

That's No Reason To Give Up

*No one lives forever;
But that's no reason to give up
Don't you wanna fall in love?
No such thing as heaven
And I'm the last girl on earth
So, baby, let's get it on*

(Elizabeth Grant; Last Girl On Earth)

really

Jack's Bar

"I'm not sure - give me a House Old Fashioned. Always a very good choice when you're unsure."

He walked away and came back with a tumbler in his hand - I picked it up. I liked this thick and heavy glasses, with the large single ice cube in it - the scent of the alcohol mixed with the flavor of orange. I sipped on it.

"Have heard that you're the upcoming tango star."

"Sure. I only should try not to step always on my dance partner's shoes - it would be better would the women lead."

He had to look after some other guests, I looked at my glass. I had the feeling that it would be not my last Old Fashioned this evening - but hey, enough wonderful variations on the bar menu. Or a Dry Martini? Well, pure alcohol was not so much mine, but I had to confess that it was an elegant feeling, to nip at this filigree glass - the world of cocktails. Jack came back.

"But you not tell me, that it's not an interesting experience to be an scholar of her?"

"She's the teacher, I normally dance not with her - if one would call it "dancing" what I'm doing."

"But as I've heard, you "meet" her sometimes?"

"Tell me something, you both were together?"

"Would this be a problem for you?"

"Not at all."

"We were a couple for some time, but it's long ago."

"Was that the reason why she left the city?"

"You're the private dick!"

"My glass is empty."

"Another one?"

"Yes, but a Polo Bar."

He walked away to prepare my new cocktail. I had to try to find another topic, unfortunately I had no case at the moment.

He placed the glass in front of me, good looking.

"Fucking times the times today."

"Yeah, Nancy announced the impeachment procedures now."

"I hope they are knowing what they are doing. I'm not totally sure about Biden's son."

"Too much Fox News?"

"No, but hey, to be a Dem not means that you're an angel. Our beloved JFK, a fucking racist in the end and a filthy swine in relation to Jackie. And she, was she an angel? They both raised up in privileged families, for both it was clear that they were something special, that they were no ordinary people. It's like in ancient times, we're ruled by family clans, on both sides!"

"Warren and Sanders?"

"Guess why Sanders had no chance against Clinton? And today? Warren is the great surprise at the moment, but she's not through. Don't forget things like the National Convention and the super delegates. No, she's by far not through, even when Biden has to terminate his campaign."

"And Biden?"

"Biden was a mistake right from the beginning on. This has not to become a comfort zone for conservative Dems, this is an election that has to be won! The man in office would let him no chance, the Dems are on their way to squander everything - again! At the moment I ponder about if O'Rourke or Buttigieg wouldn't be the best choice. I think that the man in office would have a lot of problems with both. A gay politician, a man from Texas?"

"And you're dance lessons?"

"Not today, please. I've no idea what I should tell you."

"She's a very puzzling woman - don't forget that I'm knowing, about what I'm talking."

"Why you both broke up?"

"You not asked her?"

"Why, I can ask you?"

"It happened, no special reason. I think, that we both were not made for what one can call a normal relationship?"

"Thanks for this information."

"Wow, you not wanna tell me now, that your seeking for something what one could call a normal relationship? I fear that I have to tell you, that you're most probably a bit too old now, for the middle-class dream: A nice house, a representative car, a presentable woman and of course two nice kids - a boy and a younger girl. You're aware of this - or?"

"I'm aware of, that I have no relationship with her and I never will have one. Yes, I'm aware of, that I'm an old single man. I'm aware of, that it would be a stupid idea, to seek for a common relationship - satisfied?"

"Well, I agree with the second part. What the first part concerns.....?"

"Why you're not interested in, to renew you relationship with her - or, are you?"

"The past is the past - she's a real fascinating woman, or?"

"You have to know it. She tries to teach me dancing the tango, and this not really functions....."

An Ordinary Day

An ordinary day in an ordinary city by a bay. Workers are loading their trucks in the morning, to deliver the packages. But then nothing was ordinary anymore - three dead, many wounded.

I stand in a street, looking at a building. It was in the news, but only because it happened in this city, in this quarter. Would it have happened in another city, in another quarter, who would have been interested in? And to be honest, why should someone be interested in it, it happened every day in this country? And three? At least thirteen, better thirty, better more. A co-worker, no racist or even better a Muslim terrorist. It happened every day in this nation.

I was a private dick, one of this kind, who knew that he would change nothing, that he would not make the world better. Maybe not worsen it, but definitively not making it better. I had my income, could make my living. I lived alone - of course. At the moment I sat in my office, no case at the moment - I had time, a cup of tea on my desk. The phone rang.....

It Happens Every Day

A woman was on the other side of the line, she was slightly hysterical. At work, her boss, instant dismissal, she was not willing, if I would be willing help her, and so on. I told her, that it was sometimes more a matter about, whether I could help her or not, that it would be better to come into my office, that we could talk about it better then, I talked about my fee - we made an appointment for tomorrow in the morning, 10am.

This would give me time to be prepared. In a way I knew nothing, in a way everything. Should I know everything, then I feared that it would be a disappointing meeting for her. Not that I was a chauvinistic asshole, but I had to find proves, that was my job. And this job was sometimes a wild-geese chase - it could kill you.

I had now case, no appointment, it was 3pm, I decided to close the office for today. I activated the CF and looked forward to an easy afternoon and maybe a long evening in the bar.

I walked around and decided to have a late lunch. So far I had only some coffee in the office. It was a somewhat strange thing. In the office coffee, at home tea - not every time, but most of the time. I

had a Caesars Salad with strawberries and bananas on top, a triple Americano. I thought about that it was longer ago that I had lunch at Mr. Johnson's restaurant, I missed Ms. Jonson's cakes. A new case?

Worker rights? Well, the USA? Would it change if the impeachment would be successful? Would it change with a new man in the White House? Biden, Warren, Sanders maybe? I feared that I would have to tell the woman tomorrow, that I could not do that much for her. And if? The same as with Ms. Palmer? That even when she would win the case, she would be at the end the one who would be the loser?

It was hard to be a worker in the States. Especially in a low paid job, especially as a woman. One of this US porn topics, women molested and forced to sex for instance during job interviews or at the work place. Okay, much sicker stuff the Japanese offered - why I knew this? You should know your enemies, some say - as an old single man.

I continued my way through the city, it was late in the year, summer was definitively over - it was definitively not my favorite season! I should live more in the south - yeah, California! Devastating to see the daily pictures. But honestly you have to say, that it was also not that clever to build more and more homes in endangered areas. Sure, the weather, but some of the problems were self-made, also the problems with the power lines. Profit, money - Profit Over People, why such books became written?

Well, living here, no wild fires, no tornadoes, no hurricanes? A normal city in the USA, nothing special, whatever that would mean. I thought about to spent the evening in Jack's Bar.

"Not to be offensive Jack, but I'm definitely not in the mood for a conversation."

"Maybe therefore we should have one?"

"No, it's not this kind of mood. At the moment a fucking lot of things are happening, sometimes I have the feeling that everything becomes simply too much, overload, the alarm is ringing."

"Maybe you should not to try to follow everything that happens in Washington?"

"Washington is not that problem as such. And you have to follow it - what would be the alternative? Watching the corrupt stuff that the Fox News agitators are providing you? You have not to watch it live for hours, who's able to do this? But you have possibilities like YouTube and others today. The Republicans always yammering about first-hand information! Then move your ass and get you first-hand information! Use your own brain - but this is not the point. Have you seen the pictures from Hong Kong for example? This people are fighting for freedom, and we're on the way to squander our freedom. They are willing to die, and we're too cushy to use our means of information, to invest a little time, it's fucking!"

"It would be like too often - or? At the moment that these racists and fascists would have reached their aim, At this moment many would realize they had been only a mean to an end - when it's too late. One more Old Fashioned?"

"Always."

I sat at the bar and watched Jack, while preparing my Old Fashioned - it was always interesting to watch him by doing this. He was always very focused on it, at such a moment nothing was important for him, except to prepare a good cocktail. And his cocktails simply were fantastic cocktails. Also - maybe especially - a standard drink like an Old Fashioned.

"Would I annoy you, by asking you....."

".....no."

"It's okay, I'm no longer with her."

"You regret it - whatever has happened?"

"I screwed it, she was the best woman I've ever met. I was the idiot!"

"She can be very complicated - or?"

"She's no puppy, if you mean this. But she's no diva as well, if you mean this. She's an adult

woman with an own mind - she's has an own mind!"

It was not my last Old Fashioned, and I had a very long conversation with Jack. Not much other customers in the bar tonight, Jack knew his regular customers very well. He knew me very well. At what a time I had my appointment tomorrow.....?

In Office

It had been clever to fix the appointment not earlier as 10 o'clock. Thus I had enough time to stand up, to have a long shower and no need to hurry to reach my office. I had enough time to prepare some coffee - if she would like to have one - and some tea for me. I booted the PC and opened the newspaper - yes, I had subscribed a newspaper - and ran through the headlines while looking at my emails.

Yeah, the fucking shit with the hearings. Unbelievable in which way the Republicans acted, what a fucking bunch of ass-kissers they had become? Okay, they were used to kiss the asses of their billionaire sponsors, but the way they knuckle under to this disgraceful president was even for them extreme.

The city had still a problem with homeless people? Well, maybe it would be a possibility if we would have a society that would be interested in each other?

New weather extremes - well, as long as there's no climate change this is only a natural thing.

A shooting at.....two girls dead.....some wounded.....I closed the newspaper. Well, a normal day in this so fucking wonderful nation! I looked at the clock - 9:30 am, still some time.

10 o'clock, she was punctual, very punctual, too punctual maybe. She gave me more information about what had happened - the expected. I had to tell her what I had to say to her. That it would be very difficult to prove anything. Even after #MeToo, that she would most probably be the fool at the end. I told her from a woman, problems with the neighbor, she won the case, she had to move, the neighbor is still a respected member of the community - always the woman's fault. I asked her, how she would feel if there would be a trial, and she had to discuss the length of her skirts with the defense attorney. Always the woman's fault! I discussed the best strategy with her. Were there other women with the same experience at her workplace? Would it be an option to complain to his supervisors? We had a long conversation.

She needed the fucking job, not her only job. But she needed all her jobs, it would be hard for her to lose a job. A male as "manager", (mostly) women who did the work, women who were depending on such jobs. No good relation, even after #MeToo. But in a society who still believed in conservative fairy tales like trickle down, that the more billions the billionaires have, the better for all of us, that it would be fair that the richest companies paid no taxes, that public health care would be a mess, all this conservative shit, as long we would have this type of dependencies. And then the fine division: Women got the bad paid jobs, they were always the most vulnerable workers, the workers with least rights, the workers one could exploit the most.

I said goodbye to her, we had talked enough. I had to do some work now, had to think things over. It would be no easy case, and I was still not sure what would be the best strategy. We had decided, that I would visit her workplace during the week, at a day and time she would not have to work. I would call her after I would have a plan. That as long as I would have no distinct plan, I would charge nothing. The door closed and I had the feeling, that this would end in a way only too familiar to me - but what would be the alternative? Always the loser, this could be no alternative, this was a fucking alternative!

A Day At Work

I entered the place, it was one of this typical places for - attention, not politically correct now, but the fucking truth! - one of this typical places for the poor people, the underprivileged, a so typical place for this nation. Cheap food of bad quality, a lot of calories but no nutritional values, very large portions. It would have cost you more to buy the ingredients and to cook it by yourself at home, not to talk about the time you would have needed to prepare it, then to eat it in this "restaurant" - welcome to wonderful America where it was more expensive to cook a fresh meal at home, than to go to a "restaurant", than to order your food at a delivery service, than to buy oven-ready meals in the supermarket. I looked at the menu!

It was in the morning - breakfast. The menu confused me somewhat, a lot of pictures, a lot of combinations - eggs? The waitress came and I thought it would be the best to order some eggs.

"Scrambled eggs with two slices of toast please, and a cup of coffee."

"With ham or bacon?"

"Only the eggs."

"What kind of pastry you wish?"

"Sorry?"

"You can choose, the combos, it's cheaper then."

Now I started to understand the colorful menu. The breakfast was always with something sweet. Eggs with a cinnamon roll for instance, preferably with pancakes and a lot of syrup, such stuff!

"No thank you, only the scrambled eggs."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

She walked away, and you know what was the sad thing? That her boss was unsatisfied with her now! She had failed, she was not successful in, to sell me more than some simple eggs, my bill would be a very low one now - welcome to wonderful America! The eggs were perfect and very tasty!

Back in my office, I had saw enough, had saw also the suspect for a short time. He, the "manager" of the "restaurant", had a short conversation with one of the other waitresses. I could not understand a thing, but obviously it was nothing nice for the women - maybe some spontaneous extra shifts or so. It was always the same at such places. A "manager", preferably a young man, no qualifications in executive positions, sometimes even someone who still went to school, and a group of women who needed a job, a second or third job maybe, often single mothers - a difficult combination.

I had developed some ideas, of which I thought it would be the best to discuss them with my client, therefore I had called her and had made an appointment for the next late afternoon. Tomorrow she would have the early shift and some extra hours, not enough staff. We would meet at 6 pm, she had asked if it would be possible that her daughter would come with her - single mothers.

I thought about what to do with the rest of the day - Jack? Too much alcohol was not really my thing, from time to time one or two cocktails. One of the reasons why your bartender knew you only too well. Not later than by the third visit in a week, or an evening with the third, not to talk about the fourth cocktail, Jack knew that something was not okay with me. Especially when I started to drink stuff like Manhattans or so. TV was no alternative. The news were fucking, living in a fucking time with a fucking president. They would impeach him, and then? I was definitively no Republican, but the GOP of today? Why one who named himself a Republican could accept this behavior - I was so naive sometimes, at least at the moment this disgusting president ensured the Republicans that they would win in 2020. If this would change, they would drop him within a second and every Republican would tell you then how happy he was now, that this man was no longer in office - politics, a very dirty play!

I decided to walk around somewhat, not long and the year would be over, outside it was dark since a

longer time. Christmas time everywhere, sometimes it was hardly possible to escape the happiness in this happy nation. I walked by a homeless on a bench, he lay in a sleeping bag on it, it looked like as he would sleep. Should I give him a dollar, ten maybe? Maybe it would have been better for him to live in a country with a social security system, a country - sometimes I was not more than a naive weirdo.

A New Case

I sat in my office, a herbal tea on the desk. In the evening I would have the appointment concerning the case of sexual harassment at the work place, but now I waited for another client. I had gotten a phone call in the morning, sounded interesting and my new client had time to visit me at 1 pm, now it was 00:50 pm and the doorbell rang, my first appointment for the day had arrived.

He had given me only some brief information about his concern, that he got blackmailed. He had not told me his name, he had asked for a consulting, obviously someone who was not interested in, that the public became aware about the matter. Blackmailing, always a very difficult subject. I opened the door and the man who stood in front of me was not totally unknown to me. Not that I would know him privately, totally different league, but I had seen his image often enough in the newspaper, also on TV he was a regular guest - Henry J. McCallum III!

Mr. McCallum was a very well known person in the city, an entrepreneur with a net worth way beyond our wonderful president's fortune. But especially he was known therefor, that he propagated an agenda that included a regulated capitalism, more worker rights, equal pay for women and more. The proportion of women in his cooperation was one of the highest in the whole US, he was an active supporter of the Green New Deal - with other words, he was a shining figure therefor, that you can make a fortune without behaving like most of the American companies did. Well, there were some voices not seeing him in such a bright light - I asked him to come in. He decided for a coffee, I had another herbal tea.

"You told me that someone blackmails you, can I see the blackmailer's letter? Only one so far, or?"

"Yes, that's true. As I said at the phone, I got this letter three days ago. Here it is."

He handed me a letter, the postmark was from the city, the letter as such was obviously written on a PC. I started to read the letter.

"Well Mr. McCallum, this is a very difficult situation for you and in a way for me."

"For you? I mean you're a private detective?"

"Yes, I'm a private detective. And one of the good things is, that this gives me the opportunity to accept or to refuse a case."

"You're not accepting my case without any statement from my side?"

"I see a moral conflict. I represent a woman, who suffered sexual harassment on her workplace. As I said, I see a moral conflict here."

"You're not believing what's written in this letter - or? You know who I'm!"

"I know your reputation, and I said not that I would belief the accusation, made in this letter. But maybe you can understand that it's difficult for me having two such cases at the same time. And by the way, I think it should be easy for you to hire the best private dicks in the country, lawyers as well."

"I need someone who knows the city, who has connections, who is able to investigate without arousing attention. You had a very good reputation!"

"I still have a very good reputation, and I will have a very good reputation in the future. You not should try to pressure me, especially not in such a situation."

"Sorry. But I hoped for your help. I hope that we have not to discuss that this accusation has not the slightest justification."

"The video mentioned in the letter, the video that shows you, forcing one of your female employees into an act of sex?"

"I hope that I have not to tell you what's technically possible today."

"No, but it's not you and an unknown woman - you understand? For a simple blackmailing it would be enough to have a video, showing you harassing a woman. You're married, you have children. A video showing you, cheating your wife? That would be enough! To fake a video with you and one of your female employees? This would be even today an extraordinary effort. Or do think that one of your female employees is involved in the blackmailing?"

"At the moment I have no idea what I should think. You're knowing that I always supported #MeToo, but now this could be my end. Who would belief me? Who....."

".....I have to interrupt you. I have still a problem therewith that the video should show you and one of your female employees. No idea who it could be? A women who left the company, maybe fired, maybe a disappointed employee? Any ideas?"

"No, not really."

"That helps not much. Sorry for the question. You really not did it?"

"Of course not! I....."

".....that also helps not much. Whom shall I name now, good old Harvey? Everybody, men and women, could do it! You need a better strategy than this. My proposal?"

"Yes?"

"The letter told you that you will get further information, about the money and so, in the next letter. Ignore them! Ignore the letters. Wait till the video is released, if any will be released at all, then you see the female employee, then act! Then go on the offensive, a lot will depend on who the woman is. Maybe everything in only a bluff."

"Is this all you can offer me?"

"After getting the next letter we can meet again. I will decide then whether I will work for you or not."

"Normally people are happy to work for me."

"I have to find an answer - you're knowing the question?"

"It's not common to me, that somebody casts doubt on me. Maybe I will call you again, after getting the next letter."

"Yeah, our successful pillars of society, beyond any criticism. I cast doubt on anybody, that's my job, I cast doubt even on me."

He had left the office, I believed him! It was only a feeling, a stupid feeling! Why such a man should do something such a stupid thing? What name I should name now? But it was not the person as such, the circumstances were not very convincing. Not the blackmailing as such, the letter, its content, all appeared very amateurish. And then, such a case, such a client, would requisition all my time - and I had a client already. It was after 3 pm now, still some time till the appointment at 6 pm, time to prepare for this appointment.

Just before 6 pm, still herbal tea, the doorbell rang again. I stood up and opened the door to let my client in, I had developed some ideas and plans, time to discuss them with her. So I opened the door and to my surprise two men stood in front of me - two police officers to be exact. No uniform, but the type one had not to ask!

"Visit from the police? I wait for a client, what can I do for you?"

"I think it would be better that we would come in. I fear that your appointment has to wait."

"Okay, come in."

Both decided for a coffee, after 6 pm now?

"Okay, what can I do for you?"

"You're knowing a woman, her name is Carla Rodriguez?"

"Well.....she's the client I'm waiting for and who's overdue now? What happened!"

"We found her dead body this morning, obviously a murder with robbery. Your business card was in

one of her pockets. Can you tell us why she was your client?"

"Are you sure that it was a holdup murder?"

"All indicates this - doubts about it?"

"A lot of doubts!"

Yes, immediately I had a lot of doubts! Ms. Rodriguez had to work at the morning, better to say she had a double shift. Morning and noon shift - not enough staff, as often in such companies. On the one hand many depended on such jobs, on the other hand the working conditions often were such worse, that the staff changed very often. Most of the time they hadn't enough staff. You could pay better, you could improve the working conditions? But why, when you had enough people which had no other choice in the end? The bad face of the American Dream.

Yes, I had immediately a lot of doubts. A coincident that my client became the victim of a holdup murder - and when does the murder had happened? She had to start with working very early. Therefore, the murder would have had happened very early this morning in the dark. It was December, definitively it was still dark at the hour her shift would have begun. Where does the murder had happened? A lot of questions, a lot of doubts!

"Can I ask you when and where the murder has happened?"

"Yes, of course. As far as the coroner can say at the moment, at around 5:30 am. Obviously she was on her way to her work place, very near to her work place in a backstreet."

"A holdup murder? She not really looked like a rich woman - the haul of the murderer?"

"Some idiots kill for a few bucks - you have another theory?"

"You conducted interrogations at her workplace?"

"Yes."

"You talked also with the "manger"? A young guy, still wet behind the ears?"

They looked at each other, obviously the were not sure about it.

"Would this in some way be important?"

I told them why Ms. Rodriguez had consulted me.

"You're thinking that this manager could be the murderer?"

"For me he would be immediately a suspect? That's what I'm saying, not more."

"We will consider this."

With these words they stood up.

"Thanks for your information. If we need further information we will contact you again - you're a private investigator?"

I shrugged with my shoulders.

"Let us do our job!"

With these words they turned and left my office - I sat behind my desk and took a deep slug of my herbal tea.

Jack's Bar

"You're not in the best mood."

"You're asking?"

"No, this was no question, this was a statement."

"I have a new case - I had a new case."

""Had"?"

"My client, who was technically not at all my client, is dead."

"This, technically, has not to mean that there's no longer a case. This could mean, that now there's a case all the more?"

"The police will investigate the murder."

"So, why then you're in this mood?"

"She was a single mother - the daughter? She was a Latina, dead in a backstreet in a poor neighborhood? Yeah, the police will investigate the murder, one week, or even two? How much

murders we had last month? Only a murder more, she was no white celebrity mom. I not wanna blame the police as such, but her death will be not even worth a four-line news on page twenty-one. She was a Latina single mother - and the daughter?"

"Maybe there's an aunt or so. You have no real trust in the work of the police?"

"That's not the point. As I said, how many murders the last month, how many rapes, how many other severe crimes? Not to talk about crime as such. Even if they would be interested in to investigate this murder case in a severe way, they would have not the resources. This is not CSI - hey, they have always all time and resources they need! Who believes that this is the reality? Was there an episode about a single Latina mother, found dead in a backstreet in a fucking neighborhood. Oh yes, two CSI at the crime scene for hours? And then they used all their nice equipment, all the staff worked on this "eminent" case - TV shit!"

"But sometimes there is this private dick....."

"You've read too much Chandler novels."

"And the daughter?"

"Maybe there's an aunt or so."

Jack knew when it was better to leave me alone with my cocktail. And he knew that this case would be no dead case for me. And the daughter? Even if there would be an aunt or so - how old was her daughter? Jack came back with a new cocktail, I had emptied mine some time before.

"Tomorrow is New Year's Eve, I think this year you will not sit at home alone?"

"Jealous?"

"The bar is closed the next two days as you maybe know? Who says that I will celebrate alone?"

"Not with her."

"No, not with her. We're good friends now, we had a conversation about the time before she left the city. She not talked with you about it?"

"She did. I was not sure about, whether this is okay for you or not."

"Sure it's okay. So, you have a new case now, a murder case and there's also a daughter?"

"It seems so. There's a prime suspect, at least for me."

"The police is informed?"

"Yes, at the beginning it was a case of sexual harassment at work. Now she's dead, murdered in a backstreet very close to her workplace, in the early morning, just before she would have begun with her shift? Okay, it's definitively not the safest area of the city, but one should investigate this context."

"As I said, there's sometimes this private dick.....you will celebrate with Jessica?"

"As if she not told you?"

"You see, we have something in common now."

"She has found a kind of party were you can dance a lot."

"Sounds not that much motivated?"

"Believe it or not, this will be the first time in my life that I will attend in a New Year's Celebration."

"I totally believe you! You feel some pressure?"

"I have my problems therewith to be happy on command. You felt under pressure while being together with her?"

"Always, and this was stupid, this stupid behavior was one of the reasons why it not functioned. She is a wonderful woman, you have nothing to prove! Be yourself, forget this man's shit, she's not interested in. Not some years ago, and especially not today."

"You're regretting it?"

"Yes, but what's gone is gone. Don't be the same idiot I was. She likes you."

"She told you?"

"Well,....."

"Can I ask you something else?"

"Of course."

"You're knowing Henry J. McCallum III?"

"Well, is this a question?"

"No, not really. He asked me whether I would work for him or not."

"That's new to me, that he's asking?"

"He not really asked, but I gave him a knock-back."

"It's always a good thing to have the most influential persons of the city as friends. What was his concern - if you can tell me!"

"Well, that's the odd thing. Someone blackmails him, sexual harassment at work, more or less we're talking about rape. A video shall exist, showing him forcing a female employee to have sex with him - greetings from Harvey!"

"But he says that he not did it, or?"

"Yes, and in a way I would believe him. But the point is, that it would be strange to have two such cases at the same time. One time a woman who says that she's the victim of sexual harassment at work and then a man who says that someone accuses him wrongly about the same matter. Even when the woman is dead now, maybe especially because she's dead now."

"I think Mr. McCallum has enough resources to find help - others not, even when dead now."

"That was also my point - I think enough alcohol for today. Could you mix me something without?"

"Of course!"

New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve, I met with my "date". She wore the same outstanding outfit that she had worn, as I saw her for the first time - still and simply breathtaking. I had tried the whole day to find something what not let me look like her dance student - at the end I wore that, what I always wore when I had dance lessons.

"Wow, lets me look like a school boy."

"Come on, your outfit is not that bad. You improved during the dance lessons."

"Yeah two-colored dance shoes. I fear the problem will be the guy who wears them."

"Why it should be a problem?"

"You said that we will celebrate in a dance hall?"

"Yes."

"I fear there will be a large line with potential dance partners at our table?"

"Maybe, but they all will become disappointed then. I'm only interested to dance with one man tonight."

"And where will we dance? You not told me the venue and I haven't found a real dance hall in the city."

"You did some research?"

"Internet."

"Yeah, it's not so easy to find. Wait and be impressed!"

We took a taxi, and it lasted some time. In fact, we left the city towards one of the smaller suburbia.

"Now I understand. You never told me from this place?"

"No, it's an insider tip. It's a place for the passionate people who like the old days."

"According to your dress, the 20s and 30s? The first time, in Jack's Bar, you came from this place?"

"Yes and yes."

"So we will hear a lot of jazz tonight?"

"Yes, but not only jazz."

We arrived at the place, from outside it looked a bit like a factory hall. A little sign, that was all what gave a hint that there could be more.

"Disappointed?"

"No, I haven't saw the inside so far. And when I see some of the cars driving around here, and when I see the people walking around here, their clothes, especially the women - Broadway Downtown

L.A.? Old Downtown, the classic downtown I mean - or better Chicago? No celebration for the poor people."

"No. Is it too hard for you, to forget the world outside for a night, diving into this artificial place?"

"Not with you."

We entered the hall and I was simply astonished. I had heard from this classic dance halls, I had seen pictures, footage even, but never thought to stand in such a hall one time. Okay, it was not one of this very large ones, in some up to ten thousand could dance at the same time - at least I had this in mind. Two stages with two bands which played at the same time, battled, who would attract more dancers? Battles, not really an invention of the rappers. This hall was smaller, on stage of course. But the dance floor was impressive, a waiter showed us our table.

"So, I guess you know many people here?"

"Of course, I'm running a dance school? This is a place, I should show up from time to time."

"So, I guess we will hear different bands and singers during the evening?"

"Yes, jazz and waltz, tango of course. But we will see also dancers on the stage - you like tap dancing?"

"It's impressing, sometimes it's really astonishing what they are doing."

"You will see some of the bests tonight."

We ordered a bottle of wine, later we would eat something. But the main part of the night would be music and dancing.

