

# **Cozy Days In London**

## Arrived In London

It had been an easy ten hours flight – arrived at Heathrow I used the Heathrow Express Train till Paddington Station. And there I stood now and looked at my city plan, to ensure me in which way I had to go. It was my first time in London, my first time in the UK, my first time in Europe - okay, it was my first time abroad, except Mexico, what was not really abroad for me. Not because I was Mexican, or that I would have Mexican roots, simply because it was a very short ride till Mexico from the place where I lived. But before all this funny Europeans now would begin therewith, to make fun of the Americans who never would go abroad, only knowing their own country, before this would begin, a short geographic interlude - the United States Of America in comparison to Europe:

Let's start with the size - the US is large, very large! The size of the EU is 4.3 million sq. km, the US 9.1 million sq. km! The size of the US is more than the double of the EU! Okay, to be fair, Alaska is very large. But nevertheless, many states of the US are at least as large as whole countries in Europe, if not (much) larger. As an example: California and Germany, the fourth largest country in the EU after France, Spain and Sweden, have nearly the same size - and California is not the largest state in the US (the third largest after Alaska and Texas, closely followed by Montana and New Mexico). So, in any way: The USA is much larger than the EU!

Population? Well, now things are changing. The population of the EU is 511 million people, the US has 328 million inhabitants (Canada by the way 37 million)! But be careful! California has nearly 40 million inhabitants, by far the most populated state in the US. Okay, Germany with the (nearly) same size has a population of 83 million - the far largest in the EU - but, in California you have two large urban centers - Los Angeles and San Francisco. The urban region of Los Angeles has (nearly) 20 million inhabitants - Germany? The urban region of Berlin has 4.4 million inhabitants! You see, it's difficult to see the USA one-dimensional. Larger areas of California are desert, the Mojave desert. Nevertheless most of the fruits in the US are produced in California. Wyoming has 563 000 inhabitants - the size of Wyoming? Around 254 000 sq. km, this is between the size of Italy and GB. The city of Los Angeles with nearly 4 million inhabitants is the cities with the second most inhabitants in the US - New York has over 8 million. Los Angeles city has more inhabitants as 24 states! Virginia is number twelve in the ranking of the most populated states in the US with 8 million inhabitants - New York City! As a consequence?

Some regions of the US are very densely populated, some are very large urban areas. But there are also vast regions who are very sparsely populated - and not only Alaska. But more, states in the US are as large - if not larger - than countries in the EU! This means, to travel in a state in the US is the same as to travel in a country in the EU. To travel from one state to another means in Europe to travel from one country to another. To fly from Los Angeles to New York means to travel nearly 4.000 km! And we talk about the linear distance, not by car or so! The distance from Madrid to Moscow is 3.440 km! That's America! What should we learn?

An American who travels in his state is like an European who travels in his country. An American who travels to the next state is like an European who travels to the next country. An American who flies from Los Angeles to New York is like an European who flies from Madrid to Moscow. And an American who travels to Europe? It like an European who travels to the States or Canada, to the south of Africa, South America or Asian counties like Japan or China - how much Europeans do this? More than Americans? Yes, but maybe there's another point we have to talk about - the working world.

Germans - as an example - have around twenty five till thirty days holiday, if not even more. An American is happy to have twelve days, after the first year without any holiday. Americans have less bank holidays, especially at Christmas as an example. Then not to forget the distances? Visiting the family at Christmas who lives in the next state? Not that easy! I not start now to talk about wages of an average worker, the fear to lose your job while on holiday, the risks with getting ill - bad enough at home, but abroad, in oversea? Therefore, be a bit respectful and judge not too fast on

this Americans, who not know more than their own country!

Well as said, I stood at Paddington Station and knew now which was my direction, the direction I had to go.

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As I said, it was my first time in London, but of course this city was not unknown to me. TV - at least what one could see in TV about this city. The Tower Bridge, the Tower itself, the Buckingham Palace, Big Ben and Westminster.....and no, before you would laugh again about the Americans, I not thought that this was London as such. And why? Well, my city as such was not Hollywood or the Hollywood Boulevard, not the Sunset Strip or Wilshire Boulevard, not Beverly Hills or Santa Monica. They were a part of my city - well, Beverly Hills and Santa Monica not even this! - but the city as such was much more. And of course, this also applied to London, I was aware of this.

I needed five minutes from Paddington Station to my hotel, Gower Hotel - one of this typical London townhouses, now used as a hotel. In fact a whole row of townhouses, eight or nine, were used as hotels now. The houses reminded me on the famous Victorian houses in San Francisco what surprised me a bit. Firstly, this houses were made of stone, not of wood, and secondly, they were not Victorian style - Edwardian? I wasn't sure about it, should have a look later.

As I entered the hotel, a narrow hallway, a narrow staircase upwards in the background. At the check-in desk they offered me two rooms - I should have a look at both to decide then which I would prefer. One upstairs, a bit louder. One downstairs, very quite and on the same floor as the breakfast room. I took the key to the room downstairs - number one - and opened the door. Small - a bed, a desk, a cupboard, a door. A small shower, typically European, not one in the American style, the toilette, also European style. I liked the room and was not interested in, to view the room upstairs also.

My clothes and all the other things were put away fast, the large suitcase I had to put on the floor next to the desk, I found no other place for it. As said, the room was small, but okay and, important for me, clean. So, there I was now, in London - you're asking why? Later, first I had to take a long shower, new clothes, and.....not long till 7pm local time, time to eat something!

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I stepped out of the hotel - on my way from Paddington Station to my hotel I had saw, that in the street to my hotel there was one restaurant after the other. Sussex Gardens was the road where my hotel was, the street to Paddington Station, with the many restaurants, was London Street. London Street? Okay, I was aware that a main road in London, say Oxford Street, had four lanes - only four lanes! In Los Angeles a street with four lanes was a small side road! But my point is, that I would not name such a small and short street "London Street"!

But to be fair, a short look showed, that an interesting variation of restaurants and more awaited you. But come on, this was London - or? What else than the "Sussex Fish Bar" could be my choice and of course, fish and chips. And I had to confess that the meal was not that bad. In fact it was absolutely okay. Well, french fries were chips now, but the fish tasted really good. Okay, I ignored things like the vinegar on the table, but my first English meal was definitely no bummer.

As I left the restaurant I thought about to walk a bit and discovered, that in fact the whole area was crowded with restaurants, pubs and cafes. From London Street around the corner into Praed Street and then into Edgware Road. There I discovered one side of Paddington - men sitting in front of cafes while smoking shishas, as well as some women. One Arabic restaurant after the other - okay, one was definitive now, I would not starve. Soon I arrived at the corner Edgware Road and Sussex Gardens and I decided that this was enough for the first day.

## My First Day In London

Breakfast from 7:30am on, I woke up at 6:20am - before my alarm clock went off. I decided to doze till the alarm would start and thought about what to do today - 6:45am, the alarm started. I took a shower, had a look at my emails, and 7:29am I stood in front of the breakfast room.

The breakfast room was downstairs as my room, just around the corner. Nobody was in, so I entered the room carefully as a woman appeared at the other side in a door frame - obviously the kitchen. I should choose a seat, she pointed at the breakfast buffet, and disappeared again. I decided for the last table in the middle row, my back to the wall, the door and the buffet in front of me. The breakfast room was a bit small, or too much tables in it - whatever, not that much space, but enough. I walked to the buffet, decided to start with tea, orange juice and cereals. Shortly after I sat at my table again, came a younger woman and also she disappeared in the kitchen, to appear again shortly after with some slices of toast for me.

"Do you wish eggs or anything else?"

While saying this, she pointed at the board at the wall. The board was divided in two parts. Continental breakfast listed the thing one could find on the buffet. English breakfast listed all the things you obviously could order from the kitchen. Different variation of eggs, bacon, ham, of course beans.....all this wonderful English breakfast specialties.

"Scrambled eggs, please."

"Only scrambled eggs?"

"Yes."

She walked away and I started with my cereals. Shortly I was through with it, my eggs came. Thereafter I decided to eat one part of the rest of my toast with ham and cheese, the other part with butter and marmalade respectively with honey. To finish the breakfast I ate a yogurt - too much? Well, I had no bacon or ham, no beans.....much too much! At least for someone who normally had no breakfast at all! But hey, this was London, England - definitively no lunch today!

As I had finished with my breakfast the room has filled and at all the tables sat people now. I heard people speaking French and.....South African language? The young woman was busy now, and at one table she had people who not spoke English very well. But obviously she could ascribe their dialect.

"You're from Spain?"

"Si!"

Now she began to talk Spanish with them, and I could see that they were very surprised about how good she could speak Spanish - I left the room.....

Oh, before I forget it! You were interested in, why I was in London, in England? Well, maybe I should talk as a first step about me, about my profession? I was a private detective, a private detective in Los Angeles - and now it started again! No, my name was not Philip Marlowe, my name was Peter Maurer! And no, this were not the 40s or 50s, it was the end of April - 2019! An American private dick in London? Well, this story would write itself on its own - or?

Maybe I should say that I was here to be in Bristol at May 1<sup>st</sup>? And that I planed to stay a day in Dover? But that the main reason was Bristol? Why Bristol? Well, to listen to the most beautiful voices I knew – three angelic voices to be exact. Yeah, that was the reason to be here!

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I stood in front of the hotel, without any exact plans. The River Thames should be my first aim - I looked at the inner-city map that I got from the hotel. A map? Sure that this story played in 2019 and not in the 40s or 50s? A smartphone? Why should I have one, in 2019?

So, I looked at the map and my way was obvious immediately - should I say that I would walk to the river? Walking! Yes, should you ever be interested in to see a city, to explore a city, to discover a city, to feel a city, then walk! Walk as much as possible and, walk around without a distinct aim.

Sure, you will miss things:

Have you visited XY? Wonderful, or!  
Well, it was not on one of my ways. No, I've visited XY not.  
What! You've not visited XY! Are you crazy!  
But I've seen so much other things?  
But not XY!  
No, not XY.....

But back to the map. Sussex Gardens - around the corner Hyde Park? I would enter Hyde Park at Italian Gardens, along The Serpentine till I would reach the corner at Piccadilly. Through Wellington Arch and I would enter Green Park - down Constitution Hill alongside Green Park and Buckingham Palace Gardens, I would reach the Victoria Memorial. What a beginning! Hyde Park, Wellington Arch, Green Park, Buckingham Palace Gardens, Victoria Memorial, Buckingham Palace and The Mall right in the first morning - what a beginning! But I would not follow The Mall, I would enter St James's Park - you know why, at least I hope so! Then alongside the next lake, St James's Park Lake, I would cross the lake to follow it on the other side, till I would reach Horse Guards Road. A few steps along the park till I would reach Great George Street. One impressive block with various authorities later - eh voilà, our next landmarks in sight. Big Ben behind an ugly scaffolding, the Houses of Parliament - the best comedy show in town at the moment -, and of course Westminster Abbey. Sightseeing in perfection! Again a few steps more and I would stand on Westminster Bridge, the River Thames under me.

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It was nice to walk along The Serpentine - pretty girls from Scandinavia were feeding squirrels. But the gray ones - also here they displaced the brown ones. Nevertheless they were nice, sitting on the ground and eating their peanuts. A nice day, somewhat windy, but no London weather - at least not at the moment. I started to thought about the Brexit.

Separation instead of working together - but this was not my problem. Always the same, and I was an American? Why the people followed always this bigmouths. And no names one had to name now, it was always the same fucking and disappointing story. The sun shined! Hey, this was my first morning in London, I walked through Hyde Park, alongside The Serpentine, and the sun shined? - I had tears in my eyes.....

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St James's Park - I looked, and then I saw the first one. Yes, without any doubt, no creature more beautiful and gracile. Black ballerinas dancing on the water, a red spot, white accents, withdrawn, very fitting to this elegant and tender sights. I had tears in my eyes.....

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Westminster Bridge, the River Thames well filled with water. It was like all in this city, a bit like in a dollhouse. It felt like you would be able to touch the water. I thought about the Golden Gate Bridge or the Colorado Street Bridge - no, no barriers or other safety installations were needed for this little bridge. You could use it as diving tower in a public swimming pool, but not for.....I had tears in my eyes.

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I looked at the London Eye, the Coca-Cola London Eye, who was definitively of no interest for me.

Maybe I should say, that I definitively never did one thing when planning to be in a city for the first time - never I read a tourist's guide. Sure, I had some ideas of the city, some pictures of landmarks and other famous places and buildings, but.....I decided to walk back to the park and to walk around in this area for some while.

I walked back Great George Street, crossed Parliament Street, to see that the road along the park was Horse Guards Road. And yes, I knew who the Horse Guards were, and that the plaza I could see in some distance the Horse Guards Parade was - at least I thought that this has to be Horse Guards Parade, a plaza at Horse Guards Road? But I decided not to walk along the road, but the smaller way inside the park. And this was a good decision, I discovered Duck Island Cottage and its history and saw some more Pelicans - some I had seen already before.

Well, Horse Guards Parade? An empty plaza with empty stands - not that much interesting. Maybe I should try to find out, when there would be some action on the plaza? But then the passage, better the large one with the two smaller ones, at the head of the plaza attracted my attention. Many people walked through it, obviously something interesting on the other side?

According to my intuitive faculty there should be Parliament Street on the other side again, but obviously more? Whatever, after I had traversed the passage, dark with some columns, I was disappointed - a small plaza, not more? Well, two police officers with bullet-proof vests and sub-machine guns - but hey, I was from the States? I decided to enter Parliament Street again, through the open gates, between the small "houses" and to decide then whereto I should go then. And what should I say? After I had reached the broad and very crowded sidewalk, I passed a man with a fancy golden helmet and a sword and another armed police officer, after I had looked back to the points on which all the people on the sidewalk looked, some made images, I realized where I was. Two men on horses, obviously very young, with fancy uniforms, helmets and also a drawn sword which was leaned on their shoulders, as the man in the middle did it also. I liked the sign at the side: BEWARE - HORSES MAY KICK OR BITE! - THANK YOU. Everything was very British!

I stood there for a while, like the tourists, though about the thoughts of this two young men. Maybe two officer candidates? Obviously it was not easy to sit there for hours - they had to do this for hours, or? - not moving, not talking, not reacting to all the tourists who made pictures. And also about the horses I thought about. In the meantime I had discovered, that this was Whitehall, not Parliament Street - a mystery I had to solve. Therefore I decided to walk back in the direction of Great George Street, just as a woman passed me. The problem? She walked in the other direction. Why a problem? Well, I hope not that you maybe think now that I would be a macho, but it was her clothing. She wore a long red woolen coat, had shoulder-length blond hair - nice to see, but that it wasn't in the end. She wore also black opaque woolen stockings and black moderate heeled t-strap shoes. It appeared very elegant, but Great George Street waited.

The next that I discovered was Downing Street - who had the idea to name this alley a street? But okay, this was London, an old European city, evolved in a very long time. Not only a few buildings in this city were older than my whole country, at least as long as you would talk about the United States. The next discovery was that Whitehall suddenly Parliament Street was - why not! It could be also puzzling that a street like Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles had two times the same street numbers - at least for tourists who wouldn't be aware of, that Santa Monica was no part of Los Angeles and that therefore the street numbers started anew in Santa Monica again. After this discoveries the River Thames was my aim again.

I started to walk along Westminster Pier and passed a war memorial. Not for the first time, at my first day in London. The city was full of all thinkable variations of war monuments - this was not offensively meant. The war, the fight for Britain, the fight against the Nazis, together with the other allies, in this city omnipresent - I had tears in my eyes and saw an interesting ship not far away.....

Tattershall Castle, a not that small gangway one could use to reach the ship - PUB ON THE THAMES was written there. I decided for a rest and tried to enter the gangway, but two men addressed me. They asked - very politely of course, this was Britain - whether they could control my backpack. Well, no problem - how long ago it was, that many died not that far away from here? I entered the ship.

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I entered the Tattershall Castle, a bar and tables welcomed me on board - very nice at a days, now many clouds, colder, from time to time it drizzled. Nevertheless a few people sat there and drank a pint of beer - London? I walked to the bar, asked for a coffee, but they had none, only downstairs - no problem. As I looked for the staircase, I saw that also at the stern there was something. A fish and chips kiosk, closed, and some more seats - I went downstairs.

Suddenly everything changed, upstairs not that much noble looking, looked now everything like you would expect it from a typical, more upscale, British pub. A bar, in the middle of the room places where you could drink you beverages while standing, and tables at the side. I was somewhat tired and decided to choose a table, had saw a waitress, no self service obviously. And in fact, I had not sat down really, as she was at my table.

"Sorry Sir, do you wish something to eat or only to drink? The tables are reserved for our guests who are eating."

I had not thought about it really, but as she mentioned food, and even after the enormous breakfast, I felt some hunger and a look at the watch showed me, that it would be absolutely okay to eat something.

"No, I want to eat something also. But I wanna start with a coffee."

She went away, brought me the menu and soon after the coffee.

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There I was now, in London in a pub on the River Thames, the London Eye on the other side. A few days here, more or less two in Bristol, and one in Dover. London, would I had come here, without the concert? I don't think so, in the end one city was like the other - or? Sure, one had a Eiffel Tower, the next a Buckingham Palace, the third one a Hollywood Boulevard or a Golden Gate Bridge. But apart from that?

Sure, American cities were different to European cities - very, very different. But in the end in all this cities - small or huge, famous or unknown - people lived. And in the end they had all the same wishes, dreams, concerns and fears. Well, their answers were - very - different from time to time. After a mass shooting in Europe they sharpened the laws, in the States they asked for even more weapons. But in the end it was all the same, all the time, at all places.

"You've found something, Sir?"

"Oh, yes, the cobb salad and a glass of the rosé wine, please."

"Thank you, Sir."

I looked again at the river, in a way I feared that the next days in London would become boring days, thought about the big ocean. But maybe I should be more openly - the wine tasted good, and the salad was fantastic! Thirteen British pounds, no bargain, but absolutely appropriate - at the end cheaper than I would expect it a place like this in this area, especially because the salad was nicely made with a fine range of flavors. Maybe a bit small in some American eyes, but absolutely enough for me.

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It had become evening and I was back in my hotel for some refreshment. I thought about what to do with the rest of my first day in London. While walking to the park in the morning, I had saw a pub just around the corner. But maybe it was somewhat too early for a beer? Okay, pubs closed very early, but because I was not that much used to drink alcohol I would not need that much time to had enough. Therefore I decided to walk around a bit more - as if I would had not walked enough miles for the first day - to have a beer later. I decided to walk down Sussex Gardens till Edgware Road. Edgware Road was the main road in this part of London - it had more than two lanes! But more

interesting for me was that it was obviously the main shopping street in this area, with many restaurants and cafés. Very oriental, in front of many places men and even some women were sitting and smoking shisha. Obviously a broad choice of very interesting restaurants, but I was not out for dinner. Eaten I had enough during the day, I thought more about a coffee. After I had walked down Edgware Road in direction to the park for some while, I decided to turn. I had not found the place I looked for. As I had said, I looked not for a restaurant or a place to eat. Of course, it would have been possible to sit outside to drink a coffee - an oriental one - or a tea, but I have to confess that I not liked this sweet smell of shishas. Therefore I walked back, Pread Street was my aim now, but I not reached the street - java u? Obviously a kind of café, shishas outside, but not inside - inside I had saw none at all. I looked inside, saw a cake counter - of course also pastries and suchlike - a board with different coffees, teas and something to eat. What should I say, looked perfect! Obviously self-service, I stood at the counter and could not decide. Coffee or a tea - England? Somewhat different selection as in the States - a cake maybe? They looked tasty and very sweet - Wonder Bakery in L.A.? I decided for a caffè mocha - caffè latte with chocolate, very sweet but tasty. You had to order at the counter, but the staff brought you your order to the table - I took a seat. It was a nice place and I decided to stay a bit longer, now with an americano and a piece of chocolate cake.

