

Tomorrow's History - Today's Deeds

Is Reality Doubtful?

Some Initial Thoughts

Again a new movie dealing with the question about "what is reality" - "Bliss". I have read two critiques, they sounded much like I see "Matrix", much ado about nothing!

The philosopher Hilary Putnam has actually said everything about this topic, his version is simply consistent. And if you like to read a novel, read "Simulacron-3" or watch the superb filmization "Welt am Draht" ("World on a Wire") by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

It's no question what reality is, all these versions are not consistent, you have to be willing to be as consistent as Hilary Putnam. The problem is, if you are as consistent as Hilary Putnam, then everything is said, nothing is left to say! So, consistent as Putnam, then everything is said, or not, but then it's simple to say what reality is, and what not!

An Evening In The Bar

I sat in my favorite bar, looked at the bottles on the other side, not my first drink, and also this was nearly empty. I had still to wait for a moment till it would happen – you knew this story. The door would open, the breathtaking woman would enter the bar, maybe blond this time, maybe dark, why not a fox this time? In any case, with a fucking tight and short dress, high heels and of course a confusing rounded body, rounded at the good parts. I gave the barman a sign that I needed a new one.

I had not to look, I knew that the door opened as the man behind the bar gave me the new one. She would look around as everybody except me would look at her, and would decide to take a seat next to me – of course with one barstool in between. I waited till she had sat down, till she had arranged everything, so that I could not see too much while look at her fantastic legs, her arousing legs upwards. Under such a dress a woman like her would wear nothing – dark black hair this time.

I gave the barman another sign, he knew what he had to do, came to me and smiled. He would ask her what she would prefer, of course it would be mine to pay for it. The barman came back, she had chosen a hard one, as expected, not one of this soft stuff for girls, at its worst with a straw, and men behaving like girls. We had not much to talk, we would have our drinks, I would look at her from time to time, but not too much, that would be too much for me. Later we would go to my home, we would have a hot night, and the best? I hated this smaltzy goodbyes, she would have left when I would wake up in the afternoon, and this would good so. I would meet a new one, in the bar the next time.

Some More Thoughts

Not so difficult to decide what is real in the above story, and what happens only in the imagination of a drunken person - or? Or the other way around. Would I say that everything in this story would be real, this would sound very strange - a parody okay, but as a seriously meant story? A man sits in a bar, gets drunk, and every time when he's doing so, the door opens and one of this iconic hard-boiled women enters the bar, chose him, a night full of sex - drunken! - and the next day she has disappeared - not very convincing, I would say.

So, is it that difficult to say, when something is real, when not? And it would make no sense now, to start to talk about mentally ill persons. And again, be strict like Hilary Putnam would be different, but would mean the end of everything.

A Story About A Druggie

A druggie is lusting for drugs, he wants to escape the dove-gray reality. He knows exactly what the reality is, that what's surrounding him without drugs. Drugs are no means to enter reality, but to escape reality. Maybe to enter an "alternative reality", but knowing that this is only a "further" reality, a compensatory reality. And always when the drugs lose their effect, the druggie drops back into reality, not falls out of reality. The world as such was without drugs - assumed that dinosaurs not used drugs. Some animals get drunk when eating fermented fruits, we have not the feeling that they enter therewith reality by leaving an illusion. Does this lead to one question?

Is It Possible to Question The World Other Than In Total?

"I'm somewhat pregnant" makes somewhat no sense - "some parts or aspects in the world are not real" as well. One of the biggest problems is, who could tell which aspects or parts are real and why. Some nice constructs would be possible, like revelation or simply "getting the insight". But all this not functions, or confronts you with an infinite regress, or forces you to a stunt, or.....I will talk about some "popular" theories in the following.

The world is, or is not - "Perseverance" has landed on Mars just in this moment, or not. Means, if you start with thoughts about the question about "real or not", then be consistent or let it be. I have the feeling that many like it to "play" with such thoughts, but are not willing to draw the consequences then, that they act "unfair" then, to rescue their own existence. This behavior is not very professional for me, says the man who often writes about suicide, but still sits in Germany in front of his screen and types such words.....