It was a wonderful evening, but also exhausting. We danced a lot, sometimes I performed better, sometimes worse. From time to time there was a break, dancers, even artists on the stage. This gave me time to get new breath for the next round of dancing. All in all I thought, hoped, that I was not that bad, saw many men dancing fantastically - many of them known to her. Only one time she danced not with me, she danced with another woman, her dress was simply unbelievable!

"Wow, only her dress - every show girl would be jealous about it, the feathers and all the sparkling, very sexy!"

"I will tell him when I see him the next time, that you're loving his dress. It would be okay for me, if you would have one dance with him."

Well, sometimes things are not like they seem. As I watched them dancing I thought that I would see the two most beautiful women of the night dancing together - and I danced with both of them.

Midnight, Champagne in the glasses, everything what was outside I had forgotten - we went outside, a spectacular fire work awaited us. With this spectacle the evening not came to its end, in a way this was the opening for a wonderful night. As we entered the taxi again it started to brighten, dawn had begun. The taxi stopped in front of my condo, I said goodbye, and she gave me a kiss, and I had some tears in my eyes.

I opened the door of my condo, switch the light on, and then the TV - breaking news! Henry J. McCallum III arrested, accused of being the murderer of one of his secretaries - wow, I would guess that she would be the one, one could see in the video!

Not that I thought, that he would be a murderer - on the contrary! My first impulse was, that this would lead thereto, that he was most probable innocent, innocent in both cases! To harass her, okay. But then murdering her would be stupid - why? The tape still would exist, the tape would be his death sentence! No, there was this smell, something was wrong. Okay, maybe he killed her in an impulsive act, but he would have other possibilities. The reporter said that she had been killed in her house, two days ago, evidence would lead directly to the suspect - nonsense! Two days he would sit

at home, doing nothing, knowing that there was a dead body, that it would be only a matter of time till the dead body would be discovered? He was a billionaire with connections I only could dream of, not to talk about fixers, about people who would do everything for him, money was enough there. Two days and nobody had tried to disperse the dead body, to disperse the evidence? Never ever!

Strange, two dead women, two suspicious men. One time I was convinced about, that the man was guilty. One time I was convinced, that the man was innocent. But in both cases the woman was dead! In one case the woman seemed to be the victim, and the other woman? Both dead, but dead not necessarily had to mean innocent! Maybe the other woman was part in a conspiracy against McCallum, maybe killed by accomplices? But why then they should incriminate McCullum? This money source had been dried out now.

It was late, I decided to go to bed. The whole night I saw two men and two women in front of me, and a network of possibilities.

New Year's Day

It was hard to stand up, crazy what I had dreamt, always half asleep. I needed a long time, longer as normal, to sort out, what's the dreamland and what's the so-called reality. But in the end I found it out, and as always I was disappointed.

I needed a very hot and very long shower, of course also the alcohol, of course also the effort of the dancing, but much more my confusing thoughts. I was not sure about the way I should handle this new development. On the other side, why it should be relevant for me? He would have a whole bunch of fucking good and fucking expensive lawyers, I was an irrelevant person for a man like him. But he had sat in my office, he had asked for help, I felt committed. Wouldn't it be somewhat absurd would I try to get in contact with him now, would I be even capable to get in contact with him now? I should forget this matter, I had a client, an important client, a dead client.

But today was New Year's Day, today a new year began - not for two women, and for one man in jail. My task would be to find the murderer of one of the women, to bring one man in jail. Everything else would be uninteresting, not my matter. I should try to get some clear thoughts, a tea would be no bad decision, two or three eggs with some salad maybe. To earn some money would be also no bad idea, had some reserves on the bank, but nevertheless I should be able to pay my cocktail also the next day.

I ate my eggs and the salad, drank my tea and decided that I would need some more sleep. No good idea, again this two women and this two men gave me not any peace. But at a certain moment it seemed as I would have fallen asleep, because suddenly I woke up, confused, uneasy, could not remember any dream! But something had happened, I felt it, I felt this cold hand around my neck, it was 3 am. New Year's Day was over, the first day of the year was over, soon the last day would be over.

I sat on the edge of my bed, my cell phone blinked, someone had called me. I was not in the mood to talk with her, it was not the time to talk with her, she had not only called once. Sorry, I was an old man now! After such a night I needed a longer time to recover, therefore I laid down again, looked at the ceiling and waited for the next day.

New Year's Resolutions

A new year, new resolutions - time to give them up! I had decided to forget the rich guy and his problems - the secretary? I had decided to concentrate on the relevant case, the other dead woman. My strategy would be, as a first step, to become a regular customer in the "restaurant". Then I would see what would develop, maybe I would see something interesting, hear something interesting. Still one problem, it would be not bad to get a case with a living client, to make some

money. Some money on the bank, but it would not be enough for ever. Whatever, I would have from now on a place for breakfast - eggs, toast and coffee, not more! Reading my newspaper? It would be good to be a "special" customer, would help me to get in contact with the staff. It would give me the opportunity to get insights about their workplace, to gain their trust.

Since around two weeks now, I started my day with eggs, toast and coffee. After I had finished my eggs, I took my newspaper and started to read it, slowly drinking my coffee. You're not understanding the irony in this picture?

Then my friend I would guess that you're no American! An American who reads a newspaper as such, is a somewhat rare thing - and I mean at home! An American who reads a newspaper in public is a real strange thing! An American who sits in the morning in such a place, drinking coffee and reading a newspaper is something surreal! Even more, when he sits there for an hour or more - I totally not fitted to this place! Soon I got to know the waitresses, but also to the cooks. To get your eggs in many variations was no problem in the States, but sunny side up was not the first choice of a normal American, especially if you wished the egg yolk very liquid. All in all I got an overview about the people who worked at this place in a very fast way, saw also the "manager" from time to time. And maybe I should mention, that I had also a small case during this time, nothing special, but I made some money. Today something was different.

"I thought that Kishana would be here today, I hope that she's not ill? I'm surprised that you're here today, Karen?"

"I stepped in for her."

"Then I hope, that she will be well soon again."

"I fear that she will not come again."

She looked around, it was obvious what she feared.

"That's a pity, she smiled all the day."

"Yeah, as long as.....sorry, the other customers."

She turned around, wanted to walk away.

"Sorry, can I have my bill?"

"Of course."

I had the feeling that her voice sounded differently, but could not see her eyes.

"Could you do me a favor?"

"Maybe?"

"Could you write down an address and / or a phone number from Kishana on the bill?"

As I said this, I took my wallet out of my back pack that I normally carried with me. I opened the wallet in a way, so that she could see my license, that proved my status as private investigator. In a way this was a risk, but I had the feeling that it would pay.

"With pleasure!"

This time I could see her eyes.

Single Mothers

I knocked at the door, had tried to get her on the phone several times, but no success - and also now I got no response. But I had the impression that I would hear a TV, I walked around the house and looked into the windows - she sat in front of a TV with a young girl on her lap, it seemed as that they not had noticed me. For a moment I thought about to leave, but then I decided to stay, to be intrusive. I knocked at the window.

She moved her head slowly, the little girl looked at me. I took my license and held it in front of the window, she gave me a sign to go away. It was not easy for me, but I knocked again and tried to

convince her with my hands, either to come to the window or the door. It seemed as it lasted a very long time, the girl became unsettled, as she slowly stood up to walk in the direction of the door. I hurried to reach the door, the door opened a bit.

"Piss off, whatever you want! I call the police, if you not leave my site!"

"I think you remember me from the restaurant? I'm a private investigator and I'm here because of Carla Rodriguez, the woman who worked in the restaurant before you started to work there. The woman who became murdered in the backstreet behind the restaurant."

"So you're not here because of me - very fine!"

She started to close the door.

"Waite! I'm also here because of you. I think that you both underwent the same experience in the restaurant, and I fear that you could do the same, what her has costed the life!"

"And that would be?"

"To confront him therewith, that you would go to the police - you thought about this?"

"Yes....."

"Then we should talk!"

We sat together in her living room, not a very nice one. Her daughter still watched TV.

"Can you tell me, what happened in the restaurant to you?"

"You know it, or? What would you do, if I tell you? You're here because of her, not because of me."

"I'm here because I have a case to solve."

"She's dead, or?"

"Yes, but her murderer has to be hold accountable for it."

"And what does this helps me? I need a fucking job, I have daughter?"

"You're a single mother?"

"Looks so, or? Or do you see her fucking father?"

"No. Maybe I can help you find a job, I've some connections in the city."

"And therefor I help you?"

"No, no quid pro quo. You have not to make a deal. But it would help me to solve the case if you would work together with me."

"Who pays you?"

"Nobody, she's dead as you know. But I feel committed, it's not acceptable for me to let her murderer unpunished."

"And again, why this should involve me?"

"Because, I think that the man who molested you and her, is also her murderer."

"Wow, let the police do the job."

"The police has a lot to do. I have possibilities the police has not. But it's not me versus the police or so, it's me with the police. Four eyes see more than two, that's the point."

"So what do you expect from me?"

"A first step would be, that you would tell me everything about the situation of women in the restaurant. You're a single mother as well, I've the feeling he likes it to employ single mothers. He seems to be a real philanthropist - can we talk about your experiences?"

"Yes. But what will happen then?"

"I'm not sure at the moment. It will depend on among others, about what you will tell me."

We sat for a longer time together, and it was worse as I thought. Obviously everything had a system, obviously this all happened not only one or two times, obviously it was an open secret. Well, not only in Hollywood, but would such a case become a nationwide top news? Of course not, it would be not about a big Hollywood producer, not about female Hollywood stars - it was a murder case? Yeah, a Latino single mother murdered in a backstreet, I had found not even a short notice in the newspapers about it. She was a number in a bad statistic, not more.

"Okay, I have to think about it, what you have told me. It would be good to find two or three

women more, who would be willing to speak out. Could you try to establish some contacts for me? I could need some help - you could assist me?"

"Working as your assistant?"

"Yes, I can not pay very much, but I think at least as much as you got in the restaurant."

"Is this your way to help me?"

"It would be good to have the assistance of someone, with insights into what happens there."

"You have no insights?"

"I'm a man, it's not easy for a woman to talk about such things, it's even more difficult for a woman to talk with a man about it. I think it would be easier for women to talk with you, than with me."

"I'm not sure if I'm good in this - I'm no investigator?"

"You will be good, I'm sure about it. You have the experience, unfortunately you have the experience, it's not an abstract thing for you, as for me. But be aware, this is a murder case! I would suggest, that we meet in my office tomorrow and talk it over again. I hope I will have a kind of plan till then. I have a close friend at the police, I will call him tomorrow - would it be okay for you to come to my office tomorrow?"

"Sure, I would be your assistant then?"

"Yes - you need an advance?"

"Would be not bad."

Yves

"Hello, Yves."

"Hello Peter, why you're calling? - What can I do for you?"

"Oh, come on! Do you really think, that I would only call you if I need your help?"

"Fine, when and where?"

"Pardon?"

"Which restaurant and at what date? A new Indian restaurant has opened?"

"Some tacos at the food truck, later the day?"

"You're kidding me! I do you a favor and you return the favor with a nice dinner - that's the deal."

"Okay, a table for two this Friday?"

"Wow, I'm not sure about your status, but I'm married."

"Okay, give me the address of the restaurant - you have heard something about a Latina murdered in a backstreet recently?"

"You're a very funny person this morning, I have not to tell you something about the crime rates in our city - or?"

"No, of course not."

I gave him the necessary information about the case.

"As I said, I'm only interested in what the status of the case is. I'm not interested in to interfere in the work of the police. But, and this is the problem, I'm aware of the crime rates in our city."

"I will need some time, but I will inform you. It's good that someone is interested in her, in her fate."

"She has hired me."

"From a technical point of view not, and she's dead now."

"From a point of trustworthiness, she has. And hey, you're a police officer? With her death the case not ended, with her death a case has started."

"Yeah, but I'm a police officer. I get paid from you to protect you and to investigate in crimes. You are a private investigator."

"Yes, that's what I'm."

Jack's Bar

I had spontaneously decided for a cocktail in Jack's Bar, he not expected me before tomorrow, therefore he was a little surprised to see me.

"Sorry that I have to tell you, but Super Tuesday is tomorrow?"

"Yeah, I'm aware of that, I know that I've said the last time that I would spend Super Tuesday at your bar - and I will."

"Well, it's not normal for you that you sit daily here. A special reason?"

"Yes and no. I'm not sure about this.....situation? The primaries, my case - or do I have cases? Buttigieg and Klobuchar are out, not sure about some things."

"Well, then your at the right place, a bar was always a little world of its own - what can I do for you?"

"Nothing hard today.....something with brandy maybe?"

"A classic? A Sidecar?"

"Yeah, something like that - you know what I like."

Not much people in the bar today, it took no long time and Jack placed the cocktail in front of me.

"Not exactly a classic Sidecar, but I think you will like it."

I took a sip, enjoyed the sugar, and it was exactly what I needed.

"Very good, not much people here today?"

"It's Monday? Monday it not my best day. You're mostly at Wednesdays and Thursdays here."

"That's true."

"You're not in the mood for conversation, I let you alone."

Yeah, he not only knew my taste, he also knew when it was the best to let me alone with my cocktail. I got a second one, different but very fitting, a coffee, I had to order nothing. I felt not like the tough private dick from the novels and movies - fucking reality!

My New Assistant

We met in my office, had a coffee together.

"What shall I do?"

"I ask you to do interviews among the restaurant staff. It would be important to get an impression about, whether this behavior is his normal behavior against women or not."

"Can I say something?"

"Of course! We work together now."

"Thanks. You said something about single mothers, I thought about it. As I started the job one of the other women said, that it would be no surprise to her to see me. Young, from a minority and a single mother, it was her facial expression. Many of the female employees are young, from a minority and single mothers are not uncommon."

"Than we can see a pattern."

"During my job interview he told me, that he would always try to help women, especially single mothers. I only not knew what he meant with "to help"."

"Okay. Start with women, from them you have a phone number. Say, that you wanna talk with them, that you need to talk with somebody, that you wanna warn them. Do not mention the investigation. Tell them, that they should not tell him from your phone call. Can you do this?"

"Yes, of course."

"At Friday I will meet someone I know at the police. He can give me some insights regarding the investigations of the police. We should meet again at Monday. If something happens, important information or so, please call me immediately."

"Sure, till Monday."

"Today is Super Tuesday, you're interested in politics?"

"Not that much. It's Super Tuesday but I cannot vote. Our state has still to wait quite a longer time

till we can vote. You have heard about this virus? I have relatives who live in Seattle. They even have some deaths in Washington now?"

"Yes, I've heard it. Everything is related to an old people's home. In China they have a lot of problems....."

Jack's Bar

"I'm somewhat late Jack, but I had something to do - first results?"

"Yes, but how about a drink first?"

"Sure, something with Whiskey or Rum, maybe a bit sweet, some bitter - you know what I like."

He brought me an interesting looking cocktail, and it tasted fantastic.

"You see it by your own eyes....."

He pointed on the screen which I had obviously already seen. Of course, there was no TV in the bar normally, but at special occasions Jack set one up.

"Wow, Biden in the lead in the early states. Okay, only a few percents have been counted so far, but if this stabilizes....."

"Sanders has to hope for California then."

"Strange, a short time ago Biden was not worth a dime, now this comeback! Black voters?"

"It's a bit strange, two or three endorsements from important persons from the black community, also from Buttigieg and Klobuchar after they stopped their campaign, and everything is different? That seems to be somewhat strange."

And things developed not good for Sanders, also not in California. Was this the end of Sanders? Maybe not, but this election day was a hard stroke for the Sanders' campaign.

A Table For Four

It was, to be fair, a very fine Indian restaurant in which we four sat. Yves and his wife Elizabeth, Caroline and I. We had started the conversation by talking about the elections from Tuesday.

"Bloomberg also has stopped his campaign now."

"Well Elizabeth, I think that this is a very good development, the fact that you obviously not can buy an election."

"Absolutely Caroline, but Sanders is in deep trouble now. I have to confess that I'm still not sure whom I should give my vote."

"Maybe this will be not of importance any more Elizabeth? I'm not happy with these primaries and caucuses. I've the feeling that our primary will be not very interesting anymore. Why we cannot have one primary, all states at the same day?"

"Why we still have an electoral college? But I would agree, we have to modernize our electoral system. Can I change the topic of our conversation somewhat?"

"Of course, Peter. Let's talk about your work."

"Only for a moment, but it's important that Yves tells me what information he has for me - Yves?"

"I fear that I have no good information for you. Your suspect has an alibi."

"An alibi or an alibi?"

"Every day a waitress and a cook are arriving first at the restaurant, they are starting everything. The other staff comes later, especially your suspect. His regular work time begins two hours later, also at this day, and he arrived punctually at this time in the restaurant."

"Then he had time to commit the murder - the alibi."

"He needs only thirty minutes to the restaurant, he was obviously still at home at the time of the murder. His girl friend gives him an alibi."

"Well, his 'girlfriend'?"

"Yes, I know what you mean. But nevertheless he has an alibi."

"The police?"

"You know, it's difficult for them - I have not to tell you about all the crimes that happened alone during the last twenty-four hours in this city. I've talked with the responsible officer, he would be happy to know that someone would stick to this case. Otherwise he fears, that this will become another unsolved murder case in this city."

"More than one murder, several rapes, dozens of severe crimes - at least one suicide. Let's talk about something not that fucking."

"I'm not sure if this is a better topic, but we have our first case with this new virus in our state today - I saw it in the news."

"In Washington they have more and more cases, and deaths."

"Strange, I have asked a former employee from this restaurant to help me. She has told me that she has relatives living in Seattle."

"Well, so far it seems not so dramatic in the States - or?"

Meeting With Kishana

We sat in my office with a cup of coffee again.

"I have tried to call various women, but the response was not very good. I have the feeling that many would like to say something, but they fear to do so."

"Yes, that's always the problem in such cases. I hoped that it would be better if a woman would ask them. We should see it not too negative, maybe you can call them later again. Maybe they need simply more time."

"This virus thing, my relatives in Seattle fear it more and more. But the president says that it would be nothing severe, that the virus will disappear soon again."

"To be honest, so long I thought not that much about this topic. But when our president, this notorious liar, tells me that there's nothing to fear, then I start to be afraid."

"What shall we do?"

"I'm not really sure."

Jack's Bar

Again in Jack's Bar, but this week was only little Super Tuesday. But in fact, this was only one of our topics.

"They say that they maybe will close our schools for a week. This not looks good."

"Come on Jack, our wonderful president knows exactly that this virus thing is only a bad hoax from the Democrats. There's nothing to fear!"

"Yeah, this cools me down very much!"

"New numbers! Okay, Sanders is very deep trouble now! No boost from Warren's resign, looks very bad for him."

"The numbers in Washington, this cruise ship in San Francisco, I've a bad feeling."

"Do you really think that it can become just a bad as in China in the States, Jack?"

"We have closed the borders very fast. I hope not, we have not the best health care system in the world."

"I have to confess that I feel somewhat uneasy now."

Phone Call With Kishana

"Kishana?"

"Yes."

"Peter, I thought that I should call you."

"Sorry, I have done no further phone calls."

"That's absolutely okay. Yesterday I talked with Jack about it, today they have closed the schools for a week. Is all okay with you and your daughter?"

"Yes, we have your check. Maybe next week she can go to school again."

"Maybe. There's another reason for my call. You have heard about the Harvey Weinstein verdict?"

"Yes, and I have to say that I cheered as I heard it!"

"Yes, it's a very important verdict and it can help us. It's a signal therefor, that voices of women become more recognized."

"Yeah, he was a Hollywood mogul, and the women celebrities. You not tell me, that my voice would be equal to their voices?"

"No. I have to honest, no."

National Emergency

The president had declared a national emergency today. I thought it would be a hoax from the Democrats? My case? It was a murder case, no small crime? I had to think about it, what if the situation would escalate? So far everything seemed to be controllable, but Washington, the cruise ship, first case in more and more states, more cases in our state?

More and more became discussed. The primaries, rallies, town halls for instance. Would this limit my possibilities as private investigator? Every day I felt more and more insecure.

First Death!

Yesterday we closed the schools in the state, today we had our first death. Tomorrow would be the next TV debate, planned for Phoenix. It would not happen, not in Phoenix, not with an audience. They moved it to a TV studio in Washington, without an audience. The next primaries, next Tuesday, were in question now, at least Ohio postponed its primary. We should try to limit our interactions with others as much as possible - cool for investigations. But maybe this would be not the most important - but we talked about a murder, not about a parking ticket. Kishana, would it be acceptable to ask her furthermore for help, she had young daughter? Money? Our president narrated fairy tales about, that the virus would disappear by its own, a miracle would happen. A miracle was for me, that Americans were still willing to listen to this shit! A lot of questions, that was all I had, a lot of questions, but no answers.....

Overwhelming Developments

I had thought about, in which way the investigation could continue - Kishana had made some more phone calls and had first successes. Two other women told her, that they had been harassed by him, one still worked at the restaurant and had said, that it had been not that severe. The other had quit the job and said that it had been an attempted rape. She had been lucky that he got interrupted by another employee. More, she had agreed to, to talk with me!

But now the development sped up, the world changed within a few days. The debate in a TV studio without an audience. The state decided to keep schools closed for a longer time. Further actions were discussed. More and more sickened persons, more and more deaths. Suddenly the focus changed!

Only a day later we had more sickened persons as in Washington, our governor declared the state of emergency, more discussions about further actions, a shut down was not excluded, a shut down like in China, maybe not that strict, but with severe restrictions. They gave us the possibility to practice

social distancing on a voluntary basis. I had a new witness, could I meet her? Well, I could have a phone call with her, but it would be not the same. I was no police officer, I should change my behavior, but the case, the fucking case? The talked about closing restaurants, that would have a big impact in my investigations. Fuck, why this was not just one of this classic crime novels, with a hard private dick - would he be interested in all these developments? Mike for instance, he would grab his gun and would have a "severe discussion" with him - and this would solve the case!

Another day, the next primaries, three states had not postponed their primaries, but Georgia and Puerto Rico which would be the next in March. No more primaries this month, and maybe not even in the next? More and more ill persons, more and more dead persons - and not only old people with pre-existing conditions. Someone was interested in the results? Not I. Biden had expanded his lead - what's good for? We had a pandemic, the WHO called it so, rang the warning bells, and our president still chattered about the bad Democrats and their hoax - in what a fucking country I lived!

Jack's Bar

I sat in Jack's Bar, a sweet cocktail in front of me, I was not in a good mood. One could not say that the bar was not frequented as usual.

"Well filled."

"Yeah, but I'm not sure whether I should be happy about it or not. We were asked for keeping social distance, this not looks so."

"You fear that we will see more sever actions?"

"Sure, I think it's only a matter of time. Don't understand me wrong, I run a bar? I need customers, but when they close restaurants, bars and clubs? It's a real stupid situation."

"Yeah, maybe my last cocktail for a longer time - give me a real one, a real hard one."

I sat for a pretty while in the bar, and we talked much about the situation. It was obvious that more severe restrictions were on the way. The situation in the state seemed to run out of control, they would have to react.

Shut Down!

Yeah, it was my last cocktail, at least for a not foreseeable time. The governor enacted a stay-at-home order, now everything would be different. Four states, maybe others would follow. I had to think the case over, I had to find a new strategy to deal with this situation.

The restaurant was closed now - maybe food to go? It would be very difficult now to meet with someone - phone calls, social media? I had to lean back for a moment, in any case I had to stick with the case, it was a murder case! It was time to stay cool.

To stay cool? In the next days everything escalated in the state. All numbers exploded, shortage in everything, and a fucking asshole president! Our mayor, the governor, tried everything, but with such an ignorant and incapable government? Every day it became worse, and I tried to solve a fucking murder case?

Sitting In The Office

I sat in my office with a nice peppermint tea in front of me, the TV was on and our governor gave us his daily update - everything got worse with every day. We needed masks, but especially ventilators, thousands of them - hey, our government had sent us four hundred. It was hard to listen to him, why it was not possible in this country to organize a meaningful and coordinated crisis management with the president as leader? Well, this was America - I had to develop a strategy, a strategy that functioned with the given circumstances.

A first step was, to figure out if the restaurant had closed or if it would still provide takeaway food - they had closed completely. So, what did we have? A witness. I could have phone calls with her. An assistant. I could have phone calls with her. A restaurant. Closed. A suspect. Not allowed to leave the house, except for some special reasons. A private investigator. Same as with the suspect. And now the fantastic plan!

Well, in a way I could maybe use that he was not allowed to leave the house? I could try to set a trap? But if he would be no idiot, then he would know that this circumstances worked for him. Okay, in TV I would develop a totally stupid plan now, and voilà, the totally implausible plan would function! So I sat in my office and enjoyed my peppermint tea and listened to our governor - I became more and more frustrated. I should have a consideration with my assistant, two minds were always better than one.

Developing A Plan

I had decided to call Kishana to talk the matter over with her.

"You know, we could try to set a trap. In a way the circumstances would be against us, on the other side we could use them. The point is, that it's very difficult now to get in contact with him directly. We should not forget that we're talking about a murder case."

"But I hope that you can understand that I've some interest in, that he would be hold liable for that what he did with me, as well as with the other women. I have quit my job because of him, after I have worked for only some days there, no good decision, especially with this situation now."

"I understand you, we have no death penalty in this state anymore, and I support this. Therefore, it would be good to get him for as many crimes as possible. Think about Harvey. Would you try to play a game with me?"

"Tell me about it."

"Phone him and tell him that a private investigator has contacted you, tell him the truth so far. Tell him further on, that you became curious, that you have called other women, that you have gained information about at least two additional women, one called it an attempted rape. But that you would say nothing, you would need money, he could buy your silence. Two points. You mention that the private investigator talked about murder, he will tell about his alibi. But you tell him, that the private investigator not believes in it. He also could get the name of the private investigator, money could buy everything. Second, you demand a hundred thousand dollar. I think he cannot afford this, go not lower than twenty-five thousand. What will happen? I do not know. The idea would be, that we can provoke him, that he will do something stupid, for instance that he would try to kill you. The problem is, that normally I would monitor him, but this is not that easy under these circumstances. Also to monitor your house will be not that easy. What do you think?"

"I would do everything to nail him down, but what's with my daughter?"

"Also Carla had a daughter, but that's unfair to say this - sorry. Yes, also this a problem, at least under this circumstances. Maybe this all is not practical in this situation."

"No, I understand your idea. But what if he simply not reacts? I mean, it would be my word against his word - even after Weinstein! And the murder case, do you have any evidence?"

"Let's try another idea. I will confront him, confront him therewith that Carla was in my office, that I know about several other women. At least I can put pressure on him insofar, that I could end his "career" in the restaurant, but also I could destroy his reputation. That I could talk with his "girl friend", I could set her under pressure, to be together with a Harvey Weinstein guy. We could see than, what will happen."

"Would this be dangerous for me or my daughter?"

"If he's no idiot, not. To kill you, would link him directly to two murders, also his "girl friend" would be no longer very useful for him then. Alone the police would intensify their investigations then very much. But I'm not sure if he's that clever?"

"I fear not."

"Than we have a problem. You know what's strange?"

"No."

"Someone asked me if I would work for him - blackmailing."

"And?"

"Someone blackmailed him, because someone alleged him, that he had harassed a woman, maybe raped her, may he has murdered her. In a way I begin to ask myself, who's the criminal in this story."

"You have no real plan, or?"

"A short time ago we had three hundred deaths in the country, now over a thousand. The next time I will see the number it will be over a thousand one hundred. And here in our state, our city? To hear the governor every day, our mayor, the incapability of our government, all the lies and stupid talking from our president? But there's a dead woman, a daughter who has no mother anymore, a man who thinks he's allowed to do everything, this is not acceptable. I know now what I have to do!"