Many of the customers were of Arabic descent, but in all the crowd was very mixed. It was a very nice atmosphere and I was sure that this would not my last time here - also the food looked very good. Could this also be a place in the States? Not really, or? In the States there was always this hecticness. It was obvious that you could order a coffee or a tea only and sitting here for a long time, without the feeling that you would occupy a seat, a seat for a new paying customer, even with enough free seats around you! Why you had this feeling? A lot of young people here, some with laptops. Good WiFi and many sockets so that you had not to use the battery. But also a group of men at a table, drinking tea, talking, obviously not in a hurry! Yes, a nice place, but I decided that it would be the time now for a real English pub.

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I only had to go back to Sussex Gardens again, to follow it till Sussex Place, and my aim was already in sight - The Victoria. From outside it looked very nice, through the window I could see that the pub was well crowded - some places outside were still free. I entered the pub - it was a pub, therefore self-service. To my surprise I saw that a seat at the bar was still free, I sat down.

I was no beer drinker, but this was a pub! Okay, also bottles of wine and liquor they had - but a pub? I looked at the, for a pub typical, beer pump. Ten different sorts? No, more! I had no idea - Guinness I knew. If beer, then a dark one, but Guinness? Guinness I could drink at home - I got interrupted.

"Hello darling, what can I do for you?"

I looked up and a tall, very tall, woman stood in front of me. Okay, I realized that the floor behind the bar was higher than in the guest room, she was not that tall. She had curly hair and smiled at me.....

"I'm not sure. A dark one, but no Guinness?"

"ESB, I recommend you an ESB."

She pointed at the beer tap for ESB.

"Okay."

"A pint?"

"Yes, a pint."

To be honest, I had no idea what else would have been possible. In movies they ordered all the times a pint of beer. She pumped the beer like in the movies and placed it in front of me.

"Here darling, enjoy it."

"How much is it?"

"Four fifty."

I handed her a five pound note - keep the change - and realized that I was exotic. It was common to



pay with your credit card, that you tapped your card - this was a British institution, a British pub? Where was the sense for British traditions?

I looked at my glass - a pint. I wasn't sure, but it was not less beer. I sipped on it - well, no bad recommendation. In the background I heard her voice: Hello darling,.....

I looked around at the interior - very nice and cozy. Many pictures, photographs, a lot of wood, an open fireplace with very comfortable looking furniture - very nice during the winter? It was really a very nice place as I realized that obviously this part was not everything. "On the other side" was a dinning area, but obviously you also could eat in this part of the pub. As I said, I never read one of this tourist's guides, I liked it much more to discover things.

My glass emptied more and more - I looked at the clock. Past 10pm, pubs closed very early, therefore not enough time for me for a second one. Also I had to confess that I felt the alcohol already, but this was not the only thing I felt. I stood up and looked around - stairs, this should be the right directions. Upstairs or downstairs? I saw the sign that told you that upstairs was a bar - downstairs. Wow, was not that easy at all! Not because of the alcohol - okay, also because of the alcohol - but much more because the staircase was very narrow, winded and low. I had to duck, but I reached my aim.

10:25pm - last round!

"Another one for you darling?"

"No, thanks."

I was not the best customer, others were much faster than I - but at least I had a pint of beer in front of me. My new neighbor - the pub was much less crowded now - had ordered half a pint! Looked a bit small, the glass. With some efforts I handled it to empty my glass before the clock reached 11pm. I stood up and walked back to the hotel - fresh air and the insight that one pint of this beer was definitively enough for me!

## **My Second Day In London**

My second morning, I stood up, took a shower and was ready for breakfast at 7:30am - I was the first in the breakfast room. Tea, cereals, scrambled eggs, toast and marmalade, a yogurt - enough till the afternoon. As yesterday the two women, the older one in the kitchen, the younger one in the service, were very friendly - she could remember that I had only scrambled eggs from the British breakfast offer yesterday. Breakfast TV, the weather forecast was interesting. Some sun, some clouds, some rain - and now choose your clothing for the day? Deep political analyses - yes, sarcasm! - and the most important question.....no, not the Brexit, the Royal Baby! No, not so far, but it could be every day - and then? Yes, of course, the name! Well, always interesting to see what the most important things in this world were - the US was not better. Okay, we had no royalty, therefor we had our celebrities.

I went back to my room and packed the things for the day in my backpack. I decided for a tee and a light jacket, definitively it would rain later - I had my pocket umbrella always with me. But looking out of my window, basement, I could see only wonderful blue sky. But this was London - it could have changed till I would reach the street in front of the hotel!

No, still a wonderful blue sky as I hit the road and decide to walk down Sussex Gardens till London Street - Praed Street was my first aim for today, then Edgware Road - Regent's Park? I reached Praed Street and walked around the corner. Burger King, a souvenir shop, an Italian café and pizzeria - looked not bad, a Lebanese grill - also looked not bad, a souvenir shop, java u and next KFC. Java u, much smaller than the one I was yesterday - I have had breakfast just before, but why not, I entered the place.

Yes, the place was much smaller, nearly every seat was occupied, breakfast time, but the place looked very cozy. I looked at the menu at the wall and decided for an English breakfast tea. The

friendly woman behind the counter said that I should take a seat and that she would bring me the tea.

Black tea with milk and sugar, a good start in the evening - or a "flat white"? It seemed to me that this would be typical breakfast coffee - at least more than one customer ordered one during the time I was in, many ordered there beverages to go. Maybe I should try one at the next time. After I had finished my English breakfast tea - very fine - I decided to continue with my today's way through the city. Till Edgware Road and then I would have to decide, how to continue.

I decided for Regent's Park and hit the park at York Gate and Ulster Terrace. I not crossed the bridge, turned left, to walk along the lake. On the other side of the park was London Zoo, and even if I was always attracted by zoos, I was not in the mood for it at the moment. Maybe later.

I walked along the lake, Boating Lake, and watched the birds. Some had a quarrel, some bred, all were beautiful to watch. As in many of this parks in large cities, this was a place of calm. You could easily forget what was around you, a large city with millions of inhabitants - the lake widened and I reached the part of the lake where you could rent a boat, where you were allowed to use it. Afore I passed a barrier in the lake, obviously some parts of the lake were for the birds only.

The Boathouse Cafe? A short rest or a coffee to go? I saw a sign that showed the way to the next restroom - a very good idea, because I saw none at the cafe. Back to the cafe? A large breakfast and java u? I decided to continue walking and chose the way uphill. Now the park changed. So far the water dominated the impression, the birds. Now ways with trees and large areas of grass appeared - and a very interesting phenomenon. At the lake you had no idea about this part of the park, here you had no idea that nearby was a large lake. The park was very diverse, from no place you could see all of the park. Very different to the parks that I knew from home, not to mention the rich greenness all around me. From here on it was easy to reach the zoo, but I decided to walk back, on the other side of the lake, the lake which I could not see any longer.

As I hit the lake again I entered a beautiful bridge, reached a very quaint part of the park. The birds were back again, also swans, but the normal white ones, nevertheless very beautiful animals - I stayed for a while. As I continued I reached a - for London circumstances - large road. The park's end, so fast? A map, I looked at it and discovered that I had reached the Inner Circle. Beyond the street was another part of the park, a very interesting part as it seemed. But I had to look for an entrance, but I saw that I would have not to walk that long. As said previously, I never planned my walks through foreign cities, only roughly, the rest developed as it developed. I reached the entrance, another place to rest, to drink or eat something, but I was not interested in to have a rest, nor I was interested in to drink or to eat something. I continued with my walking and this was a very good idea.

I decided to use the way with the rectangular rose beds at both sides. Not that much roses at the moment, too early in the year for them, but I hit the main axis of this circular part of the park therewith. It was an interesting view, obviously at the end of the way there would be a kind of central place of this part of the park. But I decided spontaneously to follow the narrower way to my left, the continuation of the way I had used before. As said, I never planned anything, I decided always spontaneously, what doing next. Yes, I missed some very nice parts of the park therewith, not saw the boy with the frog or Mary's roses, but I discovered the wonderful area around the Japanese Garden Island. I spent some time there, listened to the water's mumble, of the larger streams and the very small ones. It was very calming to be here, but yet it would be only for some time, therefore I decided to leave the park.

I rounded the nice lake and hit the inner circle again through one of this nice wrought-iron - black and golden - gates, which you could found often in this city. A short way and I was again at the corner York Gate and Ulster Terrace - the place where I had started with my way through Regent's Park.

I followed York Gate till I reached Marylebone Road, which I crossed. I followed the road a short way, reached the corner Marylebone Road and Marylebone High Street and I entered Marylebone

High Street - I was hungry and thirsty. Another short way and I reached the first side-street, Nottingham Street, and at the corner I saw "Le Pain Quotidien". It was not the first time that I saw "Le Pain Quotidien", near to my hotel I had saw one, but not had entered it, this time I entered the - what was it?

Obviously a bakery, one could buy very delicious looking bread, different rolls, different kinds of pastry.....all looked very delicious. But then obviously also a restaurant, many seats, people ate different, very good looking, dishes, some had coffee or tea and something sweet - I took a seat and saw the board at the wall. It told you, that this was a Belgian bakery and restaurant, that "Le Pain Ouotidien" meant "the daily bread" in French - I took the menu. All very much organic, not cheep, but looked very interesting. Why not, I decided for the "Smoked Chicken Cobb" and a jasmine tea. The salad was simply fantastic and the tea refreshing. I finished with a lemon tart and another jasmine tea, now I had time to concentrate more on what happened on the street outside.

I looked at my clock, it was later as I thought, shortly after 4pm - many school kids in their school uniforms on the street. Obviously school was out for today, the kids on their way home - what would be the first what I would do at home? Away with this fucking school uniform, normal clothes - especially if I would be a girl! But maybe it was different if you would be used to it, for me it looked strange.

A group of five girls passed the window - a description? Cute, more cute, extremely cute! English schoolgirls - catholic! - in their school uniforms, one of this men's topics. America's porn industry? Schoolgirls, coeds.....everything one could wish in short skirts - especially fucked by black men with large cocks - interracial porn, one of America's favorites!

Strange, inappropriate, thoughts while looking at underage schoolgirls on London's streets? Don't be that naive, don't pretend as this world would be a nice one. Yes, this was Great Britain, still thinking that it would be an empire, still thinking that to be English would be a synonym for being something special, still not admitted to themselves what they had did in the former colonies, only to name India. Of course, do not talk about it, then it not happens - weren't there some "scandals" in the past? BBC? Pakistani inhabitants? I looked at the young girl walking by with her nice queue, her blazer, her white blouse, her short skirt, black stockings - warm day today? - and her black leather shoes. I wish you the best for your life, hope that you will find a good partner, man or woman, that at least some of your dreams will come true, that we older will not destroy this world completely and therewith your future, that your life will spare you of the worst things. I payed and left "Le Pain Quotidien".

It had gotten dark and I was back gain in "my" quarter, thought about what I should do with the rest of the day - pub again, "hello darling, what can I do for?" again? Why not?

I entered the pub, many customers, even if it was not that long till closing time. But I found a seat at the bar, but "she" was not to see. Instead a man, smaller, lean, thirty / thirty-two?, with a movie actor's voice, rough - he could be really an actor! I ordered an ESB again.

I started therewith to concentrate on my beer, thought about the day, not realized that the pub emptied more and more, that the man behind the bar finished his work, that a younger woman replaced him, that he took a seat not far away from me. But suddenly I became aware of him, of both, because they started a discussion.

He obviously tried to order a drink or a cocktail and she refused it, to give him one. She talked about last week, what had happened last week, that he had at least five or even more of them, that he was totally drunken at the end. He said that he only wanted one, one after-work drink, but she stayed rigid.

I started to concentrate on my beer again, but became some problems to do so. Was not sure about, whether they were new customers, had not noticed them before - were I blind now! Forget the other two at the table, concentrate on the young man and "her"! "She" wore a woolen sweater with an extraordinary generous neckline. But much more "interesting"? The sweater was "a bit" oversized and she always bent towards the young man - and me - while talking with him. Okay, she wore a bra, a very sexy one, but it was obviously what she did. And the young man was obviously very

bashful and shy, not knowing where to he should look - enjoy it, I fear, that more of her you will never see! I looked at the clock.

Still a bit of time, but far too less for a second beer, at least for me. I decided to visit the restroom, again some problems therewith, payed and walked back to the hotel, but not directly. I walked around a bit, my second day in the city came to an end now, tomorrow would be my third. Again I had no plans for tomorrow, I would decide it during tomorrow's breakfast.

### **My Third Day In London**

I sat in the breakfast room, enjoyed me scrambled eggs, the toast, the marmalade and all the other things, looked at the TV. No, still no royal baby, but.....today was the London Marathon? Had no idea about it, but why not? I still had no distinct plans for today - why not a marathon? Sorry, The Marathon! I finished my breakfast and hit the road. I had saw that the finish of the marathon was at Buckingham Palace and The Mall - I was there at my first day! So again the way through Hyde Park and Green Park to Buckingham Palace and The Mall, and in fact everything was prepared there for the event. It was very early, but I saw runners already - but very young runners? Already some audience there, but not that much - or? I had no problem to find a place directly at the barrier, at the corner Spur Road and The Mall. Opposite to me, at the corner Constitution Hill and The Mall a large screen - the live TV broadcast? In any case, I got some information.

The marathon as such had not started till now, the professional runners, the international stars. What happened now were pre-runings, young runners - male and female - in different classes and different championships. The city championships for example, for males and females, different age classes - not the whole distance, or? Some enthusiastic parents not far apart from me - and pure British sportsmanship? From the corner where I stood, it was only the finishing straight till home - a hundred yards maybe? A young boy stumbled in the bend, he was totally exhausted - and what happened? Another young boy came and helped him, supported him and together they walked over the finish line - yeah, the Brits!

But the young runners were not the only ones on the track at the moment, also the handicapped runners and the wheelchairs, this futuristic looking machines! Also they started in many different classes and it was cool that, whenever a runner came nearer, all the audience started to clap and shout. And if it was obvious that the runner had problems, that he or she had given everything, the applause and the shouting became even more intense. It was a good feeling to be a part of this crowd - I saw me on the screen? Could millions see me now?

But then the main race begun, the favorites got introduced. I had to confess that I knew none of them. One or two names - Leule Gebrselassie?, Eliud Kipchoge? - sounded not totally unknown, but.....I was not sure. But what fascinated me the most was the total number of runners, and to see this sea of runners from the helicopter - over forty thousand runners, over four hundred thousand had asked for the possibility to run! Then the main race begun, the top favorites at first and then more and more of the other runners. It would take a long time, till all runners would even have crossed the starting line! Not to talk about that they would have crossed the finish line? Sportsmanship.....

Sportsmanship was also, that still runners from many different classes reached the last corner, the finish line. The "back-markers", long after the winners of their individual classes, who now got even more support from the audience than the winners. In fact the first victory ceremonies had just started. And hey, also the special areas alongside The Mall, with seats for the celebrities, began to fill - sure, who would like it, to miss the winner of the race! Some royals would be there also! But I concentrated on the runners again - another wheelchair? It was a longer time ago that I had saw the first one, but also this athlete got supported by the crowd.

The fastest runners would need something more than two hours they said, and talked about a possible world record. The conditions would be good this year, last year very hot, too hot, but this year much colder, but not too cold, very good conditions for the runners, maybe a world record? I

was not interested in it, as they showed pictures from the starting area, about more and more runners who began with their individual race now - but a lot of them were still not on the track. My phone rang - a SMS?

I looked at the message: "Number 36 765 is the murderer!"? Okay, a joke, but who tried to fool me? Nobody from the States - who should know, that I would stand here at the moment, watching the race? The TV broadcast? Who would sit now, who would know me, in front of a TV in the States - time shift! - watching the London Marathon? I mean, we're talking about America? Even the Boston or the New York Marathon were not the favorite sports events in the USA - but the London Marathon - live? But who would know my number in Britain? I knew nobody in Britain, I had give this number nobody - I decided to ignore the message for the moment, the race had developed. As always runners from Africa led the field, the men's field as well as the women's field. Not far apart from me stood a woman of African decent now, who waved a flag - not sure about the nation. In both leading groups were runners from Kenya and Ethiopia - I hoped that her favorites would win. And not a long time later it got obvious, as the reporter mentioned Eliud Kipchoge from Kenya, that he would look very good today - she waved the flag even more now and was very happy about the heard. I could not get this stupid message out of my head!

The run took its course and it would not last long and we would know who the winner of the male race would be - Eliud Kipchoge from Kenia in the lead, but Mosinet Geremew from Ethiopia not that much behind him. And also the women's race was led by a Kenyan runner, Brigid Kosgei. Her lead was very comfortable, so everything looked like a double win for Kenya, much to the delight to the woman near to me, waving her flag even more enthusiastically now.

I looked around, does the sender of the message was among the crowd? But my number? I looked at he large screen - Eluid Kipchoge had reached Birdcage Walk, soon I would see him, soon he would be the winner, if nothing strange would still happen. The crowd started to get louder, the star from Kenia passed me, now it was definitive that he would be the winner. But also the following runners, Mosinet Geremew and Mule Wasihun, both from Ethiopia, got a fantastic support for the last yards, maybe the crowd cheered even more for them?

Then the women's race. Brigid Kosgei dominated the race now, Vivian Cheruiyot, also from Kenia, and Roza Dereje from Ethiopia followed her, crossing the finish line. The race was over now? Of course not! For some the race would still last many hours, but nobody left. And also I stayed and cheered for the runners who passed us now in a large number. Men and women, young and old - it was not important, the crowd cheered for every runner, especially for them who were exhausted. And one moment was no good moment, a runner collapsed at Spur Road, not much away from me - medics had to carry the runner away on a stretcher. A tent from the Red Cross was on the other side of the road, near Victoria Memorial. I had not looked at my clock, many runners had passed now, many were still on the track, as I had the impulse to move on.

I decided to walk to Birdcage Walk on the other side of St. James Park, but it was not that easy, because I could not simply follow Spur Road. It was only possible to use the road till the provisional footbridge which I had used earlier to cross Spur Road, then the road was blocked. But in the end this was no problem, I could walk through St. James's Park, what would give me also the opportunity to see the black swans again. It was wonderful to see them again, looked at them for some time, then I continued with my walk. I reached Birdcage Walk were also many stood, cheering as one runner after the other passed them. I did the same while walking down Birdcage Walk - I was hungry and thirsty now! Tattershall Castle again? I thought that everything in this area would be very crowded at such a day - I reached Horse Guards Road and entered it.

I followed it and.....was this the meet and greet area of which they had talked about? I saw signs with letters - the last letters of the alphabet? 36 765 - could I meet him here? Would I have to know his - or hers? - name? But when this runner would arrive at the finish, still on the track? That would make no sense! What should I do? The next police station? My smartphone showed me, that the Metropolitan Police at Victoria Embankment was not far away?

