall be not our problem for the moment. You know your neighbor's favorite team?"  
 "Guess!"  
 "Okay, then I would say that we will be not on the same side – maybe the better way to start a conversation? Your favorite team?"  
 "Not even in the playoffs."

After Catherine had gone I thought about my new Super Bowl plans. I still had some days, it would be good to visit the sports bar at least two times in front of the special evening – not at a Thursday. I should start a conversation with the man behind the bar - new in this area, nice bar and so on. And even when the bar would be overcrowded at Super Bowl evening, he will invite me to come that day, to gain me as a new regular customer. A bit hesitation, but then a "maybe". It would look stupid, would I be in the sports bar for the first time at Super Bowl evening. I will come very early – if you're sold out I can look for another place – no, stay, it will be a fantastic evening – you really think so? It will be okay then, to be there at this special evening, no alien any longer. That should function and would give me some hours to start a conversation with her neighbor. Should I hope now that the Patriots will win? Then the phone rang.

"Peter Maurer, private investigations, Mr. Maurer at the phone."  
 "It's me, Mr. Johnson. You're man has installed the video surveillance and we have an immediate success!"  
 "Wow, that was fast! What happened?"  
 "At the liquor shop. They sold liquor to a young man. They know him and everything was legal. They not asked him about his age therefore, the police officers were already in the shop. They started to make a lot of stress and threatened both, the young man and the shop owners. They were very aggressive."  
 "Well, but wasn't it a bit stupid by the shop owners, knowing that they are in the shop, but not asking him? This looks like a trap for the police officers. And apart from that, they made a mistake. The police officers could not know whether this man had proven his age before, whether he's a regular customer or not. Even when they were aggressive then – we need something that starts ungrounded. Nevertheless, it's a beginning. Has they saved the recording?"  
 "Yes, but isn't this recording not useless now?"  
 "Not if we will have more severe footage later. Then it can be a piece in the puzzle."  
 "So we have to wait."  
 "Yes, I hope this is not too disappointing for you now. But as I said, we need at least two or three severe incidents. The beginning is done, now we have to collect more footage. What I have forgotten to say. If there are severe incidents, not recorded by our surveillance, please say to the people, that they should make memos. Circumstances, date, time, what happened and witnesses. Together with the footage, this can become very important. Can you do this?"  
 "To everybody?"

"No. Especially to people, who had problems with them already before. Shop owners, people who can keep something to themselves. It should not become street talk."

"I understand. Shall I keep you informed – I mean about everything?"

"Of course! And do not understand me wrong. Keep everything, everything can become important at the end. But to become active I need something severely."

"I will keep you informed."

I hoped that Mr. Johnson was not too disappointed yet. For me it was interesting that we had a result, even when it was nothing severe, so fast. But we needed a real misbehavior, otherwise it would be too easy for the police officers to create some stories which would explain their behavior. I would need something to nail them down.

### **The Man In The Bar**

Jack's Bar, an ordinary evening, I just entered the bar. Well, ordinary in this sense that there would be no jazz concert this evening, neither another special event - at least not for the other people in the bar. I was a bit nervous, had got a phone call, very cryptic. A man offered my very special information about "the missing girl" - no details. He asked for a public meeting point, I proposed him Jack's Bar and to my surprise he agreed. It would not be important for me, to know something about him, he would address me - stupid only that at this time during the week, always the same regular customers were there - I saw him in first sight sitting at the bar, drinking a Whiskey, neat, how masculine. Tried to look business-like, but failed totally therein. I thought that three empty chairs between us would be enough - I ordered a Cosmopolitan. As Jack brought me the cocktail with its light pink color, not too much juice in it, as many too often did, he gave me an unobtrusive sign. Yes, this guy was not clean. I was not interested in playing games, nor I was interested to wait till he would do something, therefore I turned towards him. I raised my glass, congratulated him to the good choice and asked him if it wouldn't be better for us two, to look for a nice cozy corner in the back of the bar. Obviously he was surprised and not really happy about my approach.

"You not thought that I would need more than one glance to identify you in my favorite bar? Let's have a talk, but not here."

I took my glass and stood up, to walk to one of the tables in the back of the bar. He followed me and we took seats.

"Let me say something straight away. This is not the first time that somebody offers me something "very special". Most of the times it was rubbish! Therefore, to waste no time, say what you have and mention your price."

"I think this is not the way you should treat me - I have the information!"

"There's the door. As I said, in ninety percent it's rubbish, in nearly ten percent it's nothing "very special". Very seldom it's something, what helps you really."

"You're not interested in how I....."

".....no! I'm interested in the information, not in long and fancy tales."

"Well, let's say....."

".....please, offer me what you can offer. My experience is this: The more words, the less information."

"I would have a video for you."

"Can I watch it?"

"No, at least not in the moment."

"So you wanna say, you have no video for me - you maybe know something about a video."

"A friend of mine has a video....."

".....that's what I meant! The more words.....can I meet your friend?"

"I will be the middleman. I....."

".....forget it! You're here to spot how much I would pay, that you can pull him over the barrel. That's not good."

"That's not the point. I would give him his share. The point is, that he's a very shy man. He would never talk with you eye in eye."

"Too bad! I've learned that this middleman thing is never a good idea. I....."

".....now I have to interrupt you! I have the feeling that you're interested to preempt me! I can leave if you want!"

"As I said, there's the door."

I pointed with my hand in the direction of the door - he not stood up. He tried to get some information by looking in my face. I only shook my head and smiled.

"You're not cool enough for such a play....."

He stood up and started to walk slowly towards the door.

"You should walk faster, at least if it should look like as if you would mean it seriously. And by the way - you payed your drink with your credit card?"

The last part I said louder. He stopped and turned his head - he really was surprised!

"You really payed your drink with your credit card? Man, apart from that, I'm a private dick! Why I should not follow you? How long I would need to find your "friend"? And why you told me something about a video - hey, I know how the Internet functions."

Now he smiled and slowly he returned to the table. He bent forward.

"Well, you maybe know the Internet, but....."

"But, I have no idea about this mysterious dark net - what a pity."

"That's the point, my "friend" knows places there, not many others know."

"And the police has specialists who know many such places, maybe more then your friend? I'm not sure whether you realize it or not. But your information becomes cheaper and cheaper. I think you have a last chance now - otherwise do me a favor and leave. You can sit down now and we start with a serious talk, or....."

I pointed towards the door again and Jack came to the table and handed me his slip, with the credit cards details. He took a seat again.

"I will tell you now what we will do. But first, give me a number - about how much you have thought?"

"I....."

"How much money."

"Oh, ten thousand at least."

"You're crazy. Give me some details and then I will make you an offer."

"Well.....I know a guy with some special interests - you know....."

"No, I'm no psychic! You can have many "special interests". Please, cut to the case!"

"He's interested in videos of younger girls, especially when they are a bit more tougher."

"You mean raping and such things?"

"Yes."

"And he has a video with the missing girl - why you know it."

"He told me. We talked about.....well, he said that he would have something very special, a video with this girl who's missing."

"Why he has it, but obviously nobody else?"

"He's a member of a very special red room."

"The famous red rooms - you have seen the video?"

"You not think that I will....."

".....stop! I have a problem. Every time, especially when a young girl or a child disappears, porn and sex movies of the missing persons pop up - at least the internet and the dark net are full of rumors about them. Therefore again: Did you see this video?"

"Yes."

"Okay, and it's definitively the missing girl!"

"Well, the quality....."

"Come on! You not tell me that you're here to sell me a video in lousy quality that maybe shows the missing girl - ten thousand?"

"Hey, I'm not in this scene. He told me that this is definitively the missing girl - he could explain it to you."

"Nice, half an hour ago I said that I wish to meet him!"

"Maybe I can arrange something?"

"Okay! I want to meet him, I want to see the video first, I want that he can explain me why this is definitively the missing girl and why it's not possible today to shoot a video in HD quality."

"The last I can tell you."

"I'm very interested!"

"It's a matter of style, he said."

"What!"

"Well, it's more lustful in that way - for them! It turns their fantasy on....."

"Yeah, their fantasy! A meeting with the video. I will have some money with me - and by the way, you will be unarmed then, and also your friend. Believe me, I have the larger one and at least for me you would be not the first - you understand?"

"Yes."

"I give you three days - I wait for your call. I will tell you then where we will meet - okay?"

"Sounds like a trap."

I showed him the slip.

"I know where you live, I would find your friend, I know that you watch illegal videos - why would I need a trap to catch you and your friend? I will have five thousand with me, after tree days I tell the police what I know - that's it!"

"And if you will hear nothing from me anymore?"

"You started the game - I know where you live."

"That's no good behavior towards an informant - not that good for your reputation."

"I still offer you five thousand dollar - how long do you think will this video stay in this exclusive circle? You wanna make some extra cash, then you should be fast."

"I will call you - is it necessary that you meet my friend as well? Wouldn't be the video enough?"

"Too late, both or nothing."

"I will call you....."

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"Please Jack, Whiskey Sour."

"With pleasure, Peter. Strange guy - you wanna talk?"

"Yeah, let us talk. As you said, a very strange guy....."

## **Talking With The Brewsters**

I sat with the Brewsters in my office. I knew that this will become a very difficult conversation, but it has to be.

"There's a new development. But it's still very vague one. I asked for this meeting because I have to clarify my further proceeding with you."

"Okay, what new development?"

"Someone offered me information about your daughter. Unfortunately this happens very often in such cases, but most time it's only useless rubbish they offer you."

"To make money?"

"Yes. On the other side, I have to spot whether the information is maybe useful or not."

"You need money? How much?"

"No, it's not because of money that I have to talk with you. It could be, that this is the beginning thereof that the case gathers momentum. You know that I have relations to the police. On the other hand you hired me as private detective. I ask therefore, if it would be okay for you that I will work very closely together with the police."

"Whatever you think that it would help to find our daughter!"

"Okay, then I will share all my information with the police."

"Can you tell us something about the information that you get offered?"

"I think that would be not that good at the moment. The problem is, that I'm not sure so far if everything is not simply a bluff."

"So the information is no good one."

"That's the problem. Would it be exactly as the guy said, then it would be on one hand very good - your daughter would be alive. On the other hand....."

"You need money?"

"No, at least not yet. I will have some money with me, when I will meet him again. But we have to see - what would be your financial scope?"

"We're talking about our daughter - everything we own!"

## **At The Police**

I sat together with Benjamin to talk about the new development. I had given him a first summary, about what had happened in the bar.

"You gave him three days to call you, that was yesterday. What, when he will not call you?"

"He will! He will wait a bit, to make me nervous - he thinks that he's a clever guy. But he's a bloody amateur. He not only provided his credit card data to us - shall I make it a little bit easier for you?"

"Would like it."

"I gave Jack a sign and he asked one of the other regular customers for a favor. This other regular customer followed our guy as he left - what should I say? How stupid is it, to park your car near the bar at such a meeting? This is his license plate number."

I handed him a notice. He only smiled.

"Okay, this is really amateurish. What do you think is the background of all this?"

"I think that his "friend", obviously a person with some very special interests, told him about the video - just as he told me. I'm not sure about him, about his "interests". But maybe that's not the point at the moment. As his "friend" told him about the video, he had a fantastic idea - hey, how much would desperate parents pay for such a video? What puzzles me at the moment is, that he awaited me in the bar? He not called me, he not asked for a meeting, he just awaited me. It would be already a question, in which way he gained knowledge about that I'm interested in, to get information about Sarah Brewster. But to know that this is my favorite bar, that I'm there nearly every Thursday evening - and now? Nearly every Thursday, I nearly went to a sports bar - but he awaited me? This is a question that's needed to be answered."

"Yeah, this is strange. But you allow me to stick with the case as such."

"Of course!"

"You stressed "his friend" very much. Do you think that this friend maybe not exists?"

"I have my doubts about that. He became very nervous as I said him that I wish to meet his friend. But more in the way: Fuck - now I have a serious problem! It's very difficult, to bring along a friend that not exists - but at the moment it's more a feeling."

"This would simplify everything, would there be no "friend". What's your idea about our next steps?"

"We wait till he calls me. I will meet him again and we can see how substantial everything is - maybe you wiretap the meeting?"

"Yeah, we should. When not calls you, we bust him."

"Sure, but maybe it would be good to play his game for a moment. I think you will monitor him from now on?"

"Sure, and I think it will not take long and we can say more about his "friend"."

"Then the police will monitor him and I wait for his call - that's how we continuing?"

"Yes, at least we have the chance now, to have a starting point now. The last days were very devastating. No real hint, despite of the huge resonance in the media. But that's the danger, that he's only a free rider. You said that you've talked with the Brewsters this morning - you told them about the video?"

"No, of course not! Only that someone has offered me information about her daughter. It would be hard enough for them, would this video be real, but would this only be a fake at the end? No, first I have to watch the video, first we have to decide how real everything is."

"You think that he will wait the whole three days?"

"I think so - you fear losing time?"

"Yes, if this video is real, then maybe every minute counts."

"You will monitor him - it's on you. Should there be a development, that lets you decide to bust him immediately, do it! I not said, that we have to wait till he calls me - you're the police, you're the commander in chief."

## **Provocation**

Super Bowl day - I was lying in my bed, in the morning, not really awoken, as my phone rang - the ringtone of the forwarding? Someone tried to call me at my office? The strange guy! I grasped the phone and was awake immediately.

"Peter Maurer, private investigations, what can I do for you?"

"Hi Mr. Maurer, Mr. Johnson on the phone."

"Hi Mr. Johnson, what can I do for you?"

"I think that we have very convincing footage now. It happened yesterday, late afternoon. I saw the footage, I think you should come to me, that you can assess the footage by your own."

"I have an appointment at the evening - can I come for lunch?"

"Yeah, Super Bowl! Lunchtime would work well with me."

"Then I will come for lunch."

I hoped that it would be a more severe incident this time, something I could build on. Yes, Super Bowl. I was not as good prepared as I hoped for. So far I had spent two evenings at the sports bar, the first time very short, the second time much longer. I had a good conversation with the man behind the bar: New here, lived in another city before, looking for some nice places, to spend evenings with sport and to make new friends. As expected he asked me, what my plans for Super Bowl evening are. Not sure, why not here, you will be overcrowded, good chance to make new friends - maybe, I have to think about it. It would had been better, to be a third time there, but in fact, everything gathered speed now.

I stood up for a shower and a fast breakfast. Tea and.....tea! Lunchtime with Mr. Johnson, Super Bowl at the evening. Tomorrow would be the third day - I awaited his call. Had I made a mistake therewith, to start to work for three clients at the same time?

Well, it had been absolutely unpredictable how the Brewster case would develop, even now it was not obvious. Maybe it was only a flash in the pan? Mr. Johnson? Well, one severe incident would be good, but not enough. And Ms. Palmer? A nice evening, watching the Super Bowl? Who would call this hard work? But first I should concentrate on Mr. Johnson and his affair.

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I entered Mr. Johnson's restaurant with an huge hole in my stomach. And the fine smell inside not made it smaller.

"Hello Mr. Maurer, something to eat before?"

"Absolutely! I haven't eaten anything so far - beef goulash as daily special?"

"Yes, have still a bit."

"Then the goulash, and a soup as starter."

"I would recommend you the chicken soup with vegetables, and for the hunger a lemon cake after the goulash."

"That sounds all very good - I take it!"

I sat down and enjoyed my meal. The soup was a fine housemade dish with fresh vegetables, the goulash very juicy and with a hot touch. After the goulash Mr. Johnson came with a tray and two pieces of lemon cake and two coffees on it.

"We will not watch the video here, or?"

"Absolutely not! This time I would prefer a more private ambiance."

"We can go in my office. You enjoyed your meal?"

"As always! The soup, the goulash with the mashed potatoes, and now the cake - everything tastes very delicious. I have to thank your wife this time for the always wonderful dishes."

"We can walk through the kitchen when we go to my office. I tell Arnold that he fill in for me as long as we have to talk."

After we had finished the lemon cakes and the coffees, he stood up and came back with Arnold. I stood up to join both.

"Hello, Mr. Maurer."

"Hello Arnold, I hope you had no other plans?"

"No, my father told me that it's important. You have to talk about the police officers."

"Yes, it seems that we have some good footage now. I think we will need not that much time."

"I have time. You have to talk about serious matters with my father. I can handle everything so long."

"You're a good son, and now I have to meet the mother!"

"Of course - that's the way to the kitchen."

He preceded and we entered the kitchen, Mrs. Johnson cleaned the anyway very clean kitchen. Everything looked well organized, on the stove a large pot with a soft boiling stock - the smell was fantastic!

"Tomorrow we will have beef brisket as daily special."

"Wow, and I guess again a wonderful soup."

"Of course.....and this is our cook, my wife. Clara, this is Mr. Maurer. Mr. Maurer, this is my wife."

"Mr. Maurer, nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too - maybe we should stop to be that formal? May I can say Clara?"

"Of course!"

"Fine, I'm Peter."

"Then.....I'm Arnold."

"Oh, then your son is Arnold Jr. in fact?"

"Yes, but his name refers more to my father, his grandfather Arnold. This name has a long tradition in my family."

"About what you're thinking, Peter?"

"Well Clara, you can read very good in faces. I thought about what "tradition" means for our country."

"You not mean, "tradition", for a black person?"

"Clara!"

"No, she's right. I have German roots - traditions? But you, where are you from, where are your roots? You live in a country from which you know, that it's not so long ago, that your ancestors have been brought into this country as slaves. Not to talk about civil rights and more. And today it's not much better."

"Well, today the Latinos are the worst enemies of our nation - we need a scapegoat."

"Yeah, I know - can I see the video?"

"Of course, this way."

We entered his office, a small room with a desk, a PC, a cupboard with files and some other stuff. He offered me the desk chair and grabbed a smaller chair for himself which stood at the wall.

"I have the video on this USB stick, also all other material so far. You can take it with you when you leave."

"Also the incidents, from which we have only written statements?"

"Yes, I have scanned them."

"You have prepared everything very well."

"It's important for me, it's important for us."

"Yes, it's a serious matter. Do you have copies?"

"Yes, on my hard drive. Also on other USB sticks - the Changs have one for example."

"Very good. Then let us see what has happened. You have seen the video already, is it severe?"

"It frightens me! It frightens me about what will happen next. You will see.....are they such stupid or naive police officers? I don't know why they behave in such a way? After such a behavior, twenty or thirty years ago, they would be dead now - and I fear that this will end very bad if we cannot stop it."

"Then start the video....."

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I watched the video - okay, that was fucking. Mr. Johnson had said nothing in forefield, had given no comments, the video spoke for itself. Yeah, a few decades before they would had been dead people now. And even today, still an area with one of the highest gang rates in the whole country. I looked at Mr. Johnson, he looked at me.....

"Is this footage demonstrative enough?"

"This is much worse then I thought - can you give me some background information?"

"Sure."

"The girl and the boy? Okay, to make it short. She looks simply hot in her tight mini dress. This kind of tiger pattern and her knee-high black boots it not less sexy, neither the neckline. And he looks real sharp in his suit. Okay, obviously not the expensive stuff, but they appear at least a bit overdressed in the grocery shop. And then? She's fifteen, he's sixteen?"

"As they told the officers, they were on their way to a party. Young people who like it to dress up sometimes, it was Saturday evening?"

"Do you allow me a question?"

"Yes?"

"Would you allow your fifteen-year-old daughter to dress up in this way?"

"I've asked Arnold about them. He said, that he not knows them personally, but that they are both known as a couple who like it, to dress up in such a way. And by the way, the shop owner said this to the police officers, that he knows them, that they are not for the first time in his shop and that



they are known to like it, to be dressed up in such a way. And how they reacted?"

"Yes, to threaten the shop owner that he would run into trouble would he not shut his mouth, is no adequate reaction. The condoms?"

"Yes, she had two condoms in her handbag. But in the video it sounds like she would have two dozen in it. And before you have to ask - yes, would I be her father, I would be concerned. But it would be relax me, to know, that they think about their doing and the possible consequences. Do you think that a girl has to stay a virgin till the wedding night?"

"No, and I agree with you that it's good that they obviously act in a responsible way. Okay, let us recapitulate. A underage couple in a grocery shop, dressed up, she very sexy, on their way to a party, with condoms. Two police officers enter the shop, see the young couple and think: Yeah, a prostitute with her pimp! They ask them about their age, they tell them, and they think: Hey, a underage prostitute with her pimp. Would you agree with me, that so far nothing severe has happened?"

"No, not so far. I only would not say that necessarily..... "

".....I have to interrupt you, Mr. Johnson. The point is, that I have to argue now like the police officers will argue when confronted with this. You understand?"