Last Girl On Earth

Ten thousands of infected and hundreds of deaths in the state now, most of them in the city. No, this was no apocalyptic video game, no sexy female hero would come and fight against the bloodthirsty monsters, no muscly male hero with a fucking big gun. We had only a liar, a downplayer, a fucking motherfucker as president.

He was more and more bored about, that also he had to stay at home, in the White House? How nice it would be, at Easter, in a church, full of people - he was such an asshole and pretender, he in a church? Maybe to grab a pussy or to fuck a porn star - I started to become crazy, crazy because of this fucking behavior of our government. But I had a case to solve, and I would solve this case!

A Home Visit

I knocked at his door, it was early in the morning, I had to knock several times, forcefully, he opened the door of the small shabby house finally and looked not very good. Unshaven, definitively no new clothes, tired, not enough sleep - I would say, a long night with alcohol and maybe his girlfriend.

"Who are you, are you crazy, at this time, we have a stay-at-home order, what do you wanna from me?"

"I'm a private detective."

"Fuck off!"

"I think we should have a conversation."

"Why?"

"Because you're a rapist and most probably a murderer?"

"Asshole, piss off."

He tried to close the door, but my foot was faster. A voice out of the background asked, what would go on.

"A asshole who talks shit, not more. Fuck off, or I call the police. You should be at home, are private investigators are allowed to walk around?"

"Who cares? Call the police, I can prove the raping and several cases of harassment."

"Oh, really? And why I'm then not in jail?"

"Because I wanna get your ass because of the murder."

"You're are an idiot, or? So, I'm maybe a bit slow at the moment, but you told me just now, that you cannot prove the murder - I'm right, or?"

"Exactly."

"Fuck off you idiot!"

"But I also said, that I can prove a rape and several cases of harassment. You remember this guy, Harvey Weinstein? Twenty-three years in prison, a fucking long time, and the trial in Los Angeles still waits."

"I'm a bit confused now, what do you want from me? Do you think I would confess a murder to get not sentenced as rapist - I have no idea what you wanna from me?"

His girl friend appeared at the door, also not really fresh looking, some shabby clothes on.

"Come back, who's he?"

"Not a hunch, baby. Go back, I come soon."

"Oh, fine, it's nice that you join us. Also giving a rapist and a murderer an alibi, get's punished very severely."

"What he's talking?"

"He's an idiot, this has nothing to do with you."

"Maybe not the rape and the cases of harassment, but the murder case in any case."

"He talks about a murder!"

"Hey baby, he can prove nothing!"

"Fuck, what you're talking?"

"Hey baby! I had told you that they have killed this woman who worked in the restaurant, in a backstreet behind the restaurant, the police was here!"

"I think that he told you also, that this woman was my client, she came to me because your man here has harassed and raped her, one day before she got murdered?"

"Hey, you said that it's pure routine that they wanna an alibi from you!"

"Hey baby, even the police has told you, that they have to ask about an alibi routinely!"

"And what about this shit about raping?"

"Maybe I can say something thereto?"

"No, fuck, she's dead!"

"Yes, that's why it's a murder case. But several other women are not dead and willing to testify - bad for you!"

"You mean, my word against theirs? Gosh, go home and do our fucking arrogant governor a favor!"

"Do not forget Harvey, twenty-three years of prison, only because some women testified. You should watch more the news maybe?"

"They really got him, because these women have testified - I have to talk with you!"

"Hey baby, he....."

".....maybe I can say something? I think I should go home now. You know, this stay-at-home order? But I have something for your girlfriend."

I threw one of my business cards through the door crack, she stood still some feet behind him - yes, the six feet rule!

"My name is Maurer, Peter Maurer. You can find me also in the phone book. Have a nice day!"

I started to turn, but then I stopped, looked at him again.

"Oh, and at the end a good advice for you. It would be very bad for you now, would one of the other female employees of the restaurant become pressured by you now, not to talk about a second murder. The same goes with your girlfriend. Maybe I should tell you also, that I will have an eye on you."

"Yeah, under these circumstances!"

"Under this circumstances it's even easier for me - don't forget, I'm a private dick, you not! Let's see, if our wonderful president will impose a guaranty even, that would be funny, for you together with your girlfriend. Have a nice day, and goodbye to the lady."

Now I turned finally and walked away, particularly slow - the first step had been done.

Just Waiting

I walked to my car, took a seat, started the engine and drove slowly away, around the block, stopped in front of the house again, on the other side of the road - pressure, it's was all about pressure, to force a reaction.

Maybe his reaction would be to call the police, we had a stay-at-home order, we had a massive problem with the virus. I had an agreement with the police that it would be okay, would I sit in the car, alone, no other person around me - well, the six feet rule.

It not needed a long time and a police car came down the road, stopped, a police officer came to me. I gave him a number, he had a short phone call, he nodded with his head and drove away - I decided to walk around a bit, from this side of the car to the other side of the car and back.

This state, this city, was the epicenter of the virus in the USA, this limited my possibilities, but his much more. Well, the chattering of our fantastic president about a possible quarantine? He was a liar, down-player and incapable jerk, the best was not to believe his stupid chatter. Okay, from the mouth of our governor it would have been something different, and even if I had been not always his fan, his crisis management you had to appreciate.

I hoped that something would happen, he knew now that he could forget the police, I hoped that his girlfriend would react, and she reacted - my phone rang, she was in the line.

"I'm in the restroom, can I talk with you?"

"Of course."

"What's about this thing with raping and harassment?"

"Well, your wonderful boyfriend likes to harass women at the workplace, especially single mothers, in at least one case – two, if we talk also about the dead woman - it was a rape."

"You said that you can prove this?"

"Yes, enough women will testify."

"This are only allegations."

"We had Harvey and #MeToo, I talk not only about one woman."

"And the murder, you have no proves."

"That's true, but I do not believe in coincidences. All leads to your boyfriend. The only thing is, that you gave him an alibi - a wrong alibi if I'm not wrong."

"Why not getting him for the harassment and the raping?"

"There was a woman who hired me, I have to do her justice."

"Can we meet somewhere?"

"Somewhat difficult in these times. You can come to my car?"

"I don't know? What's then?"

"You tell me that the alibi is wrong, I call the police and he will be arrested - you will see him never again. Well, maybe on court, as a witness."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, absolutely. He will....."

I heard a knocking and a voice, loud enough, so that I could hear everything easily via the phone.

"Hey baby, what are you doing?"

"I'm in the restroom?"

"You need a pretty long time."

"Sorry, only a moment then you can use it."

"I do not need to, but I would need your phone, I cannot find mine at the moment."

"I've finished, I show you where it is."

"Are you trying to fool me!"

He was very loud now, the situation escalated! I jumped out of the car while screamed into the phone, that she not should leave the restroom, that she should make herself as small as possible - two shoots. Fuck!

I reached the door, it would have been stupid to try to go in, I was alone, no bullet proof vest on, no idea about the situation inside. I dialed the number of the police and shouted:

"Hey asshole, I'm outside here! Come and get me!"

Another gunshot, the door had a hole now, I thought about the situation. It would be suicide to get in, he could try to escape - his girlfriend? I had made the emergency call, I hoped that the police would not need too long - had his girlfriend opened the door or not? I thought that I would hear a backdoor, started to run around the house, to the backside - he saw me, I saw him. He shot, I shot. His bullet hit me, my bullet?

I felt fucking pain in my chest, very warm there, something was wrong with me, I saw the clear blue sky above me. Then I heard the police, so fast, or was my sense of time dead? I heard voices, felt people around me - hey, the six feet rule! I thought about, while obviously in an ambulance, that a hospital was not necessary the place, where I would like to be at the moment, I would maybe steal a ventilator from someone who would need it more than I, maybe I would end in a refrigerated trailer? I blacked out.

Nice Time In A Hospital

I opened my eyes and was right off aware, where I was, and why I was in the hospital, what had happened, that obviously I was connected to not only one machine - no good sign. A nurse, or a doctor, I was not totally sure about it, bent forward and started a conversation with me.

"How do you feel, Mr. Maurer?"

"Good in a way. I feel no real pain, but I think I have to thank the pain killers for that. I feel that my chest is not okay, but okay, no wonder. I have some headache, but not much. I feel tired, even that I think that I have slept some hours. All in all, I've the feeling that I had some luck."

"A very good analysis, but some points are wrong. You had a lot of luck, and you're by far not through it. And you not slept for some hours, you slept for some days. We've put you into an artificial coma for some days."

"What day we have today?"

"Saturday, it's Saturday afternoon."

"It happened on Monday, or?"

"Yes."

"Nearly a whole week."

"Yes."

"Did I need a ventilator?"

"For some time, yes."

"Do you still have some?"

"We had one for you."

"That's not good, others need them more."

"You needed one. Don't think about it, at least at the moment. You're still in a critical state."

"I have a room for me alone?"

"No, this luxury we cannot offer you at the moment."

She pushed a curtain, which I noticed really only just now, a little to the side - another bed. She looked at the other side, I followed her, the next curtain.

"Do you have patients on the corridors?"

"Yeah, you still know in which city you're?"

"Yes, I fear yes. Nearly a week - tell me the numbers. Very bad?"

"More and more. Nearly three hundred thousand cases and over seven thousand deaths."

"Are you kidding me? I've no real remembrance, but at Monday, the numbers were much lower - or?"

"At Monday? I've no idea anymore how high the numbers were on Monday - much lower in any

case. They rise with every hour, every minute."

"What will happen to me?"

"Not sure about it at the moment. It will depend also on, in which way you will recover."

"And?"

"Well,....."

"How many infected persons will be rushed to the hospital."

"Yeah, of course. We've tested you, you're not infected."

"I understand."

This was the last time that I saw her. A short time later they rushed me to another hospital, the one in which I was at first, concentrated itself on infected patients. I had not seen her name, or did I have forgotten her name?

The new hospital was different, in another part of the big city. Only a very few infected persons in this hospital, they tried to separate them as good as possible. I laid in my bed, rising numbers, also among the clinic personal. I hoped she would be not among them, but why she? It was foreseeable, thanks to our fucking health care system, thanks to our fucking incapable government, thanks to our fucking ignorant and fucking selfish president, that many from the medical staff would die. And she? Most likely she was the one who had operated me, rescued my life, there was a connection between her and me - was I selfish now?

Cozy Days

I lay in my bed, it was warm, not to say cozy. Sure, I had had a lot of luck, the bullet affected my lung, but not very severe, had missed my heart - I had had a lot of luck, not everybody lying in a hospital had so much luck than I - obviously!

Even if this hospital was situated in a suburb, not in one of the hot spots, was not one of these hospitals, that had many infected patients, not to say was specialized on them, you felt the pressure that the hospital staff had to withstand. Sometimes they interchanged hospital staff, sometimes you heard a conversation about a common friend from another hospital, a doctor, a nurse, somebody from the other staff who got ill, got severe ill, ICU, had died, had a breakdown, had committed suicide.

The nurse who cared for me today came from another hospital, had cared for weeks for infected patients - she was very young and I wondered what strength had given her the ability to bear this all, this suffering, this dying, I would not be able to. But had she been able to bear it? You could not see her internal feelings, she always smiled when she was with me, like stewardesses always smiled. I closed my eyes in my warm and cozy bed - it was Monday afternoon, the ten thousandth deaths not far away.

Visitors

Wednesday - two days later, nearly thirteen thousand deaths now, and the day had just begun. Four hundred thousand cases we would exceed easily today. The medical staff was under pressure, even here in this hospital, as said, it was no coronavirus hot spot. Thinking about them in the other hospitals.....

I had a laptop, followed the news, not sure about whether this was clever or stupid, but I had to. I could not understand it, why we Americans accepted the behavior of this president - but did we? He himself had declared, that he would be a wartime president now - for that his approval rating was fucking!

Caroline and Jack would visit me later in the afternoon, the police had visited me yesterday, sure, they had had some questions to ask, and I had got some information. I tried to relax something, had slight pain in my breast, some problems to breath - some had more. I was a lucky bastard, or? I had

not to sit at home, I could lie in my warm and comfortable bed, I became my meals served and I had to say, that they were not that bad. Yeah, I was a lucky bastard, I was the one who was still able to breath, to look out of the window, to eat, to follow the numbers.

"And, how are you, Peter?"

"I have no reason to complain. I get my meals in time, I have a cozy bed, the people around me are very kind - everything is fine, Jack."

"The police has interrogated you?"

"Yes, yesterday."

"Then you know the details, but you can watch the news as I see."

He pointed at my laptop.

"Yeah, I think it was in the news for a glimpse, but who's interested in the death of a woman, in a city where every day hundreds are dying. Nearly he also had got me, I'm getting old."

"You also wounded him, the police had not problems to get him later."

"Yeah, and I'm not sure what hurt him more. That I hit his arm, or that he lost grip and fell from the fence. He on the other hand was very deadly, his girlfriend had no chance and I had pretty much luck."

"You blame yourself for what has happened?"

"I fear I was somewhat naive. I though not that he's that much a freak. That tells you a lot about, what has happened with Carla - I mean, he committed a murder while I was on site? I thought not, that it could escalate that much."

"At least he has confessed the first murder as well, you've solved the case."

"Yeah, and another woman is dead - too many women are dying in this story."

"Maybe we should change the topic, Peter?"

"Yeah, let's talk about the virus, at least the virus kills men and women - more men, and more African Americans. The first? Well, men? The second? Maybe the virus hates black people or it has something to do with our fucking health care system, our society that gives everybody the same chance, especially when you're black, about the possibilities in our country to feed your family and yourself in a healthy way with two or three jobs - I think the virus is a fucking racist! What are your thoughts, Caroline?"

"I think that I like it, that you're still a cynic, I think that this is a good sign. Apart from that, the doctor told us that you were very lucky, that the bullet caused as little damage as even possible, in regard that the bullet hit your chest."

"Yeah, in the first moment it looked worse at it was. I lost some blood and had a shock, but apart from that. Well, some have all the luck - they tested me, I even have not the virus!"

"You know how long you have to stay?"

"Some days, not too long. They have a lot of other work at the moment. Seriously, I can go home as soon as possible, they really have a lot of other work at the moment. But I would need somebody who would look after me for some time?"

"I think you will find a - you not think I should do it?"

"Well, you're without work at the moment? No dance classes at the moment - or?"

"You have heard from this Internet and such things?"

"Oh, you do it online now."

"Yes, but I think about it. I think I can be your nurse for some time."

"We have a nominee now, no Bernie anymore."

"Yeah, Jack. And I have to confess that I've some problems therewith. I hope that Joe will be able to handle it, and we will not see the same idiocy as in 2016. The Dems have yet again already won - wow, Biden leads with over ten percent in the polls! The virus, the economy? Biden will be the next POTUS, therefore he had already a very nice phone call with our gracious president - honestly, I have goosebumps."

"Not only you. I hope that Sanders can motivate his basis."

"I hope that the Dems realize, that without Sanders they will have no chance to win. Of course is Sanders clever enough to realize this - I hope that he will not overdo things. Sure, Biden has to move towards Sanders, but Sanders cannot expect, that Biden will adopt his complete agenda now."

"At least we see in the crisis, that Sanders' ideas are not that crazy. His ideas about health care, worker rights and more? Well, now we have Biden."

"Okay, I think this is enough for today - or? I think at least one of us will be here at Friday."

"Thanks you both. You're right, it's time for dinner and for the next asshole briefing."

What Was Important In Such A Time?

Good question - that somebody was with you, honesty, somebody you could rely on? Not really the American values - ostensibly, but honestly all was about money and power, male values?

I saw all the staff in this hospital, also the woman who came to clean the floor, saw the staff in the other hospitals in the news, not the woman who cleaned the floor. But hey, they cared for others, sick and weak people, they were no tough business men, at Wall Street, juggling with real estates worth billions of dollars, they were surrounded not by golden taps and hot porn stars, they were surrounded by weakness, decay and death.

And yet, one could discover dignity and security, the dignity and security they gave those who struggled, who were endangered to lose their dignity and security, those who's time came to an end. How much more honorableness the woman had who cleaned the floor compared with those big shots - only that nobody was interested in her, only in those who "owned" the money and power, no matter in which way they had achieved this and in which way they used it.

What a fucking question it was, the question about values for such a time. As if there were values you switched off and on, whatever you needed at the moment or not. The question was very easy to answer - in a way. The same values as at any other time - nice and naive thoughts! Were it the pain killers, too much news, a vague future? Biden versus the president was the name of the duel now. I saw them standing face to face, a dusty road, a Wild West cliché. A naive Biden who thought, that he would be able to outdraw his gun faster than the man on the other side, not seeing all the gunmen lying in ambush, surrounding him. He really thought that this would become an honorable duel? Oh Joe, this man had no decency inside worth a dime. This man would kill your wife, your children and your grandchildren to win, he would betray his wife - well, his daughter and his son-in-law he would not betray, they were those who organized the ambush. Oh Joe, you had such a nice phone call with this gracious man.....

A church that insisted on church services, no matter that this meant that people had to die. A Supreme Court that insisted on, that people had to vote in polling stations, no matter that this meant that people had to die. A president who insisted on, that he would know everything better and that he never had done anything wrong and that he would never make anything wrong, no matter that this meant that people had to die.

But if you could no longer trust your church, the Supreme Court, the president, whom you should trust then? If I would be even more naive than I was, if I would smoke a spliff in the 70s, if I would be a babbling Dem, then I would start now with stupid shit like: You can trust the honorableness of the woman who cleans the floor - very nice talking, but in fact this talking was absolute shit!

She represented this churches? She was part of the Supreme Court? She was our president? No, she was the woman who cleaned the floor and nobody was interested in her, that was the fucking truth! Give her money and power, education and such stupid things you could forget, and everybody would be interested in her, this was the fucking truth!

Maybe I should come down somewhat, my chest hurt very much now. My heart beat fast, cold

sweat on my forehead, I felt not really good. But why I should, hundreds died every day in the city, why I should. I looked at floor, a very clean floor, well it was a hospital, everything had to be very clean, aseptic even - so many honorable people in my room.....

Jack - Happy Easter!

"Wow Peter, you know how to shock people!"

"Yeah, I feel a bit ashamed, Jack."

"That's not what I meant. We all thought that you were on a good way, and suddenly you're in the ICU again. Nobody expected this."

"They found no real reason for it, I think I cannot handle this situation. I'm stressed, even normally I hate it to be in a hospital, but under these circumstances. Do not understand me wrong, the people here are very friendly and self-sacrificing, but I always had problems with this special mood in hospitals. I could not work in a hospital, even not in normal times. In a situation like now I would fail totally, I would not be able to bear this burden for a day. They want to observe me some days longer, but maybe I can leave at the end of the week."

"Caroline told me, that she will care for you, she's only not sure about, whether she should buy a nurse's uniform or not?"

"Tell her that I like her whatever outfit she ever will wear. Do you think that they tell me the truth?"

"Why you're asking?"

"Well, they allowed only one person to visit me for a short time. They meant, that I need rest, a lot of rest. Again two days in ICU, at the ventilator - today is Monday, or? Easter Monday?"

"Yes, today is Monday. I had a conversation with the responsible doctor. They found no distinct reason for your break down, physically you're on a good way. He meant that it would be probably better for you to be at home, your familiar surroundings, but they cannot let you go home at this moment. Should you have again such a break down at home, you would have no chance. By the way, they tested you again, you haven't the virus."

"Nice, at least not the virus. I will do my best that I can leave as soon as possible. Maybe I should omit it for some time, to watch the fucking news?"

"To relax, it would be most probably very good to do so. I think I should leave now, it's time to go. Caroline will visit you at Wednesday, maybe you will be already at home at the weekend."

"Give Caroline my kind regards - to my mind had stewardesses always the more beautiful uniforms."

"I will tell her."

Skirts

Caroline visited me, white half-sheer blouse with ruffles and beautiful lingerie below, black pencil skirt, black opaque tights, black heels - not necessarily an outfit you would expect from a stewardess, but.....

"You really know, how to motivate me, to do everything so that I can go home again."

"Well, I fear that you will have to take the things a bit slower for a longer time, especially at home. Your breakdown was not a funny thing, and it should not happen at home. It's still not totally clear what happened, maybe you have to stay for a longer time in the hospital."

"Not when I see this."

"What's the difference in seeing this here or seeing this at home?"

"Well,.....?"

"You're very ill, you have to slacken off for some time. I'm maybe your nurse for some time, but that will be all."

"Okay, you know this schmaltzy movies and slushy novels, the ones where the wonderful nurse

falls totally in love with the hero?"

"Yes, but I see no hero, only a gorgeous woman in a hot outfit."

"Thanks! I will like it, to be home again."

"No problem, I always do my best."

Still In Hospital

Still in the hospital, it was Saturday, and the hope to be at home at the weekend again had been dashed. The doctors were undecided because of my physical status, so they did what they often do in such cases - we will decide at Monday! But it would have been unfair to complain about this, every day I saw this discrepancy between the daily statements of the president and his deputy and the reality in this hospital. And again, this was none in one of the corona hot spots!

But even here you felt every day the burden, the working people had to bear in the hospital. And even when they tried to shield you, from time to time the reality could not be suppressed. They tried to comfort you, they cared about you, but in the end they were the people, who would have needed comfort and care much the more. From time to time you heard a scrap of conversation, a nurse or a doctor, a member of the staff had gotten ill, maybe also a known person from another hospital, sometimes it was about death - for them it was the daily reality. A nurse had gotten the information that her mother had died, the virus in an old person's home - she stayed and worked her double shift and I lay in my warm and cozy bed.....

I hoped that I would be home soon again, thought about what I could do - they said that I would need at least two or three weeks of additional rest at home. Should be not the problem in this time I thought, should I volunteer in a soup kitchen or so? I thought about in what a country I lived. A country, obviously, where it was a crisis, that school kids no longer got a meal in school, a country where one could see endless lines in front of soup kitchens, a country where it was considered as not essential that a woman could get her abortion, but that a man could buy his gun, this was a country with clear priorities in crisis. The feeling was there, that not the bullet had hurt me much, but that the daily reality hurt me severely.

But at the moment I could only stay in my bed, the worst thing was that all the nurses and doctors, all the staff in the hospital, wore all the time masks - of course they did! I missed the smiles, hands covered in gloves, I would have liked it, to embrace them all. I should do it later, after the crisis - what crisis? The health crisis, or the political crisis? The health crisis would find its end one time, one time there would be a treatment, a vaccine, but the political crisis? I feared, that the medical crisis would veil the political crisis - what thoughts, I had never saw me as a political person! Yeah, I voted, but apart from that? I tried to live my life, but now? Every days lies, every day failure, a president totally unfit for office, and a bunch of opportunists and bootlickers around him - only to vote was maybe no longer enough.

At Home Again

Monday, still in the hospital, but not for much longer. They prepared my leaving, Caroline was on her way to the hospital, to drive me home. Everything had been stable over the weekend, still they had no final idea about what had happened, why I had this break down. I would have to stay also at home in bed, at least for some more days, some activity would maybe be possible in the following days, of course it would depend on the recovering during the next days. It was hard, I would have liked it, to invite Caroline for a dinner, maybe at home and she would cook something for me - in a way I was very happy to leave the hospital. I hated hospitals, not just since the last weeks, till my whole life. And yet, I felt like a coward, like a traitor, like I would leave them back in a battle. Yeah,

they risked their lives and often more, other were unhappy that they had to cut down their pretensions a little, not every weekend wasting millions of tax payer money for golfing! Well, hope that at least Ivanka and Jared had a nice trip.

It was hard to see the behavior of a totally overchallenged president, his attacks on our fundamental rights like the freedom of the press, his attempts to act like a dictator, his inability to accept strong women. On the other hand the people in the hospitals, many of them women, many of them members a minority, many of them not the richest. They who had to carry the largest burden were they, who cared the most of others - be honest, no real new story!

Caroline had arrived, I was not good in such situations. I had no real idea in which way I should show them my gratitude - maybe it was because it gave nothing that would have been adequate. I had tears in my eyes and felt like a child that should become separated from his parents - and Caroline was the bad woman who brought me away, I cried. I was a fucking private dick, I was so limited, I had a big gun that was all, and even with this I could not protect anyone. Not her, now dead, not me, the lucky survivor. I looked at my hands, not able to put a bandage on in a reasonable way - I was so pretty much useless.

At home I went to bed, I was not hungry, I was tired. Caroline waited for some time, but I asked her not to waste her whole time by sitting around here. She would come back tomorrow, would cook something, I could phone her - or Jack - if I would need help. Caroline had put the TV in my sleeping room, I was absolutely not sure if this was a good idea. The governor talked about the situation in the state and the big city - was not necessarily a fan of him. No, he was okay, he was okay before, and now in the crisis he gave everything a face, and he tried the best for his people. You could have been critical about to some of his previous actions, but now he did a fucking good job - what a contrast to the federal government, what a contrast to the president. I switched the channel - demonstration in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. A demonstration against the stay-at-home order - the president's trolls and his henchmen did a good job, a good job that played with the lives of humans. This president and his allies run out of control more and more. You became scared, thinking about what maybe would happen during the next months, the months till this nightmare hopefully would end. I switched off the TV, I should try to sleep somewhat. The staff in the hospital, what did they right now?

A Fucking Lot To Do

Now I was home again and something strange had happened - well, maybe "strange" was not the best word. But I sat at home and saw this two worlds, the world in my TV and the world that tried to touch me personally.

On TV I watched the battle between governors and the federal government - a very cool situation in such a crisis. But with such an incapable and overchallenged president and deputy? Then some governors fought with their mayors, governors who tried to please the president in a special way, as well as right-wing groups and fundamental evangelist - those who had secured his election. And then there were workers, forced to go back to work and risking their life and the lives of their relatives? But all this was somewhat abstract, even in this big city, this state, with this mayor and governor. It was in TV!

But then I started therewith to check up what had happened in my office, answering machine, mail, the email address of the office - it was shocking. The doctors in the hospital had allowed me to use my laptop, but had "recommended" that I should not use it for work - and to be honest? I was occupied with the news, the daily insanity in Washington occupied me, the daily fight of our governor, the daily numbers, the constantly raising numbers of deaths. I had lost the contact with the daily life of the people in this city, not realized that, even when the streets and parks were empty now, still millions had a daily life in the big city. And some of these lives had been bad before, and

nothing had changed for the better for them - why it should?

I had received, during this short time, a shocking amount of messages - the answering machine was filled since a longer time, the amount of emails seemed endless, had no idea where I should start, I looked at the heap of letters on the table, I had not to open them all, had not to read them all, had not to listen to them all, all were more or less the same.

I had heard about it in the news, but it had not caught my attention, I felt ashamed. Yes, this asshole of president, but the real people in the houses, in the rooms, some things had not changed! I had been occupied by my case, then the hospital.....not only a few of the messages were dated earlier than the day I got wounded - this shocked me the most! I had no real idea how I should handle this - Caroline arrived.

"Better today, Peter?"

"Not really, Caroline. I try to gain an overview of my incoming mail, I've a problem."

"Too much?"

"I was so focused on my case, then the time in the hospital. Okay, I'm alone, I have no employees, much larger agencies in the city. I've read only a few so far, I'm not sure in which way I should handle this all?"

"I would say, that you should be aware of, that you're hurt? You have no longer to stay in the hospital, but only because they need all their resources for the real critical patients."

"And, what shall I do? The letters in the garbage can, deleting the emails, the answering machine as well? Ignoring all?"

"Of course not, we can go through all this messages together. But in the end, what you want to do? You're not in the condition to undertake a new case, not to talk about this amount of cases."

"What's your proposal?"

"We should try to systematize everything. This mail is about domestic abuse, let's print it out and start a pile about domestic abuse with it. Later we can see what we can do. Maybe women's shelters or youth welfare offices can help us, institutions like these. We can ask other detective agencies, maybe they can undertake some cases. We can do at least something."

"You're right, but I fear that we will need not only some hours therefor."

"I was at the grocery before I came, we have enough to eat."

"Tea or coffee?"

"Maybe both? A hot and strong coffee and a refreshing tea?"