New Scotland Yard - The Yard - the famous sign - James Bond? Well, no police station as such, the headquarter of the Metropolitan Police was the building, I stood in front of. Would it be possible there to speak with an "ordinary" police officer? I saw a gate and addressed the gatekeeper, he asked me about my concern and I told him about it. I not forgot to say, that everything could be a joke, but that everything was very strange in a way and that maybe.....maybe it would be better to report the matter? A short time after, a police officer sat opposite to me, and we talked about the matter.

"As I said, it's absolutely possible that it was only a joke - not a good one, I have to say."

"That the number has been suppressed is interesting, but this not excludes a bad joke. We will see what our experts can do. So, you know nobody in England, in London, you said?"

"No, everything appears like a stupid joke or a very strange coincident - both not very probable?"

"That you shouldn't had to be the recipient of the message, that it was a mistake?"

"Something like this, but that sounds a bit constructed?"

Another police officer came, and both walked away. I sat and waited till he came back, my phone in his hands.

"I think this is all so far. We have your contact information, have a nice holiday and a nice concert in Bristol."

"Would you give me some information – occupational curiosity? I think it was not that difficult for you to get in contact with the officials from the marathon?"

"No.....okay. No runner with this number was or is on the track."

"I've heard about over forty thousand runners?"

"Yes, okay. In fact a runner with this number had signed in, but he not appeared, he not participated in the race."

"But that should be no problem, the officials have to have his data - address and more?"

"Yes, they should, but the data is faked. The address, the name, whatever, everything seems to be wrong."

"They not checked his data? After what all happened in this city? Wow!"

"Please allow me, to say goodbye now. Of course, should you get more such messages....."

"Sure, I will inform you immediately."

I left the building, not very satisfied. Sure, they would not keep me informed, in the end I was surprised that I had got any information after all, but everything sounded a bit strange. And I? I would have no chance to investigate anything. If this would be a joke - I should do some calls!

I looked at the river, the phone calls resulted in nothing. No longer I was hungry - the Tattershall Castle was only a few yards away? It was a days with sun and clouds, windy at the river, but this was London, Great Britain? In this sense the weather was fantastic and I decided to enter the Tattershall Castle to have a beer on deck.

On deck was a bar, several kinds of beer, but no ESB? I decided for a London Pride, also not that bad. I looked at the Ferris Wheel at the other side, the ships on the water, the people walking by on land. The marathon was still not over, still runners were on the track - how many murderers would be among them? Stupid thoughts!

I stood up, it was nearly 4pm, and decided to walk along Victoria Embankment in direction of the City of London. The Golden Jubilee Bridges and rails above me, I reached Waterloo Bridge and decided to walk back, in direction of the hotel. A short way off the river I reached Strand. I followed the street back, till I reached Trafalgar Square - the National Gallery? Too late!

Trafalgar Square, the 60s? I thought about to eat something, to drink something, but I had to walk. Pall Mall now, till I reached the end of the street and a building with merlons like a medieval castle. I walked around the building, the St. James's Palace in the end, and was back again. Green Park at the one side, St. James's Park on the other side - the marathon was over now, or?

I was back in Paddington, "java u" Pread Street. English breakfast tea in the evening, a tasty self-made salad and something sweet thereafter. It was really a nice small place, more seats downstairs, but I had found a seat upstairs. What should I do with this day - hey, I was the big private dick from

the States! But this was the land of the Bobbies - unarmed police officers, what a strange idea? It was funny to see English crime movies, where unarmed police officers examined a suspicious house - hey, where were the special forces? Some different ideas about gun laws, how many cases of gun violence in Great Britain? I stood up and left.

Back in the hotel around the corner, refreshment, new clothes - not the time for the bed. Around the corner, pub, hello darling, ESB. I had headache and I drank much too fast, after the second pint it was obvious that it was enough for this day - in any matters. The way to the restroom was a really difficult on this time, downstairs and upstairs. I walked out and the cool air hit me like a heavy punch. Should I sit down for a moment - the seats outside? Only a short distance till the hotel, a few corners - maybe I would meet a murderer? Two fucking pints, maybe I should stick at breakfast tea the next time? I managed it, back in the hotel, the tough Marlowe from the States!

### **My Fourth Day In London**

The usual morning ceremony - I was the first in the breakfast room. As always cereals, toast and scrambled eggs, marmalade and honey, yogurt - and still no royal baby! I thought about what to do today, Oxford Street I had thought of. Would be easy to reach, around the corner to Hyde Park, alongside Hyde Park and I would be there, right at the beginning of the street. I could walk down the street and then we could see. Soho would be in this direction, but I was not that much interested in - more one of this tourist's things, or?

I looked at the TV - Brexit, Theresa May? Well, as an American I should be careful to pontificate about the Brexit, but come on! Maybe it should calm me down, that also in Europe they were not smarter as in the States? In fact, this frightened me even more! They talked about, that the days of Theresa May maybe were counted, Boris Johnson as possible successor? Wow, "my" president and Boris Johnson, that would be a couple! I hoped, that at least this fate would be spared the world. I finished with my breakfast, packed my things and headed out.

Oxford Street, more like a side street? Okay, no city created at the drawing board - and slightly older as every American city. One from the States should keep this in mind!

I started to walk down the street, the shops, department stores maybe - it bored me somewhat. I reached Oxford Circus? Okay, I was not interested in shopping, especially no clothes, or shoes even? Otherwise this would have been heaven on earth to me! But shopping I could do at home - American mega-stores and huge malls? I looked around, any longer following Oxford Street? Maybe I should tell from a very fantastic thing here in the city now. Especially in "tourist's areas" one could find every few yards an information point. A pillar with two maps on it. One map for proximity, one map for the wider area. Also circles for different distances - and the best? The maps showed exactly the part in front of you! So, this side of the pillar one direction, the other side of the pillar the other direction. This meant, that on every pillar there had to be different maps, on both sides! Therewith it was totally easy to just walk around - yeah, I know, smartphones and all this stuff! But I appreciated this service very much.

So I stood in front of the map to decide whether I should follow Oxford Street any longer or.....I decided to follow Regent Street from now on. Regent Street would lead me to Piccadilly Circus - why not!

Also Regent Street could not get my attention, at least not very much. But I had only to walk a few hundred yards and I was there - the world famous Piccadilly Circus! Okay, it was a plaza, a small plaza. This should not sound arrogant, but you had to think in another way, here in Europe. Used to this planned American cities with this very strict system of blocks - everything large and broad. Here in a city like London everything was chaotic and much smaller, much less organized, much more cozy. It was much more difficult to navigate, with a car I would have had a lot of problems -

not to talk about driving on the wrong side. But imagine an American city - driving from Main Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street? Five blocks straight on, then turn left and another four blocks - a toddler can do this! But in a city like London, and with this traffic density? Where are the city highways, the American ones with ten or more lanes!

No, it was nice to be here and I could understand that it could be cool, to hang around here in the evenings and nights - especially as a young person. But it was not evening now, I was not young anymore and I was in a restless mood. Therefore I looked around somewhat, looked for the next map to decide where to I should head next. I decided to follow Shaftesbury Avenue - an Avenue with two lanes!

I started to follow the narrow road, theaters and clubs, I was south of Soho. But also this could not fetch my interest, all was very different as in the States - China Town was also near, or? I searched for something, unfortunately I was not aware of what I searched. I only knew that I searched something. I continued walking, reached Holborn, followed Holborn, that all made no sense. I reached another information point, another map and looked at it.

I was in the City of London now, the known landmarks, but I felt no motivation to see or visit them. St. Paul's was near, the Tower further way, the castle as well as the bridge - still no motivation. The Thames, yes, the river. I entered Farringdon Street, a few hundred yards, and I stood at the riverside. I thought about to cross the Millennium Bridge, but why I should? There was a.....was it a private celebration or a public space? I wasn't sure about it, but it was of no importance, I would not fit to this people.

London, a city of the rich, an arrogant city, more, a city of people who were proud of to be arrogant. A city where class distinction was a basis for the daily life. Women in beautiful dresses, stockings, high heels, styled, make up, jewelry - would I like it, to be among them? I turned and looked at the water, slowly streaming, and was sure - no, never I would have liked it, to be among them. A young woman walked by, blond hair, chin-length, a coat, knee-length, creme-colored, black cotton tights, and black t-strapped shoes. I looked at the water, slowly streaming. I decided to walk back, to walk alongside the River Thames.

I started to walk back, alongside the River Thames. It would be a not that long way, but I had time, no reason to hurry up. Maybe I should eat something, I could buy me a sandwich or something alike. Was this city a more brutal city than a city like Los Angeles? Well, not at every corner you saw homeless people sitting in their tents? The city was a clean city, very clean compared with Los Angeles? But yet, I had always the feeling, that this city was much more brutal than Los Angeles. It was the brutality of snobbishness, at every corner you got told that money would be everything. I wasn't sure, but I could not imagine to live in this city. It surprised me in some ways, this was Europe? Maybe Great Britain was not the best place for workers' rights and such topics, but compared with the US? The health care system, the social security net? Had I watched too much English TV series? Even to think about Monty Python and English comedy as such not helped, I was not able to get rid of the feeling, that this was a society deeply permeated by pronounced class mentality, and London was its capital.

In the evening I would be back in Paddington, maybe eating something in a Persian grill. I was at the border of "The City of London" today, in a few days I would be in Bristol and Dover. Would it be different there? Of course! But the question would be, would I like it more to be there, than to be in London? The parks were beautiful in London, interesting architecture and culture, but I had a problem with that, what I assumed, that it would be the basis for the daily living together. To say it in that way, I had the feeling that there was no living together.

Maybe that sounds somewhat weird, said by an American. But in the States you knew that money was everything - look at the primaries! Most interesting was, how much money a candidate could collect - money was everything! It was most important, how much money a movie made at the box office, how much a musician was worth of - money was the measure for everything! That was a



known fact, it was the daily message the States gave you. And yet..... - did I not got it? I felt repelled by the city - attracted by a city like Los Angeles? Maybe I was too much American.....

I reached Westminster again, and thought about to eat something at the Tattershall Castle. But there was this other Le Pain Quotidien in Paddington? I would need somewhat longer to reach it, but I still had time. I had looked, it would close at 8pm. I decided to continue with walking, through the nice parks, alongside the lakes, seeing the black swans again.

I reached Le Pain Quotidien short before 7pm. I ordered a tea and something for dinner. I would have a large selection of different things for something sweet thereafter and started to ponder about the city again, as the door opened. Apart me, only one table was occupied, it seemed that at this time the daily business was more or less over. I heard that the waiter welcomed the new guest in an extravagant way. But this seemed to be his standard, also me he had welcomed with many words, even if it was my first time here. I raised my head.

At a small table near the door a woman sat now, I saw her obliquely from the back, I could not see her face. Obviously she was younger, maybe around thirty? She wore a flowered dress, black opaque stockings and black t-strapped shoes - the second time today. I was not sure about, could I not understand his city?

Later I sat in the pub, "darling" today again. Again an ESB, again one was enough for me. It was a very strange day today, what should I make out of it? Tomorrow another day in London, then I would travel to Bristol. What should I do tomorrow, apart from looking for a connection and buying the ticket? Would be not enough for the whole day.

## **Paddington Station**

Paddington Station, only a few corners away from my hotel, the station, where I had arrived from Heathrow. I loved train stations, airports as well, harbors of course. All this places, where many people arrived, many departed. Where did they come from? What would be their aims? Some had a lot of luggage, others not. Some were in groups, others alone. Some wore ordinary clothes, others were dressed up in a very sophisticated way - it was always interesting, to be at such a place.

I looked for a schedule, found an information point with flyers for single connections - London / Bristol, there it was! My plan was to depart early, to arrive early in Bristol. I would check in, and would have some hours to discover the city somewhat. In the evening the concert. The next day I could decide then, at what time I would return to London. So far so good, but then I found a mistake in my plan - well, the British rail? I could buy a cheaper ticket, but it would be not valid the whole day. It would not allow me, to drive during the rush hours? I needed more information - easily I found a ticket counter, one with real people behind the counter.

Okay, this was Great Britain. Politeness and cooperativeness was no question in this country. Therefore it was an easy thing to find the best solution for me, the man behind the desk had a very good solution. I could not use the ticket in a very limited time span during some rush hours, but apart from this the whole day. And to be honest, I was not interested in, to drive during the rush hours!

Now I had my tickets, one for each direction, and a print out of my traffic connections - and now. I looked at my clock, it was still early in the morning. The station? Well, I would be here tomorrow again? And it was always my habit, to be around very early. I would have at least two hours or so for the train station tomorrow - and today? I decided to buy me a coffee to go, and to leave the station.

I just entered Praed Street, thought about to buy me a coffee at the java u in the street, why not sitting down, I had time, as my smart phone told me that I had got a SMS: "See you in Bristol!" - what a motherfucker tried to fool me! I looked around - it could be everyone. Therefore I tried to be cool, crossed the street, to walk the few yards to the java u.

The smaller java u, it was early in the morning. Many seats were occupied, especially those at the nice wooden table. But two or three others were unoccupied. The young woman behind the counter made me aware that downstairs would be additional seats, but I took my flat white and asked a young man if I could have the seat next to him.

This place was a very good one, I could see the street outside, I could see the door. But as said, it could be everyone. My idea was to look at the people around me, on the street, to keep faces in my mind. It would be interesting to see, if I would recognize a face tomorrow at the station, on the train or in Bristol. And now?

It would make no real sense to try the whole day to keep faces in mind. I thought about whether I should go to the police again or not. I discarded it. So, what should I do with this weird morning, with the whole rest of the day.

I decided to walk through the parks, as I had done it before, and so I stood at the lake again, looking at the black swans. I was pissed off! I was here to attend a wonderful concert, to listen to three wonderful voices, the three most wonderful voices I knew, in a former church, a capella, and someone tried to spoil me this. Maybe it was a joke of someone of real bad taste, but who should be this "one"? Would I be at home maybe, but in London, the UK? I looked at the elegant and so gracile black swans and decided to take all this not to serious. Okay, somebody talked about murder, but whom? Me? Somebody with whom I had a previous encounter, as private dick? But again, here in the UK? Yeah, very beautiful creatures, this black swans.

I reached the River Thames, a lot of water in it. Heavy barriers towards the sea tried to protect the city from the water. Thought, to protect the city by storm. And yet, the levels of the seas and oceans rose every year, how long this barrier could protect this city from this threat? And all the large cities around the world located at coasts? Not protected in such a way? I looked at the River Thames, tomorrow I would drive to Bristol. London so far? Not my city! I looked at the River Thames and had no idea what I should do - strange in such a city, or?

## **Bristol**

Paddington Station again, I had only a small bag and my backpack with me, no luggage as such. I would stay only one night in Bristol, the rest of my luggage was still in my hotel room in London - I would pay for two rooms this night. But it was easier, than to carry everything around for only one night. Paddington Station early in the morning, as expected I was there long before my train would depart.

I liked it to be at places like train stations or airports. I liked the mood at such places, the many people arriving or departing. I decided to have a coffee in one of the places, the station offered you. In some hours I would be in Bristol, I would check in, I would have some time, then I would hear the most wonderful voices on earth - a capella in a former church. There were two songs, or maybe three or four? Would they sing them? Even if not, this would become a very special evening. Well, not the first concert for me, and not the first impressive artist I would see, but as said, the most wonderful voices on earth.

Two sisters, together with a third female voice. Each voice alone, but all three together, like a choir of a thousand angels! Well, I imagined this, it would be the first time to hear them a capella, the first time to hear them live. Whereby, on some songs on their albums the music was very reduced - maybe this could give you an impression of what one could expect? I was excited! I looked at the other people, would some also be one the way to Bristol? Most probably not, but you never could know - yeah, you never could know!

I have had my coffee, but still time. I walked around - nice old train station. It was a terminal station, not uncommon for a train station in a large city. More uncommon, at least for me as an

American, was the British system. Sure, you bought a ticket, but you had to show the ticket before you were allowed to enter the platforms. With other word, only ticket owner could enter the platforms - how unromantic was this! Hey, all these movies, all these lovers, a last kiss on the platform before he or she had to enter the train - or the other way around? The train arrives, he or she waits, the door opens, and then.....nothing! Because you had to leave the platform first, by showing your ticket, and then in the hall you could embrace and kiss the beloved one - not before! Oh Brits, where was your romantic side?

I liked it, to look at the other travelers - the Heathrow Express? Not my train today, just right now the express arrived. Many people left the train, from around the world they could be. And some still waited to enter the train - their aims? All over the world there aim could be - I entered the platform for my train, not all over the world, Bristol would be my aim. The train to Bristol was already ready for leaving, I had still nearly ten minutes till the departure. All the time I had hoped to get a new SMS. This would have given me the guarantee, that the person who was behind the emails, would be in the train with me. As expected, not that many passengers were in the train, the number of suspects would have been very small in that case. But maybe I would get an email while heading to Bristol? After I had took a seat at a window, I looked outside at the station platform - four minutes till departure, and because this was British Rail, I had no doubts about that we would leave the station in time. I leant back, the train started to move.

It was always interesting to see a city from a train, not the shiny facades at the streets you saw in that case, but the shabby backyards instead - and this could tell you much more about a city. Through industrial areas, quarters you would not have been in otherwise, it was always interesting using a train to explore a large city - much better as by car. Driving a car, you had to concentrate on the traffic, especially in an unknown city, not to talk about, if you would have to drive on the wrong side. In a train you could lean back and you could open yourself totally to the expressions you had. I liked it, but also a disadvantage - maybe a disadvantage. A train not stopped if you saw something interesting, often only a glimpse was possible, a short moment, sometimes surreal, sometimes confusing, sometimes extremely impressive.

As always in the city limits the train moved slowly forward, we passed a patrol station, but soon we drove through the suburbs of London. I had no idea in which part of London we were at a certain time, sometimes I could read a sign at a station, but it was interesting to see these suburbs. Very different to the USA. This typical row houses, bricks, as you knew it from the pictures or TV - was this still London, or had we already crossed the city limits?

We would need around one and three-quarter hours to reach Bristol, somewhat over ten minutes I was in the train now, but now I was sure that we were no longer in London. More and more landscape, independent cities - Maidenhead I could read, no longer in London definitively. I looked at the soft hills, the green, some lakes. Not that you could not find such a landscape in the US, the States were huge, very huge! It was, that I knew, difficult for the Europeans to understand, that the States were roughly as large as Europe - without Alaska! But even more, you could find more diverse landscapes in the USA, than in Europe! The snowy Rockies, the deserts in the south. The Great Plains and the region alongside the Great Lakes. The Sun Belt and Florida and the New England States. And much much more! But this landscape here, in the south of England was very different to the landscape of my home. After twenty-five minutes we reached our first way station - Reading.

Obviously Reading was no small city, at least for an English city. London, and maybe some more somewhat larger cities in England, but nothing comparable to New York or Los Angeles, not to talk about Greater Los Angeles! Well, maybe I was unfair now, to compare England with the whole USA. Some states in the USA had fewer inhabitants than London! But what I meant was, that England appeared like what I knew from media or movies. Small cities, the typical houses, the green landscape - could be perfect. But then there were these movies, novels or news. The Brits, some dark secrets behind closed doors. A strange humor, and not only the humor was strange.