"Yeah, sure."

"I would say, that I had an initial suspicion - it will be difficult for you to deny this. I would say, that prostitution is very common in this quarter - even by underage girls. Drugs, gang violence, prostitution - the whole bunch. So far, they are on the safe side."

"And then they search for weapons!"

"Also this is acceptable - at the beginning! That they inspect the girl's handbag is okay, as well as the boy's backpack."

"And then?"

"Yes, the "body check" is hefty, not to say violent!"

"He grabbed the boy between his legs - and the shit comments? And the girl? You not have to ask what happened in his trousers, while touching the girl's thighs. And then? I have to control whether you wear panties or not! He is very disappointed that she wore one!"

"Yes, that's totally unacceptable."

"You can imagine what would have happened when someone would have entered the shop in this moment? Not to talk about, what would be, would, for instance, the girl have a brother who's a gang member? And then the talking, why not taking her along for a little joyride? That's fucking!"

"Yes, it's obvious that they threaten her therewith, that they would rape her."

"In the good old days girls like you knew, how to act to please police officers - what a fucking talking is this, while touching her between her legs? Well, our wonderful president is a fucking role model!"

"The girl and the boy, how do they handle this incident? Are they okay?"

"Well, at the moment they are not interested in, to go on parties again. Maybe some would think that's good for them."

"No, they did everything right. In fact, it's very impressive to see how they reacted. They really did everything, that the situation not escalates."

"What will you do now?"

"I will call a friend of mine, a police officer. I will meet him as soon as possible to speak about this incident. He will be my connection to their supervisor."

"Do you think this footage will be enough?"

"Absolutely! We cannot wait longer till maybe something very bad happens. We also have some more footage and the written statements - I think five incidents so far?"

"Yes."

"That's enough, we cannot wait longer."

"Can you answer me a question?"

"Maybe."

"Why they let two such young and inexperienced police officers patrol together in such a neighborhood?"

"This question I have to ask their supervisor! I also thought about this - let's see what answer I will get."

"Do you think the police will listen to you?"

"Yes, I'm not unknown to them. Just right now I work together with them on another severe case. Yes, I expect answers - are they only stupid or is there more? This question has to be answered!"

"Shall we continue with the surveillance?"

"No, I call my friend. Please inform the shop owners that he will dismantle the video equipment tonight. It should be no longer there when I'm at the police. But written statements are still interesting."

"Okay, I will tell them. And now?"

"I will inform you when I will have my meeting at the police - and of course, what the result will be. Then we have to see....."

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"Yves, I have to meet you!"

"No, it's not about the Brewster case. It's a matter of inappropriate behavior of police officers, I would need your advice and help."

"Tomorrow morning would be cool?"

"Fine, then have a nice Super Bowl evening. Bye, Yves."

It was cool that Yves had time for me so fast. It would be good to talk with him first. It was not my interest to make a lot of hustle, at least not at the moment, at least not as long as it was unclear to me, why this police officers were acting in such a way.

## **The Normal Job**

As I entered the sports bar, the discussions in TV and between the guest about the coming game were in a full swing. Yeah, the NFL knew how to create tension and to merchandise the product football. But that was okay. Show was part of the sports event, the sports event was a show - a billion dollar show.

The bar was totally overcrowded - not unexpected! It would be not that easy to come in contact with her neighbor, but I had expected this. My only aim today was, that he would become aware of me. Maybe I could bandy some words with him. Next week, at his regular sports bar day, I would be in also, to talk a bit with him.

I had decided to be a Rams fan, at least better as to be a Patriots fan. In fact I was neither a Rams nor a Patriots fan, and it would be of not so much importance for me, who would win this game at the end. Okay, maybe I would like it a bit more would the youngsters win, but all led to the Rams - again!

I looked for the barman with whom I had talked the last time. I found him and ordered a stout - well, normally I was no beer drinker, but I thought it would fit better, at least better as a glass of wine. And in fact, from time to time I drank a glass of beer, a dark one in any case.

"Wow, I feel a bit like in the wrong place."

"Absolutely not! Also Rams fans are accepted here - you're not the only one!"

"That's not what I meant. Obviously the people here know each other - I feel a bit like an alien."

"Oh, that will be no problem! Maybe this will become a very disappointing evening for you, because Brady will be the man of tonight. But without any doubts, you will make new friends tonight - maybe it will need some more beer, but then....."

Yeah, that was also my idea! But more in the way to wait a bit, till my aim would have some more beer!

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Half time show, well not that much my taste. But what should you expect after the refusals in series. And the game? The Patriots in the lead? Well, only one field goal in the first half? The Patriots on their way to the big triumph? Three points in lead over the Rams - sorry, only a field goal Mr. Brady! But in fact, you had to accept that the Rams were on the losing end.

But I had not followed the game that much, I was more interested in my target. He was in with three friends, all four loved beer very much - who could say something to disfavor a guy who loves beer? I waited till the next round was in due, till it was my aim's turn, to obtain the next beers. I emptied my glass and stood beside him at the bar to order a new one. As the barman came I gave him the advantage and he ordered four new lagers - the barman looked at me.

"A new stout for me, please."

The barman turned to fulfill our orders and I looked at him, I nodded with my head.

"Rams fan?"

"Well, obviously"

"Some of your colleagues are still optimistic to win the game."

He grinned at me.

"We all know Brady's history, but only three points? No, to be honest? At the moment I would bet my money on Brady."

"It would be a big surprise, should he lose the game after this first half. The Rams will have no chance in the second half either!"

"I fear that history is on your side."

"Absolutely! Brady cannot lose such a game, he....."

The barman came with our beer. I grabbed mine, he tried to handle his four.

"Can I help you? I have only one to carry."

"No, four beer are nothing!"

And in fact he was able to manage it, to carry all four beer to the table with his friends - at least most of the beer. I looked for a new place from where I could see him. The game? Well, maybe the Rams could do the wonder - yeah, who would believe in this one!

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A lot of beer and men results in? Well, overcrowded restrooms! So I had only to wait, till my man felt the necessity, and I could follow him. I was not interested to start a conversation - this was a men's room! Men not talked during doing it, it was a too serious operation! Maybe when washing the hands - well, if.....

My interest was that he saw me, that I would be familiar to him, when we would meet again - at his next sports bar day. And so we stood side by side, not talking a word, till we left the restroom together - after washing our hands!

"Second half now."

"Brady time now!"

"Yes, now we will see who's the best."

"As if this would be a question!"

That was all! Men didn't need a lot of words - well, maybe their conversations needed not that much words, because the topics of their conversations.....

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Well, what shall one say? Hip, hip, hooray - Mr. Brady! Yes, they did it again, and nearly the whole sports bar was over the moon - well, apart from the few fans of the Rams. But to be fair, the mood was good and nobody acted arrogant or inappropriate. I thought about my meeting with Yves - okay, I should stay a bit longer, but not too long. I waited and looked if I would get another chance to

bandy some words with him. And in fact, I saw him at the bar and joined him.

"Yeah, I have to confess - Brady is Brady!"

"Yeah, but to be fair, the Rams were not that bad. Absolutely no high point game."

"No. And one point speaks in the Rams' favor."

"Yeah, they are the youngsters. Maybe they will win their Super Bowl one day, but after the Brady era!"

"You not expect that you will see him next year again?"

"Hey, he's Tom Brady! He said, that whatever will happen tonight, I will not end my career! As you said: Brady is Brady!"

"It would be stupid to say that he wouldn't be capable to do it - let's see what happens next season."

With this words I turned my head, as if I would look for someone else. As I looked again in his direction, he was already on his way to his friends again. Enough conversation for tonight. I decided to stay till my glass would be empty, to drive home by taxi. I would meet Yves at 9am, still some time to sleep. I had no distinct plans for the evening - maybe a lazy evening? Yves would need some time, till he could arrange a meeting with the supervisor of the police officers for me. I hoped that it would take not a that long time - what when their supervisor would agree with their behavior? Or, what if he was an arrogant person, not interested in my matter? Well, the best would be to talk with Yves and to see what his opinion was. He would give me an advice, how I should handle this matter in the best way. And Yves? Could he get problems when he would support me - internal affairs were always a delicate matter. I decided that it was not the best idea to think about such topics after some beers and called a taxi.

## **Enough Problems Today**

It was pretty early in the morning, at least after the Super Bowl evening and too much beer. I was no beer drinker, and I felt it that morning. But my meeting with Yves was too important, therefore a very long and hot shower, hot coffee and some scrambled eggs. I felt better now, but during I drove to the police department I realized again, that I was not in my best condition. I reacted slow and some other motorists where not that much happy about it - take your time! At the end I was happy to have reached the police department - Yves' welcoming was accordingly.....

"Wow, Super Bowl?"

"Too much beer - I did some investigation."

"You've investigated beer?"

"No, I was at a sports bar to get in contact with a person. It's connected with another case. Well, I tried to adapt myself and drank beer. I mean one from time to time is okay, but I'm no beer drinker. But let us talk about the topic why I'm here."

"Sure. You've said something about inappropriate behavior of police officers?"

"Yes. Some residents of the neighborhood around Main and 25<sup>th</sup> Street asked me for help. Two young police officers patrol there and their behavior is very doubtful - to say it in a nice way. The people fear that it will be only a matter of time that this will end in a disaster - they have enough problems there, they not need stupid police officers there - if it's stupidity!"

"If it's not?"

"Racism? Arrogance? Not sure about it. The point is, whatever the reason for their behavior is, this will lead into something bad. And I mean, also bad for them."

"In which way I can help you?"

"I have some footage and more material. I hope that it would be possible to talk with their supervisor. Maybe a stupid idea, maybe a bit naive - depends also a bit why all this happens."

"Can I see the footage?"

"Sure. I have a USB stick for you. The most severe incident is named "shop"."

Yves watched the video without saying anything. He only shook his head from time to time, took a deep breath. Then he looked at me.

"Wow, in black and white you would think it's a movie scene from the 40s or 50s. Now I know what you meant and why the people who live there think that this will have no good end. Only to think about, that the boy would be gang member, or that she would be the girlfriend of a gang member. Yeah, this has to stop!"

"Can you find out who's their supervisor and do you think you could arrange a meeting with him for me? I mean, I hope this will cause you no trouble."

"Should I become trouble cause of this, then you would have your answer about the question of the background of their behavior. Otherwise their superior should be thankful, that the people who live there are acting in such a way. And this two young police officers patrol together?"

"Yes, also one of the questions."

"I would have also one more question."

"The footage?"

"Yes, everything legal?"

"Well, legal is sometimes a question of interpretation, sometimes not the most important subject. I am not interested therein, nor are the residents interested therein, that this material becomes public. Should we find a solution, then we not have to release this footage."

"If not?"

"Then I will make a big fuss. I think the material speaks for itself - or?"

"Yeah, let's hope that they are only stupid youngsters. I will arrange something for you - give me some time, I....."

".....oh, sorry, my cell phone vibrates. Can I?"

"Sure."

"Peter Maurer, private investigations, what can I do for you?"

That was a surprise! No three days!

"Sorry, I'm in a meeting.....yes, I know that you have the information.....this evening?.....no wish, an order.....you start acting like a man now?.....no, I not play games with you, but you are still an amateur. But okay, I've a piece of paper now, give me you orders."

In fact I had nothing to write something down, but Yves! He had listen to me and was immediately aware about, who was at the other end of the phone.

"This evening 8pm, at Jerry's Motel.....no, I don't know it. But hey, I can read city plans and I have GPS in my car."

Wow, he was fucking nervous!

"No, I not make fun of you, but you make it difficult for me to stay serious. Okay, Jerry's Motel at 8pm. A specific room? - Room number eleven, you wait for me. Okay, you will have the video with you, and I can watch it before I pay you?"

Now he started to become a real tough guy!

"I've said that I will have five thousand with me, that's it, enough for you! - Really, I made a mistake?"

Yeah, don't try to play with the big guys, when you're none!

"I've forgotten your "friend"? Well, that's the different between an amateur and a professional - you not thought I would believe in this story one second? But that makes it easier for you. You have not to create a story, why your "friend" is not with us. We simply can make the deal!"

Then the necessary came - like in a bad movie!

"Sure, no police.....you will have a special surprise for me?.....not only the video? I look forward to our meeting!"

That it was! I was not interested to waste my time any longer with him. Now we would have to react!

"I not have to say much - or?"

"Absolutely not! I call Benjamin."

"Yes, we have to prepare some things, we have to discuss how we will act."

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Yves called Benjamin and within minutes we sat together.

"He's a total amateur. No professional would have phoned me after only two days - and much more? He gives us nine hours to prepare everything? No pro would give me more than an hour, if at all that much?"

"That's right. We will have officers in the next room to you and on the street. Everything will be prepared for wiretapping your meeting - do you think he will frisk you?"

"I don't think so - and I will not allow him to do something like this. My problem with this amateur is, that such amateurs are often more dangerous than real hard-boiled criminals. It's difficult to say how they act, sometimes they are totally irrational. But I have good backing."

"We will decide how we will react, according to the development of your meeting. If the situation gets out of control we will storm the room. Otherwise we will wait. We have the total control over him. We know everything about him now."

"Yeah, it was good that you gave me updates. About his "friend" and such things. We know now that he is our guy. But your specialists for internet crime are still trading water?"

"Yes, unfortunately. Corresponding places in the Internet and especially the Dark-net are full of rumors about a video that would show the raping of Sarah - but they cannot find the video as such. Either it's one of this Internet legends, or it's still available only to a very closed circle. That makes it difficult to decide whether we should arrest him or not."

"Yes. If he really knows the source of the video, if he has access to the place where you can get the video, than it would be a risk, to arrest him. Okay, we would have a chance by searching his computer. But such people are very clever in camouflaging their activities. If he would not cooperate, it can become very easily a disaster for us."

"That's also my idea. If nothing strange or dangerous happens, the police should stay in the background. As you said, we know everything about him. Arresting him would be the easiest thing. But to get the important information? It's a difficult situation - but at first we have to see what he can offer. Maybe it's simply a hoax - no indications that anybody else offers this video?"

"Our specialists think that - if the video exists at all - only a very small group has access to it. They recommend that you ask him, why he offers you the video. They think his answer would be very interesting. The point is the following. Would his story be true, then he would have access to a very secret place. Such people have a codex, and he would violate this codex in an extreme manner. He has to offer a very good explanation, why he acts in this way."

"Yeah, I will stress this. Will some of your experts be in attendance to listen to the conversation?"

"Of course. And you will get a little friend for your ear. We have some very small and inconspicuous ones - we can communicate with you then, can give you advises and can inform you about our actions."

"That's very good. Then we should begin! Still we have over eight hours to prepare everything - he is really a fool!"

"Yeah, do you feel good?"

"Why you ask Yves?"

"Super Bowl and beer?"

"Thanks to him I have even time for two or three hours sleep, and another shower."

### **Meeting The Devil's Admirer**

As said, he was an amateur. I thought about, why he had given me so much time. Does he feared, that otherwise I would say something like: Sorry, but I have a dinner appointment already - what about tomorrow? What should be more important than this affair? Well, I thought that I should ask

him this, only to see his reaction.

Anyway, the police monitored the whole area since hours, he had entered the motel room roughly an hour ago and I was prepared. We did a last check up - yes, everything functioned. I could hear them, they could hear me. We talked over different scenarios for a last time, I had still fifteen minutes. I left the delivery van who was parked around the corner and walked slowly to the motel. Room eleven, I knocked at the door and he opened it.

"Are you alone?"

"Seems so. And if not, be sure that you not would see them - can I enter?"

"Yes."

I entered the room, on the desk a notebook, already on. It seemed that he was not interested in to waste time. I pointed at the notebook.....

"Can I see the video?"

"Yes, you have the money?"

"I have. But let us clarify two things before. You're unarmed? You're alone?"

"I'm alone."

"Fine. I can confirm that so far nobody has entered this room since the last two and a half hours, except you. But before?"

"You have monitored the motel?"

"Of course! You have given me a bit too much time - but now I have to have a look into the restroom and the shower. Do you mind?"

"No, there's nobody there."

In fact there was nobody, but he became more and more insecure.

"And now everything that could harm me."

"Are you armed?"

"Sure! Do you think I would go to such a meetup unarmed?"

"But I have to give you....."

".....this are the rules! And before you have to ask, I make the rules! Your weapons, please!"

He laid a nice little gun and a knife on the bed.

"Turn around, I have to frisk you."

"And if I....."

"....hey, my gun is much larger then yours! You not should be interested in, that I show you."

He looked at me, always this fuck with amateurs. It was absolutely unpredictable how he would act. He needed a moment, but then he decided that it would better to follow my orders. I found another knife.

"This was the last stupid thing you do, otherwise I fear that it can end up very bad for you."

"It would be very stupid to harm me. I have the information you need."

"You've forgotten? I know your address, I can have your PC..... - maybe you should not overbid your cards."

"What you wanna do? Telling the police my name? Stealing my PC? What do you think? That I have my passwords and login details written down on a sheet of paper? Maybe you have to learn that I'm no fool - you have nothing without my cooperation."

"That's a good cue. I have a problem with you, a very serious problem. And to say it, I have a problem therewith to trust you. You see, you're interested in porn, violent porn, with at least younger women, with underage girls. Obviously you have access to a very special place - would you agree with me so far?"

"Maybe. You tried to find the video?"

"Of course, and I have to confess that I found nothing than rumors. On the other hand I found serious hints, that at a very dark place this video, and more, should be available to very special interested "savorers". That would lead to the idea that you are one of them - I think we can forget this story about your "friend" finally. Would you agree with me so far?"

"Maybe. And your problem?"

"Well, should you be such a person, then you would betray your "community" with this action. I would like to have an answer to this question. Five thousand for this video and you offer me even more? It seems to me, that you would sell your "friends"."

"Why? I offer you only the video as such - and maybe more. But "more" means more stuff. You not think that I would sell you the information where you can find the video, or even the access data?"

"Okay, say that I would accept this. I still have a problem to understand all this. I mean, you have access to a very special place - not everybody will be capable, will be allowed, to enter such a place. At least this is what I think that I would know about such places."

"Where is your knowledge from?"

"Mainly from the media - reports about this scene, internet research....."

"Maybe not the best sources?"

"Good enough to know, that there're places where you have to provide something first. This leads me to the question - who are you?"

"You're on the wrong path, I'm no active person. To provide something not means to produce something. I'm a passive person."

"Well, you only "enjoy" the videos others have made for your "pleasure". It's good to have a pure conscience!"

"Now I'm not sure what I should think! Maybe it would be better to blow the deal?"

"Why a deal? You need money? I have to get a feeling about, why you act like you act. Especially if this should be not our last meeting."

"I need money. And to say it straight away, I need more money. Okay, this video as a bargain for five thousand. The next one will be much more expensive - you get along with me?"

"Yes, this sounds better to me. So money is the driving force for your action?"

"Yes."

"Okay, that calms me down, to be honest. Can I watch the video now?"

"Sure. Have a seat and enjoy!"

For his smirk I would have liked it, to smash his face in.

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The video started and after a few moments, looking at the girl that was "presented", I stopped the video.

"Hey, the video has not even begun! So fast too much for you? The action starts after two minutes, that's only the prelude!"

For a second I thought about to.....but not now.

"Asshole, I have seen things you would bear no second. This is a video, maybe you should see things in reality, maybe this would "help" you. You know that the Brewsters have hired me - or?"

"Sure."

"So, without any doubt I know their daughter, her face. And I have to say, that it's even hard for me to say, whether this is their daughter or not. Okay, we have talked about this already, but why you think that this his really the daughter of the Brewsters?"

"As you see, you need my help. First of all, the source of the video. Second, the uploader of the video. The uploader is also the producer, he's a hero now. Would this be a fake, he would become a laughingstock. And finally, there's a proof, but later in the video."

"Okay, the source - you will not tell me. The uploader - you will not tell me. The producer - you will not tell me. Can we see him in the video later?"

"Yes, but not his face only his....."

".....okay, I can imagine it! Finally, the proof?"

"After 3:25."

I started the video again at 3:00. The girls was naked now, her body was shown in detail - 3:25 her wrist.

"You see it?"



"I see a bracelet - still blurred."

"Yes, but the descriptions in the media reported about a blue bracelet, without details about it. What do you think with more background information? The producer shows the bracelet very long, it's the proof! Again, what do you think? It's her bracelet - or?"

"At the moment I have the feeling, that the only reason why I'm here is to proof you, that it's her in the video."

"No, at least it's not the prime reason."

"Would I affirm you that this is her - you would tell this your "friends"?"

"Of course! That's a part of the deal - and this is one of my rules!"