"Okay, let's try to do the best we can."

Home Office

I felt like a doctor in an emergency room, no, unfortunately not like George - "triage" was the word that I had learned. We made piles, then we decided what to do with the sheets. Well, was not so much that we could do, institutions like women's shelters were swamped with work, other agencies had enough trouble with the stay-at-home order alone. Not, that they were not interested in our inquiries and pleas, they simply had not the possibilities to give us better responses. I felt down, Caroline helped me to make phone calls and by writing emails - we tried to give the people who had contacted me at least some kind of direct response. I tried to calm myself therewith, that I had done at least something, even if it was not much. Two cases left over.

A young boy had written an email, his father turned more and more angry, beat him and his mother more and more. They lived not far away, only some blocks, it would be easy to reach their flat, better than an address on the other side of the city. The other case was a letter of an old man, also he lived not that far away. His letter was somewhat strange, he had the feeling that sometimes someone would be in his condo, things would disappear. Caroline and I thought, that we should at least stop by him once, to talk with him - we had not reached him by phone. And then we would still have the possibility, if for instance the "case" with the man was easy to "solve", to look after other cases.

"Thanks that you helped me."

"Was a pleasure, and I have to care for you."

"Well, we needed three days for the work, this is much more than I could expect from you."

"Maybe it was for those who addressed you?"

"Yes, maybe."

We had a small dinner, switch on the TV, always a mistake in these times. It was Thursday, the situation in the big city had relaxed somewhat, since some days now, the numbers of new infections and deaths declined, at least somewhat. But apart from that, Mitch McConnell? Yes, it all was a fault of the Democrats, the blue were guilty! But before I could be too much annoyed about this, the president, our wonderful and fantastic president, knew always to top everything, to draw all the attention towards him. Sun and heat, injecting disinfectant, the new miracle cure of the president. But this time it topped everything, as well his new attacks on the press - I got angry!

"Cool down, Peter! You're far away from being healthy!"

"Sorry, but I get sick of this shit every day! These are briefings to inform the American people, this is no longer to bear!"

"I agree with you, but stop running around - now you have to cough! What's wrong!"

I had to cough, I felt a fucking pain in my chest, I had to lie on the ground.

"I call an ambulance!"

"No.....it's getting better. Wait a moment, I think it's okay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, let me rest for moment."

"It would be better....."

".....tomorrow I have a check up. Then we can see."

"I will stay tonight, I will not let you alone."

"I would like it!"

"Yes, but we have to see how we can get you in the bed now. And then I have to make me a bed on the couch."

"Well,.....wait! What's in the news?"

"As far as I have understood, then this Henry J. McCallum III has tried to commit suicide in the jail. You know, this....."

".....yeah, I know. I know it far too good."

"It seems as he would be guilty."

"Another Jeffrey Epstein? The jails in this city are really bad places."

"You've doubts?"

"I don't know. At the moment I know that we have a president who's no longer acceptable, but apart from that....."

Lazy Sunday (Afternoon)

It had become Sunday, Thursday had been a shock - the briefing as well as Henry J. McCallum III. But hey, America with an insane president, insane times, why not top Thursday? Friday, not thought that our president would be a master of delicate sarcasm, and I idiot could not see it! I could see only a finally freaked out criminal, dangerous like a rabid wolf! And Henry J. McCallum III? ICU - not more they said, but this was enough. Was there not a story with this other man, the same story again, nobody noticed anything, only that the man was not finally dead this time - what went wrong?

I had to stay in bed at Friday, Caroline tried to forbid me watching the news, I was very upset about what I had to see - my chest hurt. She tried to bring me down, the two cases I had? And Friday evening, the fucking coward was not willing to answer questions, that made it not better! I had a fucking night, fever, Caroline stayed the whole night aside me.

At Saturday Caroline manged it, that I got tested again, with one of this very fast tests - but still no virus. It was anger that heated me, and I felt useless, lying in the bed. I wished I could take my gun, could go outside, could do my job!

Sunday, still in bed, I thought about the two multi-states pacts we had now - why not become independent? The West Coast as one new country, the East Coast pact as another new country - maybe others could join. The rest could stay as the USA - "U" stood for united, or? What a joke! And Mitch could be the financier of this new USA, his home state Kentucky was soooo rich - fucking asshole! Apart from that, Sunday was a good day, at least so far. No new shit from the president, and also today no briefing was expected.

"At Monday we should start with the cases."

"It's new to me, that I'm an employee of you?"

"Sorry.....I should call my assistant - fuck, what has happened to her!"

"Cool down, I fear also on Monday you will not make a lot."

"And the cases?"

She went out, came back with my gun, threw it on the bed.

"Grab it, get dressed, and have fun on the streets!"

I had tears in my eyes.

"You can be fucking brutal - thanks!"

I had a phone call with my assistant, Kishana.

"Sorry that I have not called earlier, but I was in the hospital - I have to be honest, I've forgotten you."

"It's okay, you were in the news."

"Yeah, but it all developed not exactly in the way I hoped, in the end it all was a disaster."

"He confessed the murder."

"Yes, after another murder, a murder I was not uninvolved in. Have you enough money?"

"I've your check."

"Tell me if you need more - you and your daughter feel okay?"

"Yes, no signs of illness."

"You've got tested?"

"No, why?"

"I think I could need an assistant very soon."

"Would be okay for me, I have nothing to do."

Monday, Monday

Monday evening and still in bed - but I had recovered, thanks to my "nurse". I had plans for tomorrow, I should start with the cases, of course I had to consider the circumstances, the lockdown as well as my injury. But that had not to mean, that you could do nothing, I had some plans.

The TV was running, the Rose Garden, the president started to speak and it needed not one minute to know - the same shit as ever! I switched the channel, some old cartoons, definitively better, more entraining, but especially more intelligent - a coyote and a large bird, later a cat and a mouse. I fall asleep.

Time To Be A Private Dick Again

Tuesday, I stood up early, no longer interested in the president's shit, interested in the people that had asked me for help! I made a hot and strong coffee, sat down and felt the grim pain in my chest. Okay, apart from the still strict stay-at-home order in the city, I would have to work differently this time. Well, the last time acting like a real private dick, had cost the life of a woman – yeah, maybe I

should act differently this time?

Caroline would come soon, I had arranged that we would have a phone conference later. Caroline and I here, Kishana and Jack at their phones. Why not via Internet, was popular today? Well, not everybody had the means therefore.

My idea was, that Jack would drive to the old man's home. I could not reach him by phone, maybe he could get some information. Caroline and I would drive to the boy's home, I would have a talk with his father, I would tell him what he had to do, I was good in this! Kishana would stay at home, she would be the connection between us all and also our backing, she could react in any way. So far the theory. Later we all would meet at Jack's bar, for a private drink, of course socially distanced.

The numbers in the city seemed to ease further on, but it would be not for the first time that they would rise again, after some days of easing. Nevertheless, the situation was much better than two or even three weeks before. But what meant "better", if hundreds died every day, even now?

"Do you think your plan will function?"

"Why not, Jack....."

".....I talk not about Jack, I talk about you and me."

"If it functions, I will have a talk with him."

"You will try to pressure him, but....."

".....yes, the last time a woman had to die, and believe me, even when one could call her a fucking crack whore, and even that thousands died since then, her death is not irrelevant to me!"

"That's not what I meant, but what will be our aim?"

"We have to see what the situation will be, how he will react. You cannot "plan" such an encounter."

"What if he attacks you? What if he tells you nice words? Is he armed?"

"First, I would guess that he's armed - it's always good to assume this. You have not to be with me. Should he attack me, we have won – stay-at-home will mean jail for him then. But maybe we can do it less dramatic? If he acts stupidly, we can take the boy and his mother with us - we will see."

"I will accompany you. You've even problems to drive, not to talk about other things!"

We would drive in the late afternoon. The boy's home was just some blocks away, he lived in a totally different world. Typical for any (somewhat larger) American city, also this big city, was, that it was often only the matter of one or two blocks, the one or other side of the street, in what a world you lived. My neighborhood one could call "decent", up the street, very soon, some blocks of social housing, not necessarily the "best" neighborhood. But why one should drive up the street, down the street one could easily reach the river, the downtown of my borough, a borough, larger than most cities in the country, larger than quite a number of states!

As said, as we stood in front of the door, had rung the bell, this was not the best part of the city, this borough, to live. Not, that social housing as such was no good idea, but very often the willingness to keep everything running after building the blocks, was not very much marked. Also the inhabitants - to be honest - cared not necessarily best for their homes, without a real perspective? A long and difficult topic - or maybe no topic at all? Be ambitious and work hard, then one day you can live on the isle - yeah, always a nice story, some actions behind the door.

The voice of - obviously - the boy was to hear, he asked what I wanted. I stood in front of the door, Caroline stood aside.

"I have to speak with your father, you have written me an email, I'm the private investigator."

"I'm not sure, no good moment."

"No moment is good in such a case, tell him that a man stands outside, a man who has to talk with

him."

Silence for some time, then the voice of a man.

"Who are you?"

"Somebody you should listen to."

"Why?"

"Because the next who will stand in front of your door, will be some police men. They will be not very happy, no good time for them at the moment, and on principle, they don't like men who beat women and children."

"Come on man, the police would be still here, if you would be no blowhard."

"As said, I'm a private investigator, the police is the next option."

"Who said, that you should come here? My wife, the boy?"

"Who cares, it's a matter of fact that I'm here."

"You're a clown, piss off!"

"I think that I have to fear now, that you will beat your wife and the boy. I fear that we have a dangerous situation now, that I have to react immediately, I will come in now!"

"Are you crazy?"

"The last time I hesitated, a woman had to die - everybody will understand, that I had to act more quickly this time."

"Are you this guy from the news?"

"Well, you know me?"

"A lot of time for TV at the moment. This other guy nearly killed you, you should be in bed?"

"Yes, and my wound starts to pain more and more, and more and more I lose my patience!"

"And you will force your way into my home?"

"Gosh, of course I'm not alone!"

Caroline placed herself right in front of the spy hole in the door now.

"Man, she's a woman!"

"Time that you get to know a strong woman who not accepts your behavior. Open the door, or I....."

With these words she took her smartphone, dialed a very short number and held the 911 in front of the spy hole - the door opened a tiny crack.

"Can I see your license?"

I showed him my license.

"Yeah, that was the name in the news."

He opened the door completely now and looked at us.

"Hey man, you're not good-looking?"

"It's not the best for me at the moment to stand in front of doors and talking a lot."

"Who are you?"

He looked at Caroline, but I answered.

"She's my dance teacher, I learn to dance the tango."

He looked at me, somewhat puzzled.

"What?"

"Would it be possible to go in? I fear I have some problems."

"I had said you, that it would be a stupid idea to come here. You should be in bed and I should care for you."

He moved his head from me to Caroline and back.

"She's your sweetheart or?"

He grinned and looked in the wrong direction.

"I teach him the tango and that's all that I teach him. But maybe I should tell you that men who are beating women and children make me sick? I....."

".....sorry, but I really feel not good....."

The next I realized was, that I lay on the ground, a woman and a boy appeared.

Caroline and I sat on a shabby sofa, Caroline cared for me, we both had masks on now. The man stood in the room, the mother and the boy sat in an old arm chair, the boy on the mother's legs. The room was not the cleanest I've ever had saw, but one of the first things Caroline had done in my apartment after caring for me was, to use the vacuum cleaner and the duster - wow, I had cleaned up already before, because I thought that maybe the day will come, and she will be my guest at home? So much about that!

"Do you really think it wouldn't be better to go to the hospital?"

Caroline looked at me, the head in a way that only I could see her face - she twinkled. I shook my head slightly.

"No.....and no, we have not to go to the hospital. I need a moment."

No, it had been no show, I had real problems, but I recovered.

"Okay, there's a reason why we're here - it's fucking to speak with these masks!"

"Yes, but we should wear them."

"Yeah, Caroline - maybe you can sit down sir, I have to talk with you."

"Maybe I have not to talk with you?"

"That makes it easy, Caroline."

"Yes?"

"We take her and the boy with us. He can do alone whatever he wants."

"Hey, we have a stay-at-home order!"

"That's not means that you can beat your wife and your boy - asshole!"

"Wow Caroline, not thought that you use such words."

"Not, I can use others - come, we go."

Caroline hold her arm out to the women as the man jumped forward.

"She will go nowhere!"

"Cool down buddy, we four will go now."

"Gosh, you're not able to stand up without help? What do you wanna do?"

"911?"

"Oh man, now you're frighten me!"

In the meantime Caroline had stood up, she looked at the women.

"You want to come with us?"

"I tell her....."

".....shut up asshole! - It's her decision."

The woman looked into the boy's eyes, then she took Caroline's hand. I fear that it was no heroic picture, the woman and the boy, Caroline who had helped me to stand up, now she helped me to walk, till we reached the car. Her man had been very passive in the end, I had the feeling that he was surprised about, that she really left him. He said, I had the feeling more to himself than to her, while leaving the apartment, that she will come back, in a few days she will be back, he would wait till she would be back, she would have no chance without him, especially not in this time. We entered the car.

"How do you feel?"

"Better, some pain in the chest."

"It was not played?"

"No."

"You should be more careful."

"Yes."

"Where I should drive to?"

"I have to phone Kishana. I made another phone call, that she should look for a possibility for our clients to stay, at least for the next days."

"And then?"

"We will see."

We met in Jack's bar, of course the bar was closed. And "we" meant Caroline, I and Jack. Kishana was at home, we were connected via smartphone, we could not endanger her child. Jack made us some drinks. Caroline had a cocktail based on mezcal - not everybody's affair. I had decided for an Old Fashioned made with Overproof Hampden Estate. Jack preferred a fine whiskey - neat. Kishana had a coffee, obviously the best at home with a small child. At home I had not a drop of alcohol, a lot tea and some coffee.

"Let me begin, my story is fast told."

"Okay Jack, sounds not that good?"

"Well, an old man in this city today?"

"Not the virus!"

"It seems as it happened very fast. He was yet able to dial 911, the ambulance brought him to the hospital, but he collapsed, and they had no chance. He died yesterday."

"Fuck, and now Peter?"

"It's a good question. Trying to find out whether somebody has stolen things from him, maybe is doing it right now? But we have no real idea about his belongings - we could ask neighbors, we could try to observe the apartment, we could concentrate on other cases?"

"Maybe we have not to decide this right now - your case?"

"Well, I drove with Peter to the apartment, and he was the young blooming hero!"

"I had some health problems."

"Fuck, you should be careful with this shit!"

"Yes, Jack!"

"Hey, I'm your bartender, you know that the bartender is in the right always."

"Yes, Jack. I thought not that such a shit would happen. We had a lot of luck that the man was that passive."

"Why, because I as a woman would have not been able, to handle the situation?"

"Because it's enough luck, that my bullet not hit the lung or the heart. Such a situation can escalate very fast - it was not necessarily the most smart way to handle this."

"Wow, should this mean that you will act more clever in the future?"

"Well, if my aim is it, to see who wins in November, it would be better maybe. But maybe I'm not that much interested in, who wins in November - weak Joe?"

"And the woman and the boy?"

"Ah, yes Jack. Kishana has found a closed hostel where she can stay for the next two weeks. After that time she can move to Kishana."

"This sounds not like a permanent solution?"

"At the moment nothing is permanent. We have to see what will happen. She had a job, but of course her employer has fired her. Of course, she has no health insurance anymore - always the same shit!"

"Money?"

"I've some savings. I always thought, that I would make a long travel sometime. Europe maybe, England maybe, London maybe, I could talk with the people then. But I never travelled, and obviously I will have not so soon a chance to travel."

"She has gotten no check with the president's signature? Or has her man the check?"

"Hey, she's no rich woman or a multi billion dollar company! She can wait longer, maybe forever and a day, who cares?"

"I've also saved some money."

"You own a bar, you have to pay rent. It would be hard, would you have to close!"

"I've also saved some money."

"Thanks, Caroline. I have very low costs, you have to finance a dance school? My office is the former living room of my condo? Let's see what will happen the next days."

"And your ambitions to be a private dick?"

"Today was a real damper, to be honest. I have to ponder about it."

"Cheers, to all of you, also to you Kishana!"

"Cheers!"

"Cheers!"

"Cheers from my home!"

No Real Chance!

Caroline had driven me to the hospital in the morning, after I had more pain again - she had forced me to go to the hospital. They did some examines and were not very happy, in a way they were upset, especially because of my "little tour".

"I hope you're not angry with me now."

"No, in a way I was an idiot."

"You tried to help."

"And was fucking successful!"

"At least you gave the boy and his mother a new chance. It's simply too much, this situation is too much and especially all the subsequent consequences. You cannot change the circumstances and all the consequences now. You can try to do something what's good, but not in this condition, at least not in such a way."

"I had never the illusion that I would make the world better."

"Maybe it's enough to make the world not worse, to do something. I will not start with stories now, like Amnesty International commenced for instance, and not always a letter will have such an impact, but maybe we should not cease in writing letters."

"That's nicely said, but I have a lot of problems in writing letters at the moment - I've some problems to hold the pen."

"Maybe others can help you out somewhat therewith?"

"Let's see."

Caroline drove me home, late the day after the check-up. I had promised not to act such stupid again, to stay in bed, at least at home. The streets were so empty, weird in the big city, normally even in the middle of the night the streets were not such empty, like now. All numbers declined, but still the city was a hot spot. All around us the governors, especially the conservative governors, opened up their states. Sure, the vast majority fulfilled not the guidelines, but why one should be interested in, the president wished to open up the nation again, no matter how many would have to die, the stock market in the city was more important than the lives of people. And yet, even in the White House they had two cases now, with all the efforts of testing there - well, as a worker you had not such problems, no one tested you!

I thought about the development of this story, fuck, this was not the West Coast, not California, not Los Angeles, not fucking Hollywood. This was the city of real movies, this was the hard East Coast, no pathetic Hollywood happy endings, our movies ended very often in the brutality of the reality. Sitting on the back-seat of a cab, looking in the eyes in the review mirror.....

Living In An Unreal World

Everything is fine now / All our beds are made - a singer I loved very much sang in one of her wonderful songs, nearly one could mean this. Only a very few states with rising numbers, many at

the same level, more than a few with dropping numbers. At hundreds of places they searched for a vaccine, more and more serious ideas of treatment. Nearly one could fail to hear the worrying information about seriously ill children in my city, maybe one could think, seeing pictures from sunny beaches, that everything was over now. Only one "matter" disturbed the image - our president, the administration, actions from Republicans in Senate, Supreme Courts.....nearly one could think that a wonderful summer and fall would await us.

But you had only to listen to the president for five minutes and you were aware of, that this story was not at its end, this story would have the potential for some very drastic turns. He told you that everything was over now, that wonderful times would await us - maybe some thousand deaths more, but hey, Blacks, Latinos, poor people first of all? Therewith you knew, most likely it would get very worse in the next months, most likely this would not become a nice summer, no nice fall, maybe the climax of the nightmare, not to think about, the beginning of the next chapter of a then even more devastating nightmare.

What I had done had been stupid and irresponsible. I had endangered Caroline, that was fucking stupid, an asshole with a big piece! I should be fucking happy about, not to lie alone in my apartment, that somebody cared for me, not dying alone, not get buried alone. So much grieve in the city, in the state, in the States. But was it really more, than at other times? A stupid, maybe even disgraceful question? Maybe only a time when a world, a nation, a state, a city under the microscope? Only the brutal manifestation of all what was there all the time, now only visible in its ultimate brutality? And hey, the Republicans had still some billions for tax breaks, time for fighting against the blue states, time for the ultimate fight for their extreme right-wing agenda. The 2nd Amendment was important, the 1st only if it could be used for own purposes. To make abortion more difficult was important, but not to protect workers - no job, no health care, your problem!

I lay in my bed and felt not very good, outside the sun shined. The second half of May had begun now, the days long now, the sun stronger and stronger. It made no sense, I had to recover, I had to be fit, too much was on the line now. I looked at the TV screen, "my" governor had its daily briefing, told about numbers, but also about people, people who suffered and felt pain, every day. He not said, that everything he did was perfect, he said, that he was afraid of making wrong decisions, but that no one had a panacea in such a time and crisis. He was not necessarily all the time in the past "my man", but now I wished I would have the opportunity to give him my vote, my vote in November. He would be a fucking different president!

Time In Abeyance

It was good to stay in bed, it was good to sleep a lot, it was good to dream a lot. Weird dreams, no nightmares, I never had nightmares, but sometimes very weird dreams. It was good to have them, to clear up your mind, to find new halt, in a world in a tilted position, on its way to tip over, the feeling that the world would bury you, like a collapsing building on a September day.

And yet, I felt light like a feather, quite like a nightingale would care for you, nothing could harm you anymore, at least as long as you would never leave this bed, this room, this apartment again. Outside was the cruel reality, inside was the cozy comfort of an unreal wishful dream. Wonderful, but unreal, knowing, that this time was a volatile time - *nothing gold can stay*, the mellifluous voice in my ears.

I avoided it, to switch on the TV, to read the newspaper, to ask too many questions about the outside. I needed my time for weird dreams, not for the fucking reality. I knew that it got more and more insane with every day, no details were needed to feel this. A story came me to mind: I would fight with a monster, and I was on the way to kill it. And the more I put pressure on the monster, the more the monster smiled. I asked the monster: You await your death? Will death be a redemption

for you? The monster laughed aloud now: You stupid nothing, do you see the abyss behind me? Yes, I answered. Have a look, the monster said. This is a trap, I said. No, this is the reality you should know, the reality why I have to be merry. The monster stepped aside, so that I could have a look, without to have to fear an attack. I looked down and saw an abyss, filled with an uncountable number of monsters. See, the monster said to me, you can kill me, but to kill the monsterhood, will be hardly possible. With these words the monster offered me its throat, I not did it. I walked away, I had to find another way.

Seven of the ten regions of the state started with a slow reopening today, not the city and the two bordering regions. Only a hundred dead people a day I had heard, no thousand a week! A dramatic progress led to a devastating situation - a nation in war, the first war since the Civil War on American ground. No soldiers died, civilians died, a strange war with strange warriors. It was difficult to focus on the real enemy in this war, the real enemy was very clever in tactics of confusion. The real enemy was very smart in laying false trails, or many were stupid enough to follow every of the real enemy's false trails - you could see it both ways. All in all it was a baffling time.

I would need some days more, but felt with every day, that the day came nearer to get up again, to leave the apartment again, to step on the street again, to be back again. Well, maybe I should behave differently then? But hey, I was a private dick and this was a tough city - near the middle of twenty-twenty.....

I'm Indebted To You!

"You're under no obligation to thank me, especially not in this way."

"There's no way that would be adequate to express my gratefulness - and I'm no windbag."

"No, absolutely not. You're one of those who's not saying more than needed. I help you because you're a friend."

"No good friend, it was dangerous what I did. To expose you to such a danger was reckless."

"Well, I've heard that someone told me, that female private investigators exist, even women at the police and army?"

"The point is not that you're a woman and therefore not capable to do the things that men do. The point is, that it was a stupid action as such, especially in my physical condition."

"That was what I want to hear! And now you should get well again, outside a city waits for someone, who cares. Maybe he should sometimes think twice, before he dashes off, but he has done many good things."

"Well, too often it's very disappointing what's the result at the end. This is a fucking world, at it will be a fucking world."

"It's not easy to change the world."

"Is it possible to change the world? I mean Gandhi as an example. Did he change India, the world? I fear that millions of Indians will have some doubts upon it, especially women with no rights, objects for males, pressed to work in factories for nearly nothing the whole day, the whole week, pressed to prostitution as children. Yes, Gandhi has changed the world."

"Wouldn't it be too much expected, to impose the whole world on his shoulders? Maybe he has changed something, but not everything?"

"But what does a certain change is good for, if the fundamental suffering will be not touched by it? You maybe shape the surface to something nicer, but what sense this makes, when the hell thereunder stays always the same?"

"You would like it, to change the world?"

"I would do everything, if I would be capable to. Without any scruple, without hesitation I would kill this president, would it make sense. But what would this change? Of course, he would have paid

a price for his disgusting behavior, but would this change anything on the illness of our nation as such. He's a symptom, not the illness. You can suppress the symptoms, but this defeats not the illness - quite on the contrary!"

"You should sleep somewhat."

"And then, when I wake up again, the world will be a better one?"

"No, I fear not. But maybe while you're sleeping?"

"Yes, the big sleep bestows you comfort."

*When she goes to Dreamland
Nothing bad can happen
Cause there's no one there
(Emilie Simone - Dreamland)*

I'm Embedded To You!

"Why you never started an agency?"

"I have one?"

"I mean with staff, you have not even a secretary, you sleep next door?"

"Are you disappointed? A redhead?"

"You're not Philip, but seriously. You had some very spectacular cases, a lot of press. You never thought about to expand?"

"No, I have my income, I have a bed, I have all what I want."

"And you love it, to be a single. The lone wolf who solves cases in the big city - I fear you're some decades too late?"

"No, I'm not one of those, who thinks all was better in the past. It was fucking in the past, as fucking as today."

"But there were times, were a lot of people were interested in you, you got a lot of invitations, even from late-night shows and of course parties - Jack told me."

"Then I would guess, that he told you also, that I'm not interested in this gentry people, especially not in this city. They stand in front of pictures in exhibitions, talking a lot of shit, and only because they can pay the absurd prices for this meaningless wallpapers, they decide what art is. I give a shit on them, their fellowship as well as their "taste" for art."

"You're not attracted to modern art?"

"I like the music, movies maybe, but after the modern area I have my problems with visual arts. But it's meant more as a metaphor. Parts of the city are okay, but others are only boring. Look at the isle, why one should be interested in, to live there? People who have to confirm each other all the time, how sophisticated they are, that they are the intellectual elite, that they have all the taste and knowledge, but often they have only the money. I see them as a boring and snobbish bunch. And you, I know not that much from your past?"

"You not asked Jack?"

"No, I think this would be inappropriate."

"Well, the time I was together with Jack, I liked the isle very much. I'm a dancer? I dreamt of a career as I was younger, but this was not my world in the end. I left the city, I left Jack."

"Well, according to what Jack said, I not said that we never talked about you, it was the other way round, and that it was his fault."

"Whatever, it's the past. And I'm not unhappy about my life so far."

"And now, running a dance school?"

"And now, running a one person detective agency?"

"Yeah, will you stay?"

"Why not, it will be safe, you're on the way to recover, but you're still an ailing maverick."

Jack's Bar

I knocked at the back door and Jack opened it.

"Come in, it's nothing illegal."

"More or less?"

"Have a seat at the bar, I have some places unoccupied."

I sat down and Jack asked me about my wish. I decided for an Old Fashioned, but with rum - Hampden Estate Overproof, I needed something "real".

"How is business running?"

"Well, you not my best customer at the moment."

"Cocktail to go is nice, but not for me. Alcohol in the bar, tea at home, this is a clear rule."

"Okay, as long as I have the back door."

"You mean, I have to pay for this very nice cocktail?"

"I fear so!"

"I have no income, and I'm wounded?"

"You can come here and you have some savings? I have no scruples - yes!"

"Okay, but have you at least a story for me? You're the bartender, and I'm your guest?"

"If you ask me so? Two days ago I sold a sleazy guy something, He had absolutely the need to tell me a fantastic story."

"I'm all ear?"

"Killers in the city!"

"Wow, their victim?"

"Our governor!"

"That's cool. Why?"

"Right-wingers fear that he could run for presidency, so they decided to kill him!"

"Okay, he denied several times that he would do so! Even his brother had no chance. It seems somewhat unnecessary?"

"As I said, was a sleazy guy. You're satisfied with your nurse?"

"Your former girlfriend?"

"Yeah."

"I have to say that I like it, when she's with me. She gives me the feeling of comfort."

"Shall I switch on the TV?"

"Why, always the same shit. You know what I don't understand?"

"Tell me."