God, The Pretender

The existence of God became not doubted in the Middle Ages, but many discussions about to what an extent it was possible for a human to understand God. From the try to ponder about God based on logic (Aristotelian syllogisms, Thomas Aquinas, scholasticism) over the "Negative Theology" (theologia negativa, Plato, Nicholas of Cusa) to mysticism (Meister Eckhart). But one all had in common, God existed, no question about that!

<< A short remark: The above is (very) simplified and shortened. The Middle Ages had been much more complex and diverse, not to talk about that the term "Middle Ages" as such is very doubtful. The point I want to make is, that whatever your basis was - Aristotle or Plato for instance - the existence of God as such was no matter of a discussion. This leads us to the next simplification - the "Middle Ages" had been a very complex, diverse and fascinating time! Back to the text.

A very interesting discussion at this time was the question about, if it could be possible, that God was in fact not infinitely good, but in fact a bad God (deus malus), a God who deceives the humans. That all what the humans thought as given, was in fact only deception (ignis fatuus). The interesting aspect is, if you start to consider that this could be - always on the basis that the existence of God as such is axiomatic, irrevocable - then you will get many severe problems. One of the responses of the institutional Church in Rome to such thinking had been the burning stakes.

Because I do not believe in God, any kind of a god, this thinking is not problematic for me. But for everyone who believes in the existence of a god, this is a massive problem, one that's not resolvable! If this god - and at least the Christian god is almighty! - is not a "good god", but a god who fools the humans, then the humans are at his mercy. And of course, you cannot simply say: Hey, our god, God, is good, that's simply true, like Descartes did - this is not more than a cheep

stunt. As said, I'm no believer, therefore this is not "my" discussion, but a very nice one for all those who believe in a god, not to talk about the Christian god with his special characteristics.....

Solipsism

N.B.: This text is about metaphysical solipsism.

Even long before I studied philosophy and heard about such ideas that everything could be an illusion, everything except me (see also Descartes), I perceived such thinking as simply silly - and I mean silly!

I never met a person with this thinking unfortunately, my argument would have been - already in my youth - that we would go to a busy freeway. This other person would enter the lanes, would position oneself in the middle of them. Then this person should look at the fast approaching cars and should tell me that they are only illusion - just at this moment I would believe this person!

Okay, most probably this person would be very fast dead, or a very severe traffic accident would happen - I think everyone, even every solipsist, would say that this behavior would be simply crazy because we all know how painful it is, to collide with something, not to talk about a fast driving car. What's the problem?

Solipsists are cowards! You cannot say that (maybe) everything is unreal except me - this is not consistent! Either everything is unreal, then also my person, or not. There is no way to argue that everything could be an illusion, but I would exist in any case - that's a mere joke! Solipsism is the worst way (that I know) to deal with the question about what's real and what not. Okay, Descartes is also very horrible!

René Descartes

Not to make it too complex, Descartes is a hoax! "I think, therefore I am" - "cogito ergo sum": Apart from, that he was not the first with such ideas, like a magician he conjures up the "I". Maybe there would be "something" that doubts, but why this "doubting something" should be "I"? But give him the "I", unfortunately nothing follows therefrom - you cannot draw a conclusion from one premise. Descartes' answer? An easily falsifiable proof of God, stolen from Augustinus, but funnily, this not helps him either! But give him also God, he himself saw the problem we had before: Who can tell that this God is not evil? His answer? Well, because there's no reason to assume that God is evil, there's no reason therefore, that the things are not as they appear to us - wow, every Medieval scholastic would have freaked out about such an argumentation!

Again, this is a very shortened consideration of the philosophy of René Descartes, but it shows one problem. Descartes starts with the absolute doubt, very good. The result is, that he maybe can say, that "something" doubts, but nothing results therefrom. Even if you say that the "something" is synonymous with "I" - still no implications. Descartes sees this, this is obvious to him, so now he starts with a line of arguments that is, to say it nicely, "ambitious" - nonsense, to say it hard. Why nonsense? He starts with the ultimate doubt, to end with a frail and easily falsifiable proof of God. But even this helps him not, and he sees also this problem that this God could be evil. And now Descartes becomes finally silly, starting with an absolute doubt, to end by saying, that there's simply no reason to doubt, that God is a good God - this is totally weak and contradicts his starting point ultimately!