"And you would tell them that you have sold the video and....."

".....of course not! But I would say that I have information about, that this is in fact her bracelet."

"Then I have a bad message for you. I cannot confirm this, at least not now. Yes, the bracelet looks like hers, but I have to have a closer look and I have to compare it with a picture I have. She wears this blue bracelet on this picture."

"But I think till next time you can confirm me this - or?"

"This leads to the question how we will continue now?"

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From time to time I got short information via the receiver in my ear. So far the police was not interested to interfere, but they told me that I should try to protract the conversation as long as possible. What he not knew was that some specialists from the police ransacked his house just right now. Specialists, because their aim was to leave no evidence of their being around. The longer I talked with him, the longer they could do their job.

"I think this is an easy question. You give me the five thousand and I give you the video."

"So far I would agree with you. I have to have a closer look at the video to decide whether it's interesting or not. I meant, how we will continue with our "relation"?"

"Well, after you have decided that this is real footage of her - say, I will give you one day therefor - I will tell you the next step."

"You have to have a bit more precise. What do you will offer me next and for what money?"

"Ah, I can tell you that this will be not the last video. Tonight he will bestow us with the next video - more action he said. And this time it costs fifty thousand!"

"Are you nuts?"

"I think her parents will pay everything - maybe I should talk with them?"

"Bad only that I stand between them and you."

"I think it will be no good news for them that you spoiled an opportunity. I don't think that they will be happy when you screw it up again."

"You mean?"

"McAllister?"

"He killed her right after the kidnapping. And I fear the Brewsters will be not happy about it that you impeded everything. I can buy ten or twenty videos - and then? The only valuable information would be the source of the video and the login data, so that specialists from the police could try to find him."

"You're dreaming? Do you think that it will be easy to find a man like him? You never will find him!"

"That's a stupid answer. Why do you think I'm here? I'm not interested in to buy this video or any other video because I'm a pervert like you. I'm interested in to get information to find this man, the man who has made this video! Should you offer me only some videos, than I fear our business relation is over!"

"What do you expect from me? The access data?"

"That would be cool, valuable and therefore worth a good deal of money."  
 "I have to think about it - how valuable?"  
 "How much do you need?"  
 "Two hundred thousand would be good."  
 "Now I have to think about it for a moment. Answer me a question in the meanwhile. You know me and my habits very well - why?"  
 "Well, I think I should keep this as my secret, for the moment at least."  
 "Have I to threaten you?"  
 "What do you mean?"  
 "I'm a private dick, you're a perverse pedophile - it was self-defense."  
 "You can kill me, but then you have nothing!"  
 "I not talked about to kill you."  
 "Wow, you wanna torture me? I think that would be not good for you reputation. I'm your informant!"  
 "You're nothing! Does he said how many videos he will "bestow" you, and your pervert friends?"  
 "Not precisely. But he said that the video tonight will be not the last. I think some more at least."  
 I had got the information that the specialists in his house had finished the job, but had found nothing special. I should end the meeting.  
 "Okay, my proposal. You phone me tomorrow and we will meet again. At least I have fifty thousand with me for the next video - if I think this video is valuable. Two hundred thousand are too much for tomorrow, but we will see. What do you think?"  
 "Sounds not that bad. Till tomorrow!"  
 He handed me a USB stick and I handed him an envelope. He looked into it.  
 "Only an amateur would do this."  
 "You still think that I'm an amateur?"  
 "More than ever!"  
 "And why I know you so good?"  
 "I guess that this is the luck of an amateur?"  
 "Well, as long as you think that I'm an amateur.....not my disadvantage!"  
 I had to find out who he was!

## **Working Together With The Police**

After the meeting in the motel I sat together with Benjamin, Yves and some specialists from the police. We had to talk about the conversation, about how much he had revealed us.

"Can I ask something before we begin?"  
 "Yes, sure."  
 "Can you give me some more information about him. Is there any hint why he knows that much about me - or is it only a bluff?"  
 "He moved to the city around fifteen years ago - we have no hint where he lived before. We're sure about it, that his identity is a fake."  
 "Fifteen years ago? More precise?"  
 "The first traces of him that we could find in the city were from January 2004."  
 "Two months before she was kidnapped. A fluke?"  
 "You're talking about whom?"  
 "He talks about the McAllister case."  
 "Yes.....but maybe this is not the most important now. Does the specialists could find something important in his house?"  
 "No, his computers - he has more than one - are very well protected. Maybe in a laboratory we could crack them, but not at his home. We have left some bugs, unfortunately it was not possible to

hide a camera to film him at his computer."

"But we could go the easy way. Two hundred thousand dollar and we will get the access data?"

"I'm not sure about it. We checked his bank account. Yes, he has some debts, but only twelve thousand dollar. Why he asked for two hundred thousand? I think he will abscond."

"Okay, but I can give him the money, he gives me the data and you can arrest him then - too easy?"

"What he said about him, that we will not find him. Well, we know that he lives in the city or not far away. At least this is the most possible scenario at the moment. But the point is, that when we talk about the Internet or the dark net, then it's not important whether he lives next door or in China. It is not impossible to find him, but it can become very difficult and long-winded."

"And time is not our friend at the moment."

"Yes, and this leads me to him. We have the feeling that he's no unknown person in this scene. Would he work together with us, he maybe could get in contact with the kidnapper. The crazy thing would be, that both would live in the same city, or near by."

"But then he would have to cooperate very closely with us. Why he should do this?"

"Should he be a well known person in this scene, not to talk about that there would be a relation to the McAllister case, then he would face a very long prison sentence. Maybe that would inspire him thereto?"

"What shall we do?"

"You await his phone call. In the meantime we will examine the video. We will inform you about our evaluation. At the meeting you offer him money for a cooperation with the police - ask him how much."

"Impunity and money?"

"Offer him everything - we will see how he reacts."

"I think that this time he will give us not that much time."

"No, but we will very fast."

"Oh, and by way - the video?"

"Yes."

"My evaluation?"

"Yes."

"The bracelet is her bracelet."

"It's a bracelet like hers, maybe we should say it in that way for now?"

"It's a self-made bracelet, it's a unique bracelet....."

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"Peter?"

"Yes, Yves."

"After you left my office at the morning - or yesterday, if you like - I had a phone call with the supervisor of the two young police officers."

"Very fast. His reaction?"

"He said that he wants to talk as soon as possible with you - but he said not why. I said him that I will ask you, that I will see you later because of an investigation, where you cooperate very closely with the police. What shall I say to him?"

"When does you're in your office again?"

"In roughly six hours."

"Ask him whether we can meet in the morning. I think the next meeting concerning the video will be in late afternoon. I think I try to sleep a few hours. But it's better to do something than sitting around."

"Okay, I will phone you."

## **The Normal Job**

"Ms. Palmer, it's me Mr. Maurer. Sorry, that I call you so early in the morning."

"Yes, I have to say that I will have some problems in meeting your neighbor at his sports bar day this week."

"No, another case. I have to concentrate on this one. I hope you're not too disappointed now or annoyed about me."

"Yes, it's a very important case."

"Yes, it's a matter about life and death."

"I appreciate this very much, Ms. Palmer. As soon as possible I will meet him and....."

"Thank you, thank you very much."

## **Talking With The Brewsters**

"Sorry that I only call you, but I wait for a phone call for myself. I have to leave then to meet someone."

"I think you call us because of the video?"

"The police has informed you already?"

"They told us that you bought a video that shows most likely our daughter. They not told us details, but said us that you got offered a second video."

"Yes, that's true. It seems that someone has kidnapped her in fact."

"Pornographic videos? You call because of the money you need?"

"Forget the money, this is not important now. The video I got shows her unharmed. In the light of the fact of a kidnapping is this video not the worst possibility."

"It's our daughter - or?"

"I think yes."

"And this other video?"

"I have to buy it, then we can say more."

"Do you think she's still alive?"

"It seems so. But I hate to say this, but time is against us. I hope I can get some valuable information as soon as possible."

"The man that offered you the videos?"

"A very shady person, but our only connection to your daughter at the moment. The problem is that he knows where this videos can be found in the Internet, but this not means that he knows the kidnapper."

"So the only thing we can do is to wait?"

"Yes, I have no other advise for you. Pray for her, maybe that helps."

"You not believe in God - or?"

"No, but you should not renounce your faith just now. Stick with your believe, she needs you both now more than ever."

## **At The Police**

Just after my phone call with the Brewsters, Yves called me. He informed me about, that I should be at 10am at the town hall to meet the police officers' supervisor. He had informed Yves that he would be the whole morning at the town hall and that he would have time for me at 10am. I asked Yves about, what I should think about it.

"It's a bit a strange meeting place?"

"Well, it's not that uncommon for a man in his position to be at the town hall. It's said that he's not

only interested in to make a career at the police, some say that he has political ambitions."

"Then I think it would be not the best promotion for him - police officers who behave inappropriate?"

"Absolutely not! Maybe this is a possibility for you, but....."

"Yes?"

"Try to be somewhat diplomatic."

"I will be there as a representative of the people who have hired me. I think this should be no problem for me - why you tell me this?"

"I meant it in that way, that you should not expect any distinct answers from him. He will stay tight-lipped on the matter. Especially he will not judge about the police officers, not in front of you."

"That's okay for me. It's not important that he tells me sweet words, it's important that something will happen. He knows the video?"

"Yes, I've sent it him."

"Thanks for your advice. Anything new about the video in the Brewster case?"

"Nothing new as such. As you expected there where three people in the room. Sarah and a man, obviously a younger man. Than a third person who filmed. One time this person says something to Sarah - obviously a woman's voice, of a younger woman."

"So we can assume that a young or younger couple has kidnapped Sarah – leads to the school?. The room?"

"Nothing special. A cellar or a specially prepared room? Difficult to say at the moment. She moved the camera not much."

"Because I've seen the video not in complete. I definitively need no details, but what happened in it."

"I had a short conversation with Benjamin. Their impression is, that this video was therefor, to present her as their "trophy". She had to undress and then the male started to humiliate her. One time also the female said something to her. Shall I express it in their language?"

"In the language of the people for whom the video is?"

"Yes."

"I fear I can imagine it - it's an "appetizer" for the upcoming videos."

"Yes. Two things. Time is a real enemy for us now. On the other hand, the possibility that she's still alive is very high. It's not excluded that they made the videos, killed her, and now they upload the videos. Unfortunately they couldn't find a hint about, when the video was made. But according to a specialist, it's most likely that the ultimate kick for them would be, to be still "in possession" of Sarah while uploading the first videos. Maybe you can get information about - during the next meeting - whether the kidnappers have offered their community, that they can express wishes about what they should do with her. This would be a strong hint therefor that she's still alive."

"I hope that I will get the next phone call soon. Is someone with the Brewsters?"

"Of course, they get psychological care. But they are strong, at least till now. It helps them, that there's a good possibility that their daughter is still alive."

"Yes, but.....I'm on my way to the town hall. I have to focus on the coming conversation."

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Yves had told me in which room I should be in at 10am, to meet their supervisor - it was not that easy to find it, but at 9:50am I stood in front of it. A man walked down the hallway, in civvies, and stopped in front of me.

"You're Mr. Maurer?"

"Yes."

He nodded with his head, then he opened the door and stepped into the room. I followed him. It was a small room, one table with six chairs seemed to be the only in it. He offered me a seat and took the one opposite to me.

"So, you're Mr. Maurer?"

"Yes."

"You're not unknown to me. I've heard that you work very closely together with the police at the moment - the Brewster case."

"Yes."

"You've a very good reputation. Maybe you're sometimes too committed with a case?"

"Depends on what do you mean therewith?"

"McAllister? - This should be no critique, nor I wanna diss you, but in our jobs we need distance, otherwise you will not make it."

"What shall I say? Obviously you know enough, but stories from the past are stories from the past. This is the present, and....."

".....oh, maybe you misunderstood me. I not talked about the reason of our meeting. I talked about the Brewster case."

"I have a problem therewith to follow you?"

"You know that I have gathered information about you - sure I have. Your past....."

".....is past! Sorry, that I interrupt you. I think it's well-meant, but....."

".....but you should let the past the past! Not with words, but in actual fact! I'm not directly involved in the Brewster case, but we both know that it not looks good. Even when the girl will survive this, her life and her family's life will never be the same again. We need men like you."

"You're campaigning?"

"No, not now. Get your man and try a bit to keep some distance."

"Yeah, both is very easy - you've seen the video? You know which video I mean."

"Of course."

"And?"

"It will have consequences."

"Which?"

"They never will see this two police officers again."

"That's all? No answer thereto, why two such young and inexperienced police officers patrol together? No answer thereto, what the background of their behavior is? No answers at all?"

"You expected answers?"

"Not really. But I would be interested about their new "sphere of action"."

"They will be no longer together."

"Nevertheless.....I could find this out by my own?"

"Sure, you've very good connections to the police. Why you're interested in?"

"Still the questions about their motivation stays."

"You wanna control them?"

"Maybe."

"And if I would say you, that I will have a very close eye on them?"

"Well....."

"You know that I have political ambitions. What do you think? How much it would help me, if it would look like as that I would shield racist police officers?"

"Well, today?"

"Even today it would be not the best move."

"Depends on your friends."

"I think the mayoress, I just met her, won't not support me any longer, would give it any doubt about it, that I'm no racist. And without any doubt I need her support. You see, it's in my interest that this problem finds a good solution. And I'm indebted to the people who hired you, that they handled this matter in this way. You can tell them this."

"Well, maybe this is more than I could expect."

"We're in the town hall, this is no bar talk."

"Maybe we should meet in a bar one time?"

"Would be a pleasure to me, Mr. Maurer."

We said goodbye and I had the feeling, that I had got more, than I could ever have had expected. I

walked down the hallway and my phone vibrated - it was him!

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"Yves, Benjamin, I got the phone call - in an hour. Is this possible for you?"

"We're in the stand by mode the whole morning. Can you give us the address?"

"Sure."

I gave him the information.

"Are you still in the town hall or where you are?"

"I'm still in the town hall. First he demanded for a meeting within half an hour - suddenly he's in a hurry. But this is not possible for me. What's your idea?"

"Stay by the town hall. We will fetch you there. I will a few surprises for you!"

"I'm looking forward, Benjamin."

It took not long and a patrol car stopped in front of the town hall - with a lot of noise. Thereafter the known delivery van, which I entered.

"A lot of noise for an undercover investigation!"

"From now on we will use the van only. I think that he not observes the town hall."

"How long do you think we will need till the motel?"

"We will be in time I think. Can I have the key for your car?"

"What's your plan?"

"An officer will follow us with your car. You will change cars before we have reach the motel. This gives us time to prepare you for wiretapping and for some instructions."

"The surprises?"

"Yes - interested?"

"Of course!"

"Then I have some surprises for you. First, he's ill, seriously ill. During the house search the officers made pictures of documents and placed some bugs. He has cancer, so far we not know how serious it is, but we found notices about meetings with a specialized doctor - a very expensive one."

"The two hundred thousand?"

"Well, for such a doctor even two hundred thousand dollar are not much. This surprises us a bit, because it seems that he is in contact with him because of a long time treatment - two hundred thousand dollars would be a good first rate, but.....whatever! I have a suitcase for you."

"With two hundred thousand dollar I think. I have the fifty thousand with me."

"Fine, then we have four hundred and fifty thousand dollar for him."

With this words he opened the suitcase - well, it not looked like as that much.

"Four hundred thousand?"

"You offer him four hundred thousand dollar for a full cooperation with the police. The money is from you, the Brewsters and friends of the Brewsters. He can become more later, when he cooperates and the Brewsters have more time to get more. He offered you a new video?"

"Yes."

"Does he said something about the two hundred thousand?"

"No, not as such. He only said, that we would talk about the video first and then we would see."

"Okay, we're near the motel now. You will change cars now. Here's the suitcase - you feel good?"

"As good as possible."

I took place in my car and drove the rest to enter the motel's parking lot. Sure he would observe the parking lot - I had no good feeling at all. I left the car, the suitcase in my hand - room seventeen. I went upstairs - why a room upstairs? I knocked at the door and he opened it.

"Come in, I've waited for you....."

## **You're No Informant**

I stepped in and looked around. A bit more clever he acted this time, not knew how long he was there already. A normal room with a bed, a table, two chairs and TV.

"Turn around, please."

"You wanna frisk me again?"

"Sure. First you and then the room."

He turned around and stretched out his arms. I found nothing.

"No little gun today?"

"I had time. Maybe hidden in the room? Or in the restroom? Have heard that criminals prefer the toilet tank."

I ransacked the room, and the restroom, but found nothing. I knew that they ransacked his house again. Maybe they could find more information. I pointed to the notebook on the table, already running, a USB stick plugged to it.

"The new video?"

"Shouldn't we talk about your suitcase first?"

As I entered the room I had placed the suitcase on the floor. I had realized that he had looked at it several times.

"You said, that we will talk about the video first, and then about everything else."

With this words I took the envelope out of the inside pocket of my coat, which I still wore, and threw it on the bed.

"I hope that you need no look in it today. Fifty thousand as wished."

"Fine, you wanna watch the video?"

"Give me the USB stick, I believe you."

"Then we would have finished this deal - the suitcase? Two hundred thousand dollar - very fast?"

I took the suitcase, laid it on the bed and opened it. He came to the bed and looked at the money.

"Strange, how much two hundred thousand dollars are. You think that this view will weaken me."

"You demanded for two hundred thousand. And by the way, this are four hundred thousand - together with the envelope we have four hundred and fifty thousand in this room."

"Well, apart from the question about the "why", a lot of money in such a short time? The Brewsters are not that wealthy, if I'm not misinformed?"

"Some of the money is from the Brewsters, some from friends of the Brewsters, some from me. It can become more."

"How much?"

"How much is the live of a daughter worth? You're disgusting me!"

"Is it good for a private dick to be such emotional? I thought men like you are hard-boiled?"

"I hope for you that you will not find it out. Your second question?"

"Well, four hundred and fifty thousand and more for what?"

"A full cooperation with the police. You give them access to the place you're a member, and you will be a middleman."

"Yeah, you're a bit misinformed?"

"Help me."

"You not think, that I know his address or something like that - I know his alias and suchlike. I fear you have some wrong information?"

"Somebody told me, and I think it was a good source, that such places know special groups. Groups where long time members, members who offer very special material, can get in close and direct contact - but maybe this is only one of this Internet myths."

"Well, assumed that I would accept the money, I would work together with the police - and then? Impunity? You've talked with the police?"

"No, not so far. But without any doubt you would get a deal, you would be a key witness and helped the police a lot - especially if we would catch him before he will make the last video."

"Well, in which way I shall say it. Maybe I'm an amateur, but you're a fool! You have no idea about



nothing!"

"You mean the McAllister case?"

"Also, but not only."

"You mean your illness? Cancer, as far as I know."

"Oh, you did some research - but still, you know nothing!"

"I know that you need money for your treatment. You need a lot of money."

"Yeah, you silly fool! I need nothing any more."

"Why then we're here?"

"You little fool."

"You're not telling me now, that you're only playing games with me?"

"And if!"

He was a fucking amateur!

"You signed your death sentence, right now - you idiot! So far you had some good cards, but now I see that you have nothing, nothing to offer. Why I should hesitate only one second now, to hand you to the police? You offer nothing that the police wouldn't find on your computer? You're worthless now! But real bad for you?"

"I'm listen you."

"So far I was hesitant, but why I should be? As I said it the last time. We're alone in this room, no witness, only a fucking pervert and a private detective - maybe it's time to get a bit hard-boiled?"

"Now I see it! You're a clown! You sill not see it - or?"

"Make me smart!"

"It's not about the girl, it's not about this stupid money! I'm dead, I'm....."

".....you've cancer, not more! My father and my grandfather, both had cancer and lived many years with it. Tell me something better!"

"I've liver cancer. The fucking thing with it is, that this form of cancer is very aggressive. Nevertheless you can live long with it without noticing anything - and then it's too late. Metastasis, my body is full of them. So far it not looks like, but in a short time it will become more and more obvious - I'm a dying person, my life is over. A few months maybe, months with more and more pain and decay - you wanna threaten me?"

"So, you're idea is to take revenge on me? Why you not simply shoot me? Okay, all this.....your not the puppet master - or? You're connected to the McAllister case - the Brewster case?"

"Questions, so many questions....."

He sat on one of the chairs, I stood in the room. I took my gun.

"You wanna threaten me? You....."

I threw the gun on the bed .

"A trap? Do you really think I would be stupid enough, to try to get the gun. You really think that I would be stupid enough to give you a reason to shoot me with a second gun?"