"Joe Biden is the candidate now, at least as long as our governor not changes his mind. But why you not see him every day on TV - CNN, CBS, MSNBC,.....why they not support him more. He has to win in November, not with no airtime. Why the left media not promotes him, I'm not happy with him, but four more years to destroy our country finally? I do not understand this....."

One Hundred Thousand Plus One

The big city, the big nation - a hundred thousand people died, plus one. I could step on the street, with my big gun, to perform the tough private dick, one hundred thousand plus one crosses, the illustration of a failed nation. Time heals all wounds, they say. But a wound, always anew opened, cannot heal.

A mass murderer without any scruples as president, what for possibilities left then? Five months, most probably five devastating months, and you would know more. I stood on an empty street with my big gun in the hand - such a ridiculous picture! Tears were running down my cheek, hardly I could breathe, no knee in my neck. If this all could happen in public, people around, videos made, in a rose garden, the whole world is watching. What then happened when no one was there, not in

the garden but behind closed doors, not in public? In what a place we lived, definitively not in paradise. If this was not hell, what cruelties should hell offer more?

On the isle in the big park a white woman screamed, a black man had attacked her. It was like a metaphor for the sickness of a nation. Not every sickness had a cure, sometimes the illness was simply too advanced, or only to cure with drastic measures, like an amputation or a chemotherapy. Sometimes it was simply too late.

I felt better, someone cared for me. I thought about, whether it would be better, would there be a deadly virus, and we never could leave our houses again. Have heard about, that in Japan it would be not something rare, that people would refuse to leave their houses, they even had a name for this behavior. I could understand this people.

Large parts of the nation opened up more and more, we would wait longer, I was not unhappy about it. The streets, filled as ever, 24/7, that was our soul. The hypocritical elite on the isle, with their snobbery and racism - if only there, it would be acceptable. But the cancerous ulcer had not only affected the whole body, the cancerous ulcer was from the beginning on a natural part of the nation. How it should be possible to remove the cancerous ulcer without destroying the body? Wasn't this body doomed from the first day on, either to become a zombie or to die an ugly and painful death? I felt better now, someone cared for me.

Normality In The Big City

Didn't we always thought, that we, the inhabitants living in the Big City, were something special, especially those on the isle? But hey, maybe we're not?

Now we died from coronavirus like all the others. Now we suffered under this total failure, called president, like all the others. And now we had the same protests all around the city, as so many other cities in the nation. Should it be, that we were a totally normal city?

I felt better, physically. Apart from that? A nation that totally failed, in controlling a pandemic, saw now days of protests and nights full of violence and riots. Always I had this image in mind, would this be a movie, what would we say? Come on, first this president, then the pandemic, and as if this would be not enough, this police violence and the following demonstrations, riots and lootings - the first dead people on both sides! Wouldn't we think, that this would be a little too much for one movie - or?

But this was no movie, this was the fucking reality! And the asshole in office was neither interested in containing the pandemic, nor he was interested in, to ease the situation. On the contrary, he enjoyed the pictures, now he could play the big leader, threatening to fight back hard, even when this should cost lives. But hey, he had no problems with a hundred thousand plus dead people, many of them people of color, why he should have problems with some dead demonstrators, not to talk about these criminals, who broke the law? And then his fight with social media, his fight with the left - now he was in the fight mode.

I stood in front of a looted shop, I, the big private dick, had the feeling the world around me would collapse. Police cars burned, police cars drove into peaceful protestors, how cheap was a Black man's life? Twenty dollars, ten or maybe a nickle - nothing, our president would say, except he plays Uncle Tom for me. How often a Black man had to beg for breath, three police officers on a handcuffed body? Till he's silent obviously, till he breathes no longer. I could not understand it.

No, not for the first time, by far not for the first time, but it felt like a hurricane while an earthquake while a deadly disease, a disease called racism. I could not get rid of the feeling, that the things got worse with every day, and it started somewhat over three years ago. Now the dams broke, three years, but this was nonsense. 1992, the 60s, the 50s, the 40s, all the times! The Blacks, but not only the Blacks! Latinos, Asians, they, who lived here long before, and what I saw in the broken shop

window was my fucking White face! I could no longer see me!

The Question About Correctness

I was a private dick, I stood on the right side. I took a job, to help people in a difficult situation, parents, whose daughter had been kidnapped for example, I tried my best to get things fixed. But it was not that easy at all.

Was it okay, to loot? I think this question not had to be answered. Was it okay, to shoot at police officers in those nights? Really a question? Well, maybe I should quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. now, as many did now? And to be clear, every person of color had any right to do so, but I was also not more, than one of these white-breads.

Yes, of course, I drove no SUV, my music was different, and so much more, but deep inside? Of course, I had friends who were people of color, hey this was the big city! It all was so hypocritical! Jack's Bar was a very normal bar, nothing "sophisticated", but the typical guest? Not, that Jack would give an African American or a Latino the feeling not to be welcome, on the contrary, but let us be honest, this country was a conglomeration of different worlds, not more.

In a way this was okay, why we should be all the same? Was it not interesting to go to a Chinese neighborhood, maybe for dinner, in an Italian, and so on? But that was not the problem, that different cultures lived their culture, the problem was, that we talked not with each other. Yes, have a nice dinner in Chinatown or Little Italy - or today some Tex-Mex, or a nice Latino restaurant? But why be interested in these cultures as such, at least being part of the supreme culture, the White culture?

A week now, every night got more violent now. A week now, a president who lusted for airtime, and was not more than a little lush. And in the news? Ninety-nine point nine percent of the police is not racist, we have to fight looting, we have to understand African Americans, we have to be one nation - I was sick of this shit! Let us talk about the real stuff!

The big city, so liberal, so European, so full of art and intellect. As a White guy, as a rich guy, but as a former slave? Former?

I always asked myself, how would I feel, knowing that only a few generations ago I was a slave, that we all were slaves, treated like slaves - "In The Heat Of The Night", after the slaps in the face? *There was a time.....was?*

This society, also this big city, stuck in this time. Maybe the "American Way of Life" was not the best idea? Maybe the "American Dream" was only a chimera? Maybe we still stuck deeply in slavery - maybe? What a fucking question this was?

A White ruling class, not capable and willing to share, this was the problem in this nation and city. But also the Blacks, who lived their "American Dream", failed! Nice words Mr. President, but maybe it was time, to left your cozy Centrist's world? Oh, very distinct words from your mouth? Was not your style - or? Should this impress an angry man or woman? If after decades and centuries no words have shown any progress - ah, sorry, you could choose your seat in the bus now, the Whites drove SUV's now -, than history told you, that a time would come, a time, when words would have no meaning any longer. No, this time had not begun now, but our president did its best, that these times would begin very soon.

I felt much better now, still I had to be somewhat careful, but all in all it was much better now. Still no public life in the city, but this was good so. I would be in Jack's Bar later, together with Caroline, backdoor of course. Free Fallin', that was, how I felt now.

Jack's Bar

We met in Jack's Bar - Jack, Caroline and I. We had our cocktails, it was a day were Jack offered

cocktails to go, therefore we were prepared, to get interrupted from time to time.

"Have you said Jack, that the women and her child lives now together with Kishana and her child?"

"Well, I'm not sure? Did I, Jack?"

"Well,.....?"

"Men! We thought, that it would be a good idea, when these two single mothers would live together. They can support each other, their children have nearly the same age - what do you think Jack?"

"Maybe I should say, that it was more Caroline's idea, then mine?"

"Jack?"

"Yeah, I think it was a good idea Caroline. You're knowing, I'm not that much with children."

"I can remember."

"You both wanna be alone?"

"No, let's talk about something else. The virus, our wonderful president and how sensitive he is, reacting and talking about a black men's death and the demonstrations?"

"To be honest to you Caroline, I'm not in the mood, to talk about this shit - both. This is no hot spot for demonstrations, but I run a bar?"

"You fear the lootings?"

"Of course!"

"And the death of....."

".....and you should know that this matters to me. Everybody is welcome in my bar, I'm not interested in skin color. This was an act of pure sadism in my eyes, but I have not much more than this bar. Yes, this man has lost his life, but if they loot my bar, this not makes him alive again!"

"Hey, come down you both! We all in this room know that this was a murder, and we all would define us as tolerant or liberal, with all these problems - and we all here are aware of our beautiful white problems, that's maybe the best what I can say. Let's talk about.....fuck, about what you should talk about, in such a situation?"

The doorbell rang, nearly a redemption.

"A customer who wants to fetch his cocktail."

Jack offered at specific days cocktails to go. The customers had to preorder them, so that Jack could prepare them, later they could fetch them. He offered them in small bottles for at home, you only needed a glass and ice at home, four cocktails in a bottle. Jack would walk to the door, the customer had to show him his order confirmation and Jack would bring him his order to the door. As Jack came back from the door, to bring the man at the door his order, he looked at me.

"You know, this is this guy again, the one who had this news about our governor?"

"You mean, that he will get assassinated?"

"Yes."

"Can you ask him to come in? Tell him, that you have forgotten to prepare his order, but that you will make his cocktails for him now?"

"Okay."

Jack walked behind the counter, pretended to search, and went back to the door without anything. It was to hear, that the man was upset, but finally he came in and joined us at the bar. In fact, it was a shabby looking guy, not necessarily a typical guest in Jack's bar. Jack started to mix the man's order and I looked at him.

"Well, to make it straight, I'm a private dick."

"What a fuck is this?"

Jack stopped the preparing.

"Hey, cool down. You can remember the last time you were here?"

"Yeah.....?"

"Hey, there was this story you told me, was a.....say "strange" story. My friend here is, as he said, a private investigator. I told him about your story, and as you appeared at the door now again, he asked me, to drag you in."

"No panic, I will pay for both bottles. Of course, Jack has not forgotten to make your cocktails."

I looked at Jack.

"Can you finish also this bottle and hand him both? I will pay for them."

"Sure."

Jack continued with the preparation, and I looked again at him.

"Hey, I will pay in any case. So, you can be honest, this story, one of these rumors from the streets - or?"

"Well, I have a friend, and this friend has heard something."

Wow, this was exactly the beginning of the story, I had wished to hear. I have a friend, who has a friend, who has a friend, and that friend has heard something. Okay, I would listen, would spend the money and then I would have the task to get managed, that Caroline and Jack would not start a cockfight.

"I'm all ear, buddy!"

A Fucking Good Story!

Well, the story was, as expected, a prototype of this totally useless fairy tales, full of rumors and chatter. But what disturbed me was, that his story made absolutely no sense at all, at least now.

"Hey buddy, this was a nice story, but we can relax now. Joe Biden has, after the caucuses last Saturday, more than 1.991 delegates now, therefor he's automatically the nominee. Even if our governor would have the idea now, to become president, it would be somewhat late now. Maybe you can say, that they had this plan, if the governor had started a campaign, but now this whole plan is obsolete."

"They fear him anyway - when he talks with his brother!"

"Well, they are both showmen, especially when one performs in the other brother's arena. Hey, they both are cool, but they both know very well, how to put themselves on the market. And again, it would be too late now, and in the middle of the pandemic? I cannot imagine that the voters would endorse him, if he suddenly had other interests now?"

"Something is going on, believe me! A long time till August!"

Well, at least he knew that the convention had been postponed?

"Yeah, and at the convention Joe Biden, with such many delegates behind him, says: Hey, I step back, but I endorse this fantastic governor now. He has not one delegate, but he will be a fucking good opponent for our fucking president - this would be a sensation!"

I looked at Jack and Caroline, both shrugged with their shoulders.

"Okay buddy, as said, I will pay for your cocktails. I hope you will enjoy them."

"You're thinking that you're very clever, sitting here in the bar, when no one is allowed to do so. Do you think you're impressing the lady, in her fancy dress? This president has no scruples, and he's totally nuts. But hey fellow, you're the private investigator, I'm only here to bum cocktails off you."

He turned round, to leave the bar, I started to become nervous.

"Wait a moment. You mean that our wonderful president is involved? You not mentioned this so far, you said, "that some people would wish his death"."

"He and his ill bunch in the White House. Injecting sanitizer, all about hydroxychloroquine, setting soldiers on peaceful demonstrators because you wanna have a photo shooting, thousands of lies and conspiracy theories - and you tell me that my story is nuts? Would America today be a novel, only five years or so ago, everybody would say: This book is totally nuts, totally exaggerated. Thanks for the cocktails."

He left the bar and I was somewhat confused.

"Hey, you both, can you believe this story? On the other hand, obviously he has knowledge about what happens in politics and in general. He's no idiot, or? He looks shabby, but maybe he has only lost his job - do I something wrong?"

"Come on, his story was crazy. And as you said, it's all over, Biden is the nominee?"

"Yeah Jack, but this president is totally nuts, he has no problem with over a hundred and ten thousand dead Americans, that the numbers in many states explode, he has no problems with a dead

"nigger". He and Mitt, together with Jared and Ivanka, Mitch and Barr, they all would stand under the Southern Trees and would enjoy the Strange Fruits. This whole pack is ill and has no conscience - I think I make a mistake."

"Do you know who he is, Jack?"

"No Caroline, definitively no regular customer. Maybe he was one or two times here, but normally I have a very good memory for faces?"

"I think that now it's too later to follow him - do me a favor, Jack. The next time, I hope there will be a next time, when you see him, please tell him, that I have to apologize. That I'm interested in his observations and his knowledge - can you do this for me?"

"Of course, but you not think that his story has a basis?"

"What I know is, that a insane bunch is ruling this country at the moment. Gosh, it would be crazy if this story is true, but he was right. How many crazy and unbelievable things we have seen in the last years? Nowadays, everything seems to be possible."

We sat together for a longer time, it was bright outside as we said goodbye. There was a lot to talk about at these days, for instance, that the protest all over in the country had become very peaceful now, also in the big city. We talked about a church ceremony, and that we all three were not religious. We talked about racism in the big city, and about us three Whites. A lot was worth to talk about, at these days, days who felt like a prelude for something bigger.

Reopening The Big City

Now also the big city started to reopen, when in twenty-one states the numbers rose after an early reopening again, partially dramatically. The governor and the mayor had both stressed, that our reopening would be a careful and slow one, maybe not the worst strategy. Nationwide the numbers stagnated more or less, but on a devastating level. A new number, two hundred thousand deaths and more we would reach in the USA, within the next months - over one hundred and ten thousand we already had. Why? Well, at the moment, on a plateau, we had between eight hundred and one thousand deaths a day - a day! For the next three months - ninety days - this would mean between seventy-two thousand and ninety thousand more deaths - simple math, and to stress it again, only if the situation would be constant!

But maybe a sudden decrease? With all these demonstrations, with not a hint of a national plan, with a president not interested in the death of people, only interested in the Down Jones and his reelection - wow, now there was a problem, because to label the president's numbers as bad, was flattering.

Of course, Biden had not won, one had to be careful, but this was not the topic. The topic was, that we had a dangerous crybaby as president, an impotent macho, who started to act more and more crazy. He was like the little fat boy in the sand box, who lashed out to all sides without any conscience, without any overview, because the other kids had teased him. But that he was the bully number one, this was not important for him, it was his natural right to act like this, he was a macho in his dreams, an old White fat men in reality, who thought, that nature made him superior.

And in the big city? The mayor had nice words for our Black inhabitants today - oh, let us no longer talk about stop-and-frisk, this was the past now, and to be honest? Hey, even Jay-Z sang about it, driving with his fucked up car, stopped by the police. And, what did he have in his trunk? Yes: Just as every cop is a criminal / And all the sinners saints, so all the Blacks were drug dealers and criminals or saints or maybe all this talking was shit? A fucking White class, infested by racism since decades and centuries, since thousands of years, and maybe it was not only a problem of the "White Race"? Maybe it was a problem of the human kind? But hey, it was so easy, "niggers" were allowed now, to kneel down! NASCAR baned certain flags now - wow, this would change the world now, now we were all Saints! Or criminals?

And in the big city? I had to think things over, a lot of things! My way of life, my profession, my disgust regarding the outside world, Caroline, my own misbehavior.....but I was old, White, and a man. Too much lip service at the moment, a radical racist mobster in the White House with his bunch, a radicalized right, willing to use their assault weapons, what a fucking movie this was? But this was the normal strategy, create a situation where it seemed, that everything would be hopeless, and then the sudden relief, the hero brought everything in order again, the world could continue as before - well, "niggers" could kneel down now.

And in the big city? Did someone really think, that the "sophisticated" White class on the isle would give up their privileges, because of a dead Black man? No, they would not fight with assault weapons, there was no need for, they had much better weapons. Money, real estate, they owned the companies, they paid the politicians - really, this woman from Puerto Rico? You're funny, give her some canapés, she's a lefty. We here in the big city had our view on, to be an honest Democrat, we had Hillary and Wall Street, now we had Biden who liked it, to pose with Hillary - did you see him only once, posing with your lovely Sanders, woman from Puerto Rico? The big city, was such a progressive city!

And in the big city? I had to survive till November, and then? Then we would have some answers, I would have some answers, I only feared that I would not like them. I had to hope, that an old White man would become the next POTUS, I not liked it! Whatever the number of deaths would be, it would be much too much, I would not like it. I could not believe that the far right groups would simply accept the current developments, the president would never accept a defeat! I not should close my eyes now, it was devastating, what I would see then. It was simple in a way, lean back and enjoy your popcorn, the movie would continue on.

"Peter Maurer, private investigations."

"It's me, Jack."

"Oh, I was lost in thought, I not saw your number - why you call?"

"This guy with the story?"

"Yes."

"He placed an order for the evening, you're interested?"

"Of course, I will be there."

Maybe it was good, to get some distraction. And who knows, maybe a new spectacular case, or maybe only a cock-and-bull story, in any case a reason to do something.

Sequel

I sat in Jack's bar, a cocktail in front of me and waited, till the man would fetch his drink to go - I had not to wait too long. Jack asked him to come in, that I wanted to talk with him, he agreed.

"Thanks that you agreed to talk with me, I was not very kind the last time. Maybe I should ask you for your name at first, Sir?"

"No Sir, at least not anymore. My name is Arnold."

"A drink, Arnold?"

"You know what I like."

He looked at Jack, who started to make him the cocktail.

"Your clothes are not that cheep, nevertheless they look shabby. The virus? You lost your job? If you allow me to ask?"

"Sure, you wanna know who I'm. Well, I had a good job, I had. I had a good life, I had. Yes, I got fired, no need for me anymore. And of course, I had very good privileges on the job, a very good

health insurance for instance - but hey, I have no longer a job. Welcome to the American reality!"

I started not therewith to ask him, if he ever had thought about them, who had never such privileges like him, with or without a job - now that he was affected by this system.

"I understand, but no savings? We open up now, slowly, but we open up again?"

"Hey, why saving money, if you can make every day a fucking amount of money? I not complain, do not understand me wrong, I lived this life, and it was a fucking easy live so far."

"No new job?"

"This is a time we use for downsizing, that's what's the talking in my business is - looks not that good for me. But as said, I do not complain, others have more problems than I."

"Can I ask you about these rumors, what you have heard, can we go back to your story?"

"To be honest, I have heard only something about that someone had said that he has heard from someone something."

"Well, once I solved a case, because someone has heard something. This man, who had heard something lived really on the street, for many years. Are these "others" friends of you, you not mentioned it the last time?"

"I talked with a former colleague, who said it to me, that a friend of him had heard in a club, that someone had said, that he had heard, that there were someone in the city to kill the governor. Sounds not that good, to be honest."

"No, not really. In a club? We have a lock-down?"

"Come on, you really think that the real rich give a shit on it? They get richer, especially now, the virus is a gift for them, they have a lot to celebrate now! And this will be the problem. I can give you the name of my former colleague, maybe he will tell you the name of his friend, but then.....you will have no chance to get information in such circles."

"I'm a private dick, I can do a lot. Would it be possible to press them with their illegal clubbing?"

"Well, depends on whom you know in the city, who you're paying in the city - you understand."

"Sure, nevertheless, could you ask your former colleague about the name of this friend? I would have to know who this person is, before I can decide, what I maybe could do. Would this be possible?"

"Sure."

"Would you send me a message, with the name?"

"Sure."

"Another drink?"

"Sure."

We had some more drinks, I got more insights in his life. Mid thirty, made a lot of money so far, spent more than he made, only the best restaurants and bars, call girls and fast cars. Why thinking about tomorrow when tomorrow would offer you even more money - bad luck for him, that he was only one of this fellow travelers, not one of the real big studs. Should I feel sorry for him? Not really, or? He was one of these Whites, who not gave a shit about them, who had not such a fucking easy life, not his White privileges. He would get enough chances after the reopening, maybe he would have to limit his spending somewhat, but he would not end on the street - and even if, there were others, you should be interested in. People who had served, who became ill, who never have had any chance in their fucking easy life in the American nightmare.

Waiting

I walked around in the city, I had to wait, if even I would get a response at all. We opened up somewhat in the city, I had fetched a coffee, the night was cold. I felt somewhat overwhelmed by the situation, I had, to be honest, some problems therewith, to form with all this, seemingly contradicting, pieces one picture. There was the virus, the numbers on the rise. Not in the city, not in the state, but in many other states and nationwide. But the numbers of infections was not the crucial

point, on the contrary - wasn't there this talking, about herd immunity? The number of deaths - nationwide - still in a downtrend! The number of hospitalizations? In some states rising, doubts about numbers from some states - at the end in fact all only because of more testing? It would be good to hear this from medical experts, not from a corrupt racist, not from doubtful conservative governors. But the death rate still falling?

The rally in Tulsa? What a bummer was this? Mr. Best President Ever as laughingstock, even his supporters liked it no longer, to be in one room with him? Tomorrow - or better today - Phoenix? Bolton, a swine called another swine a swine - modern times! Could this be the beginning of the end of this pompous nobody - every day young people on the streets? But then a look at the alternative, sorry Joe, but that not let me start to relax! I would like to see him side by side with Bernie, together against the enemy, where was the thrilling campaign, Bernie had talked about? It seemed as it would be years ago, that he had said this words!

In some moments I had the feeling, running towards the cliff and no catcher would be there to rescue me. In some moments I had the feeling, that this nightmare would come to an end now. Maybe the next months would become hard, maybe very bad, like in a war, knowing, that the final battles would become very bloody, but that it would be only a matter of time now, and the war as such would be over. In some moments I had the feeling, to lose the ground, no longer knowing, what is up and what is down. This was such a moment.

What I knew was, that there was a lot of suffering in the big city, more than normal, as if "normal" what had been not enough. At one street they celebrated every day, after the bell had rung, expensive champagne and cheep girls, even in the bloodiest war one could make a fucking lot of money! Was this morally questionable - what a little fucking asshole you were, welcome to the American Dream!

I looked at my cell phone - no, no call, no message, nothing. Yeah, what a story this might have been, a conspiracy to murder, our governor, and I would have been the hero in the story - well, there we had the crux, I was no hero. Yeah, some big cases - a dead child, a dead young girl, now a dead woman, too much death around the big hero!

I? Our governor a hero, or a controversial person, now at the peak of his popularity, together with his brother - nice seeing you both joking in TV! Why it should be interesting for my, should someone plan to kill him - because it was illegal? Gosh, all the illegal things in this big city, all the crimes our wonderful president committed every day, not to talk about previous presidents - oh, sorry, Bill not fucked her! I decided that I had to come down, it was somewhat late to call Caroline? Maybe I should invite her to dinner, in my home, I was no perfect cook, but some I had learned as single man. I would call her tomorrow, maybe a private tango lesson - my phone rang

Sorry, Wrong Number!

"I have the information, you're interested in."

"Thanks, but I'm no longer interested in it."

"What?"

"Sorry man, but this whole story is nonsense. And I have no interest in, to deal with this people."

"Which people? Maybe our governor gets killed?"

"The friends of your friend - he has his security, they can do the job."

"Well, okay, will be bad for you to hear in the news that he got killed?"

"Nowadays every day so many are dying because of the most fucking reasons you can think of, he would be one among a fast growing number."

"And the illegal clubbing and so?"

"This is the big city in the big country. Some always had the right to do whatever they wanted, while others had no rights at all. Why should it be different this time. Some are happy if getting something at a food bank, others are getting billions from the government, always the same story."

Why it should be different this time?"

"Okay, you have my number if you change your mind?"

I terminated the call and deleted the number. Why I should be interested in the governor's life, he had not hired me. Henry J. McCallum III came to mind, I had totally forgotten his case, his case was no longer a headline.

I continued my way through the city, more and more states with rising numbers, rising numbers in cases. Experts predicted, that it would need one to two weeks, and the number of deaths would rise again. Many states with record number in cases now, soon with record number in deaths? In the city and the state the situation was much more relaxed now, "we" had done our homework! Thanks to our governor? Florida and Texas no surprise, their governors were assholes, deep in the ass of our beloved president, but a state like California? Well, the California kids - the white boys and girls - want to have fun at the beach again. Who was better: A conservative redneck asshole in the deep south listening to the president's lies and keeping them as granted, or a liberal white selfish and arrogant Californian rich daddy's son or daughter? Fuck them all!

I wrote a SMS, asked Caroline whether she would have interest in, to join me for a self cooked dinner on the weekend. It was Thursday today, Tuesday had been the primary. I had not voted, why I should? Biden would win, what an inside! This whole process was a farce, created to firm the power of the party establishment. One election at the same day in all states would have been a too big risk, you never would know what stupid ideas these voters could have. In November, I would vote, of course I would do so. A toast for our new POTUS, Joe Biden forty-sixth President of the United States - why I had some problems therewith, to be happy now?

The city in the night was a nice city, you not saw that much. What you saw was bright and sparkling, at least as long you were kind and not left the tourist's places. Sitting in a taxi, in the night, these times were over - what wonderful mayors this city had and have, the Latina had made it again, I had also not voted for her, but only because I lived not in her ward. One day there would come a rain, now it stormed, no good idea Travis. I feared that I would wake up one day and I would see him in the mirror - as she swanned over the zebra crossing in her white dress? Maybe I should think about the menu, something light for summer. Only five or six courses? I had some tango music at home - Carlos Cardel and Astor Piazzola. Maybe.....

A Dinner For Two

It needs two to tango - the tango of life?

I sat at home, Caroline had answered, had pledged, I needed some ideas for a good dinner. Still asparagus, the first chanterelles, should not be that difficult to create a nice dinner. But for what purpose?

My whole life I had lived alone, always restless, enjoying living single, no responsibility for someone else, not to talk about children. But now, now I felt alone, had the feeling that it would be nice to wake up in the middle of the night, knowing that someone would be there.

But I feared, now it would be too late. I was not that good in, to be together with others, to have small-talk, to pretend that you would be interested in the meaningless talk of the other. Someone with whom you would need no words, dancing around, listening to the music, carried away by the sound - my skills in dancing the tango so far? Well, I still had my problems therewith, to keep the rhythm, but most of all I still had my problems therewith, to let loose. No good base, to dance the tango.

So, I would do my best to impress her with my cooking? Maybe I should go to a porn movie theater with her - were there still porn movie theaters? - like Travis did. To kill my emotions, ready for the

final task - what was better, that your emotions killed you, or that you killed your emotions? I was not fit for a relationship, I only dreamt about, I was not able to keep the rhythm, I was not fit for dancing.

A light summer dinner, a tartlet from asparagus for instance, or a terrine from chanterelles to begin with? Both good for a soup, an essence from chanterelles? Some seafood or fish? Ravioli filled with dungeness crab? Meat? A cold soup maybe? Vegetable or fruit? Dessert? Something with strawberries? Mousse? Sweet asparagus - ice cream? A parfait? Green tea, rosemary? Should be no problem to create a nice dinner. A relationship would be something difficult.

The nation decayed more and more, enough forces were interested therein that this would happen, you could begin with the president and his family. Four month, a little more, I not saw one reason that this development would come to an end - on the contrary! Alone the development of the pandemic nationwide, and a government who enjoyed seeing it, this was exactly what they needed, a nation in the process of getting destroyed. Waiting for the collapse, too many burdens for one nation, the climax of developments, not started today. I decided to go shopping. The final menu I would create while shopping, time to find out.