Descartes has the same problem as the solipsist for instance. Starting with a radical idea and very bold, but then realizing what the consequences would be, not liking the consequences, the search for a solution to avoid the consequences, they start then with an argumentation that contradicts their first ideas totally - this is very weak and ridiculous! Therefore, let it be if you are too weak to bear the consequences.

Hilary Putnam

N.B.: I refer to Hilary Putnam's image of the "brain in a vat" as such, not to Putnam's remarks on knowledge, truth..... - I would follow Searle's critique in that respect.

If, and this "if" is important, if I would be a brain in a vat, then I would have no chance to make this out. That's it! Not more is to say because "I" would not sit here and type this words, "I" would swim in a kind of nutrient solution, the mad scientist would grin.

If, again a significant "if", if you be consistent, then this is a very short story, and maybe a very depressing one. It could be and if it would be, then one would have no possibility to change this, in the end, one would not even have the possibility to reflect about it (Searle, not Putnam!). But there's this other significant word: "Could".

"It could be" obviously not means, that it's so - I have only no chance to decide if it is so, or not. But I like the consequence of Putnam's image, because if this would be the truth - a brain in the vat - then.....nothing! "I" would be not even capable to reflect about it (again Searle not Putnam) because there would be simply no "I", the "I" would be an illusion. So, and now?

I would say that the radicalism of Putnam's model can lead to only one decision, it's not the reality! Why? Because if it would be the truth, and it could be, then "I" would be the product of a mad scientist and everything - absolutely everything! - what would be, what "I" would do, think or feel, would be a result of the action of this mad scientist - and I would have no chance to find a proof for it, not to talk about to change this situation in any regard. So, if it is, then it is, let's assume, that it is not so.

Common Sense?

So, if I'm a brain in a vat, then I'm a brain in a vat, all about that is said therewith, but what if I'm not?

If God is evil and a pretender, than it's so, all about that is said, but what if not, maybe in the end God, or even no god at all, do not exist?

I think that it's not the worst idea then, to raise your hands, like it's said that George Moore did it in his lectures. I think it's much more productive - in the end only this is productive! - to think about the world as real, even if this not contradicts the possibility that I'm nothing more than a brain in a vat, that the evil God exists, even when I do not believe in the existence of any god as such.

It makes no sense, it has no meaning - in the deepest meaning of the word - to stand on the freeway and argue that the cars heading towards me, could be maybe not real. The fun fact about it is, it's never excluded, no one can prove that they are real, in any case they could be an illusion, but what if not? Wouldn't it be simply common sense to assume that they are real, especially by knowing about the horror of car accidents, maybe had self a severe car accident - no one can prove that this car accident happened, I could be still not more than a brain in a vat!

The only meaningful question, the only question that would result in an answer would be, a question based on the basic premise that "the world as such is real". Is a rainbow real? Dig at the end of it or search for the bluebirds. Is a unicorn real, how I feel the world? Is an atom real, a

proton, a quark maybe or maybe only cosmic strings, or "in fact" nothing of all of this?

But these questions are different from talking about a brain in the vat, an evil god, or all the other variants. All these questions do not deny "a" reality as such, a unicorn exists in any case, of course a rainbow, also a proton.....I exist. And most probably I have two hand and type at the moment that I type at the moment that I type at the moment.....

And is it not exciting, the endeavor to understand this reality, this real existing universe, to understand the stars and the origin of it all, human life? To be a brain in a vat would be very "boring", everything would be "dull", a mad scientist would grin at the moment, would laugh about the brain that would think that it would type words, someone would read them maybe, would be maybe even be interested in them. But if "I" am no brain in a vat, I could have hope that someone would - "in fact" - read this words, maybe would be interested in them. The brain in the vat - and all the other variants - is interesting and important, but in the end a one-way street, and often such ideas develop into not more than pseudointellectual "mind games".

Today the night will be a starry night, I will observe my variable stars. I will have no doubt about, that these stars are real, that the changes of brightness I will record are - within the bounds of the accuracy of visual estimations - real. And maybe "I" am only a brain in a vat.....