"I would need no trap to shoot you. I only wanna that it will last long enough, that I can beat the shit out of you!"

"And in the meanwhile another daughter will die? To be fair, the first time you had no chance, but this time? I can tell you that she's still alive - he offers his audience the possibility to express wishes. You wanna know my wish?"

"No, it's enough for me that you never will see whether he fulfilled your wish or not."

"You still threaten me?"

"What do you expect? That we will say goody later and that you will have a nice evening at home? The best you can expect is, that I deliver you to the police."

"And then, waiting till she's dead also?"

"You said that you will not cooperate, I said that it makes no sense to buy videos. I fear this is a senseless situation. Two possibilities I see. The police has specialists, they can try to find him. Maybe you're in fact the key to everything. The other possibility is, that I try it, in my way. This are the two possibilities I see."

"The first? Catch him if you can - yeah, the specialists! The funny point? Yes, with the time they

would have a good chance to get him - but time is running out, much too fast! The second? You're an idiot!"

"Then I will try my best to convince you of the contrary. Yeah, the McAllister case. You're involved in? You're saying this, but a prove therefore? There was never a hint that he not acted alone - give me a hint at least, otherwise it's only babble. The Brewster case? I get more and more the feeling that you have nothing more than the access to the videos. I get more and more the feeling that your only interest is, to become a little hero in this scene. Bad information for you, that's it. Stand up, we will have a little ride to the police."

"Why I should do all this? Why I know that much about you? The press was very nice to you - they not reported much about it."

"Why they should?"

"Well, the hard private dick. First he was not able to save her live, then he was unable to - yes, I know it."

"And? I don't think that anybody would laugh about me because of that, on the contrary. The people who know it are supporting me - maybe you're the fool?"

"The hard private dick who could not save her life and then wasn't able to shoot himself? Maybe this time you will make it better, after the Brewster's daughter death?"

"Maybe I was not that unable than you think?"

"You're still alive?"

"Yeah, sometimes very strange things can happen."

"You're a loser!"

"Maybe I'm a winner? I'm still able to try to....."

".....she's dead, you and your specialists will be too late! I should tell you my wish, it was....."

".....shut up you asshole! You know this story from the man with the iron bar in his head, the one who not died? Sometimes a small damage of the brain is enough to kill you, sometimes....."

"You not tell me that you have a bullet in your brain or something like that?"

"Not important for you, the police waits."

He stood up slowly and put something in his mouth - and smiled! I was immediately aware that I had made a mistake, but where - not at the moment, at the moment this was not important.

"Benjamin, Yves - I made a mistake! Obviously he as took poison, we need an ambulance - immediately!"

I knelt near him, he was still alive but in no good condition. It was a pill or a capsule or something like this. Sure, it was very easy to hide something that small, but - not now. I looked in his pockets and frisked his clothes again, but I found nothing. It would be important to know what he had taken, but maybe also not. His condition was very bad now, it looked like as that his body collapses. Knocking at the door, I stood up and let them in. A doctor was with them, a doctor for any matters, but I think that nobody thought about this. The doctor shook his head - fuck!

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It was in the evening now, in the bar, together with Benjamin and Yves, but not to enjoy some cocktails. In fact no one drank alcohol, in fact everyone was happy as Benjamin started a conversation.

"We have all his computers now and everything else. This case has top priority. It's very surprising that he not has destroyed all the data."

"Obviously he not planned his suicide in that way, to do it in any case. It was an option, but this makes it not better for me - on the contrary! But I'm not sure what was my mistake. You taped everything?"

"Yes, but we also saw no indication therefore that he would commit suicide. Otherwise we would have interfered."

"What about his statement, that also the IT specialists will be not able to locate his abode, at least not fast enough?"

"First, as I told you before. We've talked with the police officers who were involved in the McAllister case. At no moment they had a hint that a second perpetrator was involved. His talking about....."

".....but he waited for me in the bar, he knows very private things about me. There has to be a connection. He appeared two months before the McAllister case in the city. Now the Brewster case, again in this city? All in this city? A bit too much coincidences!"

"Sometimes strange things happen,....."

".....like to live with a bullet in your brain?"

"Maybe we should see the things different. Assume, that there's absolutely no connection of him with neither the McAllsier case, nor the Brewster case? Maybe he's only a pedophile who got his information from the places he had access to? Sure, the bar is a bit strange, but he had not more information about your suicide attempted, as the ones everybody could read in the press. I think that he had this weird idea, to leave with a bang. Maybe he planned a show for the media, to embarrass the private defective and the police or something like that."

"I agree with you, Yves. Nevertheless we will further on investigate in every direction. I will keep you informed, Peter. Most important will be now, what information we will find on his computers."

"Still the question if we can be fast enough. I've the feeling that it will be a dead race - we will have no chance to win it."

"It will be very hard, but we can use all our resources - the FBI is in, even international agencies."

"Does the Brewsters know, what has happened?"

"Two officers have talked with them. They know everything so far."

"I think I should talk with them also."

"But not now - tomorrow."

"Yeah, maybe I should try to become a clear mind before. Some sleep maybe."

"That brings me to something, Peter. Maybe you should be not alone now?"

"I've my computer and the Internet, I never be alone."

"Yes, exactly that's what I fear. How about the idea to spend some days with me and Alicia?"

"Wow Yves, are you sure that your wife would like it?"

"Absolutely! She likes your cooking skills as you know."

"Maybe."

"Maybe what? She definitively likes your cooking skills and definitively she will have no problems when you stay with us for some days."

"Okay....."

## **Yves' Home**

I waked up very late, restless sleep. Looked around me, not the first time that I woke up in Yves' guest room, but this time it was different. Had dreamt stupid stuff, not sure about what was dreamt and what was reality. I looked at the alarm clock on the nightstand - 11:27am. I stood up, opened the door a bit and heard Alicia in the upper floor - does she not has to work today? 11:31am - maybe a long and hot shower would be the best, the smell of the coffee was refreshing, the prospect of a nice breakfast - or maybe a light lunch or brunch.....

After the shower, and after I had dressed my old apparel again, I felt much better. I walked downstairs and Alicia sat in the living room, reading a book.

"You not have to work today?"

"God morning, Peter. Don't worry, I enjoy it to be at home today."

"Sorry. Good morning, Alicia. I'm still a bit confused."

"Was a hard day yesterday."

"Yeah, but it was a hard day for everybody. Yves is already for a long time in his office, I guess."

"That's true, but it's also true, that he's a bit younger than you."

"Yeah, maybe I should think about to retire."

"I think it's not so bad with you - hungry?"

"Coffee and.....do you have bread and marmalade?"

"Yes, sure. You need something sweet?"

"Yeah, definitely!"

"I would have some cookies?"

"With pleasure!"

I sat down and Alicia brought me everything.

"You're not hungry?"

"I had breakfast with Yves. Most of the time I eat only some fruit or something like that at lunch time."

"Oh, Yves....."

".....he will call when there are new developments."

"And so long?"

"I hope you enjoy my presence?"

Yes, I did. And I became aware again, that nobody would wait at my home. But that was a different story - the telephone rang.

"It was Yves. Benjamin will hold a meeting at 5pm. Yves said, that it would be good when you would be also present."

"Of course, yes! 5pm? That would give me time to visit Mr. Johnson - another case. This case is done so far - more or less. I have to inform Mr. Johnson about the results."

"Okay, see you later then."

"Why?"

"Yves said you will stay for some days?"

"Oh, yes. Let us see. First I have to go home, I need new apparel. Then the meeting with Mr. Johnson and then the meeting with Benjamin - and then we will see."

"And then dinner, here, with Yves and me."

"I think Yves will be at the meeting also?"

"I think so."

"Then he will leave me no option - dinner here, with you and Yves."

"Fine, I hope I can satisfy you."

### **Mr. Johnson's Restaurant**

I entered Mr. Johnson's restaurant at 2:45pm - another hot shower and new apparel did me good. As always the dining area was fulfilled with an appetizing scent, but I was not in the mood at all to eat something. I had given Mr. Johnson a call, therefore he awaited me.

"Hello Mr. Maurer, nice to see you again."

"Nice to see you again also, Mr. Johnson."

"You had a talk with their supervisor?"

"Yes, but let's take a seat."

"Yes, sure. Sorry, I'm a bit nervous."

"No problem."

We took a seat, Arnold replaced his father for the time of our conversation.

"I had a conversation with their supervisor, I hope that you not expect too much therefrom. First, you never will see this two officers again in your neighborhood. Second, I can tell you nothing about the background of their behavior."

"You mean that you know nothing at all."

"In a way yes. But this could not be expected, not in a way that I would get real insight in this matter. And I will not interpret some of his words, because this is always a dangerous thing. And I will not conceal that their supervisor has political ambitions."

"I see, it's nice to see how the wind blows. I think we should be happy about, that we got rid of

them."

"I understand you, I understand your frustration. But I can assure you, that I will have an eye on it further on."

"Do you thin that this will be possible?"

"He has political ambitions - I met him in the town hall. This would mean that one day he will ask for your and my vote. This would mean that one day he will campaign. I have some connections to the police and - grapevine! Also the police has their vineyards."

"Well, than we should be happy so far? At least this danger is no longer."

"Yes and no. If it would happen that the two will appear here again, especially plain-clothed, give me a notice - immediately! I don't think that this will happen, but you never know."

"Okay, no hunger today?"

"No, I have a meeting at 5pm and I'm not in the best mood to be honest."

"I have heard that you're involved in the case of this missing girl, Sarah Brewster?"

"Yes."

"I think that this is more important than our concern."

"No, not in that way. Every concern is an important concern. But in your case we have achieved at least a certain success - the Brewster case....."

"Will I see you again?"

"I've no hunger today, but that not means that I never again will eat something. You will see me definitively again - the cakes of your wife?"

"Than thank you very much for your efforts. If something happens I will inform you immediately. Then till next time, Mr. Maurer."

"Till next time, Mr. Johnson."

## **Meeting With Benjamin**

All in all were were thirteen persons, the police attached importance to this case. And it was a long meeting - four hours, four hours of discussions, strategy and devastating information. A story could be told now:

Obviously his suicide was only an option for him. Obviously he played a game - or not? Doubts came up, if there was in fact a connection between him and the McAllister case, between him and my person. More and more it seemed that he was a loner who tried to grab some attention.

The police had examined his computers, some disturbing facts. All in all it was not difficult for the specialists to crack his computers. It was not easy, but it would had been possible to make it much more difficult. It seemed, that it was in his interest that the police would be able to do so. Even odder? It was easy to locate the place in the dark net were he had the videos from - he had saved the access data?

He was a long time member of this place, known in the community, and he had left two messages to them. In the first he talked about, that maybe the police would had become aware of him. Should he not post the next message within the next three hours, then he would had become a safety hazard. Obviously he posted this a short time before he left his house.

I had told him, that I would not know how long he was in the motel room already - that was a lie. The police monitored him - we knew all the time where he was. But it would had been a bit strange if my answer to his very short timing would had been: In half an hour? No problem, I'm just around the corner! But: Half an hour? No chance, I need at least a full hour - much better! The lap top in the room? Nothing, absolutely nothing on this computer.

The second message? The first message told his "friends" that he was burned now, and the community reacted. - a dead man with no name, in a motel room in a city where every twenty hours someone got murdered, died in a car crash, or committed suicide? Nobody was interested in this man, therefore his "friends" not knew that he was dead, but the police could not use his alias.

And the access data? Some questions found no answer, at least not so fast.

And the second message? This message was a personal message, a message for "themaker", the maker of the videos. He congratulated him for the videos so far and expressed his hope that he would be able to see the upcoming videos as well. That it was cool, that he asked the community what they would like to see most in the next videos - and he expressed his wishes.

The overall evaluation among the present persons of all this was concurrent - this was Sarah's death sentence, if no wonder would happen. "themaker" was aware of the police now, now he would bring it to an end fast. Sure, the police had possibilities now, possibilities but no time! Time was no longer an enemy, time was the Reaper now!

After the meeting Benjamin, Yves and I decided to have a drink, we sat in the bar.

"I still have a problem therewith, that there should be no connection between him and the McAllister case."

"We will follow up on this, but this is not the most important matter at the moment."

"No, of course not - sorry. But I'm unable to figure out his behavior. Yes. I have not forgotten what the psychologist has said. That all would lead thereto, that he was mentally ill, that his behavior was not rational. But as you said, this is not so important at the moment."

"The new video, that he not made this new video in the first room, the room that looked like a cellar? Does he starts to become careless? Would be good for us."

"But now not longer. Now he knows that the police....."

".....this he knew right before. It would be interesting to know if he knows that we're all in the same city?"

"That's our point, we not think that he's aware of that."

"It was interesting what the psychologist said about his alias, "themaker"."

"About him and the girl. A couple, he dominant, both obviously young, not older than mid twenty. They are posting the videos with original sound? You can hear their voices, their language, their expressions? Arrogant and narcissistic - this could be a chance for us."

"And Sarah? We have seen what he has done with her this time! We have read the "wishes"! We would have to find her the next days, or....."

"We will start a comprehensive campaign tomorrow. Newspaper, TV, radio - maybe we get a hint. Her circle of friends, the school, her activities - we will try everything."

"I know, and we all three know that this will be most likely not enough."

## **Talking With The Brewsters**

"The police tries everything."

"But this videos.....can you tell us the truth?"

"We know now that she's definitively alive. But, yes, time is against us - at least it seems so."

"You mean with this?"

"Irrationality, many things seem to be irrational at the moment. Two possibilities: They are irrational, or, you cannot see the rationality behind them. What I will say with this is, that it's still difficult to say, what the development will be."

"But be honest."

"I can't."

## **A Boring Morning**

It was a lousy morning, stood up at 11am. Alone "at home", at Yves' home. Thought about this song - dove gray days.....the raindrops outside? The case with the two police officers was solved, if you could name this so. I found a notice from Yves on the nightstand: Forgotten to tell you. Their

supervisor called me. The two police officers are separated now, this are their new police stations. Political ambitions?

Unfortunately it was Tuesday, not Thursday, no sports bar. I would have to wait two days. Two dead days. What to do? Sarah?

My source of information was dead - the rest I could do not better than the police. I felt like a fish on dry land, a second notice in the kitchen: We will be both back around 7pm. Would you cook a dinner? Have a look in the fridge - enough? But we can go out for dinner, if you not have the mood to cook something. Occupational therapy?

I opened the fridge and decided to go shopping.....

## **A Boring Day**

Shopping in a city like this? Fifty varieties of cheese and more? No problem! Cooked or raw ham from around the world? No problem! Organic vegetables and fruits in best quality? No problem! The only problem? You have to have the money to afford all this!

I walked around in this huge supermarket and looked at all the goods - a lot of money in the city, obviously. And on the other hand thousands who had to live on the street, who had not enough for a living. Okay, as a conservative all was easy - live the American Dream! If you try hard enough, you will be payed therefore. All this successful people, hard working people, who deserved all their wealth. Why they should give some of their money to the poor? The poor who not tried hard enough, not willing thereto, lazy people who not deserved it, to have something.

Bankruptcy by illness, veterans with not enough governmental support, students with giant loans after their study - the list could be endless. But hey, this was a free country, a country that offered you every opportunity you needed! Well, maybe it was not the best, to raise up in a poor family. Well, maybe it was not the best, to have no white skin. Well, maybe it was not the best, to be a women. Whatever, the list could be endless.

I decided to buy some turkey meat and pasta, some vegetables and salad, some cheese and of course a baguette. Enough for a fast dinner. After the shopping I returned and stored everything in the fridge - 3pm, what should I do with the rest of the time? Watching TV? No, it was too dangerous to get annoyed by some "news" about the asshole. I decided to walk around a bit.

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I thought about Sarah, I had to think about Sarah. Her situation? Should I think about it? I had no idea what I should do, no sudden epiphany came - was she still alive? And if, her situation? I could not imagine, what she had to bear. I refused to imagine, what she had to bear. It was pure self-defense to do so. But it was cowardly in the end. She had no option, somebody let her no option. And I walked around and had no idea how to help her.

I sat down and drank a coffee, a nice day today, the sun shined - does she saw the sun? The birds in the trees sang - does she heard the birds? I enjoyed my coffee - does she was still alive?

I decided that it would be better to return, I could prepare the dressing for the salad or something like this.

## **A Boring Evening**

"Hello, Peter. Is Yves at home yet?"

"No Alicia, you're the first, hello."

"I think he will come soon, otherwise he would have called."

"Yes, I think the same."

And in fact, only some minutes later Yves arrived.

"I'm very hungry - will we eat here or will we have dinner at a restaurant?"

"I have prepared something. I need only a few minutes for the first course."

"Wow, what a service! Then we should have a seat, Alicia?"

Alicia and Yves had a seat at the table, and I finished the first course.

"A salad with raw ham, together with fried and peppered fruits."

"Looks delicious - caramelized walnuts?"

"Yes, had some time to kill."

"Oh, sorry, but unfortunately no new news."

"No new activities on the darknet?"

"Sure, a lot of discussions about his messages and the fear that "themaster" would upload no new videos."

"And?"

"Well,....."themaster" assured his "followers" that he will not disappoint them."

"That's fucking! We know what this means."

"Yes, but believe me. The police tries everything. They dubbed the special commission now - you not saw a report in TV? It's the number one topic now."

"I not watched TV, nor I was online. Nor I was interested about the latest ideas of the asshole in Washington, nor I was interested to have to realize all the time that I can do nothing."

"Most of us can do nothing at the moment. Shall we....."

"Yes, I need a moment for the main course."

I cooked the main course, pasta with turkey and vegetables, but had some problems to concentrate on my doing. Was it tasteless to have dinner while she - she would have no nice dinner at the moment. It was not unreasonable to consider that she became raped now, maybe tortured, if not killed.

"I have made pasta with turkey and vegetables."

"Looks also very good. The scent of garlic, tomatoes and the fresh herbs - you think about her?"

"I think we all do this. But it not helps, it would not helps to walk around the city - what should you search for?"

"Yes, it's one of this moments that shows you how fragile life is and that it's easy to get in a situation where you're helpless, where you can do nothing."

We not really enjoyed the meal, although that I think that I can say that it was a good meal. For the next course I had bought some cheese, some fruit, fig mustard and baguette. We decided to eat it in the living room.

"TV?"

"No, better not."

"I should not eat too much of the good cheese, the mousse au chocolat still waits."

"I can not speak for you two, but I have time. I will not find any sleep anyway, therefore.....but sorry, you two have to work tomorrow."

"No other cases?"

"I think that I will spend Thursday evening in a sports bar, but unfortunately this is Tuesday evening and tomorrow is Wednesday."

"You can cook again? It's nice to come home and such a wonderful dinner awaits you."

"I don't need a whole day to prepare such a dinner."

"We can have lunch together?"

"Nice try Yves, but I have to try to be reasonable. I think I have to remember that I have still another case. Maybe I get a new one? I could have lunch at Mr. Johnson's restaurant? How about walking in the park, tomorrow will be a bright day, exactly as this was a bright day. Enough things to do - mousse?"

"With pleasure! The highlight at the end....."

I found no sleep, dozed and saw a lot of disturbing images. But how lucky I was, I only saw them.....



## **A Fucking Morning**

Wednesday morning, a fucking Wednesday morning. Tomorrow evening I would had at least a task, but Wednesday morning? I felt absolutely whacked, my head ached, a queasy feeling fulfilled my whole body, I had no motivation to do anything. My limbs felt like of lead, a leaden time fulfilled the air while I wallowed in self-pity.

I was ridiculous, my behavior was ridiculous. I should be happy, looking out of the window, to greet the sun that sent her beams to me. Although, I was not capable to.

After a vague time, I was on my way to the shower - the hot water was refreshing, at least somewhat. I looked at the clock, just 9am? I had hoped that at least the morning was over - Alicia and Yves? They could not let themselves go, they had to work, they had to be strong.

I tried not to think about Sarah, switched on the TV. No good idea, to see all this nonsense that I had missed out the last days. National emergency - what a shit was this? Closing the Mexican border - he always was capable thereto, to top his own shit! Disappointment about the Mueller report? Hey democrats, defeat him on the battlefield this time - but that would need strong democrats! Biden leads all polls, but has not announced his candidacy? At least Sanders always on second place - Biden has touched women in an inappropriate way? Bad luck for you Biden, as conservative you could grab their pussies and become president! A wannabe rapper killed Nipsey Hussle - all are so much shocked now? Yes, "he" tried to do something, "he" was very active, not only in his neighborhood - be devastated now, but do not create the idea to change something now. As Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said: Big problems can't be solved by individuals, they are no task for individuals, you cannot blame individuals therefore. Big problems have to be solved by the government, they are a task for the government, you have to blame the government therefore. So, let us be sad about his senseless death. But please, no consequences - L.A. is such a wonderful city, let us be happy!