I came back from shopping, had decided for a menu. As always, there would have been so many possibilities, but I had to decide, and I thought that it would be better not to expand the menu too much - ten or twelve courses! I thought that it would be better to have some more time for talking. The menu:

Leaf salad with fried chanterelles and in balsamic vinegar marinated strawberries

Chilled fruit soup from melon with a reduction from port wine, cream and roasted almonds

Terrine from chanterelles with fried scampi

Fried sea bass on tabbouleh

American cheese with fig mustard and fruits, different sorts of bread

Parfait from Japanese green tea (Sencha extra fine) on almond biscuit with vanilla cream

The rest of the Saturday I would use for preparations, as well as Sunday morning and afternoon. Caroline would arrive at 6 pm tomorrow, an apéritif, then I would start with the menu. The menu was created in the way, that I would not need much time to finish the single courses, we would have much time for eating, and talking. I started with the parfait.

Caroline arrived on time, let's not talk about her clothes, I felt immediately as the ugly duckling. Well, at least I hoped that with my cooking skills I could impress her somewhat.

"Welcome at my home, feel like at home, you're not for the first time here."

"No, and I'm happy that I have no longer to be your nurse. It's nicer to be your guest."

"An apéritif?"

"What do you can offer?"

"A nice medium sherry, fits good to the menu?"

"Sounds good, surprised that you have alcohol at home?"

"Yes, normally only tea as you know. Therefore, my alternatives to the sherry are very limited. Alcohol only in the bar, for the menu I would have some wine, white or rosé, and of course tea. But it would be okay for me to drink wine."

"Rosé would be fine?"

"Yes, I have not much to do to finish the courses, and I have planned only six courses, we can have a relaxed evening, no need to hurry."

"Yes, Jack has told me something about twelve-course menus and dinner till after midnight."

"That's the French style, starting late, eating many courses, often till after midnight."

"I hope we will not need that long for the dinner?"

"Depends on how fast we will eat and how long we will wait till the next course - no need to hurry, or?"

"No, definitively no need to hurry."

We drank our sherry and I finished the first course. Only some minutes and the salads were ready.

"Some roasted baguette? With or without garlic and olive oil?"

"Would be very fine, with garlic and olive oil of course."

We enjoyed the salad, Caroline liked the combination very much, but we both had some problems to start a serious conversation, and this situation continued till the cheese.

"Cheese?"

"Yes, what you have prepared?"

"Only some cheeses from different American regions. Some fruit and self-made fig mustard, a variation of bread. I thought it would be a good and relaxed course to finish the dinner, to have some conversation, to prepare for the dessert."

"A nice relaxed course to have a nice and relaxed conversation. Some white wine, fruit and bread, cheese and nice conversation topics. You have something special you wanna talk about?"

"We have talked about the president, the situation in the city, the situation nationwide, the fast rising numbers. We have talked about "Black Lives Matters" and the president, about November, polls and how weak Biden appears. We have talked about everything but not us."

"Do you think that we have to talk about us, that there's a need to do so?"

"Maybe not from your point of few, but I feel insecure."

"Haven't we talk about our relations before?"

"Yes, we have, but the last weeks?"

"I was always a straight forward person, you not plan something - or?"

"Oh, no, I have no ring in the kitchen if you mean this?"

"This relaxes me very much - you really have none, or?"

"No, but nevertheless I would like to talk with you about us two."

"Then you should serve the cheese. Still some time till midnight."

We had taken seat in my "living room", the platter of cheese on a small table, the fig mustard and the fruits and the bread nearby, the bottle of wine in a cooler, two glasses. One could say that it was cozy, I was tensed.

"Do not understand me wrong, I know that you're an independent woman, and gosh, my whole life I was a single, but I have the feeling that our relation is somewhat.....well,.....strange?"

"Jealous?"

"Would be the wrong word, but I fear that I'm somewhat old-fashioned in some ways."

"So, you were your whole life a "single", means you never had a real and deep relationship, but you're old-fashioned what "this" concerns - is this a good summary?"

"Yes, and it illustrates very well, that it's idiotic what I'm saying. But it's this feeling I have."

"You're in love with me?"

"Very straightforward - I'm not sure. I never felt in this way, I never said to a woman that I would love her."

"Maybe you should have, I've said to more than two men, that I would love them - one of them you know."

"Jack of course, but I have the feeling that certain things are very personal."

"You would have problems therewith, would I have sex with other men?"

"Men is nicely said! It's only this outdated feeling, that it's a matter between two people."

"Would sex with other women okay for you?"

"You make fun of me, and it's okay. I always dreamt about to be a swan."

"Well, then I fear you're really outdated!"

"Yeah, swans are faithful their whole life. I know, this is outdated."

"Yes and no. Yes, in fact they have only one so-called social partner. This means they live together their whole life, are getting old together, they raise the progeny together, but very often they have various sex partners, besides the social partner - sorry."

"Well, then this develops into a real disaster - dessert?"

"Why, we just have started with the cheese? Still time till midnight - the cheese together with your fig mustard, the fruits and the bread is something very fine. Maybe some walnuts would be nice also, but I enjoy it very much, to sit here with you. And maybe I should be fair with you, no other men in my live, not even a woman, at least not now."

"I have to apologize, this is not my matter, you're an independent woman."

"Are you sure that you have no ring? In the parfait would be very romantic!"

"Yeah, laugh about me. I simply like it to be with you, it's good for me, when you're with me."

"I also like it, to be with you. And I have to confess, this was one of the best dinner I ever had. You should relax, I will not keep you guessing. You will be always informed - okay?"

"Okay, some more wine?"

"Yes of course, I have not to drive home at the end of the day - should we wait with the dessert till after midnight, like the French do it?"

"Would be nice for me."

Independence Day

A week more was up, after the dinner last Sunday, today was Independence Day. A day to celebrate, a day to feel ashamed, a day to be angry - all at the same time!

It had been a very nice dinner, especially after midnight, the dessert was Caroline's favorite. A good parfait was always a good choice, of course I knew that Caroline drank green tea.

The last days we had not that much contact, Caroline was somewhat busy, tried to get more information about her dance school and the slow reopening in the city. Even when the situation in parts of the country became more and more difficult, in the city we continued with a slow reopening. Travel ban for various states, Americans from various parts of the nation were no longer allowed to travel to the big city - yeah, this fucking president had done his job very well, to divide the nation, to destroy the nation, happy Independence Day!

A fucking statue was more important than the life of a human being - but hey, surprised? Now America showed his real face, unmasked, no make-up any longer, at rallies his supporters could show their real feelings, could find confirmation for their racism, homophobia, for their view on women. Even the women loved him for that!

The United States of American, July the fourth, a nation launched - you're seeing the Founding

Fathers, now on their statues? Looking at them, do you saw something, do you missed something, I saw the American face. White and European based, 1776 or today, I saw no real differences, not in the heartland, but to be fair also not in the big city. The White surfer girls and surfer boys in California who created a dream, or the White "deal makers" on "The Floor" in the "Big City" - what else one should say? Especially as a White man, living his easy life?

In my youth I never thought about it, I had no real friends who were not White - well, I had no real friends at all, but that was not the topic. The topic was, that I saw some African American boys and girls at school, Latinos and Asian Americans not much, never a so-called Native American. I never thought that much about it, not saw for a long time their daily struggling, saw it, but not understood it. I tried to live my life, not knowing what I should do, not seeing, that so many dreamt about, to have my opportunities - happy Independence Day!

Today I was old, not that old, but the most of my life was over - in any case. Reagan and the two Bush were no happy time, but what happened now, had to happen! You could not close your eyes all the time and be surprised then, that it led into a disaster. The signs were there long before, for two hundred and forty-four years so far - looking at the proud Founding Fathers!

We had to decide, what "United States of America" should mean, what it should mean, to be an "American", whom should be allowed, to call herself or himself an "American". Looking at the Founding Fathers? Looking at Reagan and the two Bush? Looking at the United States today? Happy Independence Day!

The last days I had been in a strange mood. Caroline and I would meet later, at her home today, she would be the cook today. It felt strange, celebrating, nearly like in a family. We would spend some time at the beach, on the other isles, I was never attracted to amusement parks and crowds of people, especially if happy or aroused - "Crowds and Power", Elias Canetti.

Caroline would prepare a cold buffet, we would have a cozy and relaxed evening, dessert after midnight. At least you had to confess, that this ignorant and simply uneducated president had the clue, we were in midst a deep cultural struggle, and I felt to be on the wrong side. But hey, why such stupid thoughts, today was a day to celebrate, today was Independence Day, and I fit so pretty well to our wonderful Founding Fathers!

Sitting On A Throne

The next week was nearly over now, what I had done the last days? Nothing, or? Nothing special, or? The city still in lockdown, some reopening, but all happened very carefully. Looking at the south, why was this nation so incapable to understand even the simplest math in the time of a pandemic? More opening without flattening the curve before, not enough testing and tracing, all the ingredients for more deaths, not cases, not hospitalizations, not ICU and not ventilators, but fucking simple, MORE DEATHS!

But hey, who died? The young Whites at the beaches of California, who were not willing to social distance, or wearing a mask? Or the workers on the farms in the Great Valley? Latinos mostly, people who had to work, who had problems therewith to practice social distancing, to wear masks for hours while doing hard work. But I tried to see also the flipside of the coin, the farmers and their concerns. Could this lead to the insight, that the idea - everybody for himself - was not the best basis for a society. Of course, it pampered the rich and superrich, but all others, even if you had some property and savings, were the losers of this system. The Big American Lie, never more impressive illustrated as with today's reality, why even now it was no no-brainer that Biden would win in November - a brainwashed nation, a brainwashed heartland? Should it be that simple, I

feared that it was not.

I was a lucky guy, lived in the big city which had mastered this critical situation with bravery, while other states drowned in their own stupidity, in their faith in this most honest president every. Every day nearly a thousand new deaths, why we accepted this? The numbers of deaths rose again, how high this number had to become, near to three thousand again, to set a new peak value, till the outcry of the American people would shake the nation? "Black Lives Matter" in orange letters in front of the tower now, very nice, even our wonderful mayor have had a brush in his hand. And now? Now the police in the city would become the best police troupe in the whole USA - yes, symbols were necessary, but if no action followed, as normally and mostly, then every symbol and symbolic action degenerated to a mere farce. The symbol was there now - mayor, governor, now the action had to follow! In the city, the state, the nation! And it would be by far not enough to elect Joe Biden in November, this would be the act to give the nation at least a chance, the first step to maybe avoid the disaster, but not more.

I walked through the empty streets in the night not knowing what I should do with the rest of my life. Fifty-five now and at a turning point. Would we have no new president in January who would swear, this life would be over - or maybe it would begin anew? But if? This was a vessel in distress at sea, and no captain ever would be able to rescue the ship! It was too late, only a wonder would be able now to rescue the crew's lives, but I did not believe in wonders. Maybe it would help if the crew would take over the vessel? I looked down the empty and dark street, not long ago a huge crowd was on it at this time, would that time come back? Nothing should come back, we had to reinvent this nation, or we would drown - I looked at the huge American flag: "Together, We're Strong.", this flag and this message at this building in this street, this had to sound like a mockery, and maybe it was simply a mockery, for all those who struggled, in this city, this state, this nation.

I sat in the subway to drive home, it was Saturday. I had this picture in my mind. Ghislaine Maxwell sitting alongside Kevin Spacey on a throne at Buckingham Palace - what a nice illustration. Not to talk about Maxwell and Spacey as persons, but as a symbol, they represented the King and Queen of the United States very well, the president and Ivanka would be also very nice - any other ideas? I would guess that yes, but I would guess also, that no Latino woman or man would sit on the throne, no African American woman and man - and forget stupid rappers, no Asian American woman or man, not to talk about "Native Americans" - or? No, they both represented the United States of America very, very well!

A Story Changes!

I sat in my car to drive to Jack, the development in the city seemed very good, nationwide we headed into a disaster. And after his idea to reopen the economy fast developed more and more into higher death rates, the president had a new vision, we had to open our schools again, it will be fantastic to do so! Well, how insane all this still could become? I arrived at Jack's Bar, parked my car and entered the bar's backdoor. Jack was somewhat jazzed?

"It's fucking, or? How you feel?"

"Well, not bad? I'm in your bar and look forward to a nice cocktail?"

"You not heard it?"

"No.....obviously not?"

"They fired at our governor?"

"You're kidding me - is he dead?"

"No, in hospital, ICU, they say that he's in a critical condition but stable. Do you think.....?"

"That I've made a mistake?"

"Hey, who should have believed this guy?"

"Have you some information about him, do you know where he lives?"

"Not exactly, but I know where he has worked. I sold him two or three times a cocktail since then, and we talked somewhat."

"You had the feeling that he would be reliable?"

"I had the feeling that he would be one of these Whites who absolutely knew that he would be no racist, while forcing his African American subordinate to have sex with him, to tell everybody, how fantastic it was, to "fuck a black bitch". He's an asshole, a blatherer, I would not believe one word of him."

"Nevertheless, it seems that he knew something about this. I should have a talk with him."

Jack gave me a very strong cocktail and all the information he had. I would try to get in contact with him tomorrow, at least I knew where he worked. Now we followed the news, and it sounded not good - ICU but stable, wasn't that the slang therefor, that it not looks good? A classic drive-by assassination, at least five shots, at least two hit him, his wife also injured, but not much. I took a deep breath and a long gulp, I had to cough.

"Slowly, this is no shot."

"Maybe it would be better."

"You're guilty of nothing."

"No, I'm not guilty in the death of a young African American boy, I'm not guilty that we have this fucking president, I'm not guilty that every day a thousand Americans have to die a senseless dead, I'm innocent, we all are innocent, but who then is guilty? I need another one!"

"Yes, another coffee! I organize you one, and one for me as well."

It was always good to have a good friend!

The Dying Began

The big city would not reopen more, they saw the developments nationwide, especially in the southern states – a devastating week lay behind us. No bounce back in the city, this would be the worst what could happen, except being a ruthless governor, a bootlicker of the president, like the governor of Florida - "No Lives Matter", if the president orders to reopen the country. Even blackmailing schools was okay, at least for a mobster like the man who made the White House to a bordello, with him as the prime whore.

The number of deaths rose, as the experts had predicted, and it would continue to rise, this country was not able to act united, as all the other successful nations around the world. But why we should, as long as the White upper class was affected least of all, as long as the poor, the Latinos, the African Americans had to pay the price for this disgusting behavior? Could you imagine, what all would happen, if this would be a infection that would hit Whites the most? The story from the White and the black girl, killed in the same city, at the same day, under the same bad circumstances? What girl's face you would see in the news, in the newspapers? Always the same in this fucking country!

And yet, not everything was worse, not in the city, not in the state, not in the nation. Some more unity would be enough, some more respect, some overdue changes, like health care for all or a better education system, and at least the worst pressure would be out of the pot. But this White upper class was not even able thereto, fantastically represented by the unwilling GOP, a wonderful image was also the NRA. As "Blacks" had assault weapons in their hands, they demanded a ban for such weapons. But if a White kills dozens and wounds hundreds, this is no option at all, the NRA has to protect the rights of this White man! And all the Whites who died in that night, who will suffer from their wounds, physically and mentally, for the rest of their lives? This is a perfect example of the lack of conscience this White upper class represents. As long as this status would be in existence, this nation would not come to a rest.

I walked down a street till I reached one of this high glass buildings on the isle - an insurance

company. I entered it, with no good feeling - this was not my world. Behind the counter - like in every movie - a nice little chick, smiling, examine me, knowing in a second, that I not fitted to this environment.

"What can I do for you, Sir?"

"I have an appointment with Mr. Kavanaugh."

For the fraction of a second she let me see, that she was surprised about my wish.

"Sorry, but Mr. Kavanaugh no longer works for us. Can I do anything else for you?"

She was good, but I saw that she looked in my face, but was concentrated on do something else. I would guess that in a short time one or two men would appear, to help me out of the building. My problem was, that Jack knew his name and his former work place, but not his address, or his phone number. Therefore I had to try to get this information, his former work place was my first try. It was sad, that this was none of this old detective stories, where the private dick flirts with the girl behind the counter and with his charm he not only gets the needed information, but the phone number of the girl as well. But this was the reality and I would have been not surprised, if her name had been Kellyanne or Kayleigh - she smiled at me as three men in black suits arrived.

"No thank you, I think your colleagues will care for me from now."

I turned around to the three men - wow, three such guys for one old man like me? Maybe I still impressed her in some ways?

"I know the way to the door, gentleman - have a nice day!"

I started to walk in direction of the door as one of the guys addressed me.

"I think we're not interested in, that you leave."

"Well, what are you interested in?"

"We would like it, that you would follow us."

"And if not? I not see, that I would have done anything wrong?"

"You asked for Mr. Kavanaugh?"

"Is this a crime?"

"Maybe?"

"Hey, if he made some bad deals or so, this is not my matter. I had an appointment, this is all."

"You know Mr. Kavanaugh?"

"Briefly."

"You ever met him?"

"I think two or three times. But as said, I know him only very briefly."

"That's enough. Would you follow us, please?"

"You're no police, I have not to follow you?"

"That's true. But the police will be very interested in, to talk with you."

"Why?"

"They will tell you."

"Maybe I should tell you, that I'm a private investigator. I was here to get in contact with Mr. Kavanaugh, I would need his address or phone number."

He looked at the woman behind the counter.

"Give him his phone number, but I fear he will not answer you anymore."

Now he looked at me.

"Oh, and his address - I'm not sure.....I would try it at the city's coroners."

"He's dead!"

"Yes."

"Murdered?"

"Most probably."

Small Talk

They accompanied me to a nice, somewhat smaller conference room, where I had to wait for some

time, one of the guys stayed with me, but was not much interested in, to start a conversation with me. After some while the door of the conference room opened again and the other two guys came back, in their tow two police officers in uniform and two guys in plain clothes - obviously the important guys. I waited till all had found their place - the two important men had found their places at the table, all others decided to stand. The guy who had waited with me, and had taken a seat in the meantime, his first action as the door opened again, was to stand up - he and his colleagues stood in the most possible background now. I decided not to wait till one of the "important " guys would start the conversation.

"Nice, three gorillas from the house, two officers from the local police and two, let's guess.....FBI guys? Is this not a little exaggerated?"

The more important guy of the important guys started to talk.

"We don't think so, and by the way, we're not from the FBI. We're not interested in, to have federal guys in our city. This is not Portland, and this will be not become Chicago!"

"I only mean, we're not talking about demonstrations, we're talking about an assassination attempt - or? Our governor, I think this could be a federal affair?"

"I not said, that there are no such guys in the city and the state, I only said, that we're none of them."

"Oh, by the way, I'm Peter. I think we have forgotten to introduce ourselves."

Both of the guys grinned at me, and the other one started to talk - oh, he was the more important guy of the two guys!

"Let's be plain, what do you know about the case, you know what case I mean?"

"Of course, but what do you know about me?"

I had shown the three guys my license, therefor they knew my name, therefore the two important guys knew my name, I knew some police officers in the big city, but of course in such a big city? I had to get to know, in which way they saw me.

"Let's play it your way. Of course, we did some research, apart from that, that your name is not totally unknown among the police in the city. So far I would say, that you was always interested in, to have a good relation to the police. You always worked together with us."

"I not only once criticized the local police, even our nice mayor, even our superstar governor. You both are from the local police?"

I pointed a finger at the two important guys.

"Yes, we're from the city. We're interested in, to keep this internal."

"Why? And to be fair to you, I will have no substantial information for you. I know Kavanaugh from a bar, he chattered something about a planned assassination - I not took him seriously, that was obviously a mistake! My idea was, to talk with him, but I fear it's too late now - for everything. That's all I know, what happened to him?"

"A classical execution, a professional. Four bullets in the body, one in the brain, the weapon besides the victim. A very distinct message!"

"If you allow me a question, who's in the background, and why we're sitting here?"

"Well, the second question.....you have some reputation. Maybe you could work together with us. The first one is very delicate."

He looked in a very serious manner at me, the room was a silent chamber now.

"The three guys at the wall, they are not from the house?"

"No, we have some special agents in the house, for all cases."

"You talked about my reputation, it's known that I keep my mouth, at least I hope so. And also my political opinions should be no secret- otherwise.....?"

"Not necessary. Do you believe in conspiracy theories?"

"No."

"Federal forces in Portland, Chicago, maybe in our city, forces that cause only more trouble. A governor in ICU, all related to cities and states under democratic lead?"

He looked at me - a trap?

"Portland was and is a disgrace, the people in Chicago, on the other side of the river in the south, they would need real support, but not even more suppression. They have enough gang brutality,

they not need police brutality on top. Should this federal forces come to our city, I hope we would be very distinct in our reaction. We have not to talk about, that this president is interested in, to create as much violence as possible, this gives him a good feeling, he likes it, to see others suffer and dying. So far, but we're talking about a governor in ICU?"

"I see that we have a common basis. What, if I would tell you, that a black list exists. On it some names of cities, some names of mayors, some names of journalists, at least one more governor?"

"Gretchen and his brother?"

"Gretchen and his brother for instance."

"Portland, Chicago, our city?"

"Portland, Chicago and our city for instance."

"Last year I would have laughed about you, today, when November comes nearer and nearer, I have to believe you. But I'm only a private dick in the big city, I not even have some substantial information about Kavanaugh and his connections. Why we're sitting here?"

"I think we should discuss this now."

"I'm all ear!"

"A group of internet activists came in possession of this list. At the beginning it was not obvious, how serious one should take it. But with the time it was possible, to link more and more people in and around the White House with this list."

"But hey, should this mean that you know this list for a longer time?"

"Yes."

"Why then it was possible that someone nearly killed our governor? What about to protect him!"

"Maybe I should talk about the list first. We understood that the list has two levels. The first points to actions till November, the second to actions after the election."

"Portland, Chicago and other cities till November, to cause as much violence and confusion as possible? Maybe one or two more dead young black men would be not bad, some dead children in Chicago very nice, riots in our city also very nice? I get you right so far, this till November, or?"

"Yes."

"But why our governor struggles with death now? This would have been an action after November, if I get it right now. And by the way, after November? If the president has lost the election, or after he has won the election - I not get it?"

"That's the perfidious part - in any case! If he won, this would be the first part of the coming political purge. If he lost, this would be the beginning of the plan to plunge our country into the abyss. If he not can get it, no one should get it!"

"And our governor?"

"Someone was too fast - it was a mistake, an accident.....we're not sure."

"Joe Biden?"

"Of course."

"Why not publishing the black list?"

"The president wants to create chaos till November. This would help him only. Our aim is it, to create structures to protect the names on the list, but especially to protect our nation - whatever the outcome in November will be."

"And if he will win in November? We all know that he dreams about, to become the Fuehrer of the United States."

"Maybe we have learned from history?"

"To what extent?"

"Maybe he will be not that lucky, as the original Fuehrer?"

"You have your own list?"

"Maybe?"

"This would mean war!"

"And what would be the alternative? That the red triangles would not only appear in ads, that they would "grace" the uniforms again, of those in the concentration camps? The Jews had yellow stars, what they would create for the unwilling Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans who would

not accept the White leadership, would not accept to become slaves again?"

"Who are you?"

"Maybe, maybe we're the good ones."

Dazed And Confused

I was much more than dazed and confused, as I left the building. I had the feeling as the world around me would collapse, that everything would collapse into an infinitesimal point in my brain, to explode then in an ultimate explosion, to create a new universe - I was dazed and confused!

But seriously, what a crazy - insane - time was this? Only looking at the big city, has managed it to get over with the virus in the best possible and responsible way, now struggling with crime rates, much higher as those in the last summers, the threats of our wonderful president - what else should happen? The same as in Portland or Seattle? Chicago, a one-year-old boy? It seemed, as this nation would lose all its regulations, as everything would fall apart - a cheering president in the Oval Office!

Since his first moment in the White House he set the example, violate every rule, and nobody will hold you responsible. You only need some good friends at the right place, a horde of henchmen, opportunists, a morally decayed "entourage".

I was not interested in, to get involved in a war, as if there was an alternative. As if the war not had started a long time ago, as if the beginning of the war had no fixed date - July 4th, 1776! Since this day this nation fought a war, a war that claimed every year many victims - sometimes easily visible, sometimes not. Sometimes not to ignore, like during the Civil War, sometimes you could look aside and deny it, like in the case of racism. Over six hundred thousand Americans died during the Civil War, how many died because of an inadequate health care system every year, because of homelessness every year, because of an unhealthy life-style because of poorness every year, how many will die, because of a president who was not interested in, to protect them from the virus? Somewhat over a hundred thousand Americans died during WWI, slightly over four hundred thousand Americans during WWII - soon one hundred and fifty thousand because of the virus. This nation fought an endless number of wars with oneself.

I had to ponder about, how I should position myself. "They" had not forced me to anything, in the end, "they" only had asked me to keep my ears open, that I should use my connections in the city, to get information. But it was obvious, that this could drag you very fast and easy in something bigger, something that I would not be able to overview, a situation I liked not very much. But again, what should "drag in" mean? Our governor struggled for his life, I was an American citizen, I was America, whatever the future of the nation would be, I would be a part of it, I would have my part of responsibility for this future. It was like a hurricane, close to landfall, ignoring the hurricane would be the worst alternative! Hoping for the eye of the storm, a stupid idea. Preparing for the wind and rain, sounded much better - or? Maybe helping those who needed help, maybe warning those who had missed the information so far, maybe supporting the rescue forces, much you could do. But never, never ignoring could be an alternative.

I arrived at home, Caroline was there. I had not thought, that I would need that much time to return, we had a "date".

"That much traffic in the empty streets?"

"No, but I had a longer conversation."

"You wanna talk about it?"

"The problem is, that I have some problems therewith, to assimilate the information I got."

"Because of the governor - you had a conversation with Mr. Kavanaugh?"

"Kavanaugh is dead, they killed him. There's a hurricane on its way, a very devastating hurricane."

We will be hit by this hurricane in any case, whatever we will do. We can try to take measures, but the hurricane will come in any case."

"Can you use some less cryptic words?"

"Sorry, give me a moment, I had the wrong music in my car, give me an hour."

"Okay."

Less Cryptic Words

I had a longer conversation with Caroline and told her what had happened. I would inform also Jack later. A man behind a bar.....I knew, that both would be tight-lipped. The TV was running in the background.

"I was not sure what I should expect for the time after November, but this outlook.....in any case?"

"One scenario they see, all could be different. The Dems would achieve a landslide win in November, would win the White House, the Congress, more governors and so on, Biden would win with a large margin. This could shock the conservatives, this forces, that much, that they would maybe backtrack - or would react even more extreme. The problem is, that you cannot argue in a rational way, this people are beyond rationality, they are capable to everything."

"But the "good guys" have their own list, sounds not that comforting?"

"Yes, but this nation is very near the abyss, no catcher in sight, Joe will be definitively not the catcher."

"Joe plays a dangerous game, he thinks that he has to do nothing, everything will become good at the end - this is very risky. Does he know about all this?"

"I've no idea."

"What will you do?"

"Listening to the streets, doing some investigation."

"Will you meet them again?"

"They will contact me again."

"So, most likely we will have a war after November, a new civil war?"

"I would not call this a new civil war, maybe it's a fight for the soul of this nation, the future of this nation?"

"But be honest, the soul of this nation? At what time this nation was not underlaid with racism, at what time the American inhabitants were all equal? At what time we had not a White upper class, greedy families, not willing to share - one of these families is called the Kennedys."

"Why you mention the Kennedys?"

"How many of this "guys" you talked with were African Americans or Latinos - obviously no woman in the room, or?"

"No, no woman. I think they were all white, maybe a Latino, but definitively no African American, no Asian American as well."

"What a surprise!"