Freaks and people with strange obsessions and tics. British comedy, from Monty Python till today - I thought that such stuff told you a lot about a society. In America? Well: *Are there any niggers here tonight*.....

Well, a problem with sitting in a train was, that I could not easily leave the train for some time to continue with my travel later. In a way yes, and in a way I was not interested in, because my aim was to reach Bristol early, but with a car you can stop for a short time, ten or fifty minutes to have a look at something, traveling by train made this a bit difficult, but as said, Bristol was my aim. But I had the feeling that also Reading would have been an interesting aim - at least I had this impression, looking out of the window, as the train continued with its travel.

The landscape changed somewhat now, soft hills, farmland, lot of smaller woods, a lot of green. It was a comforting landscape, it was nice to look at, while driving through. We passed, or drove through, some smaller cities as the train stopped for a second time – Didcot.

Still this well known red row houses, should this be more than a cliché? And behind the doors? Hadn't England not a long history of conflicts? The fights connected with worker rights? The dissatisfaction of the youth? .....*the Queen and her fascist regime*..... - was this correctly quoted? The unequal distribution of assets? On the other hand one could see this as a proud history, of standing for your rights! Northern Ireland?

Not only! Wales and Scotland? A very bloody history about religion and suppression, a history of suffering. But in the last decades good developments, not every week news about bombs and death in Belfast - Derry! And yet, everything was questioned by a voting based on obvious lies - not only in the states "truth" had become a relative thing in our times. The train moved on.

From Didcot we needed fifteen minutes to our next stop, the next somewhat larger city, Swindon, again through soft hills, green land, from time to time a grove. Also this city looked interesting, at least seen from a train. I asked myself, if it had been more interesting to spent time in such smaller cities, than in London. Often the idea was, staying in a foreign country, that you should visit the capital city. Well, the USA and Washington was maybe no good example - I mean, who was interested in Washington anyway? But England, you had to stay in London? France, you had to stay in Paris? The USA, you had to stay in New York or Los Angeles? Well, I looked forward to Bristol, as the train continued its way.

The next part of the travel was very short, ten minutes later we arrived in Chippenham, again a smaller city, and another twenty minutes later we arrived in Bath, again a somewhat larger city, the last stop before our final destination. The landscape was hillier now, the hills often covered with woods, I thought this landscape somewhat more interesting. I leant back, in around twenty minutes we would arrive in Bristol. So far the travel was a very relaxed one, no new SMS. Maybe I should forget this stupid matter? The train started rolling again, for the last time, soon I would be in Bristol, soon I would hear the wonderful voices.

The train needed another twenty minutes from Bath to Bristol, only for a shorter time we drove through the open landscape, soon we reached the outskirts of Bristol. Bristol was one of the largest cities on the isles with nearly half a million inhabitants, Bristol was an old city, for an American an unbelievably old city. Most of the historic buildings were older than any American city, even when WWII left over several scars and losses.

We drove alongside the Avon, a long tunnel, crossed the Avon, industrial areas, crossed the Avon again and reached the train station - Bristol Temple Meads. I left the train, a roofed railway track awaited me - only two tracks? I looked for the exit and realized that there were obviously more tracks "outside"? I was somewhat puzzled as I saw the way out, the barriers were you had to use your ticket to be able to enter the hall of the station, to leave the platform - and it was fascinating. The "hall" was small, very small, but appeared like the hall of a church, simply beautiful. Later I realized that this train station was one of the oldest train stations - in the whole world! I was enchanted and left the station.

My first impression standing in front of the station? A parking lot in the middle, a way around it, to drive to the station, or to drive off the station, many taxis waited. To the left and right a row of low stone houses, sand stone, obviously also very old. An interesting looking building straight ahead -

also obviously fitting to the houses to my left and right, but much larger. In the background a modern apartment block, not disturbed the view overall. I turned around and saw the forefront of the station for the first time - the train had approached from the other side. I was speechless.

To me the station appeared like church, a cathedral even. And yes, I knew, that had been the intention of the architect, but train stations in the US? Whereby, in a way the hall of this station reminded me somewhat to the famous hall of the Union Station in Los Angeles - no, this hall was very different. The difference was, that these buildings not tried to appear old, they simply were old, very old for an American. I was fascinated from this view as my phone told me that I had received a new SMS - not now! It was stupid, but I looked at the message: Welcome in Bristol, no twenty-four hours anymore. - Fucking asshole! I called the police in London, asked them what I should do, whether I should contact the police in Bristol. They asked me to send them the SMS, I should do nothing myself. In a way I was not satisfied with this, on the other hand it gives me the possibility to ignore it. But after all, what would have been my possibilities? Some anonymous SMS? I was no IT expert, I was a classic private dick, I should walk to my hotel.

Walking? Yes, walking! I had only some luggage, the hotel was not far away, no mile, and with a slight detour I could have a look at the venue first. I would walk to the venue, then to the hotel, check in, refreshing, relaxing, and then the concert, that was my plan. I had the way in my head, used Google Earth yesterday, and knew the direction, more or less - I liked it, to do it that way.

No smartphone? No GPS? To be honest: No! I owned a cell phone, I could receive SMS, could write SMS in what I was not interested in - hey, the cell phone had even a camera, had no idea how to use it, but it had one! Okay, I was somewhat old-fashioned what phones concerned, better to say, I had no idea why I should need a phone with Internet access - because you would find the way to the hotel more easy? Hey, if I would have been interested in the easy way, I would have used a taxi! I was old, maybe old-fashioned in some ways, but no idiot!

I had memorized that I had to leave the station, had to walk towards the street, had to turn right, had to find Victoria Street. And hey, it was not that difficult, even when it was not that easy, because the area there was a large construction site - I had to look around somewhat, but then I found my way to enter Victoria Street. Now it was easy, following Victoria Street, crossing the bridge, and wow, that was why I liked it to walk. A nice park and some interesting buildings to my right, maybe I would have time to come back later - Bristol obviously a hilly city. I continued my way, now High Street, later Broad Street. Maybe this sounded difficult, but maybe fifty yards, uphill, then I had reached my first aim, a series of plazas, a kind of pedestrian area, definitively one of the main areas of Bristol. It was around 11 am now and it seemed, that the area would fill - some were there and ate something. Okay, it was the first day of May today, therefore it was no warm summer day, but I could imagine that in summer this was a widely used area to spend your lunch break. But I headed on.

The next what I had memorized was, that I had to follow the broad street, the next hill, and after the bend it became obvious, that it would be a very steep way I had to go. But on the other hand, I knew, that to find the venue, I would have not to walk the whole way uphill, later yes. But now, I had to find Great Georges Street to my left, there the venue, St. George's Bristol, a former church, would be. Also what I saw after the bend made compensation for the effort of walking, the next plaza, a green area, a very interesting - official? - building. And in the end it was easy, maybe somewhat exhausting, to find Great Georges Street, the next steep street. But only a few yards, and I stood in front of the entrance of the venue of the concert this evening, and it was a beautiful sight! But many hours I still had and I became curious, I decided to continue to follow the rest of the street up the hill - was there something? Yes, I could remember that there should be a large park, "behind" the venue. As I said, still enough time, an interesting park opened up, a park at a hillside. I was already sweaty, had enough time, would have a long shower in the hotel, I decided to enter the park, to walk uphill.

The first what I saw in the park were two young school girls in their school uniforms, running down the hill, maybe eleven or twelve. But they used not the ways, they ran over the grass, was this

allowed? Well, Hyde Park? Maybe I confused this with German behavior. I continued my way up the hill and realized that it would become a longer way, and that at the highest point there was a higher tower. I reached a traversal way, better a viewing area with benches, the view on Bristol was spectacular! I sat down for a moment, to have a rest, many benches were occupied. But then I had to move on, to reach the top, the tower, the highest point. A wonderful small path, paved with natural stone, led to the tower from my point on, even in May you could guess how beautiful this part of the park would be in summer with all the bushes and then blooming flowers - but I hesitated. Also alongside the path there were benches and on one a young couple sat. They kissed each other, talked with each other, and I had the feeling I would disturb them by walking by - I decided to continue my way to the hotel.

I reached Great George Street again, and then the street uphill. This time I would have to walk uphill the complete way, a way that became steeper and steeper - but I managed it, and again it paid out. The next impressive architecture, obviously very old, maybe a part of the university? Bristol hosted a university - or? At least many.....not school girls - students. Older than the two I saw in the park, but also with their uniforms. A female student dressed in a black skirt, black woolen tights and black patent-leather shoes passed me. She had straight long blond hairs, a white blouse - if I was not wrong - and with a coat of arms or so on her jacket. Maybe eighteen or twenty years old - like in a movie.

But I had to concentrate on my way. And my way would be now, that I knew, to follow the street to my left. I looked at the street sign - Park Row, that not sounded familiar? I tried to remember the real street name - not Park Row, or? "Upper" I had in mind, later I would need "Lower". Well, my system had it's weaknesses, but often it produced interesting results - I was sure that it was not Park Row. I decided to follow the street up the hill further on, now no longer so steep, to see the names of the following streets - when in doubt, I could walk back. The street made a bend after some yards and it became obvious that this was definitively the wrong way. I continued till the next branching street, a smaller street - Tyndalls Park Road. Again a park? There was no street with a park - or? So, what to do, walking back, maybe asking a student, I knew the name of the hotel! Or, using Tyndalls Park Road and seeing what would happen? I decided for Tyndalls Park Road.

A very good sign was, that I walked downhill now. Apart from that, that it was nice for me, the hotel had to be much lower than the venue, not to talk about the point I had reached now. The plazas, the pedestrian area, the hotel had to be in a more or less similar height, at least much lower as I was now. I became optimistic that my decision was a good one, as long as I had to realize that the street started to ascend again, very steep this time. But to return now would have been silly, therefore I continued, now I started to sweat really, but I saw that I would hit another street soon, that I would reach the highest point soon - I thought so!

In fact I hit a crossing street, in fact from now on Tyndalls Park Road would ascent again, but the direction looked not good! Okay, maybe this all seemed to be very confusing, but I had a good visual thinking. I stood at the corner Tyndalls Park Road and Woodland Road. Woodland Road plunged literally, and it was obvious that it would lead me more or less back to the beautiful building, the one with the female student, to Park Row. The train station had to be located quite accurately in linear direction, following Woodland Road. The hotel should be somewhat more to the left, longer following Tyndalls Park Road would be the totally wrong direction, I had to choose Woodland Road - downhill!

A new problem! I had to confess that my legs started to get somewhat tired. Steep downhill, often worse than uphill! On the other side of the street a school girl, or a student, walked uphill. I thought that she could be fourteen or nineteen. Sure, she wore her school uniform, short skirt, long legs, long straight hair, simply cute in any aspects. She appeared like the prototype of an English schoolgirl - fantastic for every TV series if fourteen, fantastic for every porn if nineteen - and her feelings? I asked myself whether she liked it, that she had to wear a school uniform, her skirt and her blouse, her tights and her jacket. Hey, I would be not the only one, who would see her as a cute ideal of an English school girl. And she, when she would have liked it more to wear jeans and a sweater at school? I reached Park Row again - and now?

The only decision could be to follow this street, Park Row, to see what would happen - or to walk back to the plazas, but this would be stupid. I followed Park Row and reached a Hospital for Children. I looked at a street sign - Upper Maudin Street! Fuck, that was the street I looked for, but I followed Park Row all the time - I was an idiot! At the beginning of my walk? Victoria Street, High Street, Broad Street? The same street, they changed the street names constantly. Park Row was Upper Maudin Street now, for no obvious reason! Now it should be easy, and it was easy. A few yards and right hand was the Lower Maudin Street. I entered the street and saw that Park Row / Upper Maudin Street would name Marlborough Street from now on! The last yards down Lower Maudin Street and there it was, my hotel! Don't tell me that my system not guided you to your hotel!

I entered the hotel, the Premier Inn Bristol City Center, soon I would have a long and hot shower, maybe a rest, maybe some more walking, soon I would hear some angels singing! A young man behind the counter, I showed him my booking information, everything was okay, the shower waited - and then? He had problems with the PC, with his booking system, could not finish the process. I could hear him mumbling that not for the first time, he walked away, came back - still problems! Okay, it was obvious that he was stressed by this, and he felt unwell. He apologized not only one time, but he could not fix the problem, already I was not the only one who waited - let's make it short! I stood and sat in the lobby for nearly half an hour, then he could finish the process, and he handed me the key - now I could enter the elevator, third floor, and entered my room in the end. I have to say that the room was very nice. Well, I needed the room only to sleep a single night in it, but it was a nice room. And the shower was nice, long and hot, very long! I looked at the clock, still enough time, I decided for a rest, till 5 pm, the concert would begin at 7 pm. I would have two hours then, could have an easy walk to the church, time for a coffee. I laid down and set the alarm clock I had with me.

My alarm clock rang, I stood up and felt not bad. For some while in the bathroom, deciding what clothes, clock and bracelet. 5:30 pm, time to have a slow walk to the venue. And due to my profound local knowledge which I had now, it was an easy walk. I used Upper Maudin Street, which later became Park Row, till I stood in front of the beautiful building again. Still some student on their way, looked somewhat like a church, maybe I should do some research later? I looked at the other people at the street and had to confess, well, yes, the elegant women in London, but the women in Bristol definitively no less elegant were. And I talked about the "ordinary" woman on the street, not about someone who was on the way to attended a concert in the evening.

Well, this time I could walk down the hill, and therefore it was very easy to reach the former church again. Everything was very easy and fast, time enough for a coffee before the concert. I had saw, as I was here before, that next to the church a modern annex was - obviously a place for a coffee or a glass of champagne before the concert, I entered the place. As expected some tables and a bar, I ordered a coffee and sat down. But then I had to use the restroom, looked for it, found it, and found out, that there was more than only the bar and the church hall, an exhibition in the crypt. Many interesting insights in the history of this place, I spent some time to read the interesting boards. Another coffee, then I decided to enter the hall.

The church hall, the concert hall, was beautiful - I was impressed. Instead of an altar a low stage, at wall behind the stage an impressive altarpiece in form of a temple. I had a seat on the gallery and went upstairs, walked in the direction of the stage, the wonderful piece of art at the wall. My seat was on the left side, looking in direction of the stage, very exactly at the beginning of the stage. Therefore I would look down on the three wonderful women, who would be on the stage later, sitting in the first row. It was still some time till the beginning of the concert, not so many people in the hall till now. I lent back, closed my eyes, and thought about the upcoming.

It wasn't just only this wonderful voices, the two sisters' voices and the third voice fitting in perfect harmony, it was the words they sang, so hardly to bear this combination. So wonderful voices,

sometimes the songs were funny, but so often sad, telling from hard work, awful tragedies, war and loss. I thought about whether they would sing one of the songs which affected me always the most, even yet, only thinking about them, I could not suppress my tears.

"Give Away Your Heart" - only the first tones of the piano and the slowed down drums, but then the words of not bearable beauty and endless cruelty - why something could be so devastatingly wonderful, it was a song to die - *Disappointment is everywhere, in your eyes, I can see it there.....* why your voices were so wonderful.....

"Ship building" - one tone of the piano, a pause, a few words, a male voice! *Is it worth it* - what a question! Should you answer it? And then the other voices set in, it's a perfect harmony - and again such an awful story-line! And then this very short moment, hearing the second male voice for a moment highlighted - it's breathtaking wonderful. *Diving for pearls.....*

"Sad February" - it's was wonderful to hear the three voices one after one, narrating this sad story, a story written by life, not sitting in a warm room in February, like I did, writing those words. How much more was such a song, then so much what was defined as popular and worth a "hall of fame"? Hearing the song, I shared the pain with all at the docks, with the ten from the Lairdsfield.....

"Flowers Of The Town" - oh, endless could be the list!

I opened my eyes, much more audience in the hall now, wiped away my tears. I was not bashful because of them, this wouldn't be by sure not my the last tears of this evening. I looked at the picture at the wall. No, this was not mine, how beautiful it even was, but I could understand.....I closed my eyes again.....

The concert began, three wonderful women entered the stage below me, all dressed in black. Becky stood with her back to me, better to say in a one-quarter view. In the middle Rachel. Opposite to me Niopha, wearing t-strapped shoes. It was nice to see them, to hear them talking about the first song, but then they started to sing. And what should I say, a (former) church was a real fitting place. Well, in the end they sang not one of the songs, I had thought about. Nevertheless, it had been a wonderful time, not only one time with tears in my eyes, as it's now. And my favorite moment?

*She's more cunning than the raven  
More wise than any owl  
And she knows when we'll go to our graves*

Hard to bear, wonderful to listen, as always when they sang. The wish, it would never end, the knowing, that all would end one day. Would the magpie reveal her secret to me, and if she would do so? I sat there with tears in my eyes and the lights had gone on again, not knowing what to do now. I needed time to stand up, to leave the hall, to discover something very beautiful!

Of course, I had seen the merchandising stall before I had entered the hall, but no one was behind it. I had looked at the CD's, the book, and the other things, before I had entered the hall - but now? Rachel and Becky stood behind it, they talked with the people who were interested in the offered things, or to talk about the wonderful concert.

I was not prepared to this, to stand face to face in front of them, maybe to talk with them! I tried to stay in the background, looked at what happened. Obviously a list was there, you could sign it, you could pay ten pounds for an upcoming CD of the tour - I had no glasses with me! I needed them only to read, to write as well, I waited.

Nearly all the others of the audience had left now, I stood at the table and looked at the list, not really able to read it. Ten pounds, also for shipping abroad? I raised my head:

"Is it possible to get a CD for the USA?" - something like that!

"Yes, of course." - a soft voice answered, not realizing if it was Becky or Rachel.

"You're from the USA? You're here, especially because of the concert?" - someone near to me asked me.

"Yes....." - should I start a conversation now?



I lowered my head again, tried to write my address legibly, difficult without the glasses. I handed the ten pounds to Becky, she smiled and I sweated. I turned around to leave hastily, I looked in the hall again. Niopha was there, in her nice dress and shoes and talked with some from the audience. The cold nightly air hit me as I stepped outside, no clear thoughts anymore, tears in my eyes.

I was back in my hotel, this time I found it very easily, what was somewhat surprising, I had some problems to get a clear thought. Now it had happened, it was over, past, it was like the memory of a movie, I sat on the bed. I would find no sleep, why I should try, switched on the TV, looked at the ceiling, was not interested in this Brexit nonsense - I undressed, laid myself on the bed and waited till the night would be over.

I had booked my room with the full breakfast, the continental buffet with all the typical English breakfast stuff on top - maybe I should say that I was no breakfast type at all? Normally I had no breakfast, a cup of tea maybe, but not more. But in vacation this behavior changed all the time radically, and this was England, therefore everything what was possible!

I walked around and realized that this was too much for me. Well, some cereals, marmalade or honey, rolls or toast? Maybe I should start with the hot stuff, eggs always good - scrambled or sunny side up? Ham or bacon, the fried tomatoes looked very good, well the sausages - this was fried blood sausage, or? Black pudding, as the English said - pudding? I decided for some scrambled eggs, an egg sunny side up, some ham and two fried half tomatoes - I thought this would be a good start, together with some fresh toast.

I thought about my plans, to walk back to the station, a stopover at a nice place I had discovered yesterday, for a cup of tea. I was in no hurry, I would reach the station whenever it would be, would take the next possible train back to London. And then there was something else I had to do, but it was more or less on my way to the train station.