And Sarah? On every TV station, all the time. Everybody did something, only I sat here and did nothing! Yes, the police did everything that was possible, people like Yves did everything that was possible, Alicia did her part - only I sat here and did nothing! I decide that it would nice to offer them at least a very nice dinner, for everything they did for me.

## **A Fucking Afternoon**

I visited a huge supermarket, one of these that offered you everything in a huge selection and in fantastic quality. Organic or vegan? No problem! From the other side of the world, fresh delivered by airplane? No problem! I walked around and waited for inspirations. At the end my shopping cart was not much filled, but with a selection of very sophisticated food. The menu for the evening:

Salad with King Prawns

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Cream Soup from Celery

\*\*\*

Flaky Pastry filled with Corn Poulard and Vegetables

\*\*\*

Filet of Sole stewed in Champagne, thereto Rice

\*\*\*

Saddle of Lamb, roasted, with a selection of Beans

\*\*\*

Cheese from around the world

\*\*\*

Sweet Pasta in Vanilla Sauce and Chocolate

But now I had to hurry up somewhat - a lot of preparation waited. Alicia and Yves would be back at 7am, then I should be ready to start with the final cooking and serving. It did me good to have to do something, and I tried my best, that I would be able in the evening to provide them a fine dinner. Sure, everything was self-made, I enjoyed doing it. Shortly after 6am I was ready, time enough to relax a bit, to have something to drink, to wait till Alicia and Yves would come back, to surprise them.

## **A Fucking Evening**

Shortly after 7pm Alicia came home.

"Hey, Peter."

"Hey, Alicia. I have prepared a small dinner. When Yves arrives, we can begin."

"Oh, I fear that we have to wait a bit. I hope that you not prepared a lot. Yves called me shortly before I arrived and told me that he will need some more time - an emergency."

"Well, that's the curse when you're married with a police officer!"

"What does you have prepared?"

"Oh, only a bit."

"Well, I think this means that you have prepared a larger dinner?"

"Only seven courses....."

We waited and at 7:45pm the door opened again, Yves entered the condo.

"Sorry you two, but there was an emergency."

"No worry, shall we begin with our dinner or do you need some time for a refreshment? Peter has prepared a "small" dinner for us."

"Then maybe I should say it straight away, even when I fear that this will kill the mood and the appetite - they found Sarah's dead body....."

## **Sarah's Dead**

"I feared that this will happen, but not that fast. New videos?"

"You not have to try to act professional - I cried also."

"You where at the crime scene?"

"No, I got a call from Benjamin - I'm not that much involved in the case."

"And Benjamin?"

"Yes, he was there. It's definitively Sarah."

"Videos?"

"No, but a message for his "followers": It's done now, look forward to enjoy, watching me doing it."

"Where did they find her?"

"He not hid the dead body, if you mean this. They found her dead body in a park, it was only a matter of time, that the body got detected."

"So, his idea is, that the dead body becomes found, that the press reports about it and he becomes the hero of the darknet - fucking bastard!"

"Yes, but we have an agreement with the press. They will report that a dead body becomes found, but not, that it was Sarah."

"Do you think this will function?"

"It's only an agreement for some time. But we hope that his "followers" will be disappointed, that they put pressure on him, that they demand for proofs, that he maybe becomes sloppy."

"That's a chance. The Brewsters?"

"The police is with them, also psychologists. They will be there the whole night."

"I have to talk with them."

"Yes, you have - tomorrow. But now I have to talk with you."

"Why?"

"You know why."

### **Talking With The Brewsters**

"My deepest sympathy, Ms. and Mr. Brewster. I have no words that could ease your pain. And I feel ashamed that I was not capable to help your daughter."

"It was not your fault."

"And not the fault of you both."

"The psychologist told us this, that we should not blame ourselves. And you also should not blame yourself therefore."

"Maybe things would have developed differently, would I have acted in a different way. Obviously I have made a mistake."

"It's easy to say this now. You tried it, that's what counts. You said it to us right at the beginning, that this is no stupid Hollywood movie. She never had a chance - or?"

"Well, if we would had been able to locate her whereabouts - but we not found it, even that we know, that it's somewhere in this city or a suburban."

"The city is large, not to talk about the urban area."

"Yes, but I pushed my informant, maybe - obviously - I sped up the events. Maybe it would had been better, to be more patient."

"And then? More and longer suffering for Sarah? We all could only lose, now it's time that "he" will be the loser in the end."

"Everybody tries its best, let alone that....."

"He will do it again, or?"

"There's a strong probability therefor, that he will do it again."

"Because he was "successful" this time."

"He has the feeling at the moment, that he can do it, that nobody is able to stop him. Yes, he will do it again. But it's difficult to say when."

"Sarah is dead, nobody can change this anymore. I hope you and the police will be able to stop him, before he will give the next parents pain."

"I will meet the responsible police officer later. He has called me, he will give me the latest information. We will try it."

"This videos, did you watched them? The videos where he did it?"

"No, and I will not watch them. Believe me, the police officers who have to watch them, have to carry a heavy burden. Keep her in memory, as she was."

"A happy and striving girl."

"Then as a happy and striving girl. Do you both think, that you can handle the situation?"

"We have to. This darknet.....?"

"Yes?"

"Why does we accept such a place? Why somebody can offer such videos to the world? Why we not close this?"

"I think it's to easy to blame the darknet as such. The darknet as such is neither good nor bad. The people are good or bad. An oppositionist in a dictatorship? Maybe the darknet is his only chance to express his thoughts. A person who sells weapons, drugs or child pornography? Yes, maybe the darknet makes the things easier for him, but all this are no "inventions" of the darknet, this are "inventions" of the people. Forget the darknet, concentrate on the person made of flesh and blood."

"Yes, that makes sense. Is it true, what's said about you?"

"Depends on what you mean?"

"What you did after the McAllister case?"

""After" the McAllister case I did nothing. But as I saw in which way this family became destroyed

by what had happened, especially after Mr. McAllister's suicide, when I had to realize that I could do nothing against it, then I did something and it was a fucking idea."

"You tried to commit suicide."

"I committed suicide, and believe me, please believe me, that this was a real fucking idea!"

"I do not understand you really. It's maybe stupid to say this, but you're sitting here with us?"

"With a bullet in my brain. Inoperable, the bullet inflicted damage to my brain and it's probably a time bomb. Believe me, this is no solution, this is shit. Promise me, that you both will be more clever than I was....."

## **Meeting Benjamin**

In the afternoon I had my meeting with Benjamin to get the latest information.

"Okay, the most important information? He has released the videos."

"That was very fast - or? Nothing in the media so far, not even in the local news. Only that a dead body was found, not more. I thought that he would wait, till the media would mention her name."

"We think, that he was that keen on to become the hero, that this was not so important for him anymore. He knows, that sooner or later her name will be in the news."

"Have you watched the videos?"

"No, I'm not interested in doing it. It's bad enough for the ones who have to do it. But I got the information that in some scenes parts of the interior can be seen."

"What?"

"Yes, either they became sloppy or they are totally arrogant. I will get stills from the video - I will send you copies. It's not that you can see to much they have told me, but the part of a mantelpiece with a flower pot on it, a carpet and a chair."

"But that would mean that, if we would find the place, we could say that this is definitively the crime scene. Three markers are enough. And then we have their voices. Would we have a suspect, we could definitively say, whether this is the offender or not. Why? They gave us everything to nail down the crime scene as well as the offenders. Do they think that we never will get them, that we never will find the crime scene?"

"One could come to the idea, that they wish that we get them."

"No, I don't think so. I think this a perfidious game he plays - he's the dominant part. It's all for his "audience", he offers them something absolutely special. Say we would get him - the videos? They would be a part of the darknet, maybe the Internet, this pervert people forever, he would be forever, he will be forever!"

"Yes, this is also our thought. And them....."

"He's inebriated by his "success" now, but soon the normality will come back. Like a druggie he will search for the next fix - not long and he will do it again."

"We're even not sure, if he not knows his next victim already. We have to work very hard now, that this becomes his only "success"!"

"The videos? He rapes, tortures and kills Sarah in them?"

"Yes. Some experts are here now, from the FBI and so. People who are seeing such material not for the first time. They have told me that this videos are among the cruelest videos they have ever seen - if they are not the cruelest. Forget this videos, this is the best thing you can do."

"This would mean to forget her, and this would be disgusting."

## **The Normal Job**

Thursday evening, sports bar day. I hope, that I have not to say that I was not really in the mood, neither for a conversation with "him", nor about to pretend that I would be interested in any kind of sport at the moment. At least I thought that it was no disadvantage, that Super Bowl day not had

happened last week. A a bit longer interval between our encounters would increase my credibility. I entered the sports bar at 8:30pm, looked around, saw him at the bar, talking with the man behind the bar. I gave the impression, that I was unsure about where I should take a seat - some seats at the bar and some tables were occupied, but enough free seats for me - and as hoped, the barman addressed me.

"Have a seat wherever you wanna - you were at our Super Bowl party, I recognize you."

"Yes, unfortunately I found no time since then again, to come again. But tonight I have time and I thought that I should spend it in your nice sports bar."

I acted as if I would realize only now, that I knew the man at the bar. I nodded with my head.

"Yeah, the Rams' fan! Hope you got over it?"

"Well, apart from that, that it was definitely not the best of all Super Bowls and not the most exciting one, the Patriots have earned it to win, the Patriot were the better team."

"Yeah, I only can agree with you. This low point games are not the most thrilling ones, especially one like this one - have a seat. You're alone?"

"Yes, I moved in this city some weeks ago. My company searched for an employee here and because I'm a single and this is a professional advancement for me, was it no question to apply for it. Apart from that, that this is a very nice city."

"Yes, this is a very nice city. At least most parts of it - you know what I mean?"

I feared that I knew only too well what he meant.

"I think so, I'm from Chicago! I'm not born there, but I worked the last years there."

Chicago was the first city that came into my mind - his reaction would be interesting.

"Man, this is a fucking city - or? I mean the white neighborhoods - okay. But the south, where the black killers and gangs live? No way, that I would set foot in this fucking area! Compared with this are our non white neighborhoods nice places."

"Believe me, I lived three years in Chicago. How often do you think that I've crossed the river?"

"I have not the feeling, that you're sick of life....."

With this words he started to laugh and he had problems to calm down again. The ice was broken and I had problems not to smash his face in.....I tried to laugh also.....

"Yeah, at the moment I've rented an apartment. But this city looks nice, my job has great possibilities - I could imagine to live for a longer time in this city. I have a very good income - a nice small house in a suburban area? Who knows, in some years I have a wife and a bunch of kids!"

Now we both laughed again. Yeah, the pleasure of beer - then he became serious!

"I can tell you something, even here it's no longer what it was, even in our all white suburban neighborhood it's no longer the same!"

"Well, I'm not sure if I can ask frankly?"

"Sure, at least in this bar we respect the right of free speech. This liberals who are prohibiting everything? But you had a question."

"Yes, well.....no longer a white neighborhood?"

"If it would be this! Hey, I have a young chick as neighbor now, a white chick to say it clearly, a very hot white chick by the way."

Now he grinned and again I had this feeling.....but instead I tried to appear "interested".

"Well, when she's a hot chick, a hot white chick? Where's the problem?"

"Apart from, that I'm no single and that I have no chance? You're a single? I've got this right - or?"

I nodded with my head and he continued.

"Hey, she's a bitch! All the time new men, and then she absolutely not respects the quiescent of our neighborhood! Sunday afternoon is no time to listen to music at the pool with one of her boys, or have a sunbath!"

"I understand, at the pool, loud music and a fucking hot bikini - or?"

"Man, as I said, she's fucking hot. Well, if she would be a bit nicer to an older man like me - the music would be no longer a problem."

"You tried it? Sorry that I'm asking!"

"Hey, would I be a single.....but I have a wife! Well, the children are grown up and no longer at

home - sure I would fuck her if I would get a chance!"

"Maybe I should move there - as you said: I'm a single!"

"She's an arrogant bitch! On the other side? You have a good income, you said?"

"Not that bad....."

"I think you would have a chance. I think that this bitch would like it, to have a sugar daddy."

"You know that she's such a bitch?"

"You're interested in? I can tell you, that we all in our neighborhood know what a bitch she is - I let no doubt about it!"

"But seriously, among us - do you think that I would have a chance, she's really such a bitch? Or is it more in that way, that you're angry about her - because of the music of course?"

"You're really interested in this bitch?"

"I'm a single, I have money and I like fresh bitches - to be honest to you."

"Oh man, how much I would appreciate it to be you! Well, I tried it a bit, but she not reacted. Hey, she walks around naked in her house, if this is no invitation. But I'm too old for her taste - or I have not enough money - or not the opportunities someone like you has. Hey, a blow job or a quickie? But I'm married, I have not the time to do it with her in a way, as such a bitch like her demands it. I am only a common suburban man."

"Yeah, I understand. But sometimes I would like it, that someone would share its life with me."

"I think we have more or less the same age? I'm fifty-seven."

"I'm fifty-three - soon fifty-four."

"Believe me, you did it right. Yes, as she was young and hot, but today? Okay, I'm also no longer the hot guy I was, but.....hey, you can do anything! You wanna fuck a whore, I mean a professional one, you can do it! Man, I would like it, to be you."

We continued with this conversation for some time, and I had to visit the restroom from time to time. Yes, also thereto. But also, that I had to see his face no longer, that I had to listen to his hypocritical chatter no longer. Yes, if she would be a bit more "pleasing", but so! It was easing, as we said goodbye in front of the sports bar.

"Next week?"

"Of course - and then I have to see your hot neighbor!"

"No problem. I have some pictures....."

"Cool, while she walks around inside her house?"

"Sure.....!"

I took a deep breath and walked away. Not to my car, my car was parked on the same parking lot than his. I needed some fresh air, and I had drank much to much beer to drive. Obviously this was no problem for our proper suburban man! I would wait a few days, then I would visit him at home. People like him? Our president would like him - what was the difference between him and "themaster"? He only talked about it? He only tried to expel my client from "his" neighborhood? He only would not "be happy", would a "person of color" become his neighbor? No that grave? Raping, torturing and killing a person? The interstages? Only some images of her on his computer, secretly made, when she walks around naked in her house? What a bitch she was!

A man kills dozens and injures hundreds? You have to understand him, he had problems, don't blame the guns! A Latino gangster kills an innocent white, rapes a white girl - would we close this border, we no longer had this problems! Would we throw this mob out of our country, we would have again a strong and bright country! Sometimes I asked myself, why I still lived here in this proud nation, why I still lived.....?

### **Informing Ms. Palmer**

"Hello Ms. Palmer, this is Mr. Maurer. I've met your neighbor in the sports bar yesterday. I've a lot against him now. Can you give me a hint, when it would be a good time to meet him, when he's alone at home?"

Ms. Palmer informed me, that his wife had every Wednesday a coffee party with some women from the neighborhood. This week she had been the host, therefore she would be out next week. Next week - fucking five days to wait!

## Deadlock

I was at my home again, have had a phone call with Ms. Palmer in the morning - Alicia and Yves had a right for a private life. Benjamin had sent me the stills from the videos. The picture of the mantelpiece with the flower pot on it – a very kitsch one. The carpet - looked like a 70s flokati, maybe a beanbag chair also there? And the picture of the part of a wooden chair – also the chair looked vintage. All gave the impression that it could be a room in an old, rundown house. Did this help? Not really! Sure, some neighborhoods would this exclude, but in this city - as in many cities in our wonderful country - you could find enough neighborhoods with rundowned houses, with decayed houses. Nevertheless, I looked at the city map, used the possibilities of the Internet, to search for possible places where this house could be. But as said, to many possibilities, especially when one not excluded the suburban areas, or the surrounding areas of the city.

I looked at the stills again. The mantelpiece was obviously the whole picture, but the carpet and the part of the chair were obviously blow-ups, only a part of the original picture. The carpet was only a carpet, but the part of the chair was, at the very edge, also a leg. Only somewhat one could see it, not more than a shadow, but it was there - I called Benjamin.

"The pictures you gave me?"

"Yes?"

"Why you have not given me the originals - I even think that they are retouched?"

"This pictures are made for the press. And yes, they are retouched."

"One can see Sarah's leg on the picture with the part of the chair."

"We've seen it, we corrected it."

"Can I have the originals, I think the mantelpiece is an original?"

"No, also this picture is edited."

"Can I get the originals?"

"I think no, I think you not wanna see the originals."

"Does you have seen the originals?"

"No, and I not wanna see them."

"Okay. Any idea about the house, where this room could be?"

"Old, not in the best condition - difficult to say. We hope that we get hints, after the pictures are released."

"I hope so."

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Saturday afternoon, I sat in a diner, had nothing to do. No new job, waiting for Wednesday, waiting for tomorrow, waiting to say farewell. A phone call - Benjamin - nothing new. I thought that as long as it's only too much coffee that you drink, then.....but that was not even a lousy joke. I felt empty, unfit for tomorrow, but it would have been disgraceful not to go.

It was the feeling, that there was nothing to do that bummed me out. Let us pretend, search for the house, as if the police not would do this. What would be substantial? But nothing came me to mind. I left the diner after some eggs - sunny side up, no ham or bacon, but on toast, with crust of course - and a lot of coffee.

Outside I felt better, felt that my mood brightened, but still there was nothing that I could do. In the newspapers and on TV you could see the stills now, I hoped that the police would get a substantial hint. But it was a game of fortune, it could be that the house was a house that was vacant since decades. Enough such houses in the city, not to talk about the county. We would need a hint, a

leverage point, without it, it was senseless. Waiting and hoping, hoping therefor that "themaster" was "satisfied" at the moment, that he was not keen on to repeat his "triumph", that his followers yearned not too aggressively for new "stuff". That had Benjamin said to me, that his "community" freaked out.

On one side they thanked him for his videos, the best stuff since Peter Scully, if not even better. On the other hand they begged for more, and he promised them, that they would get more, soon. You not had to discuss this. The more they would beg, the more they would tell him that he's "the best", the more he would be motivated to do it again.

I decided to go home, but what I should do there? A new case would be good - tomorrow I would have a task, but on Monday and on Tuesday? Wednesday I would have a task, but the days after? I should concentrate on tomorrow.

## **A Day In Black**

I stood up very early, even when I had very much time now. But this was a special day, a day of dignity, not a day of doubts. I looked at the black shoes, the black pair of trousers, the white shirt and the black jacket, at the clothing that I had laid out yesterday evening.

I started with a long and very hot shower, followed by a long and tasty breakfast. I listened to songs of my favorite singer and got dressed up. I had to drive for some time, but then I reached my aim and parked my car besides the others. I got out of my car and yes, this was a day of dignity.

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I got back very late, had spent some time in the bar, not to drink, but to talk with Jack. But now I undressed, the black jacket, the black shoes, the black pair of trousers, the white shirt. I had a long and very hot shower, a nice and light dinner, listened to songs of my favorite singer. The pale moonlight at the sky, the sparkling stars, sometimes I get lonely.....

## **Deadlock**

I had a phone call with Benjamin and one with Yves. They made progress, but where faraway from the aim. A lot of hints about the shown furniture, but so far no breakthrough. In fact? They got that much hints, that it would need days, only to work them over. And this with the knowledge that "he" had promised his "followers" that new material would follow soon. This was no secret, the police played with open cards, and this was good so. But.....also thereto a lot of hints. A nearly endless list with names about possible offenders - the police tried to find names which were connected with Sarah or her family. In fact a Sisyphean task, only a coincidence would yield a fast success. So again it was a time for me where I couldn't do much. But I tried not to fall into a bad mood. Yesterday was the day to say farewell of Sarah, today was no day to taint the reminiscence of her.

I pondered about the triangle that I saw - "themaster", my informant and I. Definitely there was no connection between "themaster" and me. Between my informant and me? The McAllister case as linking line? This would mean, that my informant had stood in connection to the McAllister case. Never there had been a hint about a second perpetrator, but that not excluded that!

This situation would had the potential to begin a nice crime novel now. I would visit the perpetrator in jail, would squeeze him like a lemon, and he would tell me a fantastic story. His story would let appear the McAllister case in a total new light - and so on and so on. Sure, the solving of the Brewster case, to find Sarah's murderer, would run alongside - nice idea, stupid reality.

Of course, the police was clever enough to debrief him again, and not only one time. Of course, the police was clever enough to open the McAllister case again. But no hint of a second offender -



again, this not excluded it! But it made it unlikely, and you had to decide how much effort you were willing to spent for this trace. Maybe other questions were more important to solve, maybe it was more important to find Sarah's murderer.