"Would it had been better, would they had been an armed black militia, like we have seen them in some streets?"

"But a white armed militia? I only think it would be good, to know exactly with whom you talked."

"You've right. At the moment I'm not really involved in all this, but maybe it would be good, to get better background information. Do you think we will see a bloody New Year's Day this year?"

"Portland is no good outlook, but I think that people like Barr, Navarro, McConnell, Pompeo not to forget the president's family - they all will be crucial. I think that this melange is the problem. This president is like a leaf in the wind, he has no backbone, he's the puppet, but he's not the puppet master. The problem is, who's the puppet master, only one puppet master.....all is very obscure."

"I should get more information who talked with me."

"I think this would be a good first step. Oh, have you heard this news?"

"Not really, was about the idiot in office!"

"Yes, he thinks that the election should be postponed, because under such circumstances, too much voting by mail, it would be the most unfair voting of all time!"

"He cannot postpone the election, but I've the feeling this is the next step - it all leads to November and the time after November. I should do some serious investigation!"

Who Are You

I had another conversation with Jack, he told me more or less the same as Caroline.

"We have not to talk about, how I see our administration, and I have pondered about it more than once, what would I do if one of the nightmare scenarios in November would come true. What, if the president wins in November, what, if he loses in November but will be not willing to accept the defeat? And I have to confess, that at least some of my thoughts were not very "nice". But two groups with blacklists, that sounds not very good."

My phone informed me, that I had received a message, my "new friends" asked me about a meeting. "Speaking of the devil.....they ask me about a meeting the next days."

"And?"

"Of course I will agree, I will suggest them tomorrow evening. Then I will have some time to prepare."

"You need backing?"

"No, I do not think that I'm on their list. It will be important to figure out, whether they are regular police officers or a kind of militia. At least it seems, as that they operate nationwide. News from our governor?"

"Not better, what means under these circumstances, not good. At least he's still alive. If there's in fact political purge planned, and I have no problem therewith to imagine this, looking at the persons, who go in and out at the White House today, not to talk about them who live there today, then we have to do something, we have to react. But one should be sure about, with whom one goes to war, sometimes there was a rude awaking after the war was won and the real war began only then. The dogs and the fleas, really no backing?"

"No, but I will inform you, when I know the time and the place of the meeting. After the meeting I will contact you again - if you get no message anymore.....you know....."

I had two more cocktail, much for me, ended with a "Mexican Teatime" - mezcal with raspberries, chili and others. I wrote "them" that I would prefer a meeting tomorrow in the evening, now I would have to wait. I was not that much attracted to mezcal, but from time I liked this extremer taste. And together with the light sweetness and the balanced hotness, a perfect cocktail to end an evening.

It was not such a hot night than the nights before, it had rained somewhat during noon. A tropical storm on its way up the coast, strong winds and a lot of rain, no good forecast for the next days. Monday night in the big city, a week with nearly ten thousand new deaths in the nation - in one week! Some nations had less since the beginning of the pandemic, but as long as the president, the task force, the vice president, his son-in-law and all the others did a good job? More and more I doubted on Dr. Birx, she was too close the president, much different Dr. Fauci. Would they be willing, interested in, to throw this nation into turmoil? All pointed to this - Portland, Chicago, the pandemic response, his statements in regard to November, his henchmen in justice, postal service, police authorities.....all pointed towards a dictatorship or the attempt to destroy the nation. What would be an adequate response?

My answer I got faster as thought. Tomorrow, 8 pm, the address of an apartment block, not that very much away from my office. I sent them a confirmation - what if they were a kind of radical group, radical vigilantes, radical left-wingers? Was the radical left better than the radical right? On both sides democracy had no place anymore, both sides celebrated the Fuehrer-cult, for plurality was no space anymore.

But our governor struggled still with death, Kavanaugh was dead – Dr. King Jr. or the Black

Panthers? They murdered Dr. King Jr., the illegal actions of the FBI versus the Black Panthers right up to planned killings? Maybe this was the wrong question? Dr. King Jr. or the Black Panthers, maybe Dr. King Jr. and the Black Panthers?

Who Are You

I reached the apartment door at 7:58 pm, and I was somewhat surprised about, who awaited me in the open door.

"Mr. Maurer, I'm....."

".....I know who you are, and I have to say, the whomever you represent, they and you have achieved their goal, I'm very much surprised."

I entered the apartment, looked around, and.....we were alone, at least at the moment. She could read my thoughts!

"We are alone, and no one will join us. I guess you will have many questions, I'm here to answer them, at least as far as possible."

She offered me a seat and something to drink - I decided for a coffee. The moment that she needed, to bring the two coffees from the kitchen, gave me a moment to think about the situation and in which way I could react. I had not anticipated that a congresswoman would be my dialog partner, not after this first conversation. A House Democrat from the big city, not from my district, my district surrounded her district in some ways, and my representative was a man, but also African American - she came back with the two coffees.

"Shall I say something, or would you like it more, to start with some questions?"

"One question I would have, is it nowadays not too much of a cliché, that an African American woman waits for me? Was my representative not enough, an African American man - or is he not part of whatever you represent? Hey, it's Saturday evening, didn't Joe said, that he would announce his "pick" for vice president this week? Everybody expects an African American woman - who would be your favorite?"

"I can understand your reaction, I like your cynicism, but maybe he will "pick" Gretchen?"

"Yeah, Warren is still in the pool, they say - I would bet my money on Susan Rice."

"Oh, an African American woman?"

"Well, in November you can choose from two old White men, one with an old White male vice president - would be at least some diversity. Your district, my district? In your district nearly every second citizen is a "black" American, in my district even more. I had never a problem with this, quite on the contrary. The "black" Americans tolerate us White minority, I like it to live in my district."

"Then I hope that you have no problems with me?"

"Not as such, but maybe with the people you're representing?"

"I do not represent anybody. I'm part of a group who thinks, that we have to be prepared for the upcoming."

"With death lists?"

"We not intend to be the first, who pull the trigger."

"The trigger has been pulled already, or is our governor not in ICU and struggles for life?"

"That's true, but this is not what I'm talking about, I'm talking about Third of November and the months thereafter. I do not think that we will see such action again, not till this date."

"So, if Biden would win and the president would step back peacefully?"

"Then everything would be okay."

"And if not?"

"Then we have to be prepared for the worst."

"Even if this would mean a new civil war?"

"You have German ancestors?"

"Yes."

"The Warsaw ghetto uprising? The uprising in the extermination camp of Sobibór? Was this "legal" acting? Was this meaningful acting? What do you think?"

"I think so."

"The Stono Rebellion - Nat Turner, a fighter for freedom or a bloody murderer?"

"A slaveholder society is one of the most despicable forms of human existence, surpassable only by a repulsiveness like a society of cannibals - every resistance is legendized!"

"I not wanna become a slave again, rather I wanna be dead! You're a White man, maybe you cannot understand this?"

"It's bad enough to see the red triangle in ads, it should not mark people again. But we live not in a concentration camp or a ghetto today - okay, I'm one of this fucking White men. Yeah, no slaves today anymore, only black vermin and Latino lowlives. Yes, we have improved so much. But,.....you will only react?"

"We will only react, but to be able to react, you have to be prepared."

"You're around the same age as I."

"Yes."

"When you see the old black-and-white pictures in TV - the man with the dream, we both were not born at that day. An armed black militia patrols in streets - today. You will only react?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me more about the people about whom we're talking at the moment?"

"Some, but not all, not now."

"Do you have time?"

"As much as you need."

A Black Woman Taught A White Man

"You know, you see it from a different perspective - inevitably! You're white, you're a man. I'm black - and I know why I say "black" - and I'm a woman. You: Good combination. I: Bad combination, as if it would be not difficult enough, to be either "black" or a woman."

"Joe will pick a "black woman", do you think that this can change things?"

"First of all, they have to win - and then I would say, one more name on the list."

"Okay, what people do you represent, with whom I'm talking?"

"We're a group of people, no organization or so. The concerns about the nation and our democracy brings us together, the conviction, that we have to be prepared for the worst. Will it be, that the worst will not happen - and we all hope this of course - we maybe have reacted exaggerated, but if the worst will happen, we will be prepared."

"Tell me something. Do you think that the "other side" not knows about your activities?"

"They know that about us, what they have to know - we feed them with information. They know for instance, that we know their list. They know, that they will by no means, can act without resistance after November the third. "

"Shall this impress them?"

"It's a different situation for you, thinking that a moment of surprise will play out for you, or that you know, that you will face a strong resistance, that you will have large losses in any case."

"But they can prepare themselves now?"

"Not really, they have to stay undercover, they cannot act openly. This limits their possibilities. Of course, they have undermined the FBI, the juridical system, Homeland Security and more, but they know that also we're not passive. They run the risk, that they start their operation at November the third, but they will face a strong resistance, especially even when they have undermined the FBI for instance, not means that the whole FBI will follow them. There is a great danger for them, that their "revolution" will become a nonstarter - we're talking about treason, not about a parking ticket."

"Do you think that this will shock the president, Jared or Ivanka?"

"No, they are insane people. Even Barr or Giuliani or Kavanaugh not, they are so much enmeshed

now, they have no other chance anymore than to hope, that their canine devotion will pay! But it's nice to have an obedient general, but the general needs an army. We form our army at the moment, among others, we have millions of fighters on the streets. They have to know, that their actions will bear a very high risk for them - in many states they could face the death penalty."

"So you hope, that you can run a successful scare campaign?"

"Well, when we can show for instance, that even the president is not invulnerable to everything, who then? We make this very clear, the president and his family will not survive this battle."

"There was this incident in front of the White House during the briefing - was this a warning that nearly cost a man's life?"

"Maybe more the note they found later in the White House - I was with you, all the time! Paranoia is a bad enemy."

"Who's the head of this group?"

"I."

"You know all the members of the group?"

"We have no membership list, if you mean something like this."

"Why you're doing this?"

"As I said, never I will become a slave again! It's enough to have a president who thinks that he can kiss you, if he wishes so, that he can grab your "pussy", because you're a woman, subject to men. But it's harder to know, that he only sees human scum, black vermin, when he looks at you, because of the color of your skin. He would be the perfect slaveholder, he would like it, to rape you and your daughter, because it's the right of a White man to "demand" this. It's hard enough to live in this United States, would we allow this president to install his fascist dictatorship, it would be the end of all hopes, to find a place in this nation, as a woman and as a "black" person. What we see with the postal service tells you all you need to know, not the rich White guys need them badly, but the poor people, the minorities, in what a fucking nation we live, aren't we all Americans? No, we are the former slaves and for the White upper class we will be the former slaves forever - like for the White woman in Central Park. In a respective way they see the Latinos and the Asian Americans, not to talk about the Native Americans. We would need one America, but the conservatives did from the beginning on everything, to keep the separations, and now everything escalates. There's a huge river in front of us, and not even a fucking bridge spans over the rapid river, but we have to cross the river, otherwise there will be no tomorrow."

"And if Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will win, if the president will leave the White House without resistance, what then?"

"You have to hope for a miracle all the time, but we would have won nothing, we only would have lost nothing. The situation for a woman like me would not be worse, but also not better. The GOP in Senate would be still the GOP in Senate, conservative governors would be still conservative governors, Kavanaugh would be still judge. Roe vs. Wade would be still a topic, like voter suppression and gerrymandering, unequal payment, not only for "black" women, or health care or education. This nation is sick to it's core, no easy and fast cure is thinkable. Let's be honest, look at me, did you ever thought in your White male life: How is it, to fuck a black woman? I spare you the answer, but only because this is irrelevant for the moment. At the moment we have other problems, but one day I will ask you this question again, and then I demand an answer - and we both know the answer! We need more women in leadership positions, we need the complete diversity of our nation, represented in politics and economy."

"And the democratic representatives in the House, is this not a good sign?"

"That why we have to hope today, that the oldest White man ever gets president? Can you remember the field at the beginning?"

"And a "black" female vice president?"

"Because the old White man has to satisfy the "black community"? He needs "their" votes. And don't tell me now, that we had a "black" president - see you on the golf course!"

"We have to avert the disaster, to face afterwards an overwhelming pile of problems - says the old White man."

"Yes, White guys like you have soooo many problems, how wonderful to be a "black" woman."
"And now?"
"Prepare yourself, sometimes miracles are happening, but unfortunately not that often."
"Are you religious?"
"Yes."
"I'm not."

As Time Go By

Days had gone by, we had decided, not to get soon in contact again. At the moment there was no current demand for action, I would keep my eyes and ears open, I would be prepared - it was obvious, I was not more than one of this small cogs in the machine. Should this calm me down? A world, that seemed to become more and more crazy with every day.

The last day of the convention of the Democrats today, it was still by far not agreed, that Joe Biden would win the election. He had to win, at least if you still hoped, that our nation would stay at least to a certain degree a democracy - a real democracy this nation never had been. We would have not to talk about the "Indians" or the "Negros", we could speak about gerrymandering, voter suppression or the attacks on the postal service - it not rained as I walked through the streets at this Thursday's morning, if, it not had surprised me, to see the younger Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman at the next corner, that was how I felt.

At the moment I would have believed nearly all stories. Pedophile celebrities a reality, why not cannibalistic celebrities? Why not a Jewish world conspiracy, why not aliens or time travelers, because all these stories contradicted each other? Who would have been bold enough, to write such a story, the reality we lived in today? And by far, the last chapter of the story was even not written yet!

A lot of people around the world thought, that Americans were uneducated, ignorant jerks, knowing about the world nothing, but thinking they would be the best - hey, do not judge a nation by its president! But it not helped, you had to get honest, had to think about why this nation was in this situation, something had to be wrong. Of course was our political system much, but not democratic. Of course our Lady Justice was not blind, especially not color-blind. Looking African meant for the average White American still, to see a slave, with some rights maybe, but still on the level of a slave. Latinos and Asians good workers, hard work bad pay check, a White World was so simple.

I was fifty-five, twenty years maybe, maybe a few more, why now such all this trouble? Why everything turned such confusing, it nearly felt like being a person with dark skin, when every traffic control could end deadly. Clinton had spoken, I meant this one with the cigar - did he really had spoken about moral values and such shit? And his wife, crybaby as always, I had more votes - really? You had run a fucking arrogant campaign, but hey, of course you did a fantastic job - did you ever disagreed with the fucking electoral college? Why asking a farmer in the Great Plains about his concerns? Why asking a working single mother in the Rust Belt about her concerns? Well, you were the eloquent woman from wonderful New York, why asking hillbillies?

Would it make a difference, losing or winning the election - regarding that they would execute their blacklist anyhow? Yes, for instance regarding international reactions, I would have to vote for Joe! From conviction? A very old White man was the only alternative to this president? Yes, this nation was in a very deep crisis!

A nation on its way into the abyss, the only alternative they saw was, that Joe Biden and the Democrats would achieve a landslide win, and this was very realistic! It was more the fear, that Biden would screw it up like Hilary, but a landslide win? A nation in war, a White upper class that fought a war against everybody, who could endanger their privileged position. Well Bill and Hilary, you belonged to the good ones, let's have a cigar in the Oval Office!

A New Case

Well, I was still private dick, I still had to make a living, so I sat in my office and waited. I prepared myself, that all this would end in a disaster, but maybe not, and if, there was still some time till then. I could not decide between a Japanese green tea and a Darjeeling, and would I find a decision, a Sencha or a Gyokoro, a first or a second flush, and should I find a decision.....sometimes life could be hard!

The insanity of the president reached breathtaking heights, today the convention of the conservatives would begin, yesterday the president announced a historic shit, why longer listening to this asshole? Not his words were important now, but his action, and his actions lead all to one point, the dream of a fascist dictatorship, to become the Fuehrer of the United States.

For the Conservatives and their voters it was no longer important, that every day more than a thousand Americans died because of the pandemic - collateral damage - the president needed success, needed strong stock markets. How apathetic this people were, as long as not affected by it - the phone rang.

"Yes, I'm on the phone.....yes, I'm in my office.....half an hour would be fine for me.....see you later."

Well, I decided for a first flush Darjeeling of upper quality. It was fine to smell the tea in the glass pot while brewing, to see the tea leaves opening. I sieved the tea in the final pot and enjoyed the fresh taste of the fine tea, I closed my eyes. "This is the apocalypse" Shirley sang - not yet Shirley, still some horses were alive. But yes, I also felt the cold coming again, closing in, and all around me falling.....

He took a place at the other side of the desk, I offered him something to drink, he decided for a coffee. "He" was a man in the mid thirties, somewhat taller than I, a bit overweight, but all in all he seemed to be in a good shape, better than I in any case. Oh, before I forget it, he was a black man, I should not forget to mention this!

"As I said, it's a bagatelle in a way, to go to a private investigator, but I need my car. I'm happy that I still have a job, but with public transport I need nearly two hours, one-way, and I have not the money for a new car or to rent a car. Sure I have an insurance, but the insurance company doubts about that the car has been stolen, they say I have to prove it. They do not believe me that the car was that valuable."

"They think you try to cheat them?"

"Yes."

"About how much money we're talking?"

"Nearly forty thousand - I know that this sounds not reliable, that a guy like me owns such an expensive car. But just before the virus came I got a good job, I had saved money for years, and then the opportunity to buy my dream car for a cheap offer - it was really a snap. I bought it, not thought that all will develop in such a way! I have invested all my money, as said, I have a good job now, I thought I would have a good future."

"What shall I do for you exactly? Finding the car? I mean, you will have a sales contract, why the insurance company not believes you? What shall I do for you?"

"To find the car would be cool, but I fear that this will be very difficult. I cannot imagine that such a special car is still in the city, at least not with this paint or so. And no, I have no sales contract or so, it was a private deal."

"And it was a bargain?"

"Yes."

"But you not tell me, that it was a hot car or so?"

"No, in no case. The man from whom I bought it is a businessman, he owns several such cars. He needed space and I could convince him that I dreamt my whole life about such a car. He....."

".....wait a minute. A collector, no valuation of the car or something like this is available? No pictures - come on?"

"There are pictures, even of details and the former owner gave me a letter for the insurance, confirmed the value of the car - but they still have doubts!"

"And he's a serious businessman?"

"He owns some.....clubs. But hey, it's all legal and enough well-known VIPs from the city like it to be his guest."

"Okay, to get the car back will be difficult, maybe I could convince the insurance of the value of the car - wouldn't be a lawyer not better for you?"

"Too expensive, you could try both, both would be okay for me. A friend told me, that one can debate about your fee with you. As said, I have invested all my money in the car, I'm a bit short of cash at the moment."

"Okay, it's a fucking time for all of us. You can give me some information about the car, about the circumstances of the theft?"

"Here I have all what I have about the car."

He handed me an envelope.

"Inside are also notices about the circumstances of the theft."

"You're very good prepared."

"It was my baby, since I can think, I dreamt about to own such a car. It was cool to drive with, would be cool to get it back. But at least I would like to have the money from the insurance company back, therefore I paid the insurance company."

I opened the envelope and looked at the pictures. Wow, really a fucking cool car, and even that I was no expert for cars, I had already searched for a cars but was no expert, but forty grands for such a car seemed not too much for me.

"Okay, give me one or two days that I can do some basic research. Then I can gage my possibilities to help you. Would this be okay for you?"

"Sure, you're fee?"

"Cool car, we will see what I can do for you. Maybe I can lend the car when it's back, to impress my lady?"

"You've a "lady"?"

"Oh yeah, and she would fit fantastically into this car."

"Then we have a deal!"

Streets At Night

The convention of the Republicans was over, what a pathetic shit it had been! Even for today's GOP this was a disgrace, and yet, it could be enough to motivate enough voters for a re-election - what did this tell you about the state of this nation? If Biden becomes president, this nation will drown in chaos and anarchy - how presumptions was this in the light of soon two hundred thousand dead Americans, openly conducted racism every day, how cute Kellyanne had been? The more chaos, the more dead, the better for the president - as a good Nazi, you had to "sacrifice" others to achieve great things, and hey, Niggers and Latinos, only some human scum?

Oh, before I would forget it, another black man with bullets in his back, seven this time! But hey, he survived, paralyzed, but that not meant that you had not to handcuff him to the bed at hospital. Oh, sorry the "independent" police union had told us now that he had an invisible knife, that there was a warrant, that he was a big danger - seven bullets in the back! Okay, sexual assault would be a serious crime - seven bullets in the back! More serious than shooting two protesters dead, harming

one other protester seriously? Let the kid walk away, maybe it was only self-defense - the sheriff and the deputy? What a coincidence, guess the color of the kid!

The NBA? Why not refusing to play till the day, when a Nigger no longer a Nigger was, a former slave? Why not refusing to play till the day, when a Nigger simply an American was? Latinos, "Indians" and this "Asians" with their illnesses? The president reminded me of Travis, both in the streets of New York, dreaming about the rain, that would wash all this garbage away. Travis became a bloody murderer and therewith a hero, the president dreamt about to be a hero, murder was no problem for him, his daily business! And the NBA? At least they reacted, and this gave you hope that they would react also, when crunch time would begin. The protests in Washington, being tired but standing up, standing up because of being tired, this gave you hope.

What was good was, that from now on everybody had to decide, which way you wanna go, you had to show your colors now! I turned the corner, suddenly many were around me, many were armed, maybe all were armed. Police lights, smoke, a penetrating smell in the air, I heard shots. I heard screams, a totally chaotic scenery, where I was? A dead body on the street, another bleeding man, smoke and dazzling light, it was like Apocalypse Now Under the Bridge - surreal and a non-existent place, Black Hawk Down? Where I was, a city in the Middle East most probably, civil war? But I understood the shouting, the police cars so familiar, a flashforward? Was this the upcoming in not much more than two months, or was this already the reality in an American city? I entered a 7-Eleven.

The light was bright, it pained my eyes, looked around and found the coffee. The largest cup with the strongest coffee, nothing from all this other stuff, fetched my sweets and looked in the face of the man behind the counter. From India like the one from the Simpsons, in no case a real American, a Caucasian one, arrived with the Mayflower, maybe even a Paki? He smiled at me, I smiled back, gave him some dollar notes and turned around, not interested in the change. Outside at the stairs a homeless, do you have some change, unfortunately not, I gave him a note, and he thanked me, he was a white guy. No people on the streets anymore, no police cars, deadly silence now, now I feared that this could be a flashforward. I discovered a horse, vulnerable and shy, in the middle of the street, no strong mustang, eyes crossed like stars, I smiled as my fingers rank through the matted fur: Be becalmed, never I will betray you, I started to cry.

The light hurt my eyes as I opened my eyes, it was this strange moment every morning and day after the relieving sleep, half asleep, the doubting question what's real and not, and the disappointing insight, that that what beautiful had happened recently, talking with a horse for instance, not the reality was. But the dead on the street, seven bullets in the back, all this shit was real!

I stood up, had a long and hot shower, drank my hot tea and tried to accept, what's real and not a beautiful dream. But I had a new case, so I took my backpack, my gun inside and entered the street. The sun shined, some clouds, cars in the street, not so much, some people around me. One could become the impression, that this would be a very normal day, but nothing was normal anymore. I heard the snort of a horse - no, I would not betray you!

Searching The Car

So, I had two options now, finding the car - very unlikely - or proving the insurance company that this car in fact was worth 40k. I would make some phone calls later, to ask around about whether someone had seen this special car in a garage, or had heard about one. But if the thief was no idiot, the car was no longer in the city, not even at the isle or across the river or at the far north. This car was hot, very hot, nearly unique in some ways, something you would be interested in, to get rid of it as fast as possible. I asked myself if I should see this as a theft to order. But this would make it not

more easy to find the car.

The other opportunity was, to talk with the insurance company. I would have a coffee later, would run over the documents that I got from my client, would see what could be a good way. I passed a newsstand, I had not been interested in the news while at home, the common shit from the president, what should one expect? - Wow, now also in our state, a black man, suffocated, seven police officers involved - not that what I needed to improve my mood, why we could not stop this shit!

Not in the city, in the state, the city at the large lake, you only had to swim long enough and you would have left this shit behind you! On what shore of the big lake you wanna live, what would the natural answer be? But I lived not at the lake, the small ocean was not far away, Europe was not far away, back to the country of my ancestors - Germany? My parents immigrated, should I do the same, back again? We had over a thousand deaths related to corona every day more - more! - than Germany, regarded that we had more inhabitants, but not that Germany was much denser populated. We had stupid discussions about masks, they had been very, very successful with their measures, they were not that divided, they were not on their way towards a civil war. Why I still stayed in this country?

My parents had immigrated after the Nazi dictatorship - okay, they had been children during the Third Reich. They hoped for this better life, was I a disappointment? But leaving now, in this dark moment, and why I, I was one of the White guys, I would have not to fear about my life, I only had to betray all my principles, then I could have a very good life even in Nazi USA. But with the wrong color, the wrong accent, maybe even with being a woman, then it could become "somewhat" difficult.

It had been five months ago, I read in the newspaper, only now a video popped up. How often this happend in this country, with no one who made a video, without witnesses? What does this tell about this nation? No, no systemic racism, only bad apples. How many bad apples one would see in the light, how much would stay in the dark? A good question - who would risk a guess?

Constantly videos from dying black men, African Americans died more than twice as much of corona than Whites, I lived in a neighborhood with a black majority, how long they would still tolerate me as a White in their neighborhood? Well, I had to think about this NBA player - we accept our white neighbors, why they cannot accept us as black neighbors? Yeah, because you were loud, had no culture, always garbage on the lawn, if one comes, soon a whole flock would follow.....why my black neighbors still accepted me?

Conversations

We sat in Jack's bar, Caroline, Jack and I, and talked. More precisely, they had some questions.

"Do you really believe them, Peter?"

"Well Jack, it can't be denied, that this president is not much interested in democracy and in leaving the White House. Also it can't be denied, that he tries his best to stir up hatred, to create a climate of fear."

"That's true, but it's a long way to a new civil war and a dictatorship - they are willing to use their guns as well."

"I disagree with you in this point, Jack. It can be a very short way to a civil war and to a dictatorship. And without any doubts, this administration tries its best to undermine democracy, and the president dreams about to become our lifelong leader - he would like to be Kim or one of his other buddies."

"I see this also Caroline, but we still have a democracy and Biden is in the lead. Not only nationwide, in the uninteresting popular vote, but also in swing states he performs well, at least in enough of them."

"But these are polls Jack, and still nearly two months till election day, and then the uncertainty what will happen after election day. No Jack, I agree with them that we have to be prepared for the worst."

Should it not happen, okay. But if it will happen, then it's too late to ponder about, what to do now."

"I have my problems to see two parties with black lists, I feel very uncomfortable therewith, Peter."

"You know when I felt very uncomfortable, Jack?"

"No, Caroline?"

"In my youth, seeing heavily armed Black Panther members, but what scared me more, were KKK members in front of burning crosses. We made them to slaves, we denied them fundamental rights, they only reacted. I feared the Black Panther movement as a young girl, but the men in their White cloaks and White hoods scared me to death. The same feeling I have again today, seeing black and White militias on the streets. It were black men who died on the streets, no White guys. It were always the White guys who had to kill the black men in self-defense, there's something systemic in it, or? Not the riots and looting were there and then black men died on the streets - it's a racist president together with far right-wing groups who sown for the last three and a half years, now they start to reap the harvest. It can become a very bad fall this year."

"I think that we all agree therewith, that this president is a great danger and that Joe Biden has to win the election. But it's like the article from "The Atlantic". The president and his allies name this article a hoax, but we all feel that it's most probably the truth, simply because it fits very well to the president's record - John McCain, what he said about him and that he lies about his words, even when they are recorded and everybody can listen to them! Who doubts about that the article tells the truth? Nobody, and that's what it's all about!

Before this presidency, Hollywood would have laughed about such a script, but now we all feel that this could become reality, not only a stupid Hollywood movie. Only that we have to consider today, that this could become reality is horrifying, we cannot wait and see whether it will become reality. We will get no second chance, when the killing begins it's too late. When the right-wing provocateurs no longer shoot with paint balls, then it will be too late, and the man in office will be very happy then. Much to much is at risk!"