I had reached the sweet section, marmalade and honey, rolls and some more toast, of course some healthy fruit - I had to realize that I had eaten much too much, but it was vacation time! And, I would walk back to the station, would carry my stuff around again, would make some detour - I had eaten definitively too much. On the other hand, my first stop for today would be a very nice place, would be a very nice cup of tea. I stood up, packed my clothes and checked out.

It was no long way, back to the interesting building - "Park Row" - that looked like a church or so, with the students, that was obviously a part of the university. But my aim was on the other side, more precisely a short way down the hill, down Park Street and had the nice name: "Boston Tea Party"! I entered the shop, very nice, and decided for an oolong tea and to sit outside on the terrace. It was in the morning, not really warm, but nice, I enjoyed my hot tea as my cell phone told me that I had received a SMS. I was not in the mood to take it, to read a SMS, most probably from this idiot? I took another sip from the fine tea, closed my eyes and decided to have a look. The cell phone was in my back pack, I took it, looked at the message and was not sure how I should have to react. Angry, shocked or maybe better amused? I read it again: *You had the chance, I told you who's the murderer. You had been able to rescue her life, now it's too late. She was really a kind old lady, now she's dead. I told her, that it's your fault, that she has to die now.* I was confused, alone on the terrace, I walked in and asked the young woman behind the counter: Sorry, maybe it's a somewhat strange question, but do you have knowledge about a crime, committed last night or so, a severe crime? She looked at me, tears in her eyes, and I realized that in the whole guestroom nobody talked, a strange mood everywhere, eyes look at me: Yes, why you're asking? I got a message, but nothing accurate. Ms. Thompson, a very kind and friendly old lady, she lived just around the corner, she became murdered last night. It's said that it was a very brutal act - why she, she was such a nice old lady! More tear in her eyes, a woman stood up to comfort her, she looked at me. Sorry, but I do not live here, I'm from the States. I walked back, sat down and searched for the slip on which I had written the number from the London police.

I had a phone conversation with the police in London - a somewhat strange one? They told me that it was good that I had phoned them, but that this would be enough. I would have not to contact the police in Bristol, that I should continue with my plans for the day. I was somewhat puzzled, I should send them the message, but this would be enough. I asked the police officer whether they thought that someone would simply fool me, but the murder was real? I got no clear answer, he only talked around, I became suspicious. He asked what my plans would be for the day. I told him that I would be for some hours longer in Bristol, but that I would come back to London within the day, if I should not stay in Bristol - maybe the police in Bristol would be interested in question me? No, not necessary. I should be prepared thereto, that in London the police would question me maybe - I plan to visit Dover the day after tomorrow? No problem, it only should be possible to contact me by phone. I terminated the phone call.

Still I sat on the terrace, still I had some tea. What should I do now? I had planned to visit something very special in this city, very special for me, but not only for me - but now? I decided to drink the rest of my tea and to walk the way back, the way that I had taken yesterday, down the hill this time, towards the train station. And my special aim? Well, at least for some time the way would be the same - I was confused!

I walked down the hill, more or less the way back that I came, till I reached the point where I had to decide. Doing something very beautiful under the shadow of death? I decided to walk to the station. I was not in the mood to do something else as to return to London - I reached the station. A look at the timetable showed, that I just had missed a train to London, I would have some time till the next would depart. I walked around the hall, I became aware of a poster - SS Great Britain, yes, would be wonderful to visit the ship, but it would not happen.

I stood outside the train station again, the so wonderful train station, and thought about what to do till the train would depart - I started to walk along the one-storied wing to my left, a flower shop? Black roses would be the flowers I would prefer the most at the moment. I headed on and reached a, well, café? I entered a small room, everything appeared very strange. Some wooden tables and chairs, possibilities to sit and eat at the walls. A menu at the wall, not small, various sandwiches and much more. But what was puzzling was the, well, cage?, in that a woman stood, obviously the person who would prepare the meals and beverages - a small opening would be the place where you would get your ordered food and beverages. I was alone for a moment, looked at the menu as the door opened, two workers, presumably from railway, entered the place. This gave me finally the impression that this place was not mainly for tourists or travelers, they had their places in the hall of the station, this was a place for railway workers, for bus or taxi drivers, for the people who worked here. The two men ordered something, together with a tea - I started to like this place.

I decided for a sandwich and a black tea - a tea. The woman asked me whether I would like to have the tea strong or not and I realized the way she prepared the tea. She had a larger tea pot, made of metal, at least half a gallon, but most probably more. She gave black tea into the tea pot, a lot of, and poured it with hot water, not that much, I had answered "strong". Later I saw that she used the tea in the pot for a certain time, till she renewed it with new one - the tea was very strong. All appeared very "rustic", but I liked it to sit there and the sandwich tasted very good. I looked at my watch, it was time for the train. Very much later I found a name of this place: Taxi Drivers Rest.

The landscape moved by, as I sat in the train again, the train back to London. I was sad in a way, not to have seen the wonderful ship, this incredible huge ship, this outstanding sailing ship. It would have been the by far largest sailing ship, I would ever have seen, would I had visit it - and I loved sailing ships! In its time it was the largest sailing ship, still today it was one of the largest sailing ships, that have every been built. It would be not easy, to see a larger sailing ship in your life, than this. But it was not the moment to do so, it would have not been appropriate to do so, it would have been no fun to do so, it would have been disgraceful to do so, in this situation. So I sat in my seat, back to London much earlier than thought, looked at the same landscape as on the way to Bristol, now just on my way back to London. Again it was not a long trip back to London, arrived at

Paddington Station, the short way back to the hotel.

Now I sat on my bed, looked at the TV at the wall, Boris talked about the Brexit - I was not interested in and thought about, what should I do now? A coffee, a snack? Neither I had eaten much, nor I had drank much during the day so far - a cup of wonderful tea in wonderful Bristol, the sandwich and the strong tea at the station. I took of my shoes, laid on the bed, looked at the ceiling - a fucking lot, whereat I had to ponder about.

## **Back In London**

Back in London, the old routine. Breakfast, of course scrambled eggs plain, toast, marmalade, tea - the usual as before. I was somewhat later than otherwise, the small breakfast room well filled, but I got my eggs and my toast very fast - what should I do today?

I would be today and tomorrow in London, then a day in Dover. Tomorrow I would buy me a ticket, but not at Paddington Station this time, Victoria Station instead. The typical weather the forecast predicted, some sun, some rain, no idea what I should choose to wear. Apart from that not much had changed, Boris and the Brexit, and of course the Royal Baby was still not there.

I stood up after I had finished my breakfast, back in my room I fetched my backpack and exited the hotel - Praed Street?

I sat in the "java u" in Pread Street, this time a flat white in front of me and looked at the people, walking by. The sun shined at the moment, but I was not in a good mood, also the second flat white could not change this. I could visit the National Gallery, a wonderful place. Or why not the British Museum, days one could spent there. Walking alongside the River Thames, lunch or dinner on board the Tattershall Castle? Back to the hotel? Back into my bed? In the afternoon it should rain? I ordered a third flat white.

I watched the black swans - Pread Street, London Street, Sussex Gardens, Lancaster Terrace, Hyde Park, Italian Gardens, The Long Water, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, The Serpentine, the funny squirrels, Queen Elizabeth Gate, Apsley House, Wellington Arch, Constitution Hill, Victoria Memorial, The Mall, St. James's Park, St. James's Park Lake.

Black swans, also known as mourning swans, I always loved it to see them. Elegant and gracile, black ballerinas swanning over the water, the white feathers covered up, the red beak tantalizing. I would follow them everywhere, but not able to fly. The Bristol Post reported about the murder, a picture showed a friendly looking old lady - I had found the article by searching the Internet while drinking my flat whites. A black and white picture, no red anymore, no red blood, no red lips, only black and white. Some details they had published - loved by the whole city, active in welfare institutions, seventy-eight years old, murdered in a brutal way. They not mentioned me.

I watched the black swans and felt the impulse to swim with them, to be with them. But I would not swan, I would be a clumsy walrus - well, in water they were anything but clumsy.....I should continue my way, had only no idea what my aim should be. But maybe this would be not important, all ways would lead to an aim.

I started to move. Sure, I tended thereto to follow ways I had used already before, sometimes I was not sure, whether I had used this way already before, but I saw many familiar things. The River Thames of course, Piccadilly Circus, Waterloo Bridge, the Ferris Wheel.....Westminster of course - does this make sense?

Sure, everything would make sense at the moment, everything. Tomorrow it would be a problem, tomorrow I should walk to Victoria Station, to buy a ticket to Dover. Trains to Dover departed at Victoria Station, not at Paddington Station, like the trains to Bristol or Heathrow Airport. But today, every way was as good as any other.

Nevertheless, looking at Big Ben I felt hungry, realized that I had drunken very less, that it was late. The ship, a short way? But I tended thereto to head towards the hotel - Le Pain Quotidien would be on my way, I could eat and drink something, the remaining way would be a very short way then. I moved on, more or less the way from the morning back again, the swans, the parks, till I reached the place, where Kendal Street, Connaught Street and Hyde Park Cres met, till I reached Le Pain Quotidien, not in Paddington, but St. George's Fields.

I had an hour till it would close, they closed relatively early, no place for the evening. I decided for a smaller table at the wall, the place offered me a socket which I needed. Next to me, on the right, at the windows, sat a young Asian woman, very elegantly dressed with a short dress and high boots, a laptop on the table, talking with someone at her smartphone. I tried not to listen, she had a soft but very energetic voice, obviously a business call, from time to time she checked something at her laptop.

The menu, I had started to concentrate on the menu and decided for the organic soup of the day - a tomato soup - and a salad with lentils and avocado. I though, that a Belgian hot chocolate would be a good choice to round up my order - not necessary to say, that everything was wonderful. Because I had to use eyeglasses for reading, I had laid the eyesclasses case on the table, a simple one, ten dollars or so - she had finished her phone call, was occupied with her laptop now, from time to time our eyes crossed. Yes, I looked from time to time to my right, but she looked from time to time to her left, and I had not the impression that she was annoyed about, that I looked from time to time to my right. Okay, yes, no need to discuss this!

My guess was, that she was in the middle of her twenties, and to say that she was hot was not offensive. My guess was, that she would have been offended by, would someone thought, that she was not hot - and, please, one moment! I was totally aware of, that I was in the middle of my fifties, and I was definitively not hot! Not my body, not my ordinary clothes, not my cheap red-golden watch. Maybe my Sami bracelet and my tattoos somewhat, but the rest was very disappointing. And because of this knowledge she surprised me totally, our eyes crossed again, by adresssing me!

"Your eyeglasses case, is this Prada?"

I had to confess, that I was more than puzzled! First, I had no idea about, that Prada made eyeglasses cases. Then, hey, this piece had cost me ten bucks - Prada? But I had the impression that her question was seriously meant, in the way to start a conversation - really? She even had turned somewhat to the left, her complete body, everything expressed, that this was a serious attempt to start a conversation!

"No, no Prada, it's a very simple one."

Well, obviously this would have been the moment, that I should ask her something, to turn my body slightly to the right, but she had really surprised me - and honestly, I had no idea what I should ask her! Maybe: In which club you're going tonight? I have to parade my Sami bracelet with the red Swarovski stones - or do you think, that I should wear the one with pearls? Were this ugly thoughts? Was it okay to point to, that I was not in the best mood - yeah, I know a nice story, maybe I'm responsible therefor, that in Bristol a very nice old lady has become murdered! Whatever, the "conversation" died very fast - maybe I was a fool? What had had I to lose? Maybe it would have been a very nice conversation - okay, to think that my ten bucks eyecelasses case could be Prada, seemed very strange. I would never get an answer, maybe this illustrated the stupidity of my behavior very perfectly!

Back in the hotel, sitting on the bed, still Boris and the baby in TV. It was not that late, too early to go to bed, the TV program boring, I started to walk around. Was it by mistake or design, but I walked down the road to the pub, which I entered, what I regretted immediately, the pub was very much filled, but to the right hand, a small and free table. I sat down and realized why the pub was so crowed at such a relatively late time for pubs, it was trivia night! I had heard about it, had seen it already in British crime series, but I thought not that this was real, but it was real. It was more than real, but in a way entertaining - I started to listen to the questions, after I had fetched my normal

dark one.

Well, in a way I had some problems to understand the questions as such, the MC had quite an accent - a British accent! And should I be happy enough to understand the question, I had absolute no clue about the answer. Interestingly, the next small table was occupied by three men, and it became obvious to me, that they had won at least some of the previous rounds - this was the last round, as I had understood in the meantime. They, and one table on the other side of the pub, seemed to be the heroes of the game, the weekly game! Wow, a Dr. Who question the MC announced, maybe I would be able to answer at least one of the questions - the one afore was about football, as they called soccer, about Tottenham! Well, I could even not answer the Dr. Who question in the end - good that I participated not in an active way!

But now also this last round was over, and as expected it came to a head-to-head battle of "my" table and the table of the other side of the pub - the other table won the trivia night as such with one right answer more. Bad luck for "my" table! But this changed nothing, the mood in the pub was very wet today, and also I had my third in front of me now - was it not a bit late for pubs now? Longer at trivia nights? I had no idea, but decided that I should walk back, what was more difficult, as I had thought.

Okay, it should have been a warning signal to me, that I have had real severe problems tonight, from the restroom back upstairs, I was in serious trouble for some time. But now the cold air hit me, and I realized very much, that three pints of dark beer were way too much for me! Not, that I had no idea anymore where my hotel was, this was not the problem at all, but to set one foot in front of the other, that was not that easy anymore. And, even when I knew that I had to turn right, it was surprisingly difficult than, to turn right! Gosh, I was fucking drunken, near to a blackout!

As I asked for the key, I tried to appear not that drunken, but I feared that I would be not really successful in it - I was happy to be back in my room again. What a fucking day! It started with a huge English breakfast and a wonderful cup of tea, the Boston Tea Party, and it ended drunken from beer, The Victoria. In between a murder - and I was involved in it, only that I had not the slightest idea why and in what a way. I had fucking weird dreams!

## **Victoria Station**

The same procedure as every day, scrambled eggs plain, toast, marmalade, roll.....but it was not the same, obviously it was not the same! Yeah, the same shit in TV, but was I interested in fucking Boris or this boring baby? Hey, I was from the States!

At least I had to do something, I had to buy me a ticket at Victoria Station, a ticket for tomorrow, a ticket to Dover. Was I in the mood for a train ride to the Channel? No, but it was no wrong expression. I had to, not, I wanted. There was a reason to be in Dover, more than one in the end.

Victoria Station, of course I would walk, and it would no real short walk. A walk towards new parts of the city, unknown to me. Therefore I was curious about the upcoming sights and impressions - no phone call from the police. It not seemed, as that they were much interested in information - what information I would have been able to provide them? Nothing in the end, nothing!

The breakfast was nice and good as every day, the staff friendly as every day. The weather, according to the forecast, fitfully as every day. I walked back to my room, had taken an apple, decided for the lighter jacket. Victoria Station, not difficult to find. Till Apsley House as always, but then not down Constitution Hill, simply alongside Buckingham Palace Garden I had to go - somewhat further on, Victoria Station! I had used Google Earth, it was easy to find, why one would need a map? A smartphone? This would have not nearly the same fun - a taxi? I liked it to start, to know the direction, and even if I would miss it, I would have the whole day! The beautiful aspect was, that you discovered always interesting and surprising things and views by doing so! And as said, I had the whole day to buy me one ticket to Dover - this should be a manageable task!

Well, the first part of the walk was very easy, nothing new - of course, the English weather! At the

beginning I thought, that maybe even the lighter jacket would have been not necessary, but now reaching Apsley House, Wellington Arch, I was no longer sure about, whether the other jacket wouldn't have been better - heavy clouds now and some spray. But, this was London, the UK, and it was very likely that at Victoria Station the sun would shine again.

But this time not Constitution Hill or Piccadilly, but Grosvenor Place. I decided to use the right side of the road, alongside of the wall seemed not so interesting, even if this meant that I had to walk under a scaffold at the beginning. But as I said, this way to do it offered you sometimes interesting insights. I looked at the posters which were hung up in the passage under the scaffold, "The Peninsula" was under construction here. The posters told you - mostly - stories from the old "The Peninsula" in Hong Kong, the first, and still most glamorous, hotels of the Peninsula group, opened in 1928. Well, the happy local employees you could see on the posters, who liked it very much to work for the super-rich British colonists - especially I liked it, that the hotel was proud of its fleet of Rolls-Royce cars, all painted in green, sorry, Peninsula signature green! Okay, this was London, snobbery was class, and I had definitively no class!

I reached a green area as expected, Lower Grosvenor Garden, a short way ahead, around the corner of the second green area, the first street to the left, I should see the train station, but I didn't! But before you now would say, maybe a map or so is nothing that stupid, I only needed some time to realize, that my mistake was, that I had Paddington Station and especially the train station in Bristol in my mind. I realized, looking down the road where the station should be, that the station was a part of this line of house facades, no individual building. Now I realized also the large letters on the iron portico down the street - London Victoria Station! Okay, the whole scenery looked not really like a train station, especially not like a train station in a historic city like London - Bristol okay! No, I had not looked for the station on Google Earth, Street View! This was the UK and sportsmanship was an important thing in this country and city. And hey, I had found the station, I had the whole day to buy me a ticket!

Okay, the train station looked definitively not like a train station, at least from outside - hey, it was a normal Londoner house front! Okay, the portico, but behind, the windows, these were flats or? I totally not understood it, but the letters on the portico told you: London Victoria Station. I entered the "building" through one of the entrances - well, now I started to understand the train station. The "house" was in fact a house, the hall of the train station began only after you had gone through "under" the house, the train station was behind the "house" - well, this was Great Britain, in the states we had always more space for such things like train stations or malls. But in the end I had managed it, I stood in the hall of Victoria Station.

The next step, buying a ticket? Hey, this was England, not the States. If you ever will have the "fun", to arrive at a large airport in the States, take it with serenity! Very often somebody will tell you, totally relaxed, in which way you have to go, what you have to do now..... - sarcasm, okay? I think for some reason, I should stress this these days – be careful, sarcasm! Really, it was always very stressful at a US airport, at least till you had managed it behind the customs. But Victoria Station, England, London?

Ticket machines on one side, ticket counters on the other side - looked very easy, especially because I would use the ticket counter, because I had a question respective the departure times. But hey, sometimes things are not that easy! I came close the beginning of the fenced off part, the part to create a queue in the way you knew it from airports or so, as a woman addressed me. I had not noticed her, my aim was the one of the ticket counters, she stood right in the middle between the ticket machines and the fenced off part. She wore a uniform and told me, very distinct, that I should use the ticket machine. In the first moment I not reacted, moved forward nearer to my aim - again she addressed me, this time very distinct! I continued my way, said something about "a question", she followed me with her eyes - wow, if looks could kill! Sure, that this was no American airport, sure that I had no beard and dark skin? I reached the area to queue, not many in the line - but a lot at the ticket machines, I knew the reason why. In fact, the short time I had to wait, I had the opportunity to become the witness of three more "episodes". People who intended to use the ticket

counter, not the ticket machine. Even showing papers and telling very understandable, that you had a question, helped not much. Also at the ticket machine one could get information, was the answer! I had no idea, and have till today no idea, why it was such a big deal to use the ticket counter at Victoria Station, especially because of the "nice lady" all the ticket machines were strongly used and only a few waited to buy a ticket at the ticket counter - four of the counters were opened?