I tried to do something useful, tried not to waste my time. But I had to realize that I was more or less out of the case. This was the time of IT specialists, the time of the police with there possibilities, no longer mine. Yeah, no longer the time of the man in the trench coat with a gun in his hand, searching for dirty photos. Today you would find them in the Internet! But nevertheless, at least I tried to do something useful.

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At least I reached Tuesday, tomorrow I had to be fit, had to talk with Ms. Palmer's neighbor. I though about to visit him at 3pm - a nice time for a visit, maybe a hot coffee, maybe a nice piece of cake. But today I had time, time to enjoy the nice weather, to sit outside, to read the newspaper, to do simply nothing. Well, later one or two cocktails in the bar, a conversation with Jack, a nice sunny early summer day awaited me.....

### **The Normal Job**

It was Wednesday evening and I parked my car in front of Ms. Palmer's nice neighbor's house. I hoped that he would make not too much trouble – I was not in the best mood. I waited a moment before I left the car and walked to the entrance. Nice lawn, perfectly cut – not by yourself, or? Some nice flowers and bushes – the wife's work? Whoever, a perfect suburban sight that awaited you. I pushed the bell and not long and the door opened.

"Hello Peter, I'm surprised to see you. Does I have invited you?"

No, don't worry. And even if, I was an American by myself. Therefor I knew that an invitation from an American was seldom seriously meant – small talk! No, you had not!

"No, I'm here as a representative."

"For whom?"

"Can we talk insight of the house?"

"I'm not sure if I should let you in."

"I'm sure that it will be better to discuss it inside of the house."

"Does we have to discuss something?"

"Yes."

"This bitch from next door?"

"That does makes it definitively not better."

"I think that we have nothing to talk about."

With this words he started to close the door and I started to turn around – saying a few words.

"Maybe your wife is more interested in, to talk with me."

Very abruptly the door opened again, as I walked slowly away.

"Stop you bastard, who are you? You're playing games with me, at the sports bar?"

I turned around again, the perfect lawn to my left and right.

"Are you sure, that you wanna discuss this with me here, here in the public?"

"Bastard!"

He stepped aside and I entered the house slowly.

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"What kind of game you're playing with me?"

We sat in his living room, he even had offered me something to drink – I was not interested in. He

decided for a beer.

"Isn't it more the question, what kind of fucking game you're playing with Ms. Palmer – you know, the "bitch" who lives in the next house?"

"What do you want from me?"

"Yeah, that's a good question. Do you know why this is a good question?"

"No?"

"Because it's very difficult to eliminate rumors – as you maybe know?"

"Can be. So, what do you want"

"You know, I'm a private detective, and I'm working also on another case. In this case a man thought that a young woman is only an object for him, to satisfy his pervert lust. I'm in no good mood at the moment, to be honest. You've a daughter as far as I know."

"You're talking about this girl that had been kidnapped and murdered?"

"Yes, I talk about this daughter."

"Hey man, slowly! You not wanna....."

".....it's your fucking behavior that's the basis of such a crime! The young woman in your neighborhood behaves not like you wanna have it? Yeah, come on, she's a bitch! Oh, and you would like to fuck her – maybe I would like to fuck your daughter, this fucking bitch!"

"Hey, this was talking in a sports bar! Who would take this serious – we both had some beer!"

"Yeah, it's like talking in a locker room – interesting that this is all the time okay, as long as men are talking about women in this way."

"It was still men's talk in a bar with alcohol – you can do me nothing!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

I stood up to leave.

"What are you doing?"

"Well, not important for you. You won."

"You wanna talk with my wife?"

"Maybe? Maybe with your daughter ? Maybe with your employer? Shall we talk about your stalking and the photos you've made? Maybe....."

"You not think that anybody would find anything? You leave this house and I....."

".....and you? As I said, you're the winner, be relaxed, take it easy."

"What do you want that I do?"

"Hand me the pictures."

"Are you crazy!"

"Yes, and this is your problem. First the pictures, the rest will following."

"And if not? You're not the police, you're....."

".....the one who works very closely together with the police on the Brewster case. No, I'm not the police, I'm worse. The police has rules, I.....? Well.....?"

"Okay! Say, I will delete the photos. And then? What I shall do then? Everybody knows now that she's a bitch, what shall I do? Telling everybody, that everything was a mistake?"

"Telling everybody that you've spread this rumors only because.....she was not interested in you – or?"

"Never ever!"

"I think your woman will return soon? Maybe you know a better reason, why you've spread this rumors? And maybe you've spread only this rumors and we forget the photos?"

"I said that I will delete the....."

".....we play it my way. This means, that you copy the pictures on this UBS stick for me. It will be easy to show, that this picture where made by you. They are my security therefore, that you will do everything to reestablish her good reputation again."

"And if I fail? I mean, it's not that easy to do this?"

"A bit late for this insight. You do the best you can, then we will see."

"That's fucking!"

"Fucking is what you did! You're the moral crusader, who secretly makes images from his naked neighbor - fuck you!"

I had sat down again, and now I stood up again and walked quickly to the front door.

"Hey wait! Okay you can have the photos - and you can see me deleting them after that! And I will do my best to restore her reputation - okay?"

"Okay."

"Can we do it fast?"

"Your wife?"

"Yes."

He was very fast now, to copy the pictures and to delete them.

"And now? You will visit 'her'?"

"She has a name - she has a name!"

"Ms. Palmer.....you will visit Ms. Palmer now?"

"Yes."

"Can you park your car in front of her house?"

"That you can tell your wife that she has yet again a male visitor - and so much older than her!"

"No, of course not."

"Hope so."

I left him, drove my car from his house to Ms. Palmer's house, to talk with her now.

### **Talking With Ms. Palmer**

I rang the bell at Ms. Palmer's front door and stepped in, after she had opened it. We walked into her living room.

"Take a seat and what I can offer you? I've made coffee if you like one - I saw you as you 'visited' my neighbor."

"Yeah, it was a nice 'visit' - coffee would be okay for me."

I sat down, and after a short time she came back, with a tray in her hand and coffee, sugar and milk on it.

"What does he said?"

"I think it's more important what I said to him, what he has to do to satisfy me."

"Well, what does you mean?"

"You know, that he has made photos of you?"

"No - photos?"

"He not only talked bad about you, he also stalked you. You're walking around naked inside of your house?"

"He not photographed me while I was naked - yeah, sometimes, but this is my home!"

"Sure, he has no right to do so. On this USB stick are the photos. The only existing copies. He has deleted his copies permanently, in the presence of me. Should he would have lied, would he have other copies of them, then he would be in serious trouble now."

"Okay, and the rumors?"

"That's a problem. You know, once in the world.....? I would have two advice - three."

"Yes."

"You could wait whether he really tries to reestablish your reputation. I demanded this from him. This can function, but has not to function. You could move, you could look for a better neighborhood, forgetting all this. And finally you could go to the police, to report your neighbor. You have the prove in your hand, it's easy to show that the pictures were made from his house and property. You've the choice."

"Could it be that all three advice have one in common?"

"That you're the loser in the end?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Then I can look for a new house - this is fucking!"

"I would recommend you to report him at the police. What he did is no trivial offense."

"And the pictures are the proof - fine, see them in court, presented to everybody!"

"Yes, you're the loser in any case. That's why many women say nothing, why many such crimes will never be reported."

"Can I think about it?"

"Sure, and do not delete the pictures prematurely. Take your time. And of course you can talk with me about it at any time. I can give you addresses from good lawyers - female lawyers!"

I drove back and it was simply fucking. Sure, she would not stay in this neighborhood - living beside this man? Should she report him? Yes, of course! Should she report him? No, it would become very ugly for her! Yes or no, always the victim, always the woman was the victim. And the offender? Ah, come on! Why has this bitch to walk around naked in her house.....!

## **Deadlock**

As time goes by - yeah, sometimes not. I looked at the TV, sometimes not even the stereotypes could help you. Time? No new case - did I have still a case? The police officers - finished? Ms. Palmer - had given her the address of a female lawyer - I was out! The Brewsters - this was beyond my possibilities now. I hoped that I would get a new job soon.

Yves had called me, they had a big success, but unfortunately the wrong one. They had found out who's behind the page in the dark net - and now? "Elysium" they had named their page - well, very cultivated perverts. "Island of the Bliss" - yeah, what a wonderful place, a place for the from the gods beloved, so wonderfully literary! The problem in reality?

They would be able now, to arrest the people behind the page - Germans! And then? The page would be closed then, the only known connection to Sarah's murderer - a fucking situation. They decided not to close the page, not to arrest the people behind it. This would have time, at the moment it was more important to stay in touch with Sarah's murderer.

And I? I waited and waited. I could not really understand, why they were able to ascertain who ran this page, but not who "themaster" was - obviously someone who lived in this city or nearby? I was not interested in this Germans, I was interested in Sarah's murderer, that he not would do it again. I knew that this was shortsighted, but.....

As time goes by - another cult classic? Meeting the Sternwoods.....?

## **Need Some Soul Food**

I walked around aimlessly, the week came to an end, still no new case, soon another week would begin. As it was always, the media reported less and less about the case, but this was okay - what should they report? The old news from yesterday? Soon they would report nothing anymore, not if nothing new would happen.

The police made no progress, at least no substantial progress. Benjamin had explained me something, but I had not understood everything, I had not listened to him really.

I not knew what to do with myself, and so I decided to visit Mr. Johnson - at least I would get something delicious to eat then, not to talk about the fantastic cake in the end.

"Hello Mr. Maurer, nice to see you again."

"Nice to see you too, Mr. Johnson. I need something to eat.....and maybe more."

"Maybe I can help you with both. Any hints?"

"Soup of the day in any case, and then the lamb?"

"Would be no bad choice, as far as I can see."

"Then let us begin with this, and a coffee."

I took a seat at a table with two other guest already there. Mr. Johnson brought me the coffee and the soup.

"The soup is very good today. A lot of meat in it."

"Would not surprise me, Mr. Johnson's food is always very good."

"Actually Ms. Johnson makes the food, at least most of them."

"Yeah, have met her. She's a gifted cook. I look forward to today's cake."

"Blueberry, had one."

"Sounds very good."

I ate my soup, beef broth with small cubes of beef and vegetables, also with soup noodles. Very rich and substantial, the offered large bowl could be enough for a whole day, especially if you could afford not more. The lamb was tender, the potato mash made with butter and the vegetables, as all the other food, fresh made. But as always, the cake was the highlight. Very soft, somewhat sweet, but not too much, with many blueberries in it. After I had finished the cake, Mr. Jonson sat to me with two cups of coffee.

"We have to thank you. Everything is fine now, no more problems with the police anymore."

"There was a fatal shooting two days before."

"Yes, as you said it to my son. We're killing one another, not even in our community we're able to live together in peace. The two dead were two young men, one of them I knew. Drugs, gangs, the police said - it's sad."

"Yes, but whom you should blame? Every day you can see liars and cheaters in TV, who are making billions and ruling the country."

"It was worse in former times."

"Do you think it's good today?"

"Of course not! But can you remember? Yes, we can! What does have changed? Don't understand me wrong, I not blame him, they gave him no chance, nobody gave him a real chance."

"You can be proud of your son. I had the impression, that he has some ideas what to do with his life."

"He's a very clever boy, but unfortunately I have not the means to send him on a university. Yes, if I would have some millions, he even would not have to be qualified for the university then - money speaks, not cleverness."

"Maybe one day this will change."

"Why, because we get a new president? What has changed for people like me and my family in the last decades? We work more and more and earn less and less. No good perspective."

"And a person like Sanders as president?"

"You not think that they will let him become president? And even if - yes, we can!"

"I understand that you're disappointment. But I have the feeling that just right now, you should not give up hope. Force the democrats, a left-wing candidate or they can forget it again."

"And then, if not?"

"That what your grandfather and your grandmother did?"

"Yes, maybe it's time again for the large marches - let us see what will happen in the next months. You're working on the case with the missing girl?"

"You mean the Brewster case?"

"Yes, Brewster was her name. Can you remember Ms. and Mr. Chang - as we met in your office?"

"Yes."

"My son and their daughter are not attending the same school, but their daughter attends the same school than the daughter of the Brewsters. My son and their daughter, Betsy is her name, share some friends. He told me that Betsy has said him, that a boy from her school has said strange things to her, but that she is not sure about it, if it would be something of relevance. She knows that you have talked with Arnold, therefore she asked him now if he would ask you, whether she should go to the police with this information or not - young people! I said that she should go to the police,

every hint can be meaningful. But the girl is a bit unsure and this boy from her school also scared her. She would prefer it, to get an advice from a person like you before. I think she simply should go to the police - or?"

"Sure, as you said it. Every hint can be of importance. Is Arnold around?"

"Yes."

"Can I talk with him?"

"Sure."

Mr. Johnson walked away and came back after a short time, together with Arnold.

"I totally agree with your father that Betsy should go to the police. But can you tell me what the boy has said to her?"

"Something like, that she will be the next maybe - something that would be more exotic this time. That she would like it what he would do with her, and that she would become famous if he would choose her - wild talk."

"Can you send her a message?"

"Sure, a SMS if you like?"

"Ask her if she would have some time to meet us."

He sent her a SMS, and immediately he got an answer.

"She could be here within ten minutes?"

"Then it would be nice when she would come, I would like to talk with her."

## **Betsy**

"Thanks for your fast coming, Betsy."

"No, it's in my interest. It was really very scary, the way he talked with me."

"Can you tell me what he said to you?"

"Yes, of course. I maybe should say that he was not alone. His strange girlfriend - I'm not sure if "girlfriend" is the best word - was with him. And he not talked that much with me, he more talked with her."

"And what did he say?"

"That I would be interesting for the Asian offer. That I would be very cute and that it would be, without any doubt, a lot of fun with me. That we all would become famous. He looked at me and smiled and said: Especially you! It was very scary."

"Who is he?"

"Nobody knows that much about him. His parents are very rich. You maybe ask now, why then he attends this school?"

"Yes, I think he's white?"

"Oh yes, I've forgotten to mention it. He's white, the girl as well."

"And why this school and not one for the rich white guys?"

"He's lazy, he's not interested in to make a career or something like that. He hangs around the school, that's more or less all that I know about him."

"Does he has friends among the other students - apart from the girl?"

"The "girl" is strange also. She's not his girlfriend, at least not in that way. As I said, he's rich. There're always people who wanna be with him because he's rich. Guys because they think that he is cool, girls because they think that he can offer them something special. But the strange thing is, that he makes no secret of it, that all this people are only playthings for him - especially the girls. He accepts them for some time to entertain him, then they have to go again. Apart from this one girl."

"Sounds a bit like the bored rich boy who searches for the final thrill - drugs?"

"Nothing special I think - weed, alcohol? He's no addict if you mean this - as far as I can judge this."

"The other girls, any stories about drugs, sex.....things like this?"

"I'm not involved in such groups. It's said that he likes it to invite girls, and that he's doing "special" things with them then. But I have not heard that someone accused him for something."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"He has a room in a dormitory for students. But it's said that he has a special place for the girls."

"Okay, I will talk with the police now. I think that a police officer will come soon to question you. From my side - I think it would be good, you would have always a companion during the next days."

"Do you think that I'm in danger?"

"Difficult to say. But it would be stupid to risk anything. Therefore, be never alone till it becomes clear what we have to think about this - promised?"

"Yes."

My next action would be to inform Benjamin and Yves about this.

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I had a short phone call with Benjamin - now we sat in a diner, together with Yves.

"Thanks that you have time, even when this is your day off, Benjamin."

"This sounds like a far too important information, forget the day off!"

I told Benjamin and Yves what Betsy had told me.

"What do you both think? Sounds like that he's our man."

"Yes, especially because I have a new additional information. "themaster" has announced that soon the next videos will follow and that he has a special surprise for his "fans".

"This would be?"

"You can vote now - white or black, Latino or Asian."

"Bastard! And Betsy would be the Asian girl."

"Looks that way. But we will thwart his plans!"

"I not wanna be the stick-in-the-mud, but I see a problem."

"Yes, Yves?"

"Well, okay, his words can be seen offensive, but what you wanna do? Arrest him? And then? Peter, you said that his parents are rich?"

"Yes, not to say fucking rich."

"Okay Benjamin, you're arresting him - how long it will take and dad comes with a bunch of lawyers? I fear you will have a lot of problems then - and our biggest problem?"

"Yes?"

"We still have no idea where the crime scene is, arrest him and we never will know it. They will erase every hint....."

".....sorry, Yves! We have his voice?"

"We have a taped voice, but we have not "his" voice."

"It should not be that problematic, to tape "his" voice to compare both then - Peter could arrange this, together with Betsy?"

"Secretly?"

"Hell, yes!"

"You know the problem.....?"

"Yes, his lawyers would roast us therefore."

"Sorry that I interrupt your conversation, but why not the old fashioned way?"

"You mean?"

"We have the problem that our state of evidence is scanty. And also I see some danger. Yes, it seems to fit very well, but.....? Only the thought, that he's only a houghty asshole? And the police waste its time with him? Yes, would we know the crime scene, better, would we arrest him at the crime scene? Even the best lawyers would have a lot of problems then."

"You think that we should tail him?"

"Yes, I will tail him. If he's our man, nothing can happen. I mean with Betsy and the other girls. If

he's not our man than you, the police, are wasting no time."

"You cannot tail him for twenty-four hours."

"That's right. Give me one officer. I have the night shift, the other man the hours when he's in school. I need six hours sleep, that's enough!"

"You cannot make eighteen hours shifts?"

"And as a good friend, Peter. You have not to clear a debt."

"No, why I should have to? I have no other case at the moment. And I said six hours sleep, I need also some time for showering and maybe I should eat something from time to time. He eight hours, I a double shift."

"If he's our man, then we should make no mistakes....."

"Maybe it sounds a bit like that at the moment, Benjamin. But you can ask other police officers who know me longer, I'm not the guy who makes stupid things."

I looked at Yves.

"That's true, Benjamin. I agree with Peter, that at the moment we have not that much. The idea to arrest him at the crime scene.....I think this will be also the place where he has his computer?"

"Most likely."

"How often he posts something and at what time?"

"At the moment at least every two or three days in the night, local time. This would mean that there is a very good chance that Peter would have not to tail him that long, till he guides him to the searched-for house and crime scene - that's your idea?"

"Yes. Three or four days maybe - or better, till the next posting? I think we should do it! Three, four days and then we can see what it results."

"Okay, Yves. I will assign an officer for the 'day shift'."

Now I had a new job, a very important and severe one. No time for mistakes, at least if he would be our man. If he would be our man, then it should be only a matter of time till we would have better evidence as now. And of course, the police would look after Betsy and would try to find out, whether our suspect has talked in the same way with other girls, and if yes with whom. It was early in the evening now, time for my first shift. In the morning my relay would come, I would be in permanent contact with the police station. But now I would have a first aim, to find my aim! I hoped that I would find him at the dorm. If not, it would become more difficult.

## Investigations

I stopped my car in front of the dorm and saw through my information, mostly given by Betsy. A photograph from a yearbook, some personnel information, his room number, some places where I could find him maybe also, some background information about his parents, stuff like this. But at the moment only the room number and the photograph was of importance for me. I decided to check whether he was in his room or not.

Well, this was a dorm and this was the USA. I could not simply walk to the door, ring a bell, or even enter the building to knock at his door. The dorm looked like a fortress in some ways. But Betsy had a girlfriend who also lived in the dorm and therefore I knew that his room looked onto the road. More. Third floor, fifth window from the right - no lights! Well, that was no good.

Waiting in my car opposite to the dorm till he would come? How long it would take till the police would be here - ten minutes, or maybe fifteen? I looked at the list with places where I would have a chance to find him also. I decided for one.

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I had searched for him at three different places now, but had not found him. Yeah, more and more I had to realize that this led to only one insight - he was in the house, the house everybody searched



for. It was around 4am now, back again at the dorm, no light in the window. Or does he came back in the meantime, does he was a nice guy lying in his bed now? Betsy's girlfriend had told Betsy, that he was very often up till the early morning, or that he was away the whole night. Regularly this caused a lot of trouble, with other students or the house management. But daddy was a noble donor and therefore.....it would make no sense to continue!

I decided to drive home, informed the police station therefrom that I had not found him and that I was concerned. What would he do just right now? Betsy was not in danger, but maybe the other girls? Okay, even if he would had kidnapped a girl just now, he would play the same filthy game with her as with Sarah.....