"Your new case?"

"Let's see what my phone calls will yield."

As Bad Things Got Worse

One week was gone, maybe one could say: A week, what should have happened during a week, it was only a week? But a songstress I loved very much sang always words like: *But it's funny how some things just change in a day, or even in an hour* - she was a very smart songstress! We lived in bad times, but that not meant that it could not become worse, not with this president, not with all the failures and neglections of the past decades, now we had to pay the bill, and the bill increased with every day, every hour.

The West Coast burned, even here at the East Coast you could smell the smoke! One hurricane after the other hit the South, some even reached us! The president accused Joe Biden now to be a pedophile, this was so disgusting, you had to get sick about it, you had to puke because of it! But the worst was the behavior of the GOP, it was only to hope, that history would mark them all, each one by name!

Bob Woodward, The Bob Woodward!, had released a book, thanks Bob for all the months in which you kept your mouth shut, as well as all the others! Dr. Fauci, sorry, I respect you, but why not disagreeing the president from the beginning on - where was Dr. Birx now? Where was the strong opposition of the military - how often he had to spit on the graves of soldiers till it would be too much for you? There was a reason, why dictators had a chance to establish their dictatorships. Not only one, to be fair, but this was one of it, a very important one by the way!

And yet, large parts of the USA appeared like a flock of sheep, ignoring the wolf pack up on the hill, many even like lemmings, simply willing to follow the Fuehrer into the abyss. But what was shocking was, not even this proverbial voice in the wilderness was not to hear, but fuck, he wouldn't be there, The Catcher in the Rye! No fucking novel, not even an all-American novel, a worldwide

novel, an everlasting novel, a very banal thing, the fucking reality! And even in such a fundamental crisis, it was all about money, about million-dollar books, about success, about vanities - maybe the people should read more novels!

One week was gone, some others would follow, and then? The final catastrophe, a new beginning, a new beginning with the old Democratic Party, with Joe Biden? My phone rang, I listened to the voice.

"Thanks for the information."

Also this contact yielded no information, the car had simply disappeared, as feared. Seemed as there would be not much that I could do for my client, maybe I could get a deal with the insurance company? It was always a matter of money, you had it or not. *Money is the reason we exist / Everybody knows it, it's a fact / Kiss, kiss* - sometimes you should simply listen to a smart songstress. So, put on your party dress, partying as our solution!

A Phone Call

"Your phone call comes not totally unexpected, but please, you not wanna tell me, that you will start with your actions right now?"

"No, but this new dynamic can change everything. Her death is not unexpected, but the timing is very problematic."

"Well, that the GOP and the president cheers, not to talk about the fucking evangelists, okay, but I would expect some more compassion from a woman like you."

"Why, because I'm a woman, because I'm black, because I'm no man who would appear "tough" in this situation? Let this part be a matter of the media, I have to make some severe decisions."

"Sorry, but I thought....."

".....I cried as I heard it, maybe this helps you. But I hear also the right-wingers cheering."

"Yes, but there's a problem."

"And this would be?"

"Look at the funny Dems, they start to talk about moral, about 2016? This GOP, this president, the radical right, the evangelists especially, they give a shit on moral! The Dems would have only one chance, millions on the streets and crashing poll numbers for the president. But I see neither of it, I cannot believe in the one or the other, the rights have all opportunities to do it, and they will do it."

"I agree with your words, that's why I call you."

"To do what?"

"We will await the developments of the next one or two days, maybe till the president has named his pick. We will have a meeting at the end of the week, I want to invite you."

"Okay?"

"It will be a secret meeting, and I mean secret. You cannot talk about it with your girlfriend, neither your friend from the bar."

"Well, you know a lot of me, why not name them by their names?"

"Names are names, you better forget names from now on."

"You plan actions?"

"As I said, we have to see what will happen the next days, especially in Washington. Maybe we get some impressions till then, which side of the aisle will benefit more from this situation. We have to discuss this new situation, we have to be prepared, whatever will happen."

"Okay, and you think that I can contribute something to this discussion?"

"Yes."

"And I'm not allowed to talk with someone about this meeting?"

"Yes."

"Okay, but I cannot exclude that I will be critical, that I maybe will be not able and willing to follow your discussion and decisions."

"We need free and independent minds, one of the most dangerous developments is it, to create a

bubble and you're trapped inside."

"Okay, I will participate and I will be silent about it."

"Thanks for your participation. You will get a message with the time and date and place."

"See you!"

"See you!"

As the phone call had died, I looked around me, sitting in a park. I had pondered about, what would be the best strategy to deal with the insurance company - I had a case! Well, of course I had heard the "breaking news", on every TV channel, in every newspaper. She had lost her last battle, not received her last big aim, was she a failed person now? I looked at her, I looked at me - so many of this "old icons" had died during the last weeks and months. I always asked myself: Why now, in such a situation? Was it to spare them the now following final downfall of the nation, or was it a pity, that they were no longer there, to see that this nation had got a new chance, to do it better this time? Very soon now we all would know the answer!

And then I had to come to a conclusion, at least till this meeting - what would I be willing and able to do? I saw me standing in front of the president, looking in his fucking grinning face, would I pull the trigger? Not now of course, but if he wins the election, if he establishes finally a dictatorship, the GOP was already in line, only the Dems disturbed somewhat, but why not building some camps? This people had no problems therewith to cage little children like animals, they would have no problems with anything. I had to answer me one question: When I would pull the trigger, what all would have to happen till I would pull the trigger, what all, till I would become a murderer. I stood up and felt the tender warm breath touching my neck. It was a good feeling to know, not to be alone.

The Next Fucking Week

Thursday, the president would announce his pick for the Supreme Court on Saturday, so I not expected to get an "invitation" that soon. New "riots", this time in Louisville in wonderful Kentucky, home of the horses. And Kentucky had so much more to offer, only to think at the breathtaking ark, and the idiocy behind it! But hey, do not criticize the proud people of Kentucky, but maybe this was what we already should have done since a long time now, not accepting every shit as expressing your own opinion, to tolerate it. The ark for example? What it wonderfully illustrated was, that Noah never would have been able to build such an ark - but hey, this was religion, please, be politically correct!

And how "correct" were the hypocritical evangelists, a racist talking about Latino vermin and black scum, a Nazi with his assault weapon? Still I was not sure about, what had to happen to make me to a murderer. What I knew was, that it would give a point, where.....

The American nation, a happy nation awaiting the next rise while still in the first wave! It was only a matter of time now, and we would have killed more people within a few months with our inability and lethargy than in WWII had been killed - yes, you had any reason to be a proud American!

The American system at its end, a president who openly said, that he would not accept the outcome of the election should he lose it, that he would not leave the office peacefully - you still not understood his language? And the GOP, as always, what a disgusting bunch they had become! The American democracy - as far as we ever have had a real democracy - had reached a point, where it got no way back anymore. Either this system would find the strength to fundamental reforms, or it would drown in chaos and anarchy, would transform into a dictatorship - sooner or later, maybe very soon.

But all these thoughts were meaningless, as long as it was no problem to answer a single shot with thirty-two rounds. And sorry to say this in this way, but they were not even capable to kill the shooter? Several bullets hit Breonna Taylor and killed her, neighbors could have been killed, a

child, a pregnant woman, was this system totally nuts now? So much talking about victims of gang shoot-outs, a child on its way home, a child sitting in the car besides the mother, was this police better? And hey, why real consequences, why thinking things over, this was the United States, we were always the best!

But all thoughts were meaningless as long as half of the population thought, that this all would be okay. More, a good deal of us proud Americans was willing to follow their Fuehrer blindly and submissively into the abyss of a fascist dictatorship - maybe it had to be? But maybe this was the moment to become a murderer, to murder the murderers, to kill the zombies only interested in to eat your brain. And nice uncle Joe, as a good and established democrat, let you know, that violent demonstrations were no good thing. Hey Joe, I was still a private dick and I definitively thought, that shooting police officers was no good thing, but maybe you could realize, that it was no longer the time for fiddling about with the symptoms - oh, Joe.....!

We were in a deep crisis, but it seemed that not many were concerned. Half of the nation liked it, the "moderate" left had nothing better to do, than to tell everybody, that they had nothing to do with this "radical" lefties like Sanders - what was left? Not enough in any case, no good prospects, time to get desperate? The myth of the Lernaean Hydra? Chop off one of her heads, two new will grow, and the main head is immortal - could you defeat such a monster? Heracles - with the help of Iolaus - defeated the monster! Well, there's still this immortal buried head.....but at least the monster is no longer among us. Now we had only one problem to solve: Where the fuck was Heracles and his companion, we would need them very urgently now! - My phone rang.

"Yes, I will be there."

No Surprise.....And A Big Surprise

"Let me come straightforwardly to the stunner of the day, "The New York Times" will publish an article tomorrow that has the potential to change a lot."

We, a group of women and men, sat on a Saturday evening in a medium-sized conference room of a good known hotel in the big city. Some faces were known to me, some not, officially this was a business meeting, and in a way it was one. But suddenly it seemed, as the subject of the meeting had changed right now.

"You're not talking about Amy Coney Barrett, or? Or has "The Times" dug out something about her?"

"Not about her, we all knew that he will announce her nomination today, something about the president himself."

"Now it becomes interesting. You have read the article already?"

"Yes, I have some connections."

"The topic?"

"They have his tax returns from the last two decades in hand, tomorrow they will publish the details."

I thought that it would be maybe good to say something, even when I felt like a high school student at university.

"He's broke and a bad businessman, I would guess - sorry, if I sound arrogant."

Now I felt like a school boy.....

"Why you think so?"

"Well, every time when he talks in superlatives, he lies. I'm the best businessman in the world means, I'm a fucking bad businessman. And I think that it's nothing new, or? Not only once it had been reported in TV, for instance."

"But I think to have real numbers now, will make the difference - you have details?"

"Yes, but let me stick with his opinion for a moment. He's the first time with us in such a meeting,

but I'm very interested in his estimation. So, you think that it was obvious the whole time, that he's actually bankrupt?"

""The Apprentice" for instance?"

"Sorry, but have we to talk about TV nonsense now? Haven't we more important topics?"

Now I felt like a little pupil.....

"Feel free to speak, we have time, in the end this will be a short meeting."

"Well, he showed that he's not able to concentrate, that he's not rational, his decisions were stupid and a disaster. He was all, but not a self-confident and strong businessman. He was like a C-lister, a real successful businessman acts differently. Would you expect this behavior from one of our real successful businessmen?"

"No, I see this in the same way as you. But the article from "The New York Times" raises one major issue, that he has hundreds of millions of dollars of debts. The big question is: Who to he owes the money? Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia? I think that we have a problem here."

"This would be a question about our national security!"

"This could change everything!"

"Not for his base - sorry. But for them "The New York Times" is fake news, they are the liars, not the president."

"This is a bombshell! This will make it hard for the independents to vote for him!"

"As in 2016?"

Now I felt better!

"Hey, I not know much about you, but your last big case was not yesterday!"

"Maybe we cool down somewhat. Yes, this can be groundbreaking, it can be, but not, it has to be! First, he has debts, okay? That's not the point, the point would be, would he be indebted to foreign countries, not countries like Germany or the UK, but Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. And then we have in fact a problem, and I see this also as a problem - 2016!"

"About what you both are talking, this is 2020? Maybe our private dick has some ideas?"

"Well, soon we will see the first debate. If Joe Biden acts as.....unlucky Hillary, then nothing can harm the president, not even the insight that he's a fucking businessman. But maybe "The New York Times" will bring the president down, as the good old "Post" and Woodward once did? Would be a kind of joke in a way, but better than nothing - but this is a strange situation for us in the room now, or?"

"That's what I meant at the beginning. We have to see what impact the article will have, and much the more, will Joe Biden be able to use these revelations at the first debate. If yes, a lot could change! If not, then we will have a very severe problem - as if we have not already a severe problem. The next days could change everything, but much will depend on, what the Dems in Washington will make out of it, and about Joe Biden's performance at the first debate. And therewith this meeting comes to its end, we have literally to see, what the next days will yield. It absolutely makes no sense for the moment to discuss anything. This could be the turning point, but let's hope not too much. Well, Al Capone? Would be in fact a kind of funny, and a kind of sad, would taxes end this president's career, maybe would bestow him some years behind bars. But we should not hope too much, but maybe....."

Emergency!

"Peter, this is an emergency call, can you be with us in an hour or so?"

"Well, I'm with Caroline. We have watched the debate of course, is it because of what the president has said?"

"Yes, we have to talk about some points now, it was worse than even I thought! Can you come?"

"Well, it will be a bit difficult - I think I cannot tell Caroline why I leave, or?"

"No, sorry for that, Peter."

"I come....."

Fifty-two minutes later the door opened and I stepped in, in the room more or less the same faces as before. Some were new, some I missed.

"Good that you're with us, Peter. Was it difficult?"

"Well, Caroline was not happy, and she's no fool."

"Sorry that I cause trouble, but it's too important. Most of the people you know, some are new to you, two or three will join us later. We're not always the same people..... - take a seat."

I sat down beside a woman I knew from the last time, we greeted each other, but more we not talked. The room was filled with a strange mood, the faces of the people expressed concern, fear.....everybody seemed to be deeply shocked, our host started to talk.....

"Thanks that you all could come so fast. I think that I can talk for at least the most of us when I say, that it was to expect, that this debate will become horrible, but at least I thought not, that it would become so openly devastating. Not only the known attacks on the free election, that he cannot damn the white supremacists, but he openly called his fascist base to prepare, and we all know, to what they will be prepared to. Now you could hope that the GOP, McConnell and the most prominent senators would start to act, late, but maybe not too late to prevent harm, too much harm, from our nation. But we know that this will not happen, not in the way that would be necessary. This means, now the cards are on the table. Now it's obvious, we really have to be prepared for the worst, the total catastrophe - we have to prevent this nation from becoming Nazi dictatorship, we....."

"A new civil war?"

"I still would support an assassination!"

"This would definitively mean a bloody new civil war, man!"

I looked at the white wall, and the picture, hanging there - and what an irony. It was a black and white picture, from the 30s I guessed, and it showed the most prominent parts of the city. The isle of course, and the harbor - and the most probably most famous statue of the whole nation. What an irony, I had tears in my eyes - why Dos Passos came me to mind, because of his day of death, why Scorsese, Auster, Allen.....?

They all questioned the American Dream, showed its corruptness, that it was all about the money and power - well, some maybe more the melancholy of the city, but whatever. This nation had been a constant lie, built on countless dead bodies, and now the Golden Tower collapsed. Maybe it was better so?

I heard scraps of conversation, but I could not concentrate, my tears wetted my shirt, and I had the feeling as my head would burst, I started to shiver.....

"All okay with you.....?"

"No, I not wanna become a murderer....."

Emergency, Yet Again!

"Sorry Peter that I call you so fast again, but soon you will get the information also, the POTUS and the FLOTUS are infected with COVID-19!"

"What! Why you know this?"

"You not think that we have no ears and eyes in the White House?"

"I've forgotten, the note."

"For instance. It will be in the media soon, of course this could change anything again. We will have no meeting now, I need more information first. Also, we have to see in what a way the infection of the president will develop."

"Should I be openly?"

"Always."

"Do you hope, that he could die?"

"You wish a serious answer?"

"Thanks for your honesty."

"We all hope, that we come not at the point, that we have to pull the trigger. And to be honest, if we can avoid it, it's not important why!"

"I agree totally with you!"

Emergency, Only Emergencies now!

"Sorry Peter, it's me yet again! You have seen the last tweet from the president?"

"Yes, have heard about it in the news."

"Be prepared now! In one or two days we will know much more. But if this tweet will stay, if there will be no serious and harsh reaction from the GOP, then we know finally that they would follow him also to the gas chambers."

"And then? Is this the signal then, that also these insurances from the GOP senators who say, that there will be a peaceful transition, are only lip service?"

"Yes, then the ultimate preparation will begin."

"I understand, I understand that we can no longer accept this genocide on the American people, this genocide on especially African Americans, Latinos and Hispanics, on the only real "Americans", those who once owned this land before we have stolen it! I understand and accept, I accept with tears in my eyes and a broken heart."

"We still have a certain chance. But yes, but....."

We Have To Meet!

"Peter, we have to meet tomorrow."

"Well, this phone call comes not unexpected after all what has happened during the last two or three days. First the hospitalization, then back to the White House. The tweet with again downplaying all risks, walking into the White House without wearing a mask, and now refusing the American people the needed support, the Supreme Court is more important - they are walking over dead bodies and smile thereby. More, they enjoy it, they feel like God, it's better as the best sex, it's the devil's reincarnation. I will be there!"

It All Escalated!

"Well, as I asked for this meeting my biggest concern was the president, his illness, his mental state, his confuse actions. But well, this is a day ago, and we live in a very special time. Today suddenly, the president's health status is no longer our biggest concern, but Gretchen Whitmer. Who would risk saying, what our biggest concern in twenty-four hours will be? No one? I would not risk a prediction as well. Let's try to structure the events.

Of course, the presidential health is still a concern, his actions are even more confusing as before, but what's good is, this strongly damages his possibilities to win the election. Maybe his base is happy, but more and more the GOP and their senators get panic, more and more it becomes possible, that the Democrats will be able to obtain a landslide win. This would be devastating for the GOP, this would take away all chances from them, to challenge a win of the Democrats, go to court. All stupid actions from the president and his Nazi friends during the transition would be devastating for the GOP then, could be the end of the GOP as we know it. So far so good, but.....

In any somewhat normal situation we could hope now, that the Dems will win persuasive and that the president and the GOP will have no other chance, as to accept their defeat, but we live

definitively in no normal times. Maybe the GOP would accept a persuasive win of the Democrats, but the president, and much more his "base", this Nazi swamp? The assassination attempt on our governor, we thought this was only a "mistake" - but, was it? Thankfully he recovers, but he still suffers from his injuries. Now Gretchen Whitmer, again a group that cut loose too fast? It's interesting to see, how long they have planned it, about what options they have pondered. But did they really thought, that such an action would be useful at this moment, or the near future? - Yes?"

I thought that I should ask something.

"Well, maybe we should be not too rational, when talking about such groups, especially talking about the president. I have heard that he's now again for a new stimulus plan, we should maybe not try to be too logic. But I would have a question, if you allow me?"

"Yes, of course?"

"You've said, that you have eyes and ears in the White House?"

"Yes."

"And in the FBI?"

I saw that some in the room not liked it, to see me asking in such a way.

"It's okay to ask this. The FBI is a large organization, we have eyes and ears also there. We had some information that the FBI would do some investigation in the area of white supremacy, but we had no detailed information about it, especially not that it's such a severe case. We're talking about murder, not only Gretchen Whitmer, we're talking about the attempt to cause a civil war, we talk about the attempt to destroy the democracy in the USA. But what's important for us is, that we have now the final proof, that this groups will have no scruples, their aim is to cause chaos and destruction. Well, three weeks and three days, then we will have our D-Day, but maybe even before."

I looked around in the room, everybody seemed to be satisfied with this statement. I thought about whether they would know more than I, or were they simply satisfied with this statement? I was not!

"Sorry,....."

All eyes on me.....

".....but maybe I'm too new in this group, but what means "our D-Day" in practice?"

Now I had the feeling, that maybe I was the one in the classroom, who asked the question everybody wanted to ask, but not dared to ask.

"That's a fair question, and you're long enough with us now, to get an answer. "D-Day" will be the day, were you most probably will become a murderer, a murderer by defending our nation, our democracy. But, and this is most important, we hope that you will be able to bring others with you, to fight at your side. The more we are, the better we can act."

"I know, this is maybe blasphemy, but wouldn't that all be a job for the police, the FBI, maybe the army? The FBI was not unsuccessful this time? I have warned you, that I maybe will ask such questions, will not agree with everything."

"That's okay, I hope that you still know my answer. What example I should choose? Oklahoma City, the Boston Marathon - 9/11? Yes, if one or two groups will be active, if a few terrorist acts will happen, even a second Oklahoma City, even a second 9/11, then you're right. But it was not their aim to kill Gretchen Whitmer, she will agree with me, she would be replaceable, but their aim was to cause a civil war. Already a left-winger has killed a right-winger. Black armed militia patrolled in streets. They try to provoke the left. I talk not about a dead Gretchen Whitmer, this would be a case for the FBI, I talk about a new civil war."

"And our army?"

"Fuck, and you sit at home and wait, wait, till it's maybe too late! They try to provoke a civil war, you know what's the difference between a war and a civil war?"

I looked behind me, but was not sure who had said this.

"We should stay cool. It's okay, that we have someone among us, who asks questions, who even questions our ideas. We wanna be different from the other side, then we should be. What are your concerns?"

"This maybe sound naive, but....."

I failed not to hear the murmuring.....

".....it's a civil war if we fight against them. As long as they fight with the police, the FBI, or even with our army, it's no civil war."

"Fucking coward!"

"No, please, let us stay cool. He's right, yes, you're right! But would this ensure, that we would not end in a Nazi dictatorship?"

"No, of course not. Maybe it's only that I would wait a second longer, my "D-Day" would be no automatism. As the most here know, I'm a private investigator, I had a few spectacular cases, but I was never able to a real happy ending - on the contrary! I used my gun not only one time, but I was never happy about it, but this is something different. I mean, who started the Civil War and why? As far as I know, the answer is not that easy. Even WWI is not easy to answer - well, WWII very easy, to confess! But would it be possible to wait one second, to ask yourself only one question: Is it really necessary now to grab my gun, or would this be the moment, when I do exactly what they wanna from me to do? It's only a question from a stupid old man who never was able to bring one of his cases to a lucky end."

I stood up, had tears in my eyes.

"Wait Peter, you not have to leave!"

"It's better. Of course, I will tell nobody about our meetings or whom I have seen here. Yes, maybe there will be a time to fight, fight as a civilian, but I hope that we will decide this in a rational decision, not running in the trap of this racist Nazi swamp. Please, do not call me again. As I said, I used my weapon already, I would be able to use it again. The only point is, it should be my decision to use it, at least I hope that it will be my decision."

I turned and left the room, tears dropped on the carpet. Nobody said anything, at least till I closed the door behind me. I went out, hit the street, and closed my eyes. I heard hoofs on the concrete, felt the warm breath, I cried.....

Caroline

"Do you think it was good what I did?"

"Yes, I think so. There's a lot of wrong in our nation, we should come back to find at least some common ground."

"But it will be difficult with such a president, even if Biden will become our next president, it will be difficult with such a GOP and such radicalized groups, willing to start a civil war."

"And the Democrats did everything right? The Clinton administration was in many respects a disaster, not only in moral aspects. And Obama, I would say, especially at the beginning, it was a wasted possibility, and always the name Clinton appears, Hillary Clinton, who had so warm words for Monica Lewinsky. Yes, the GOP is corrupt, but the Democrats are definitively no saints, and if, then incapable saints."

"But you agree therewith, that the GOP practices gerrymandering and voter suppression?"

"Yes, of course, Ted Cruz is speaking just right now? Shall I believe that he speaks honestly, this puppet of the president? And yes, it's nice that he has a small talk with Barrett about playing the piano, but what a shit is this! Yes, we all know about what this all is, Kavanaugh needs support, he alone was not enough. We know what Barrett's orders are, but the hell, this Dems have all the chances - or? If they screw this election up like in 2016, then they have deserved it, but not the American people! And if they win, and we will not lose everything because of a president not willing to step back, then the Democrats have many possibilities to act - yes, why not expand the Supreme Court for instance! Shall I say you something, as Democrat I would boycott this hearing, all Dems should boycott this hearing! They can change nothing, she will become a member of the Supreme Court, if they have no smoking gun - it not seems so. Even Kavanaugh managed it?"

"Yes, I think a good illustration is the discussion at this hearing, that the right to possess a gun is more important than the right to vote. It's very easy, to take this right away from you in this country,

or at least to make it very hard for you to vote, but to restrict gun laws? You mean we should concentrate on the important?"

"Yes, the most important at the moment is, that Joe Biden wins, a landslide win would be relieving, both, House and Senate, would be relieving. Then the transition - yeah, that's maybe the crux. But then, in 2021, the Dems have to show that they are no pretenders. Yes, "The Squad" is nice, but in the end two old white men and Hillary in the background, not very progressive. The Dems have to begin to be progressive, otherwise we can forget it."

"Brings me back to the beginning - the transition, the dangers?"

"You did right. No one is able to say what will happen the next three weeks, not to talk about the months thereafter. Yes, it can become very bad, but.....we have to expect everything, but we also should not be panicked - can we stop here for now?"

"Yes, and.....the hearing?"

"Well, Dr. Who starts right now?"

"Dr. Who - but these are re-runs?"

"At least it makes sense."

Reflections

Was the president bad? Yes, of course, but the president was one person, and one person was simply only one person and not the president! That one person could become the POTUS, he needed voters, the voters made "a person" to the POTUS. Maybe it would be no bad idea not to look at the POTUS, but at the people who made him the POTUS, even more, the people who were still willing to give him a second term?

The presidential crisis was a national crisis, and this national crisis would still be there, even if the next POTUS would be Joe Biden. It was hard to bear to see and to hear the supporters of the president, foreign countries laughed about us, comments on YouTube told you enough, they could not believe, that this people lived in 2020, they sounded like hillbillies two hundred years ago.

There was this picture abroad, of this uneducated-religious-redneck-American, it was hard to bear, but this people fulfilled this image perfectly. It reminded me to Art Spiegelman, when he talked about how burdensome it was for him, that his father fulfilled this Nazi image of the "thrifty" Jew so perfectly, what his father said about "black people". And yet, had this to mean, that all Jews were "thrifty", that all Jews discriminated Africans, Palestinians maybe?

This election would be more than an election, more than a decision about the American future, it would become a message for the world. And the American people would decide, what the message would be. And a vulnerable horse stood in the middle of the street, shy and confused.....

Postscript

I will stop "That's No Reason To Give Up" today. The story has started as the continuation of "The American Dream", I thought that the relation between Peter and Caroline should become an important aspect of the story. But then COVID-19 came, and maybe more affecting, all the other developments in the US. I have the feeling that I lost the story, nevertheless the story has still some interesting aspects. But I will stop also this story today.

The new story will have as one storyline a detective story. This will be the (so far) only (partially) fictional part. I have already written the first introducing part, the story as such will begin at election day, everything else will develop. So far nothing is determined, no "Caroline", no "Jack", no case, even no name, no "Peter". Of course, even if not mentioned (so far), the story is located in the USA, he lives "in the toughest city of my tough nation". This resumes the idea of "The

American Dream" and "That's No Reason To Give Up", the city as a mixture of Los Angeles, Chicago..... and other large American cities.

I was very unhappy with the development, that I felt, that I have to decide where Peter lives, in the end I decided for New York obviously, even if the city's name never was mentioned. But for the story it would have been very different, due to corona, whether Peter would have lived in Los Angeles, CA or Chicago, IL or New York, NY and so on. But has this changed now?

Yes and no. But more, I have no idea about the development of the next months! But I will try to do it "better" this time, to stay more fictional in this aspect, to talk more about nationwide aspects. But this will have limits, say the happenings regarding Gretchen Whitmer. Would my protagonist talk about it in the way, "a governor", then this would mean, that he definitively lives not in Michigan. I think that a solution could be, to talk about such aspects always in such a way, even if this means in the extreme, that he has talked about all American states in this way, therefore he lives in no state, therefore he lives not in the USA. But in this way "his city" would become a real fictional city, nowhere and everywhere in the States. We will see.

I stop with "That's No Reason To Give Up" first, regarding the three major stories, because I will concentrate for the final days on "Beg Your Pardon!....." and "Cozy Days In London", maybe also "The Happy Clown". An additional reason is, that the, for the story important developments, would happen after election day, after I have begun the new part.

Bad Friedrichshall, October 22nd, 2020