I was the next, I was scared, to make a step forward, reached the counter, a young woman of color behind the glass, would she kill me now, because I dared to stand here, not using the ticket machine? She smiled at me and asked with a soft voice, what she could do for me.....

Wow, I relaxed and described her my request: A return ticket to Dover, both rides tomorrow. I would need a connection to Dover in the early morning, back to London as late as possible, maybe somewhat earlier? I needed no ten minutes, then I had my tickets and the printouts of my two connections, as well as always two alternatives! I thanked the woman behind the counter very warmly and left the fenced off area, passed by the uniformed woman, looked at her, with the tickets and the printouts in my hand, shrugged with my shoulders - and now?

Well, of course, I orientated, looked where the platform for my train of tomorrow would be. It was not difficult to find the platform, and of course, I would be early at the train station tomorrow, as always - and now? Looking at Google Earth yesterday, I had decided to cross The River Thames, to walk back to Westminster Bridge on the other side of The River Thames. Therefore I bought me a coffee, left the train station, walked by the bus terminal, I knew that in this direction I should find a large street to the next bridge - rough directions, details were not important, I liked this strategy! And in the end it was pretty easy, Vauxhall Bridge Road around the corner - what one would need more?

So I began to follow Vauxhall Bridge Road, obviously the road would lead to Vauxhall Bridge, I could cross The River Thames and walk back to Westminster Bridge - the distance? I had no real idea, some miles obviously, but I had the whole day? It was still in the morning and this was no American desert! It would be easy to buy me always something to drink or eat, I could find always a place to sit down - how long would you need in London to find a cab? So, where was the problem in doing so? Vauxhall Bridge Road waited!

I reached River Thames, was not so interested in Vauxhall Bridge Road, especially because this was the beginning of the walk, because I was interested in to reach the Thames, to walk back on the other side, and also Vauxhall Bridge Road was longer as thought, the distance to the bridge and River Thames. I was interested in to reach the Thames as fast as possible, to have a long time for the way back and I reached the bridge as well as the river.

My first impression? The "houses" on the other side of the Thames - well, I had heard of the housing projects at the Thames, and obviously these were two examples on each side of the bridge on the other side of the river. Even from this side of the river it was obvious, that to live on the other side, in one of this super-modern blocks would be not very cheap. A lot of glass and concrete - I perceived them as ugly, cold and repelling, no place to live. But I thought that the people who lived there - and worked? - would see this differently. I had my problems with the architecture in London, with the old as well as with the new. I started to cross the bridge and suddenly I saw something very different, looking down the river!

Pink Floyd - yeah, only the pig was missing! I remembered, the power station at the Thames, but it had been not aware of me, that I could see this icon from this bridge - I smiled. Well, it was quite a distance to it - it still was there, still a power station? Animals, end of the seventies or so, I was impressed! Yes, with some planning and reading a tourists guide, but by how much more impressive the sight was now, I was fascinated! But one problem, the station was on the wrong side, away from Westminster, should I walk to the station? On the other side, it was the direction of the bridge I would cross tomorrow by train, I should pass the station tomorrow, more or less nearby, I knew roughly the way the train would take tomorrow, why I could not use Paddington Station as starting point for a trip to Dover. So I decided to stand for a while here at the river, looking at the power

station, thinking of a time, when I was a boy.

The modern buildings? Yes, the one on the right side showed stylistic elements of ships - hey, the River Thames!, and also the tower was "impressive". The one on the left side was more block-like, both with a lot of green-blue glass - hey, water! Both boring, both most probably future icons of this city, like the ugly, totally unproportional Ferris Wheel I would see later again. I decided to walk back and had to realize that I had no idea, how to reach the walk alongside the Thames, at least from my side. So I crossed the busy road and reached the river finally.

The first part of the walk was not that interesting, well the water, some "spectacular" buildings, bank towers and suchlike - I had passed a statue, but the inscription puzzled me more than it helped: Baveswara 1134-1168 / unveiled by Shri Narendra Modi / PM of India / Work is worship - yeah? That London had a large Indian community I knew, but.....maybe I should do some research later. So I continued my way and reached a vessel, a freaky vessel painted in yellow with many beer barrels on board! Obviously a pub or so, obviously somewhat more rustic than the Tattershall Castle. Unfortunately it was too early, too early to enter, too early for a drink, therefore I continued my walk till I reached the next bridge.

Two things, I could see Westminster Bridge, my aim, now. And I reached Lambeth Pier shortly after the bridge, I could buy me a coffee. Maybe a mile away from the train station I was now, the way from the hotel to the train station, the rest to Westminster Bridge, the way back to the hotel - yes, again a day with some miles! I sipped at my paper cup, looked at the water, the sun shined and I had stuffed the jacket in my backpack - at the pier you could make a cruise? Not for me, I emptied my cup and proceeded with my walk.

I reached Westminster Bridge, a nice little park, a fountain, stalls - to use some British English - where one could buy food and beverages, a statue - this city was full of statues and memorials - and benches to sit down. I decided for a coffee, a pasty filled with beef, and two cookies for later. The statue? Mary Seacole - maybe some more checking on the Internet? I sat down, enjoyed my coffee, the pasty and the cookies thereafter, happy to have the jacket with me, under a now very cloudy sky - soon we would have some rain, it was London!

Afternoon, I would have still some time to walk around, on the other hand tomorrow in Dover I would walk a lot. Back to the hotel? Well, I could walk back slowly, through the parks, java u? The one in Edgware Road? I could eat something, a nice tea? Pub? I leant back as it began to rain - only somewhat! I would say, in an hour or so, I could stuff the jacket back into the backpack, to enjoy the sun again - does someone thought, that this weather conditions would be cool?

## **Dover**

The day began like every day, an expanded breakfast. As mostly, I was the first in the breakfast-room. And if you maybe could say, at the normal days, that this was not necessarily necessary during a vacation, today my aim was Dover, Dover for only one day, Dover with a special program. I would have to walk some miles, several places waited, a very special place waited - Dover Castle! And, not least, I had to walk to Victoria Station. A taxi? Why, the old man was an old man now, but no lame man!

Scrambled eggs as always, plain, toast, double portion this morning, marmalade, yogurt, fresh fruit, nearly I forgot to mention the cereal..... - of course tea! I felt good as I took my backpack to step out on the street, prepared for every weather. At the moment the sky was blue, the air was cold, till I would reach Victoria Station we would have had at least two severe weather changes - London Calling!

It was a nice walk to Victoria Station, now that I knew the direct way and of course as I reached the train station the sky was full of clouds. But at least it not rained as I entered the station again. And



also as always, I was way too early at the station, I had nearly three quarters of an hour to buy me a coffee, to sit on one of the benches in the enormous hall, to look at the people. Always the same, I liked the bustle at such places, the people who arrived, the people who departed, the people who waited, waited till their train would leave the train station, the people who waited till a train would arrive, a train with a mother or father, a child or a friend, a lover or husband or wife maybe, I loved the mood of such places.

I started to walk around, to look at the shop windows, to look at the people, people from many countries. But maybe all of them lived in London, London, a very international city, the aspect of London that was very interesting, like in Paddington. I had still my problem with other aspects of this city, but the cities at home? I looked at the display board, ten minutes till my train would leave. I took my ticket and entered the platform.

The train started to move, soon I would see the power station again. Of course, I had done some research on the Internet, had read about the colorful past and all the plans that never became realized. But also about the present use and why there were this huge cranes - should I try to spend some time there tomorrow, when back in London? I was not sure, for me this was the building on an album cover, an album made by a very special band, one of two special bands in my youth. I had all their records, later all their CDs, the first time I saw "Live At Pompeii" was a shock for me. It was fascinating to see them playing, decades away from my first time on a concert - Waters / Gilmour? No, Nick Mason and Richard Wright fascinated me the most - they appeared like the heart of Pink Floyd.

The train left the huge hall of the train station, the rail bent, thereafter would be the river, the bridge, the power station, in seconds I would see the fascinating building, would pass it. And there the power station was, the train entered the bridge and I saw the huge housing blocks to the left side and to the right side of the rails on the other side of the river. The train would have its way throughout them, I would see the power station only for some seconds, not I would pass the power station, I would pass this fucking huge housing block between me and the power station - no, I had not used Google Earth! I leant back, enjoyed the briefly glimpse of the power station and closed my eyes, hearing this single, crystal clear and transcendent tone.

*And no one sings me lullabies  
And no one makes me close my eyes  
So I throw the windows wide  
And call to you across the sky*

As I opened my eyes again, we were still in London, at least I thought so, the typical rows of houses from the suburban areas? Not quite two hours the train would need to Dover, we had not stopped so far, but now the train get slower, Bromley South was our first stop, obviously no longer in London, a quarter of an hour was gone. From now on we had stops quite often, all few minutes, mostly small train stations, at least one time I saw no town at all, only the possibilities to leave the train on both sides of the rails. The landscape was flat, different in a way to that on my last trip to Bristol - Kent, I knew that I would be in Kent today. Famous for its landscape - or? A typical English landscape I thought, nice, in a way boring, but beautiful and calming. Everything was small, nearly to say "cute", compared to the US, where everything had to be big, hectic and loud. The Great Plains maybe, maybe The Great Plains, but to compare the size of the Great Plains with England, the UK even? No, I liked it, that everything was so small here - two hours from London to Dover, not two hours from the suburb to your workplace, one-way of course!

I looked out of the window and the landscape and the towns or smaller cities passed by, I paid no heed to where I was exactly, but the time passed by and I got the feeling that Dover should be near. Wow, ten minutes, and we should be there, we stopped in Shepherds Well. Also obviously a small town, we departed again and entered a tunnel, would this tunnel led to Dover? No, the tunnel was not that long, and only a few minutes later we stopped in Kearsney. Five minutes, and we should be

in Dover, and I had to say, that the British Rail was always good in time. So I waited till the train started to get in motion again, would I see the famous cliffs now? No, the railroad line, houses, and another tunnel, a very short one, but then, immediately as we left the tunnel, we were there - Dover Priory, my aim. I was somewhat surprised, it happened at the end very fast, I left the train, the train station, looked around. No cliffs, no castle, the train station? Okay, this was not Bristol, but.....it looked not so beautiful. I tried to orientate - of course I had no map! But it was not that difficult, it was obvious in which direction I would find the Channel, more was not necessary. I started to follow the street uphill, it should be a short way to the water. Dover was no big city at all, more a small village, a nice neighborhood, used to American cities.

I walked around a bend, hit a larger road, walked a few yards and saw Dover Castle. The castle would be my main aim in Dover, but not my first. So I followed the street till a traffic circle, turned right and followed this street, till I hit the next street. My street ended here, the new street expanded to the left and right, and it needed not much idea, that this was the street along the Channel. Why I described it that way? Well, even it was obvious for many reasons that the water was very near now, I could not see it, I saw only blocks of houses. But I followed the new street some yards to my left and the houses opened up and I could see the water. I crossed the street, a few yards more and I had reached the Channel, the promenade. Very easy this time - or?

There I was now, the water opened up, but it was the Channel, not a sea or even an ocean. I could not see France, but from the castle it should be no problem to see the other side of the Channel, not that much impressive. And yet, I liked it immediately to be here, the harbor to my left, the cliff also. The cliff looked not exactly like on the well-known pictures, obviously I could see the real white cliffs of Dover not from this point.

The harbor basin, it was cloudy and cold, a cold wind, but in fact I saw a few people swimming in the harbor basin - well, Brits? A feeling of comfort captured me, not that impressive, this water, but water, enough water. Sometimes people swam from one side of the Channel to the other side, would I start to swim, I would have no interest in, ever to reach the other side - why? Sooner or later water would be the place of my last rest, why not this water, but not today. I had to pull myself together, I had some things to do. I looked up, Dover Castle, my first aim. But it would be a longer way, but this was good so. It gave me time for the upcoming, I started to walk towards the harbor, towards the cliff, towards Dover Castle.

I walked between the harbor basin and a long block of houses towards the harbor, one of this housing project obviously, on one side with a fantastic Channel view.

The harbor, obviously I would not reach it, my way would be a different one, but not so much a problem. On one hand, I would have a fantastic view on the harbor from above later, if I wished it, on the other hand, I would have no longer the chance to see them. In my youth I would have had the possibility, to see this enormous hovercrafts that crossed the Channel at this time. I knew them only from pictures or from TV - very loud, but fascinating, simply breathtaking. But this time was long gone, very long - or? I reached the end of the housing block.

The housing block ended in an "elegant" curve, I had the opportunity now, to walk again towards Dover city, a street between the housing block and a hotel. Very near to the beginning of the cliffs now, not able to see the castle above, and again the four way street in front of me, that I had crossed before. I had to find a crosswalk to reach Dover city again.

But I had only to walk a few yards and I could cross the street, the next hotel on the left side - well, Dover was a tourist's hot spot. I would have to follow this road obviously, my aim at my right side now, a small side road headed more or less in the right direction, "The White House" became visible. Too early for a pub, but maybe later, now I had to follow the small way, that brought me, via some steps, fast to a somewhat larger road, the road I had looked for, the road to the castle - presumably, because the road headed uphill and my aim was uphill.

It was hot now, hot for England, the sun shined, my jacket in the backpack, but somewhat out of shape. I feared that it would become a somewhat longer way, I followed the pedestrian way now,

but very fast I found a sign that told me, to be on the right way! Maybe one could say, a taxi would have been no bad idea? But this was not my style, walking without a distinct knowledge about the way was mine, sometimes somewhat exhausting, but always also interesting.

The scenery was a nice one, a lot of deep green bushes and trees, very different to the vegetation at home. And in a way the green created a nice atmosphere, no longer that much I had to sweat, looking at the information board. It told you everything you needed to know from the castle, for instance the opening times. So, I simply had to follow my way, that I had found, and I would be there - so far the theory! Well, it became a nice narrow way, surrounded by shade-giving green, but the way transformed into a long row of steep steps! Obviously this would quicken the things up very much, but I had to confess, that I was not only somewhat out of shape. As I reached the end of the stairs I had reached my aim, the castle in front of me, the way to the entrance to my right - but a small box office to my left, somewhat down the street? I sweated now and was somewhat puzzled. Should I walk down the street now, to buy me a ticket, or could I simply walk the rest to the castle? I took a deep breath, tried to stop the sweating somewhat, and decided that it would be better to clarify, whether I had to buy a ticket there - and I had, of course!

So, now that I had everything, I started to manage the last yards, entered the gate, found no place or someone who was interested in, whether I had a ticket or not! Okay, meant this that you.....no, it was absolutely okay to pay for visiting a place like this. The next what I had to realize was, that the "castle" was in fact a very extensive place. Without any doubt, one could spend a pretty long time, days, here and would have not seen all - but I had a very distinct aim, the castle as such, the central building, on top, there was my aim.

Well, maybe I should say something about the area, I was now. Of course, here, high above the city, there was Dover Castle, one of the oldest castles in England, and for an American that meant unbelievably old. But there was also a much older Roman lighthouse, a very old church, The Church of St Mary in Castro, and more. But especially this area was a military installation build, better expanded, during WWII. The English feared, that the Nazis and Hitler would try to invade England, and Dover would have been the best point for them to do so. But all this military installations one could not see, some cannons or so, but the military complex was belowground. I passed a belowground hospital for instance, one could visit it, but not now, maybe later. I thought that they did this, because thus the Nazi air recon could see not much of the facility. But all this, the military complex, the old church, the much older Roman Lighthouse, even not the Secret Wartime Tunnels - I had seen a sign - could find my interest at the moment, at the moment I had only one interest, the castle as such, the central building, its top.

I had to walk some distance to reach the entrance to the castle. The sun shined, I sweated, it was no flat way. The whole area was not flat, but finally I had reached the entrance to the castle. As said, the castle was very old, a high wall, very massive, and a central building, this was more or less the castle. The entrance was very small, compared with the height and thickness of the wall, but after you had passed it, you saw, that at the inner side of the wall there were some more buildings - today a museum, a café, restrooms and more. In earlier times presumably used for storage, as houses for the ordinary people maybe? I spent some time in the museum, but then I entered the central building.

I was interesting to start with a visit in the bottom floor, the storage cellar and the kitchen were there. One floor above, the floor you entered from outside, were a hall, most interesting the upper floors, the private rooms of the king and his wife, their sleeping room and banqueting hall. All the time I thought, well in a way nice, maybe even luxurious in a way, but even as a king in this time, it was no easy life. I would have liked it to try the bed, maybe it was not that bad at all, but it appeared not that cozy in the end. It was interesting for me, undecided about, if it had been nice to live in these rooms, or very hard in the end. Of course, no air condition, but.....I stayed undecided. After I had walked around the rooms, had found interesting sights and views, I entered the roof.

It was a good time, some school classes here above the city, but they sat outside the wall in the grass and had lunch. Not much people at this time here with me on the top - I enjoyed it, I enjoyed the

view on Dover. In fact, Dover was small, two main streets, the harbor of course, but it was a small town. I would have a walk through Dover later, I would have an aim, but now I had to do something. I waited till I was alone, leant out of between the crenelations, looked straight down to the ground, way under me, leant out somewhat more, looked straight down to the ground, way under me, somewhat more till a frisson of excitement and pleasure ran through me. At a certain point I would fall, I would fall deep, most probably I would be dead, it was arousing to do so. Not to commit suicide, to find the point of no return, but without to exceed it. My brain started to whirl and my heart beat in a very special way, I felt happy! I had to stop it, as long as I could stop it - I stepped back and my cell phone rang. I had no idea why, but I took the phone.

"Maurer?"

"Nice game, Peter."

"Who are you?"

"Not the killer."

"And who's the killer?"

"Maybe you?"

"Where are you?"

"I see you, but you don't see me, nothing else matters."

I looked around, I was alone - maybe on the hill on the other side of the city, someone with binoculars? I was confused.

"Don't try to find me. I see you, and as said, this is what matters."

"What do you want from me?"

"Why not leaning out somewhat more?"

"You not want to persuade me, to commit suicide?"

"You play this game, and you like it."

"I discovered as a young boy, who was used to, to climb on large trees and nothing happened, that, leaning over a wall, or simply looking down a cliff, in a height, that would mean to be most probably dead when falling, he discovered that this aroused him."

"How arousing it would be to fall - think about it?"

"Well, and then? To be dead would be not the problem, but maybe I would survive, life-long in a wheelchair?"

"Yeah, you're right. There're better ways."

"So, now that I've told you: What do you want from me?"

"Well, how does it feel, to be to blame for an old ladies' death?"

"You're not good, I can play this game much better."

"Really? Let's see. Maybe we will meet in Dover, later?"

I started to form an answer, but he terminated the call. I thought about to call the London Police, but so far they had shown no deep interest in this case. I looked at Dover - I would like it, to meet him.

I was back in the city, had used the stairs back downhill, but had followed the street then, which leaded to the castle, not passed "The White House" again, I had a special aim. A friend, who was in this city decades ago, as a young man, had eaten a very delicious meal in a very interesting "restaurant". Should it still exist, I should eat there something. He still knew, that I had to walk down one of the two main roads of Dover, the one not near the castle, I had to walk away from the beach, the restaurant would be on the left side. What he not could remind of, was the name of the restaurant, but that they had a fantastic dish - Dover Pot: Rabbit in a delicious sauce, with croutons on it. He also had eaten a fantastic steak with vegetables, but if possible I should choose the Dover Pot. The interesting point was, that the restaurant was one of this typical English flats, downstairs. It was a former living room, now redesigned to a small restaurant with a few tables, very cozy! A young couple had started their own business - well, not that young any more obviously today, as my friend.