After a hot shower I felt better, ate something. I turned the TV on, the news channel. I had not that much time the last days for TV, but sure, I had heard enough to know that everything escalated more and more. Mueller / Barr, the Iran, another nearly two thousand children had been separated from their parents, Alabama..... - I switched the TV off.

I set the alarm for 11am, it was 6am now. This would not be the time for my next shift, but I would have some hours sleep and I could talk with Benjamin and Yves then. At the moment it was not adequate to call them. My partner for the day shift would await him at the school and we would begin to monitor him then - everything else made no sense at the moment.

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"Hello Benjamin, Yves. Thanks for this audio conference. You maybe know, that I was not able to find him last night. But I got a SMS that the officer from the day shift monitors him now - so far everything is okay. I was concerned about where he is and what he's doing. Any new information?"

Benjamin told me that "themaster" had announced, that the "polling" will be closed soon - the majority "voted" for the African American girl at the moment. But that was not the worst, because the police was able to ascertain an African American girl that had the same experience with him as Betsy. And Betsy was the one who helped the police in doing so. She could asking around without arousing too much attention. Sure, that also this girl was protected by the police now. But we also suffered a setback!

His voice, our supposed trump card? The police was not stupid. They found two, for everybody accessible, samples of his voice. First a video of a speech that he had held at school, and secondly a video from a party, shared at YouTube. The result was fucking! His voice not the voice of the perpetrator? Yes and no! Maybe he was smarter as we thought? Benjamin explained it me in that way.

The voice in the videos with Sarah sounded very natural, but it wasn't! The voice was manipulated! But, and that was disturbing again, in a very simple way. The result? The specialists came to the result that his voice and the voice in the videos were the same "with almost absolute certainty" - almost absolute? 98 % was their result - this would be a feast for daddy's fucking lawyers!

Therefore the strategy was obvious now - no arrestment before we would know where the crime scene was! Much better? It would be possible for us to arrest him at the crime scene! To find the crime scene had absolute top priority now!

Two points I had in mind now. The voice of the girl? But this would not change the problem with his voice – and he was the murderer! And then? I had to be very responsible now! Everything led to him now, but still there were uncertainties. Do not forget the man in the hotel room, his insinuations? Was there more than we could see? It would be dangerous to think now, that everything would be obvious now. Therefore the police still investigated in different directions. Benjamin proposed that the police should do the monitoring from now on in complete. Yves argued, that I was at least as good in it as any other police officer, that Benjamin could trust in me, that I would do nothing which could endanger this case. I promised that I would inform the police immediately, if I would have problems with my double night shift. Did that sound stupid? I was a

night owl, I had no problems with sleeping during the day and to be awake in the night. I was no idiot - would I screw up this case.....

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I took "him" over from the day shift - he was, together with his "girlfriend", in a diner - it was 8pm now. The day shift, with police officers in turns for the different days of the week, had decided to do ten hour shifts. From 10am till 8pm was their time, from 8pm till 10am mine - fourteen hours. Fourteen hours, a long time? Yes and no! Fourteen hours hard work or fourteen hours waiting, this was not the same. And maybe it sounds stupid, but fourteen hours during the daytime would had killed me, but fourteen hours over the night, this was okay.

I entered the diner and chose a table so I could see his face - it was important for me to be near to him for some time. He and his girlfriend were in a good mood, burgers and soft drinks, and obviously they were not in a hurry - I drank a coffee and ordered a sandwich. I feared that this would become a boring first shift and I should be right.

They sat till 10pm in the diner, I had left the diner around three quarters of an hour before. A man alone in a diner for hours, then suddenly leaving together with the couple? That would had been too evidently. The nice thing was, that next to the diner were some shops and so I did some shopping. Of course always with an eye at the diner and their car on the parking lot. But I have to confess that I was happy as I saw that they left the diner, I had bought real useless things. But as I said, this would become very boring hours.

They drove to one of this nice places for the youth and parked their car. We all know what they did and I started to doubt. Why they should have sex in his car, if they would have a house therefor? Maybe it was more fun in the public? But it got even more disturbing. After they brought it to an end, he drove her to a house - obviously her home. And he? He drove to the students dorm. Very late, too late, but he was daddy's son. A short time his light was on, but then it went off. I had done my homework and had searched in the internet for a place were I could observe the dorm, without attracting attention. Nothing! In the morning he stood up and drove to the school were I handed him off to my colleague - that was the first night!

I could find no sleep - was "he" the wrong guy? This not fitted, that made no sense. Okay, it was only the beginning of the monitoring, but why they had sex in his car? A funny evening in the dinner? He brought her home, he slept in the students dorm? I called Benjamin!

"Hey it's Peter, can you give me an update? Does "themaster" has posted something during last night?"

He checked it - no, no new post during the last twenty-four hours. "He" was back in the game. But no new post since we started with our monitoring - a coincident? I should sleep for some hours, would be better.....

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I stood up somewhat earlier, to have some time to drink a cup of tea, to read the newspaper, to have a late lunch. Tea? Yes, at home I drank almost only tea, on the road nearly only coffee. Newspaper? No TV, it was nicer to sit at the table, reading. And the news from the paper were annoying enough, I definitively needed no overstretched news anchors. It was fucking, still nearly a month till the democrats even would begin with their debates - not to talk about "the" election day in November 2020! Late lunch? I would not know how the day would develop, when I would have time to eat something. Sure, I would have some food and beverages with me, but maybe I would have the opportunity to buy me something while waiting.

I thought about to call Benjamin or Yves or both of them, but I saw that they had sent me no messages while I had slept. Therefore it was plausible that no developments had happened in the meantime. I feared that I would become too annoying. So I not called them.

I looked at the clock, still some time till the officers from the day shift would inform me where to I had to go to take over from them. I had no real idea what I should do with the time, I had had no calm sleep, had dreamt weird stuff - I looked at the clock and grabbed the phone.

"Still no message from "themaster"?"

"No, and that makes me not happy in the end. One can say that this is good, but I have no good feeling at it."

"Yeah, it's strange. Let's see what this night will happen."

7:45pm, I stopped my car at the parking lot of a mall. No diner today, but shopping - I was annoyed! I entered the mall, looked for the fountain and found it.

"They are both in the candy shop."

Wow, candies for whom? I was in a mood to enter the shop also, to grab him and to ask him what kind of fucking game this was. Not professional? Maybe, but still the question - was he the wrong guy?

"Okay, anything suspicious?"

"Absolutely nothing! The rich guy with his tippy girlfriend. He was at school, then at the dorm, later they met and now they are at the mall - a nice and lovely couple."

"We not monitor the girlfriend - or?"

"No - do you think.....?"

"Only an idea. Let us see what they will do. Maybe it would be interesting to monitor her also, but maybe only more wasted time - let us await the next hours....."

I had to be somewhat careful, at least he had saw me yesterday in the diner. It would be a strange coincidence would we see us together the next day again, this time in this huge mall. One the other hand? Would he be the wrong guy, he would see it as a coincidence, but if not.....

It took a while till they left the candy shop, both with a larger bag of candies in their hands. I followed them and had a short look into the shop, at the huge sign behind the register - welcome to America! I mean, this was a candy shop, a shop only with candy, but with a huge sign that told the customer that the things sold here had a lot of calories and were not exactly the best for one's health? Sometimes I felt like in a kindergarten - self-responsibility?

Whatever, I had time for such thoughts because, obviously, also today they were not in a hurry. They sat down and enjoyed their candies - hadn't they read the sign? I decided for a coffee and waited.

After nearly an hour with fun, larking around and candies they decided to leave, they walked to the exit of the mall. An American mall, a place full of excitement, fun and fascination, simply a place where you could spend the whole day! And the largest of a mall? Sure, the parking lot! Was I in trouble now? My car and their car? Maybe parked in two totally different parts of the parking lot? Well, I had a phone call with the police officer before I had parked my car, asked him in which area the suspect had parked his car. I knew the car from yesterday, found it and had waited till a good parking spot nearby became available. Therefore it was no problem to follow them - he drove towards downtown, not what I had hoped for.

Sure, the idea was that he would lead me to the house where "themaster" had made the videos, where he had murdered Sarah. Okay, the house could be everywhere, but downtown? Maybe it was only a condo? With this old fashioned interior, the fireplace? No, it would fit to an older house, suburban? We reached downtown and I was annoyed - another useless night? I called Benjamin.

"No new messages from "themaster"? This makes no sense."

We left downtown behind us - on the other side of the town? But why he used not the freeway then? We reached a neighborhood mainly occupied by low income families, he stopped his car at the side of the road in front of a liquor store. I passed him and stopped in some distance, the girl left the car and entered the shop as I could see in the rearview mirror. Soon she came back with something in her hand, something she started to unpack - she threw the packing on the street. I had an idea.

"Benjamin, can you please check whether "themaster" is active at the moment or not?"

He needed a moment and in the meantime I followed the car again.

"Not? Maybe I was too fast, maybe I'm wrong - can you please stay online and can you inform me immediately when something happens? - Thanks."

I wasn't sure, but my idea was that they had bought a burner phone. Maybe they weren't that stupid, but maybe I was on the wrong track. Benjamin called me after some time.....

"A new message? Tonight the poll will be closed and then the new "season" would start? - Okay, thanks."

Fuck, this was no prove! Sure, it was possible that they had send the message, but only possible. We continued driving, and more and more we came to parts of the city where you could find old houses, decayed houses, empty houses, houses you could rent for peanuts, where you could find whole streets with empty houses.....maybe this would become no wasted night at all!

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It became more and more difficult to follow them, less and less traffic. We reached a part of the city that had got severely affected by the last natural disaster. But to say it - if necessary. This was not the most affected part of the city, the most affected parts were no longer, maybe some remains, but nobody was interested in to rebuild them. Oh, the disaster happened years ago and yes, we're talking about the neighborhoods of the poor, of the mainly black population. Governmental programs and support? Well, this was the US! Many had left the city at this time, never they came back. Others came, but not interested in this neighborhoods. Oh, sure, the white and rich neighborhoods.....

I dropped back more and more, till I saw the car no longer. A problem? Not really! They would not drive into this part of the city if this would not be their aim. I decided to wait somewhat till they had the chance to reach their aim. I would drive around somewhat, their car would stand on the street, this houses had no garages. Also it would be not difficult to locate the house, most of them were uninhabited, a lightened house would be like a beacon. Not long and I found the car, parked on the street in front of a house with some light on - I was electrified! Was this the house? Should I call the police? And if not?

I looked at my watch, it was way after midnight, today was my birthday. A police operation, a rich father's son arrested mistakenly? This could endanger the whole case. Without any doubts this would find its way into the news, and the real murderer? This could mean that he would go underground and maybe we would have never again a chance to take hold of him. No, I had to wait, I had to be patient.

I could wait till they would leave the house again. They would have to go to school - even if they would skip school tomorrow, at one point they would leave the house again and I could have a safe look into it. Or if they would decide to go to bed, if they would switch the light off, I could try to have a look through the windows. I only had to see a certain carpet, a certain chair, or a certain vase on a mantelpiece, that would had been enough - some patience was indicated.

## **A Nice House**

I waited, but nothing happened. The lights not went of, no one left the house, I even could not see anybody walking around inside the house. I stood on the other side of the street, my car I had parked in some distance, on the premises of an obviously uninhabited house - most of the houses in this street, this neighborhood were uninhabited. I looked at the advertising sign of the real-estate agent, driven in the remains of that what was in former times a neat lawn - who would ever buy this decayed house in this neighborhood? Maybe somebody who searched for a house where he could do things in an unwatched way? I looked around, in a few houses there was also light, a decade or two ago in all this houses was light, and the lawns were green, and the pride and joy of the owners. There was a time, when it was a privileged to live here, in this part of the town, but today? But that

was not the point, every city changed. The point was that nobody cared about it! People from Europe often were puzzled about, that we accepted such neighborhoods. They told you that in Europe the inhabitants would ask their administration therefore, that at least the worst sights should be removed, that the city should look nice, the whole city, not only downtown. When you then say them, that you cannot believe that in European cities there were no not that nice neighborhoods they answer you: Of course, especially in the larger cities. But sorry, in that way! Whole decayed lines of houses, whole decayed streets, blocks and neighborhoods? And then they start to talk about Detroit, New Orleans and such cities and you feel ashamed.....

Nothing happened and I got impatient. Maybe that near to the aim, but in such a situation you had to stay cool, professional. This was no Hollywood shit, not the dramatic climax, when the hero, the private dick, rescued the victim in the last second. There was no victim in the house, maybe murderers, but no victim. I could wait, even when it became harder and harder. The problem for me was, that I could see absolutely no action in the house - maybe I was on the totally wrong path? But even if, that would be no problem at all! I would waste my time, the day shift would waste their time, but the police as such worked hard on the case, they would not waste their time. Everybody was convinced about it, that the police would be successful sooner or later, the problem was only: When would they be successful, when would "themaster" become active again - soon obviously! Still the clock not showed "one minute till noon". As said, this was not fucking Hollywood. On the other hand it was past 11am in any case.

I thought about crossing the street, trying to have a look inside the house - a mantelpiece and a vase would be enough. But I discarded the thought, be patient, you would get your time to inspect the house. On the other side - hey, why I should wait till I could look into the real house? Okay, it was only a thought, but maybe a chance. I remembered that a singer bought herself a new house in Malibu, everybody had pictures from the inside then and knew how much she had paid - why? You only had to visit the webpage of the real-estate agent who had sold her the house. Even after the sale the house offer was still online, with the final sales price - estimated at five million, sold for three million - and various pictures from the inside. Okay, this was a house in Malibu, sold to a celebrity, but maybe? The real-estate agent was no problem, still his sign on the other side of the street, "sold" one could read. It was obviously the same sign as on this side of the street - and it looked not bad.

Since not a long time I owned a smartphone, now I knew why. This real-estate agency was obviously specialized in estates for low income persons and families. I gained hope that I would find what I hoped to find. Unfortunately the webpage was not that neatly arranged, and I needed some time to find my way, but then I found it! In fact, the offer of the house from the other side of the street was still online, the estimated price and the achieved price - but this was not very interesting for me. Very interesting for me were the pictures from the interior, and as I saw a mantelpiece with a certain vase on it I shivered!

### **A Job For The Police**

You all know what I would do now! Back to the car and picking up some more firing power. I would force entry to the house, would grab this little fucker and his bitch, maybe I would kill them because they would resist - case solved! Yeah, I should write a Hollywood script.....

"Hello, this is Peter. I hope it's okay that I call you in the middle of the night, but I have found the house - and it's definitely the house."

In a fraction of a second Benjamin was all ear. I told him from the advertisement of the estate company. He checked it and agreed - this was the house!

"Yes, they are still in the house and it looks not like as they were in a hurry."

He told me that he would alarm the special forces and that they would need some time, till they

would arrive. But even if they would leave the house, this was of no real importance now - it would be only something on top to arrest them there.

I stood and waited till the police arrived, and of course I was not involved in the coming action. Again, this was no Hollywood movie. I had done my job, this job was a job for the police. And they did it very well.

It was a very fast and easy operation. They stormed the house and not that much happened after that, at least not for me. After a few minutes they appeared again, together with him and her in handcuffs. I talked with Benjamin.

"Was an easy job as it seems."

"Yes, they lay in the bed and slept – drugged! Was a little surprise for them!"

"Better than a shooting or maybe more. What do you think?"

"It's definitively the house. I looked around a bit and saw also the carpet. Not the chair, but this is no problem."

"And now? I guess it will not last long and daddy's lawyers will visit you."

"Without any doubts. But we have a lot. I think he will have no chances."

"Hey, this is the US? Without any doubts this will become a feast for the media."

"Without any doubts! But we have him, he's no danger anymore. I have seen a room with computers in it, also a digital camera. Maybe we get all our needed evidence presented on a silver platter."

"Stupidity? Arrogance?"

"We have to wait. I have to call Germany."

"The forum?"

"Yes, now they can execute their operation."

"Only one question I still have."

"Yes?"

"I never asked about his name?"

"Brett, he has Irish roots."

The German police did their job and closed the forum. Many arrests in Germany and in other European cities, as well as in the US. Another of this fucking places was no longer, but without any doubts a new one would fill the gap and all the interested ones would find again a way to indulge in their fucking lusts.

As expected it took not long and daddy's lawyers were there to protect the poor boy and his girl. I would have liked it to talk with him or her, but of course this was not possible. I would have liked it to speak with him or her in a room all alone, but this was no tough detective movie. What possible was was, that Benjamin and Yves gave me updates from time to time. And even this was not without a risk.

Now all my cases were solved, and in a way none of them was solved. Like in an old noir hard-boiled detective story - the world was ugly and corrupt at the beginning, the world was ugly and corrupt at the end, nothing significant had changed. And sometimes there were mysteries never been solved. A dead chauffeur or the question about my informant? McAllister - yes or no? I had the feeling that this question would find no answer, maybe simply because there was no answer at all - maybe.....

Whatever, life goes on is the saying, and mine went on, others not. Tomorrow would be a funeral and I would be there, and not only I. But that would not bring her back, her life had ended now. Two others still lasted - no, no death penalty! I was against it, all researches showed that it not functioned, no deterrence. And a false judgment? A dead was a dead, too late for reparation, a dead was a dead.....

Time heals all wounds - yeah, sure! *I've got scars that can't be seen* - Mr. Bowie, lives are ending, some too early, some.....

## **The Face Of Greed**

I felt not well, at the wrong place, in the wrong role. I was not good in giving comfort, was not even able to give comfort myself. So I stood here in my black clothes, unsure how I should act. I tried to preserve dignity, the dignity of this place and this ceremony. But I struggled not to start to weep bitterly, only somewhat, not to start to give vent to my feelings. Maybe one of my problems was not to be religious, not to have the feeling that she was now "at a better place". I only saw a young life taken away in an awful and disgusting way. In nothing I could find solace, not even in the imagination to kill them. What would this change, nothing would change anything any more now - she was dead and would be dead for ever. And if it would have been not hard enough for her parents to lose their child by an accident, by an illness - in this way? I felt helpless, meaningless, had no idea how I should act and react, only emptiness I could feel.

It was hard for me to talk with her parents: I feel with you - I felt nothing! I only knew that I wouldn't be able to bare such a loss, in such a way. I felt that I slowly lost my balance on the blade, slowly I toppled in the abyss.

His name was Brett and his parents were rich, were part of the one percent. But was this the problem as such, that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, that his parents allowed him everything, that his parents not set him clear borders, that he was a spoiled and arrogant and narcissistic young man?

Assumed we would have a functioning society, a society that would care for everyone, a society that would be interested in the balance between the interests of different social groups? What a stupid nonsense such thoughts nowadays were!

"What do you think, Yves, will this become a fair trial? I mean, the evidence is overwhelming, there are no doubts about it, that he did it, together with his "girlfriend".

"No, no doubts about that, but his lawyers will ask the question, why he did it."

"Is this the paraphrasing therefore, that this will become a very dirty trial?"

"Well, that's our system. Have a fucking lot of money and buy you the best lawyers. If not, hard luck! He will be punished!"

"Yeah, and the Brewsters? I understand that everybody has rights, even a mass murderer, even a spree killer, but we should talk more about the victims. Not in the way as the tabloid press, in a serious way to feel with them. It's only.....he will have fans, he's the rich and cool guy, he's a fucking bloody murderer! He deserves disdain - maybe he will write a book?"

"See the guy and the girl with Manson tees? Maybe it would be better to wear some with their victims on it, maybe it would be better to think it over, how it would be, to get a visit from the family, how it would be, to be one of their victims, or a person you're loving very much?"

"Yeah, but this is too much wished, this would mean, to have empathy with the victims. We like it more to stay near the strong and mighty perpetrators, rather than the weak and powerless victims."

Greed was the moving cause of this nation, and violence the tool for bringing it into effect, where "violence" could mean a lot. Violence in a nation where you were used to it, to hear news like the killing of five- or six-year-old school kids at an elementary school, from a man who could enter a hotel room with twenty-four guns, several bump stock rifles, who fired more than one thousand one hundred rounds in ten minutes, to kill nearly sixty people, to wound over four hundred by gunfire, over a distance of approximately four hundred and ninety yards. But hey, one could become adjusted to everything!

Built on violence and greed  
This could be the nation's epigraph.

It had started with the so-called "Native Americans", the "Indians" - the only real Americans in this country. Their history after the landing of the white Europeans was a history of violence and

suppression. No, also no paradise in the times before, but what happened then, exceeded everything what had happened in prior times. Maybe exceeded by conquistadors like Cortez, Cortez the Killer, but that made it not better. Adolf Hitler named the way, how the "Americans" treated the "Indians", as a source of inspiration for him, while thinking about how to treat the Jews - especially he liked the idea of Indian reservations.