I had reached a traffic-calmed area, obviously the heart of Dover and very nice. But I had to go on, but decided spontaneously to sit down for a moment to have a coffee, to rest for a moment. "The

"Eight Bells" was the place I sat down, on the other side of the road an old church. And with this I meant, old for England, incredibly old for an American. At least it seemed so, while I drank my coffee, faster as thought, a new impulse to enter the church. It was impressive in it, and I was by no way religious, but I had to confess, that such places had a very special mood. Some parts of the church were not that old in the end, for European standards, some very old - I had read a folder. But then I decided to move on.

No long way and I hit the street that I should walk down, every moment you saw something interesting, sad that I had not time, only all the interesting buildings! But I moved on, and the character of the city changed. Now the street I walked along was a busy street, a lot of traffic - okay, I stood there and smiled. Two narrow lanes, that was all, it appeared to me like a small side road, but not as one of the two main axis of a city. But for the narrowness not few cars, and especially buses, tried to find their way. At the sides many small businesses and shops, but everything appeared somewhat cheep, very provincial, not only compared to London, maybe also especially compared to Bristol. This was Dover, this was "the" Dover? I continued my way, and started to doubt about the description of my friend. I should find residential houses, this typical English houses, where you could go down a stair, to enter the flats downstairs, but I saw none of them.

I had continued my way, again the city changed, on my side were flats now, but not with stairs, you could go down. On the other side of the street still small shops, cheep restaurants, everything appeared somewhat dismally now. This should not sound arrogant, but I had the feeling, that this area had seen better times without any doubts, the times my friend had visited the city? I doubted that I would find the restaurant, thought about to walk back, back to the nice downtown - I had seen some nice restaurants there. But then I saw it, that it had to be the place.

This was the block, I had looked for - or? You could go stairs down, you could enter flats downstairs, but no sign of a restaurant. Everything appeared very.....well, old? Yes, this had to be the place, I felt empty. What happened with the young couple, now an old couple? What happened with their restaurant, no Dover Pot today. I wiped away my tears and thought to walk back, but then I thought, maybe it would help to use the other main street of Dover, the one which was nearer to the castle, to walk back. I followed my road for a moment longer, then I reached a crossing street that would lead me to the other main street. I passed an "ALDI" supermarket, and suddenly, right before I reached the other street, I saw a narrow way, only for pedestrians and bicycles, in my direction, towards the beach again, I entered it and discovered, that every city had its special, magic places.

In the first moment the way was not so interesting, apart that it seemed to be a good alternative to walk back towards the beach, not using the main street. But then a small stream joined the way, a very nice one. Very shallow, a lot of green in it, I saw no fish, but enough possibilities to hide for them. Sometimes some waste in it, not that nice, but not much. Trees and shade, for a moment I lost the stream, but then I found it again and the stream led me back - a nice little park, the church from the other side, now I knew again, where I was. It was very nice and relaxing to walk along the stream, to hear the whispering of the water, interesting graffiti one could discover. Birds in the trees, dragonflies in the air, what a beautiful way traversed this city, but now I was back again.

As I had started to search for the restaurant, before I had the rest at "The Eight Bells", had visited the church, I had passed some restaurants, one seemed especially interesting, but of course, I had thought, that maybe my meal would be a Dover Pot. But now I needed an alternative, and this special restaurant had looked nice and had a nice name - "Chaplins". Only a few yards, and I was there and stood in front of closed doors - but it was not that late? Closed during the afternoon? I looked at the menu outside and saw, that the opening hours were from 8am till 2:30pm - now it was shortly before 3pm! I was disappointed, the menu was very interesting, and as I had passed the restaurant before, it had been full of customers. Well, this was Dover, enough other restaurants would be there, I could eat something at "The Eight Bells", but I was unsure what to do. I touched the front pocket of my backpack, felt my purse, my phone. I decided to drive back, back to London, I could buy me something to eat at the station here in Dover, or back in London.

I sat in the train again, in around one and a half hour I would be back in London, but I would have to walk back the way from Victoria Station. I had bought me a sandwich and a coffee, looked out of the window as my phone told me, that I had received a SMS - why I should be interested in? Why returning so fast, I read, I would have loved it to stay longer in Dover, but why not back to London? Well, should I start now to walk around in the train, why? I closed my eyes and walked along a small stream, looked down from above, saw the water of the Channel. From above, I had seen France, these were the coasts, where they had landed - or? The military complex down the ground, hospitals and tunnels, these times were over - or? The British would leave the EU, they thought it would be better without, alone. The Americans and their president, I opened my eyes and saw the nice British landscape. This was Kent, or? What should I do, back in London, I looked at my clock - oh, soon I would arrive. The power station again, for the short moment on the bridge? I felt somewhat confused and tired.

Later, after I had gone back from Victoria Station, had had a long shower, had sat in the "java u" near the hotel, I decided to go bed early, no pub today. I dreamt a lot in this night, I always dreamt a lot, I walked through empty streets and searched for something but not found it. It simply was not there, at least not longer, and I was sad about it. Things disappeared, I would disappear, an old lady had disappeared - why I was here?

## **Back In London**

The next morning I was not the first in the small breakfast room, and I was in no good shape. Plans for the day? No real ones, but while walking from Praed Street to Edgware Road, some of the time I had saw "water" behind the houses, nearly as Praed Street hit Edgware Road - maybe a nice plaza or something like this, obviously there was something, shops, restaurants? This should be my aim of the morning, the rest we would see.

But now I enjoyed my tea, the eggs, the toast, the marmalade. On one table a family from - I was not sure - South America? Sounded Spanish in a way, but not really? Okay, the young couple definitively from Germany, the man and the two women from Britain. The next guests entered the room, now it started to become somewhat cramped, five new hungry guests - was that Dutch, they spoke? On one way I knew now, why normally, I was the first one who entered the breakfast room, but on the other side it was nice to sit with all this different people in this small room. And the staff, the older woman in the small kitchen, the two younger women who served the toast and eggs, were very fast and kind. No reason in any way to be annoyed.

As I had finished my breakfast, I lent back and looked at the TV - the same as every day. The baby still not there, the Brexit stupidity, the weather mixed as every day. I stood up, decided for a shower - so far I had none - and to have a very relaxed day. No long walks, sitting around in cafés, killing time with doing nothing.

I hit the sidewalk in front of the hotel, Sussex Gardens, London Street, Praed Street till I reached the point, where you could see that behind the blocks was something - and in fact, there was "something"! A large plaza opened up, very different to the appearance on the other side of the block! This looked very modern - water, green, a small fountain. And not only a plaza, all extended very much in length, this was not only a pool, this looked like as a small river would starting here, I was puzzled! Asking the Internet, looking at a map, using Google Earth? Why, I had still two feet, I started to explore the area.

The first what I understood, walking around the part I had entered was, that this was a kind of plaza with a water part as center. You could shop here, could have a coffee or you could eat something, especially you could relax here, the city outside had disappeared! But not only around the water one could walk or sit. In the water was a floating park, one could partly see the wooden construction on which the park floated, benches asked to sit on them. I not entered the park - okay the grass was

artificial, not the flowers in the large pots - but headed on. In sopping I was not interested in, a coffee had time, I had breakfast recently. And the coming seemed to be interesting.

The park and the plaza ended at a bridge and a barrier in the water, especially the sight of the water changed now, developed into a long basin. I was not sure whether the water flowed or not. Was this in fact a kind of basin or a river? If it was a river, then whereto disappeared the water at the end of the plaza? Maybe I would get an answer by continuing walking - alongside the basin

I had decided to use the left side, obviously not the side that was expected to use. A small wooden jetty for them, who had small motorboats tied there - but it seemed more interesting to me. The other side appeared like a promenade, still places for a coffee or something to eat, all obviously very new, looked like one of this housing projects at the River Thames or the block that disturbed me, looking at the power station. All very clean, very sterile, antiseptic - I liked the dirt and the soil, especially at a riverside.

As I continued my walk, new boats came in sight. On the other side strange looking gray boats - to rent or so? Then this long and slender boats - houseboats, as I knew. Why I knew this? Well, British crime series at TV, I had sawn such boats there! Continue walking they became more, till I reached another bridge and the end of the basin, better to say, the basin would bend now - but where I was now? And, why I could no longer follow the water, also on the other side it was no longer possible! A barrier forced me to us a small path, I was very disappointing. But fortunately I saw the small sign on the wall of the house. Following the path I would reach Paddington Station - not bad, maybe "java u" for a coffee, but I was disappointed that I had to leave the water. But what puzzled me was, what was written under Paddington Station. "Little Venice", obviously this path would lead me also to "Little Venice"? What should this mean, "Little Venice"? "Little Venice", I saw the channels, the expensive houses, the wonderful ocean around the corner, what about having dinner at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, after sunset at the beach? But this was London, not L.A. - "Little Venice"? I felt an excitement as I entered the small path, and a disappointment as the small path led to another small path, a dirty and very ugly small path! Turning left, would lead me to Paddington Station - obviously. Turning right? It was not clearly visible, but the small path would open up soon, at least it seemed so - I turned right, no bad idea.

The small path was framed by a building on the right side and a wall on the left side, the wall continued for a while longer, but the building ended and the small path developed into a nice broad pathway at the waterfront - the water was there again, and the long narrow vessels, as well as a closed trailer who offered coffee - if open. It was early in the year, it was still early in the day, but one needed not much imagination to understand, that at a summer day, or summer evening, this place would be crowded. Definitely this became as I headed on and reached two vessels, rebuilt to restaurants, simple, not like the Tattershall Castle at Westminster, River Thames, smaller of course, a coffee, a tea, a drink, simple meals - yes, in summer definitely a crowded place. I went through a bridge, and it became finally obvious that this was a summer hot spot, places to eat and drink at the large building on the left, as well as on the water on the right - "Little Venice" in London, not the same as "Little Venice" in Los Angeles. "Little Venice" in London smaller but cozy, I started to love the place, I headed on to see what all would still await me!

I went through another huge bridge, obviously a freeway, and was disappointed on the other side - still some vessels, but no longer restaurants or cafés, looked very gray now, despite the sparse trees - but the "building" at the left looked strange, very low, a sign: "The Battleship Building", a arrow told you, that you had to go down a long ramp? Finally confused me, to see a super sports car behind glass - looked not like a battleship, or? Should I go on? The next bridge, a very small one, the water narrowed, only one of the small vessels could pass this at the same time, and even than it would be not easy. But then I saw the sign at the foot of the bridge: "Welcome To Little Venice" - should this mean, that this wasn't "Little Venice" so far, that "Little Venice" would begin just only after this small bridge? The sign offered some information, but especially a map - of course I had none with me! "You're here", the map showed me - wow, behind the narrow bridge the water would open up extremely, a kind of lake or so, channels, I read the headline on the sign: "This charming,

hidden part of London marks the junction of the Grand Union and Regent's channel" - was there a channel at Regent's Park, a lot of water, yes.....? The map showed only the near surrounding, much more information on the sign, but I had to see what's behind the bridge! Well, under the bridge, all was narrow and somewhat somber, but as everything opened up again - it was a wonderful sight, really a treasure, I would never have expected to find such a wonderful place here, this looked like another world, really a hidden secret place, surrounded by a gray city. My fucking cell phone signaled an SMS: "Welcome to Little Venice! Catch me if you can!" - Fucking asshole!

I had moved somewhat further on, looked at the roughly triangular shaped lake, a small isle inside. The lake was not really large, but beautiful, a channel at all of the three edges. On the other side, to my right, Regent's channel, to the park you would have to walk in that direction. Ahead of me, to my left, Grand Union channel. And finally, behind me, the channel to the Paddington Basin - I had this information from the map. I had also the information, that this lake was Little Venice, not like in Los Angeles. A huge difference also, this channels and the basin were old and had at least in former days an economic reason, not like the channels in Los Angeles. What Little Venice was more beautiful, Los Angeles or London? Both had their beauty?

Well, the channels in Los Angeles were - of course - all straight and right-angled, in a way boring. Sure, the nice bridges for example, but in a way - not so harsh - they looked like the "Tour Eiffel" in Las Vegas. Nice in a way, but obviously artificial, not naturally grown in time and history - but in a way this was stupid. Also these channels were channels and therefore artificial, like the Paddington basin, and I would guess, also this lake - Little Venice, London. But the difference was, that they were build to have a function, not only for enjoyment, British, not American. The "British version" looked more.....organically grown.

I looked at the surrounding people, what should be my criteria? He - I guessed that he would be a he - could see me, therefore I should be able to see him. I would not think that he would be British, an American like I of course - could I see somebody, this description could fit? Well, not that many people around me, I headed on, from one corner to the other, from the channel to the Paddington Basin to Grand Union channel - no one around me appeared suspicious. But of course, he would have to be near to me, he knew exactly where I was and what I did, always - hey, I was the private dick, it was my business to monitor people, I reached the other corner.

The Waterside Cafe, a somewhat longer and larger houseboat, rebuilt to a cozy cafe, a lot of flowers, nicely painted in burgundy color with golden inscriptions - why not a coffee, some chairs outside? I was sick of his play, was not really hungry, but a coffee was good all the times, maybe a snack, they offered salad, toast and omelets? I sat down, soon I had a coffee and I thought about something to eat, I thought about to answer one of his SMSs, that he could kiss my ass, that I would enjoy a coffee now, and most likely a toast, or better an omelet, no salad now. And it lasted not long and I got the next SMS: Meet you by the Regent's channel!

I leant back and decided for an omelet with four fillings: Tomato, mushrooms, onions and chicken. I had time, I was not in a hurry, should he wait at the Regent's channel. Well, the omelet was not bad at all!

As I had emptied my coffee, I thought about the easiest way to reach Regent's Channel - of course, up the bridge, crossing it, using the way on the other side alongside Little Venice, this way would lead me to Regent's channel, at least it seemed so.

On the bridge, the beautiful pedestrian bridge, not the part for the cars, you had a wonderful view on Little Venice - still wondering why they called this lake "Little Venice". Do not understand me wrong, it was a gorgeous lake, but it was a lake, with channels leading to it? But beautiful, very beautiful, I reached the way on the other side and headed towards Regent's Channel.

Again the now so familiar boats, and after the bend I could see that the way would lead me in fact directly to Regent's Channel, and something else I saw, very English, or? The "Puppet Theater Barge", a larger vessel, obviously with a puppet theater on it - I stopped, should I.....the fucking phone again: Do you think I will wait the whole day? At least as long as I wanna it - asshole!



A puppet theater, had I ever been in a puppet theater? I was not sure, at least I had no memory about it, in my youth you could see performances from a very famous puppet theater on TV, but this was only on TV? I looked for information for the next show, could I get a ticket? The phone again - my mood was killed and with anger I headed on, to pass under the next bridge, to arrive at Regent's Channel!

So, this was Regent's Channel, straightaway, with one houseboat after the other, on both sides. After the bridge a soft bend, a house at my side, then I saw it, the gate! Only a short way, and a gate would block my way, stairs leaded up to the street, I had not to try whether the door was open or not, at least on this side of the channel I would not reach anything - my phone again: Seems as this would be the wrong way! What about a little chase? This is a very nice place for a little chase! I was sick of this asshole's games, my mood was destroyed finally and I decided to walk back! I needed not much time, only a few hundred yards, I had only to ignore the phone, and I stood in front of Paddington Station, Praed Street again, "java u" to my left side, Paddington Station to my right, the station for the underground. I looked at my watch, somewhat till 3 pm, should I? Tomorrow I would have to use the "tube", Kew Gardens would be my tomorrow's again - why not some training today? My aim? Why not the famous City, the City of London? The Tower and the Tower Bridge? Would be difficult to explain, that you stayed in London, but had not visited the Tower of London, no crown jewels - you have not even saw the Tower Bridge! So I crossed the street, headed to the entrance of the station and saw, that to the left and to the right of the entrance, I could get all information I needed. To the left, among others, a list of lines that served this station - five in all, this looked very good, but also somewhat confusing. But more important was the Tube map on the right side.

In the first second somewhat confusing, it was easy in the end to understand the system. Today my aim was the City of London, more precisely the Tower and Tower Bridge, obviously the Yellow Line, the Circle Line, till Tower Hill Station would be the best, still in the inner first zone - this should be very easy! My tomorrow's aim, Kew Garden? Well, the Green Line, but the Green Line split three times, that was somewhat strange, and the station Kew Garden lied exactly on the border of the third and fourth zone, or as the map said it, in both zones. Well, I had to use the Green Line to Richmond, not to Wimbledon or Ealing Broadway, that should be manageable? Three or four zones? Well, I could decide this tomorrow, I entered the station, and was very surprised, what a small hall awaited me, some ticket machines of course, but this little hall served five lines? I converged to one of the ticket machines, had to wait for a moment, then I stood in front of it and started to orientate myself. I had recognized that there was a public servant that helped people with getting their tickets, but he helped someone else and it was not the first time that I would buy me a ticket at such a machine - well, of course the first time in London, in the UK, but I started to think about, what buttons I would have to press. Well, it was not that easy.....Oyster Card?.....off-time?.....maybe "anytime" for the whole day?....."Can I help you, sir?" - "Yes!"

I told the man my aim, that I would use the ticket not only for one direction, maybe another way back..... - because it was after 9:30 am we decided for a normal "Off-peak Day Travelcard", I had no Oyster Card or so! He told me also, which way I had to go to reach my platform, it was very easy and I wondered why he told me this, but on my way to the platform I became aware of, that obviously the station was much larger as I understood so far - of course, there had to be more platforms for the other lines, maybe on lower levels or so? Well, howsoever, now I stood at my platform, and was somewhat confused, because above me was, partially a glass roof, partially nothing was there, only the blue sky - well, not that blue at the moment, but that didn't matter for the moment. It was hard to describe, because I had no idea why this place was constructed in this way, but for a short moment, at the station, the Tube would not use its tube, but would be.....well, not overground in the real sense, because we were several yards under street level - it all looked like a lowered train station, very strange! But while I wondered at this all, my train arrived.

A short moment, and we were underground, and everything I had heard about the London Tube, I

saw affirmed - tight, loud, uncomfortable.....the oldest underground of the world, or? Well, the ride was not very nice and I thought, they laugh about public transport in the States, but I know not only one American subway, that is nicer to ride. But while I thought so, I arrived at my station, Tower Hill, and I left the tube - was good to breath fresh air again. I looked around, it was easy to spot the Tower, a short way to go, and it was easy to see where I could buy me a ticket. But from now on.....of course I had not done any research.