Slavery, how fucking depraved one had to be, to keep slaves, to think that this would be his "right"? I always thought about how it would have to be, as a young African American, to know that your forefathers were slaves, as your neighbor's, as your neighbor's, as you neighbor's - I would run crazy, crazy because also today I would be discriminated, because I would have the "wrong" color, because I would be a Nigger for many only, even for "my" president!

The Civil War and its cruelties - no history lessons now! No analyses of the "why"! It was a cruel and brutal war - "Americans" killed "Americans" - but what shall this mean: The "American" nation and the "American" citizens of it?

And today? When a homeless asks you for some change? No question about the why, but a question about why the richest country on earth is not able to help them, is not willing to help them. People who suffer because they can not afford a health care plan, people who die because they cannot afford vital drugs? We're not talking about a poor country, we're not talking about a Third World country, we're talking about the richest country on earth, the United States of America!

Violence and greed, many faces are looking at you!

Climate change is violence and it violates them most, who are always the most violated - poor people, children, old people, people who have no lobby, who have not the possibilities of the rich. But what most disturbing is, is that also they who are denying climate change have children. What do they expect? What does they expect will happen, when millions and millions have to - I said "have to"! - emigrate, because they have no longer a basis for life, because their environment is totally destroyed? How high should be your wall then? How deep should be the see then? No building, no area of water will stop them then!

Do they think that the global commerce will be not affected by this developments? What was the cause of the last financial crisis? Peanuts compared to the effects of climate change - or? This is one of the faces of greed! Greed knows no history, greed knows no future, greed knows only the lust, to get more and more, greed is blind, greed is deaf, greed knows greed only! Welcome in the human's world, humans, endowed with reason. The rational human, sounds like a bitter joke! The greedy human, how familiar this sounds?

A young man kills a young woman, a nation starts a war based on a lie, Jews are the evil threat, or immigrants? Listen to them who are knowing everything, them who have always simple answers, listen to them and welcome your doom. Don't tell that you haven't knew it, don't be ashamed afterwards - enjoy the video of the humiliation, enjoy the video of the raping, enjoy the video of the killing! Don't be shy, confess that you like it to watch it, that it makes you horny, that you envy the young man, he satisfies his lust, his greed, he frees himself, don't be shy and confess that you would like it, to be him!

You would like it, to be the leader whom everybody would follow you into the abyss. You would like it, to be Bezos, a Walton, a Koch - why not a Sackler, billions generated by the dead bodies of hundred thousands! Who cares, it's fucking cool to be a fucking rich person, it's cool to rule the world, it's cool to know that your wealth is generated by your hard work, by your will! Fuck you!

A young man kills a young woman - who cares, peanuts! An immigrant kills a young woman - we have to care about it, this should never happen again.....no longer I could hear it!

I felt that I slowly lost my balance on the blade  
Slowly I toppled in the abyss



## The Woman In The Bar

I sat in the bar, not my first cocktail, not my first cocktail I had emptied tonight.

"Another one, please."

"I think it's enough for tonight, you should have a coffee now."

"Hey, you have no coffee! But you have fucking good cocktails, Jack!"

"Would be not the first coffee I organize you from next door - or?"

Next door to Jack's Bar was another bar. Also not bad, but I preferred this place. Their advantage was, that they had also a coffee machine. Jack was consequent - drinks and cocktails! A very few wines and of course you could have non-alcoholic cocktails. But no soft drinks, no coffee! Next door you could get a coke! But I was not used to drink alcohol, one or two cocktails in the bar a week, maybe a glass of wine, but at home only tea for instance! This had the effect, that after two cocktails I had definitively enough, one cocktail an hour was my normal speed. But sometimes I had more time and Jack's cocktails were simply fantastic. Then he organized me a coffee from next door, to have a basis for a third one in the third hour. He could use the back door of his bar that led him to a back street and the back door of the other bar.....

"You're drinking too much in the last time, you're too often here in the last time!"

"Good for you, revenue!"

"Not in this way! Here is your coffee - large, hot, black and bitter. Enjoy it!"

"And another cocktail?"

"Maybe later, I think you should be by clear mind."

"Why? This is exactly in what I'm not interested in."

"Maybe I've a surprise for you later?"

"A new cocktail, a fucking bad one, one that blows away your fucking mind?"

"I think that my surprise will blow away your mind, but not in that way - I've gotten a phone call right now!"

"But you not wanna tell me?"

"No, drink your coffee and visit the restroom - you're looking crappy!"

"A new client? The last one I met here was a fucking one - hey, I'm not interested in a new fucking client!"

"Drink your coffee and try to look at least somewhat better - you're no longer trusting your barman?"

"Always trust the man behind the bar - give me a moment, please!"

I had absolutely no motivation for nothing. On the other hand, Jack was a friend - I mean, he was a real friend! Not one of this "American friends", a real friend! And I knew it as well, everything was fucking at the moment. I looked fucking, my lifestyle was fucking, had gained weight - my last shower was two or three days ago? When does I had changed my clothes for the last time? All that I wore.....I felt fucking.

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The coffee tasted very bitter - I was sure about, that Jack had done something with it. On the other hand it functioned and my mind became clearer - wasn't I in the mood to kill my mind? I walked to the rest room and did, what I should have not done - I looked into the mirror! I looked horrible! I had no idea when I had my last shaving, I had no idea about anything - the door behind me opened up.

"I think you will need it - have always something in the bar, you never knew.....?"

Jack laid a razor and shaving cream on the washbowl, also a good smelling soap.

"I bring you a new pair of trousers and a new shirt. Have them in my car. Not exactly your size, but better than your smelling stuff."

I looked at him.....

"Hey, I'm divorced! You have to be prepared all the time - I'm the man behind the bar?"

"Don't tell me now, that you have all this stuff here, because of the ladies?"

"Of course! You're the guy who always looks at the door, I'm the man who serves the ladies their cocktails - you can spot the differences?"

"You're not telling me, that I have to talk with a woman later? No case at the moment, please!"

"This is the key for the door, look it if you need it."

"And the other customers?"

"Can wait till you're ready."

He left to come back somewhat later with some pieces of clothing - underwear and socks as well!

"I fear that you will need everything?"

"Yeah, would be maybe better."

I started therewith to shave me, afterwards I undressed, after I had closed the door. Wow, that was my life now - really! I tried to wash myself somewhat, to arrange my hair somewhat, put the new clothes on. Then I left the restroom again - nothing had changed, except that two men were interested in, to enter the restroom very fast.

"My old clothes?"

"Give them to me."

Jack took them and let them disappear. Then he came back.

"And now?"

"I have a new coffee for you. And yes, you're still looking fucking, but much better than before."

"And my appointment?"

"Hey, had no idea how long you would need?"

"Why you're grinning - you not fool me, or?"

"No, but you're looking funny in my clothes, but much better than in yours."

"Somewhat too small, obviously? But I have to confess that they are much better than my grubby ones. What shall I do now?"

"That what you're always doing? Sitting at the bar, drinking your coffee and looking at the door."

I sat down, drank my coffee and looked at the door - as nothing happened! Okay, the coffee tasted much better this time, and even when this would be a hoax, I had to thank Jack. After the funeral I had a lot of problems - I started to weep. No, I hoped that all this would be a fake, I was not in the mood to talk with somebody, especially not with a woman! I looked at the door, at the door that opened up.....

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We all are knowing this cheesy movies and stories. The lonely private dick in the bar, sitting at the counter - the door opens and this breathtaking woman enters the bar. Sure, she takes a seat near the lonely wolf and the story will take its course.....as Woody Allen's says in Manhattan (or was it one of his other movies?): Why does this never happens in real life! Well, the door opened and a breathtaking woman entered the bar and took a seat near mine.....

Well, this situation was such unreal, that it could be also real in the end again. "She" was dressed in a way, that my first thought was, if it would be possible, that I had missed my whole life here in this city, that a movie studio was around the corner - '20s dance fashion? The hairdo looked '20s definitively - a wig? The white dress - very formfitting, with an unbelievable back neckline, encased her much interest arousing body! The jewelry '20s, I was sure about that - real vintage jewelry? But the most - I have to confess - her legs and shoes, beyond the slanted hemline of her white dress, attracted my attention. White stockings in golden, t-strapped, dance shoes - who the hell would walk around in this city dressed like this?

I looked at Jack, but he was not interested in me, he was interested in "her". With a big grin he came, leant over the counter - they kissed each other, kisses on the cheeks! Then Jack looked at me

- his grin was even bigger now!

"Oh, Peter, this is Jessica. Jessica is an old friend of mine. Jessica, this is Peter."

We welcomed each other and I thought that I should not become a part of a play. If Jack would tell me that all this was a coincidence, that this was her casual clothing style.....I should open the conversation!

"You both are old friends? Never saw you, Jessica, in this bar, not to say in the city? I'm definitely sure that I would not have forgotten it, would I have seen you one time before!"

With this words I pointed at her dress. She started to laugh, and I had problems therewith, not to look too intensive at her!

"Let me start with the friendship! I lived for many years in another city, but I returned recently. That is the reason why you not saw me before. Or maybe you have seen me already after all? I'm not dressed like this all the time - of course!"

"But tonight?"

"I was dancing, I like dancing, especially I like it, to dance the tango."

"Oh, Peter! Haven't you told me once that you would be interested in, to learn to dance the tango?"

"Yeah.....?"

"Jessica is a single. Maybe you could be her dance partner?"

"Okay Jack, it's well-meant - also you Jessica. But let us not behave childishly! First Jessica, you not tell me that you have a problem therewith, to find a dance partner? A woman like you enters a dance hall? I see the row of men, men who are hoping, that you will dance with them. Secondly, I have no sense of rhythm! And you? I've the feeling, that you're a very good dancer? How does it would look like, you and me together on the dance floor, especially dressed like this? Well-meant, and thanks to both of you, but....."

"Maybe I'm not that silly - Jessica?"

"Oh, I think that we have forgotten to tell you, that I teach dancing - especially the tango? I've opened a dance studio in the city right now. New dance students are welcomed all the time - I have to earn my living?"

"Sorry. Maybe, why not?"

"Let's have a drink together - Peter, Jessica?"

We had more than one drink together - Jack closed the bar very soon this night. And as I was home again, I thought about the happened. Yes, Jack was a real friend - and Jessica? I should not think that much about her, maybe I should join one of her dance classes - why not the tango? Well, I would be the fool of the class, but maybe I would meet a woman there who would have sympathy with the hopeless case? I thought about the dance crew who performed at the pier - for the tourists. One of their sayings was, while trying to motivate the audience to clap along: And the white guys who have problems therewith to keep the rhythm, look for a black guy next to you, that will help you! Well, even that helped me not, to keep the rhythm!

### **Talking With Ms. Palmer**

I had a last meeting with Ms. Palmer, and it would be a last meeting definitively - she would move in another city.

"I hope that you're not thinking that I would be a coward."

"Oh, no, not at all! It makes me sad."

"Isn't that not more or less the same?"

"No, I not meant it in that way. It's sad that you're forced to move away, at least from this neighborhood."

"It's better, I have to have a new beginning. Fortunately my company could offer me a very good job also in this other city."

"And your neighbors?"

"I think that they are very happy that I will move - I disturbed the calmness."

"And "he" will stay."

"Of course. He is a long time member, a supporting member, of his community. Why does it should have consequences for him? I was the problem, and soon I will be history."

"You know, I could accept this - I really mean this! I could accept this, if their suburban paradise they are always pretending would be real. But nothing is real, life is not real in that sense. It's like a sitcom. The Brady Bunch was never real, not even in this time. But why confessing this, there's this easy solution: You're the one who's guilty. Move away and everything is fine again - Marcia, the dream of a whole generation of boys, and Maureen McCormick's real life? But hey, this is the USA. At no place life is more real than in L.A. - the problem is only about which life we're talking! I hope it will be better for you in the new city."

"I think so. I will do some things differently."

"Don't become Carol!"

"Who would be ever be able to be Carol! I know what you're implying with this. No, at least I will try it, to stay true to myself, at least I will try it."

### **Talking With Mr. Johnson**

"Tasted as good as always, Mr. Johnson."

"It's nice that you have not forgotten my small restaurant."

"Why I should? The food is very good here."

"You know what I meant."

"Of course. But I meant also what I said. I'm not here because of pity, I'm here because I like your food, especially also your wife's fantastic cakes. They are reminding me of my mother's and grandmother's ones."

"But you're not telling me that you're not knowing other good restaurants, restaurants in better neighborhoods with better customers?"

"No, because this would be a lie. But the question would be, what does "better" should mean? I'm no asshole, on one hand it's very easy to answer this question, but then it's suddenly very difficult to answer this question! I like it to be here, I feel comfortable while I'm here. Yes, I know that most of your customers have no job, many not even a place to stay. But believe me, I like it more to be here than in one of this restaurants Downtown or in The Hills - too formal."

"Well, "formal" is this place definitively not! Sorry that I talked in this way with you, Mr. Maurer."

"Peter, I think I'm a regular customer now?"

"Yes, you are - Clayton."

We talked for a long time, talked about what does it means, to live in such a neighborhood, especially in this time. This was a mixed neighborhood, but all the people here had one in common - nobody was really interested in them. "Nobody" meant especially no politicians. Or would it be better to say, not the society as such?

Poor people you could find in every country, but the situation here? Whole families became destroyed because of illness, but more arms than inhabitants, more arms per capita than in countries who waged a civil war? This was sick! But even now, with a notorious liar in office, with all this disgusting talking about women or minorities, all this mass shootings, it was not sure that even one thing would change - how could this be!

"It would be important that as much people would vote in 2020 as possible. They are one percent, maybe ten percent, maybe even more, but they are not the majority."

"Yeah, in a country that does everything therefor, that it's as difficult as possible for people like me to vote - if not even impossible."

"But this will not end when you're not voting."

"And? Do you really think that much would be different, different for someone like me, when Hillary Clinton would be in office? Be honest!"

"She would not be interested in you, that's for sure. But you have to be honest also - would it be that devastating as it's now, would she be in office?"

"But don't you see the point? We're always the fools! I give a fucking shit on it, whether the Dow weakens or not! As long as I have the choice between two who are both not interested in me, why then I should vote?"

"Maybe you could support your democratic candidate? Sanders maybe, or Warren?"

"Yeah, support? I've no money to give them, I have not enough for me and my family. But it's all about money - or? The candidates have to collect millions, or they are out of the race! What a fucking shit is this?"

"There're candidates who wanna change this?"

"Yeah, that's why Sanders became the nominee in 2016! This fucking Democrats are not better then the others! This whole system is designed therefor, to give people like me no chance! Hey, I'm no slave anymore, I'm allowed to sit in the bus wherever I wanna - well, maybe I have to spend thirty years in prison because I have some pot - forget this shit!"

"And your son?"

"What do you think that I should I tell him? That he has every chance, that he has only to work hard, this shit? Hey, its so easy, or? This is a white country, this is a Christian country, this is a country of the Europeans. Call them WASP or however you wanna name them. Do you really think that they are willing to share? You see what they are doing right now? They rather are willing to destroy this nation, to doom everything, than to share anything with someone like me. With every new immigrant from outside of Europe, one who is not white, one who is no Christian, their fear rises. This is a boiling pot, and they try to keep the lid closed, they are willing to do everything therefor."

"But this will not function, you have to open the pot at one time."

"Yeah, a little bit, to let off some pressure. But this is a fucking game, a game were everybody has its part."

"No hope anymore?"

"Does I have said that I'm no longer the fucking nigger slave in this country?"

### **Talking With The Brewsters**

"I fear that I'm the wrong guy to give you advice. Some try to get in contact with others who have to undergo the same, some established a support group, some have wrote a book - I think what you should not do is, to try to handle everything by yourselves."

"At the moment the circumstance that makes us the most problems is, how the media handles the case. Not that we get no attention, but in what a way? We are not interested in, to be the means to an end for the consternation industry. I'm not saying that there are no people, who mean it from the depth of their hearts, but often it's very difficult to decide. And then, the way the media treats the man and the woman who have killed our daughter - especially him? I guess that he will write a book."

"And without any doubts it will become a best seller - I know what you mean. But the media needs sensations, who is interested in the silent tones?"

"Yeah! The best for them would be, that we would produce some drama - we will not do so!"

"New Zealand - they ignored the assassin totally. They not named his name, they not quoted his manifesto, they talked about the victims and about the grief of the bereaved. Within a month they toughened the gun laws severely - no, not here."

"We have a president who poses with a baby in a hospital, an orphan child after the mass shooting - smiling and thumbs up! What a disgraceful shit is this? Our last president cried in this moment, but not this reckless fraud! He will have the best lawyers that money can buy, and money can buy you a lot in our country. And we all are knowing how the system functions. Would he be black and poor then they would grill him, but hey! This men is white and his parents are fucking rich? We all are

knowing what will happen."

"Yeah, but the case gathered a lot of attention - even in foreign countries."

"And? We live in a new age now. Truth has become a subject of interpretation - the law of the jungle is our law now!"

"Maybe it would be worth to fight against it?"

"And you?"

"As I said, I fear that I'm the wrong guy."

## **The Great Wisdom At The End**

The society in which we are living is a fucking society - what an insight! The world we are living in is a fucking one - what an insight! But the consequences?

Psychologists, sociologists, philosophers - oh, I've forgotten the churches, religions nearly. They all can tell you what goes wrong - sad only, that they contradict each other. It seems so, as that the answer will be a not that easy one!

Maybe the answer is, that it's simply as it is, that this is the natural state? Not that much indications - apart from nice theories - that it could be different, different in a significant degree.

Tell me your wisdom, said the idiot to the bigmouth. No problem the bigmouth said, and the idiot was happy!

I walk out and kill somebody, for no reason. I walk out and someone kills me, for no reason. I walk out and kill me - for a reason? All that would be possible - what more one have to say?

## **Soul Food**

We entered the restaurant and Clayton welcomed us.

"Nice to see you again, Peter. Not alone today?"

"Hello, Clayton. No, not alone today. Clayton, this is Jessica. Jessica, this is Clayton."

"Hello Jessica, not that often such a lady is guest in my restaurant."

"Hello, Clayton. Well, it would be a lie to say that I would be often in this part of the city."

"Jessica is born in the city, but lived for many years in another city. Now she's back again."

"Yes, that's true. But anyway it would be a lie."

"I appreciate always when people are honest to me, Jessica. But maybe I can offer you something, that will be tasteful for you?"

"What this concerns I have no doubts. Peter told me, that the food is very tasty here."

"Well, it's soul food. Some like it, some not?"

"Stayed the last years in New Orleans, therefor....."

"Wow, then I have to give my best."

"I think, that your wife's cakes will fix it in any case - was a joke! The chicken looks very good."

We chose our meal and beverage and sat down - tasty as always.

"My chicken is very good, your beef?"

"Really, you're enjoying it?"

"Yeah, why not. I'm not saying, that this is or will become my daily food. Therefor it's too rich for my taste. I'm eating a lot of salad and vegetables, such things. But that not means, that this can't be tasty and that it's not nice to eat it from time to time. As I said, I lived in New Orleans? How up the pole it would be, to live in such a city and not enjoying soul food from time to time?"

"Sorry, you wanna try the beef?"

"Of course!"

After we had finished the meal, Clayton came to us with two cups of coffee and two slices of a fantastic looking cake.

"Plum pie with crumbles."

"And your coffee and cake?"

"I thought that you two wanna be alone?"

"Oh, we're just friends. One could say that Jessica tries to teach me to dance - she has opened a dance school in town."

"Nice, is he a good student?"

"Well, it's not hopeless with him. But feel free to join company with us - your wife?"

"At this time she prepares the meals for tomorrow, she's very busy at the moment."

"But I think we can have a look at the kitchen later?"

"Of course."

He took a coffee and cake for himself and took a seat.

"You're learning dancing, Peter?"

"I try it. I fit very well to the stereotype of the clumsy white man. I try to learn to dance the tango."

"I have to say, that he's not that bad - basically. But he has problems therewith to let loose, to give his feelings free rein."

"Yes, always this white men. They simply have not the feeling for rhythm we black people have. Maybe you should accompany me next Sunday for church service?"

"I'm no believer."

"I thought not to evangelize you, but maybe it would be a good lesson for you - old white man!"

"Yeah, maybe. What I said last time....."

".....you said nothing that was not okay. New Orleans?"

"Yes, New Orleans was a very interesting experience for me - well, Katrina....."

We ate our pies and drank our coffees, talked, to visit the kitchen then - for another coffee and pie.....