First I was astonished how expensive a ticket was - okay, the Tower was the Tower. But, luckily, before I bought me a ticket I saw that the Tower would close soon, and that even harder, I was too late to enter the Tower. The opening time was till 5 pm, but from 3:30 pm on, it was no longer allowed to enter the Tower, and of course it was after 3:30 pm! Well, I thought, no crown jewels, but maybe this would be not the worst - why not River Thames and the world-famous Tower Bridge? So I stood at the river and looked at the bridge and was not sure why I should be thrilled now - I thought about the bridge at the mouth of the bay, or the bridge over the bay, why this bridges caused so much more emotions, like this bridge? Was it only because - to say it nicely - this bridge was not quite the biggest of all the bridges? Tomorrow, tomorrow I would see something very special, but this bridge? I decided to walk somewhat in the direction of the City of London. But also this not helped, I felt bored, I looked at the people, some celebrated in a bar or so, outside near the river, fine suits and stylish dresses, all appeared so boring. Alongside a, for London, broad street, four narrow lanes, bored, till I saw a underground station. Back to Paddington, was my impulse, and I knew that it would be the best to follow this impulse!

I sat in the "java u", the larger one at Edgware Street, a coffee, a sandwich and the question, what had come to pass today, and I not meant the "chase". Had this been a wasted day, or maybe a very important one? Tomorrow, tomorrow would be a very special day, the climax of the vacation, but today? I had walked a lot, but what had I "achieved"? I had discovered "Little Venice", but come on, "Little Venice"? It was a very gorgeous place, I had liked it very much to be there, it was wonderful to discover it, but "Little Venice"? This place looked in no case like "Venice", but why not! But apart from that, I had to confess, that I was not able to esteem this city, feeling as if at least parts of the city were simply arrogant and snobbish. Paddington I liked, maybe an ESB later, maybe walking around somewhat?

Tomorrow would be my last whole day in Britain, the day after I would fly back. Would I get the impulse to return one day, to London? Maybe not to London, but Bristol? I had missed the ship, also Dover had had its interesting places, but London? Yeah, "Little Venice" or Regent's Park, a place like this, ESB tasted not bad - "Hello Darling"!

Was this melancholia, I was not that much the emotional guy? I decided for an ESB, a "Hello Darling" would do me good now.....

## **Kew Gardens**

As usual, I was the first in the small breakfast room, and as usual, eggs only, toast, marmalade, yogurt, tea.....for the second last time, tomorrow would be the last time. The TV on the wall, news about the Brexit and the royal baby, that was still not born - what was more important? It seemed as the royal baby would be more important, I finished my breakfast, returned to the room, had a shower and packed my backpack. And as usual, even if the sun shined at the moment, I also packed in my small umbrella as well as a jacket, entered the street.

I looked forward to the upcoming, but first I had to manage it, to figure out the right Green Line, to find the platform, at least I knew today, how to buy the ticket - again I would buy me a daily ticket. Kew Gardens, so far I had only saw pictures, but even they were wonderful, the reality should be even more beautiful. I crossed Sussex Gardens, London Street, around the corner Praed Street, I had reached the entrance to Paddington Station. First buying the ticket, or looking for the platform and the right green line? Logic would be, to buy the ticket and then maybe asking the public servant,

who would be most probably there, to answer questions from tourists - I entered the station to buy me a ticket.

In the end it was not that complicated - more or less! To buy me a ticket was easy, the same as yesterday, only for more zones, and of course I had to pay for four! But the right line at the right platform? Some signs helped me, but especially a friendly public servant - and I discovered the complexity of Paddington Station. Of course different levels, narrow connecting tunnels, but especially two very different entrances that led to different parts of the station, connected by one of the narrow tunnels! And, the other entrance was a very modern one, leading to a large hall, that led, via one other narrow tunnel to another large hall, and from there to other platforms, not only to a small "room", like the entrance at Praed Street. And then the nice information: Do you think that this is a complex underground station? We have underground stations in London, which are by far more complex and confusing than Paddington Station! Well, if this was the case.....?

So, I reached "my" platform and had simply to wait till the next tube would arrive. This time the opposite direction, this time a by far longer ride, parts of London I had not seen so far, a wonderful aim awaited me - my tube arrived.

For the first part of the journey we were underground, but as normally, the line ran overground after leaving the main part of the city, by reaching the suburban areas, so also here. High Street Kensington was the station where we saw the natural sunlight again, but only for a short moment after leaving the station again - the same at Earl's Court! But from West Kensington on we were overground for the rest of the trip.

It was more or less the same view as while riding to Bristol, the typical British suburban architecture. And to be honest, I was not much interested in, I was interested in to arrive at my aim, Kew Gardens Station. Around half an hour would be the travel time, I was on the rail for somewhat longer than twenty minutes, my aim came nearer, and as we crossed River Thames after leaving Gunnersbury Station I knew, my trip would come to an end, the next station would be Kew Gardens Station, we arrived!

I left the tube with the knowledge, that I had no distinct idea about, which way I had to take to Kew Gardens, from the station somewhat to the left was Kew Gardens, I had saw on a map, no long way, should be not that difficult to find! And in fact, it was very easy to find the right way, one had only to follow the signs!

But then there was a difficulty, in front of the station, the plaza in front of the station, was a.....market? Or was a festivity? Live music, many booths, with nice pastry and cakes and other things to eat.....but of course also a lot of other stuff. I thought about to spend some time here, but I had another aim? I bought me two pastries and hoped that it would be not over, when I would come back - but it was in the morning, live music, it seemed as this was not only meant as a simple market at market day.....

In fact, it was very easy to find the entrance to Kew Gardens, at the end of the festivity I had to follow a straight road, that it was - more or less! It was early morning? A long queue awaited me - really? Okay, this was the UK, queuing was a kind of popular sport here - and hey, it was early morning, I had two fine pastries, and the queue was still acceptable - how long was this queue at a summer day, vacation time? Better not to think about it!

Well, I looked at my watch, ten minutes I waited now, was I impatient? Yes, but this was not the problem, the problem was, that the queue had not really moved in this ten minutes - it had become only longer? Half an hour later I had come nearer to the entrance, well, the gap in the high wall beside me, the gap, that marked the entry area to Kew Gardens. Soon I would have reached this magic place, and it happened!

I entered the place and had to realize, that it was like at an airport, barrier tape, in the end the queue inside was at least as long as outside, only three of the box offices sold tickets? Well, I had two fine pastries.....and after a longer time even a ticket, I finally entered Kew Gardens!

Now I was there, did I know where I had to go? Of course not, I knew that here this wonderful Victorian glasshouse, that I knew from pictures and that looked outstanding beautiful, was to find. And to be honest, I had not to search, only a few steps, and between the trees I could see it, at least I saw a glasshouse, but a few more steps and it was obvious, yes, this was the glasshouse I looked for - it was so wonderful to see!

I walked down the way, a very nice lake to the right, nicely arranged flowerbeds to the left, but behind them the majestic dome of the glasshouse - I had tears in my eyes as I came nearer, happy to be here. I stopped to enjoy the moment, closed my eyes and waited.

The palm house, the largest Victorian conservatory in the world, what a wonderful and magic sight as I took the steps and the last yards to the door. The roundings, the height, the structure, I grabbed the door handle and opened the heavy door, made of steel and glass like the rest of the majestic construction, entered the inside, left the cold spring air behind me and entered the warm exotic air, the extreme humidity of the air, instantly I started to sweat! I unshouldered my backpack and stowed my jacket in it, I pulled up the sleeves of my sweater, it helped somewhat, but it was extreme anyway, but looking at the palm trees it all was forgotten immediately.

A few steps to stand in the center of the breathtaking glasshouse, better in front of the huge palm trees which marked the center of the impressive structure, the highest trees under the highest point of the structure, it was wonderful to look up to the glassy cupola, how high it was - but then I saw! One could go up steeply flights of winding stairs, obviously halfway there was a gallery - I was thrilled and looked forward to climbing the steep staircase as my phone gave a signal: This is the wrong greenhouse, I wait for you in the larger one!

I was confused, another greenhouse? Okay, obviously this park was a larger park, it could be, that there would be another greenhouse - a larger one, maybe a more modern one? I thought to write back, something like: If you wanna meet me, then you have to come to me. Maybe your greenhouse is larger, but mine is the largest Victorian glasshouse in the world, and I think also the most beautiful in the world! In the end I wrote nothing, I decided to ignore the SMS, I started to climb the stairs.

It was outstanding to stand at the balustrade, face to face with the tops of the huge palm trees, under the impressive central cupola. It was hotter here, the humidity extreme, the smell in the air wonderful - I started to walk around the palm trees. Well, some rust, some flaking paint, the structure was not new, but in any way impressive. Impressive was the possibility to see the structure of the glass house better now, for example the mechanisms to ventilate the impressive structure - the palm trees? I could not decide, what I should expect as more impressive, the palm trees or this architectural masterpiece, both spellbound me.

I had finished my round, had enjoyed also the view towards the side wings, I decided to walk down again. Yes, this huge palm trees were fascinating, also looking upwards, the highest point of the dome still far away. But I should have also a look at the smaller palm trees and whatever would be to discover there down under.

I was on normal ground again, walked around, looked at the smaller palm trees, all the other trees, huge and beautiful ferns, but also at not so prominent but also beautiful mosses. It was also interesting to examine the structure of the structure more precisely - I spent quite a time in it. But then I decided, to see what all more would be to discover in the obviously huge park - maybe back to have a look at the plan at the entrance? This was the UK, and I was I, so I thought that this would be unsportsmanlike.

I had seen, while heading to the wonderful glasshouse, that behind it there was also a garden, obviously a rose garden, and obviously in this season without rose buds. Nevertheless, I decided to leave the glasshouse through the back door, and in fact a rose garden, of course only the green rose bushes in this season. Nevertheless, it was nice, like at Regent's Park, but of course in

summer.....several pathways diverted from the rose garden, which one I should use? I decided to follow the most left one, the glasshouse in my back. It seemed as this pathway would run parallel to the wall, where I had stood to wait till I could enter the park. In fact, it was no pathway in that sense, it was more a swath, grass but no trees, far away one could see a kind of tower, in fact, a huge park! I decided to use this "way" because other people did so, obviously it was allowed to walk around there also, not only on the tarred ways - I started to head towards the tower. How far away the tower would be? I had no distinct idea, but some hundred yards in any case, five hundred maybe, maybe even more? Whatever, I had time, it did not even rain, therefore.....

As I had walked around a hundred yards, as my way over the grass hit a tarred way, I looked back - yes! The conservatory, with its roundings, looked like a surfaced submarine in a garden ocean, it was simply moving to see it, it looked somewhat mysterious. It looked, like one could only see a small part of it, like in the case of a submarine or an iceberg. Therefore, it would not surprise me, would someone tell me that one could find a secret stairway inside, but not up to the gallery, but down to the true structure because the true structure was hidden, hidden under the garden ocean. It would be maybe a nice idea for a story, the hidden secret under the palm house, the true palm house or whatever one would find thereunder. But at the moment my aim was the "tower", which made now the impression of a Japanese style tower, a pagoda. So much I knew, in Europe, a hundred years ago or so, they had a favor for all from Asia, especially China and Japan. As far as I knew one could find pagodas in many parks in Europe. So, would this one, it would be not very surprising.

I continued with my way, as I could see that there was another building to my right, ahead, behind the trees. As I continued my way, the building appeared larger with every step, more glass, till I was near and the row of trees opened up, only a small, a much younger tree now between me and the.....glasshouse? It was huge, different as the wonderful palm house I had left recently, but definitively a glasshouse? I headed on till I hit the next tarred way, till I stood in front of it. It was huge, colossal, much larger than the palm house. A huge central building, on both sides a kind of pavilion and again on both sides another building, all was one connected glasshouse, but not really, something disturbed me. Not so much the large portico, but the basis was brick-built? Was this the place where the idiot waited? I looked at it, the largest Victorian conservatory.....what was this, this much larger structure? It was by far not so elegant, not rounded, edged, looked more like a palace. Obviously, it should look like one, one of the queen's successors, I was not good in it? Georgian, Edwardian, or.....? It was more "modern", larger, but for me by far not as elegant as the palm house, it appeared not palatial to me, but only "snobbish"? Well, one could say that therewith it fitted perfectly to London. For a moment I pondered about, if it was necessary to enter this "palace". But then I decided to do so, the tower, but it would have been a shame wouldn't I had done it!

I stepped through the door, traversed the entrance area, alone a stunning sight, to enter the hall and was shocked by its beauty - an enormous cathedral made from glass and steel. I shivered, the plants appeared nearly small under the huge dome, all looked brand new, like yesterday built, totally different as the wonderful palm house.

The palm house looked old, was old, was endearing as it was. It was filled with palms, literally, not one palm more was thinkable, not one could be pictured in one's mind larger - and it was wonderful in this way. But here, the plants looked like children, everything was so clean and bright, flooded by light, I was confused. This could be a brand-new building, but no one would build such a wonderful building today, but in its.....sober.....beauty it looked wrong. The palm house looked right, but this place with plants that looked like planted yesterday?

I looked around, what an impressive structure this was. I would have to climb the staircases, I had to see this magnificent hall from the balustrade, my heart beat faster as I only thought about it, the view from above - the other parts of the building, the other smaller structures to the left and right? I turned left, no short way, I had to cross another door, now I understood, different climates, this was

a temperature house. I knew this from a wonderful zoo with a wonderful long greenhouse, divided in many climatic zones. On the other side the other parts of the structure? I would need a longer time to see all, but now I should get an overview first, I should climb the staircases to reach the balustrade. I walked back.

I entered the great hall again, looked forward standing on the balustrade, to have a breathtaking view on this wonderful building, as my phone announced that it had received another SMS - I had no idea why I took the phone: What about a little chase? I see you, do you see me?

I reacted impulsive, I did not think about it, but suddenly I had the feeling that I should be not here, that I was tired of all this. I headed to the beautiful entrance, but this time I looked not at it as I left the impressive building. I started to walk in the direction of the entrance of Kew Gardens, cross-country, the overall direction was obvious. I did not look back, I was not interested in what would be behind me, not long, and I had reached the entrance, also this entrance I left behind. Back the street I reached the market again, now even better attended as I arrived. For a short second I felt the impulse to look at the stalls, maybe even to halt at one or the other, but I headed on and reached the small plaza at the station again. A band played, many listened to the music, no bad music, suddenly I felt hungry. Had music played as I had arrived? I thought that it had. Had I bought me some of the wonderful pasty, offered opposite to the band? I thought that I had. I hastened, but then I bought me three different ones. The first one I ate while walking to the platform from where I could drive back. Just as I reached the platform a tube arrived, it would bring me back to the city, I entered, no one who not had been on the platform already entered the tube, the doors closed, the tube started to move.

The Victoria - Hello, Darling - ESB - I was in the mood to get drunk. Well, wouldn't be that difficult, still had enough time, one more pint, maybe two, and it would have been done - this was my first pint! I had not eaten much over the day, even less I had drunk. I asked myself why I had reacted in this way, why I had not faced the confrontation, why I had run away, hightailed, behaved like a little insecure boy.

The next EBS, a smile while she tapped the beer and gave it to me, she knew how to sell. Your ESB, darling - your five pounds, was not in the mood for more. Not that I thought that she would be interested in more, at least not with an old guy like me, but some nice words would have been possible in any case. But I was not interested in.

Should I hope for a further message? Tomorrow I would leave London again, would leave Paddington again, would return to the States again. I had the feeling that I would get no further message, but maybe this wouldn't be important anyway. But why I had reacted in such an emotional way? I looked at my ESB, would I hurry I would be able to order a third one before the closing time - I hurried.

### **Farewell, London.....**

It was very early as I stood up - well, as always, as always I was the first in the small breakfast room. Early in the sense that it had been late yesterday, that it had been at least a pint too much, I had had three. It had been not that easy to walk the short way back to the hotel, not that easy to stand up this morning, but I had had no motivation to lay longer in the bed - strangely my eyes had been open very early.

A long and very hot shower had helped, not really a headache, but a very heavy head, had not the feeling to be astute this morning - now I sat in the breakfast room and had ordered the usual. Also in TV the usual, the Brexit madness, Theresa May talked like a boring politician, maybe because she was a boring politician? But then came the message a whole nation had waited for, the whole world had waited for this message, this exceptional moment, the royal baby had been born - hallelujah!

I tried to appear at least somewhat enthusiastic, I was no longer alone, and of course also the staff,

but in fact I was not really interested in it - well, they had their royals, we Kim Kardashian. Now I had a problem.....

It was still early, I had plenty of time till I had to leave the hotel room, not to talk about by when I had to be at Paddington Station - my plane back to the States departed late afternoon. But this was good so, I had forgotten to buy something important.

Whenever I left a hotel after a stay, I left some cookies in my room with an envelope with some money in it, as a final goodbye. I had forgotten to buy the cookies! But it was a short walk down Sussex Gardens to Edgware Road, to the supermarket there. It was easy to find some nice cookies in a metal box, I decided to walk back via Praed Street for a last time, till I got round to the "java u" in Praed Street - well, I had had breakfast just half an hour ago? But why not for a last time, a flat white or a cup of tea would be always something nice. I entered the shop with my box of cookies.

The place was very crowded - well, breakfast time? I looked around, only a few seats not occupied? I was no fan of using a seat between unknown people. The other "java u" - Edgware Road - was much larger.....the stairs downwards? It was not the first time that I saw this staircase, but I had never used it, had always found a seat here. So, I decided to have a look downstairs first, walked down the staircase and called myself a dummy. Downstairs was a wonderful place, nicely separated parts, comfortable seats.....simply a nice place to sit down, a whole new world - I had missed this the entire time by always sitting above.....why I had never been curious? So, I walked upstairs again, ordered a flat white, and had my last coffee in London at this very nice and cozy place.....

I had been back in the hotel, now sitting Paddington Station, waiting till the train would depart, had left the cookies and the envelope with some pounds in it in the hotel room, was not in the best mood. As always, I was way too early at the station, but was not interested in to walk around, to look at the other people, coming and leaving, drinking a coffee or two, maybe a snack. I sat in the hall, looked at the large display board, looked at the clock, looked at the time moving forward. I felt empty.

London had been.....Bristol, I had missed a lot in Bristol, Dover had been strange, London? In a way London was a fucking snobby.....simply a fucking city. On the other hand I felt sad to leave, to fly back, would like to be at "The Regent's Park" again, so many places I had missed, the zoo. Maybe the airport would lift my spirits again, I liked it very much to be at airports. But now I had to enter the platform, to enter the train, the fast train, it would be no long travel to Heathrow. I looked around a last time, not the most beautiful train station I ever had saw, but nevertheless, I felt sad, I felt alone, not even the phone was any longer interested in me.....

Heathrow, the story came to its end. I loved it to be at airports, but this was not the whole story. I loved it to fly, I loved aviation, I loved to be at an airport, waiting for boarding, to fly away. I loved it not that much to be at the airport again to fly back home, in fact, it always depressed me.

It was not different this time, had checked in, my luggage was on its way to the plane, I had still time till I had to board, I walked around and looked at the people. Happy those who headed towards a new destination, I would have been happy to stay.

Would I arrive at this place once again? I had missed so much, especially in Bristol, had to hear the three wonderful voices again. It was early 2019, should have a look at their tour plan, should stay in touch with future concerts, maybe at the end of the year or in the first half of 2020?

There would be so many aims worth to arrive, a whole world would wait to get discovered, so many wonderful voices that could be heard. Why flying back, why not further on, why not never back, but only ahead? It was not me, I had been always the guy who gazed after the ships, smaller and smaller they got at the horizon, but on the ships others fulfilled their duty.

A stewardess passed by, a beautiful stewardess in her nice uniform. Men liked stewardesses in their nice uniforms, sexually charged, but also a metaphor for having itchy feet. But hey, I was the young men, standing at the docks, watching the ships passing by.....