A Story About Reality

"I love you!"

"Yeah baby, love you too!"

Apart from that, that this could be a mere lie, what else it could be? Biochemical processes in the brain? More? I took a sip from my Whiskey Sour.

"Bad what has happened in Atlanta."

"You've watched the news?"

"Shouldn't I? Or do you think that a woman like me is too dumb to watch the news? Maybe you should not always stare at my cleavage, I've also a face, possible to express emotions."

Her cleavage? Well, if that had been everything one could stare at? And yet, this was a bar, it was after midnight - the Grammy Awards? Looking at the songstresses I had more the feeling.....a celebration to honor artists? Hey, was this about music or - to say it nicely - fashion? Was it important as a female singer to dress up as slutty as possible? Was it about music or about legs and tits? Was it about Versace, Valentino and whatever? Even an artist like Billie Eilish - okay, Marc Bolan, Glam Rock, posers we are.....but.....Joan Baez? Was never a real fan of her, but how nice was it seeing a woman singing, just singing - not more, not less. Skye Edwards came me to mind, in her self-made dresses. To say that she wouldn't be hot would be a joke, but therefore she had not to dress like a whore waiting at the street side. Or Émilie Simon in her fancy outfits and robes, an elegant French woman, elegant was not the same as slutty.

"You're not interested in to talk with me - or? Atlanta?"

"We're a fucking racist nation and the conservatives do everything to stir this up."

"Isn't this too easy?"

"It's definitively not wrong. We kill Asians because they brought us the virus - was a stupid shit is this? Was a dumbass one have to be to believe such a nonsense? Is it that problematic to use your mind and ask about reality?"

"When you sit here with me, do you see my reality or only your presumed reality?"

I took a deep sip from my Whiskey Sour.

"You love me?"

"Yes."

"As long as I'm in the bar and pay for your drinks?"

"Yeah."

"And after we have kissed goodbye?"

"Then you're no longer a part of my reality."

"Another cocktail?"

"Always."

The Consequence Of Human Existence

Some Initial Thoughts

Humans are no animals, their ancestors had been animals, but there had been a transformation at a certain point, a transformation from being simply an animal towards being a human. This has to be the basis of all the following. So, if one thinks that humans are still **only** animals but not more, then the following is obsolete. My thought is that humans are **more then** only animals, but this should have consequences then - should!

A Lioness And Her Three Cubs

We all know this dramatic story, in one way or other, a lioness with three cubs, the cubs are fighting with each other as cubs always do. But then fate took its course, one of the cubs gets hurt, badly, it was an accident. And now?

The lioness is worry about the cub, as well as the other two cubs, but in the end it had to be. The lioness and the other two cubs will leave the hurt cub behind, it will die, alone, a terrible death. The ugly face of nature? A hard-hearted lioness? Would the cub had become a grown-up animal it would have killed many other animals, many of them would have had a painful death. The ugly face of nature?

A Mother And Her Three Children

We all know this dramatic story, in one way or other, a mother with three children, the children are playing with each other as children always do. But then fate took its course, one of the children gets hurt, badly, it was an accident. And now?

The mother is worry about the child, as well as the other two children, an ambulance will be called, the child will be transported to the hospital.

Let's Draw A Conclusion

Maybe the child will die, maybe it will be handicapped for the rest of her or his life, but it has not to die in the wilderness, alone. Of course, one can argue that this is somewhat too naive, thinking about war zones for instance, but also situations poor people around the world are in. But, the lioness does not live in a war zone, is not rich or poor, it's her "normal" situation of life. We have to compare it therefore with a "normal" situation of life of a "normal" mother. So, I think that we will all can agree therein, that the two stories differ in a main point.

Humans Are No Animals Anymore, Humans Are Humans

The mother has many more possibilities than the lioness because of being a human, and the social situation of a lioness is very different from that of the mother - ?

A problem that now occurs is, that the human society has developed very much, but not in a constant way, and especially not towards only one idea. A lioness compared to another lioness in a similar situation would have not much different possibilities, but this not applies to humans. Not only to talk about more or less "developed" nations, the idea of being part of a "national community" is very different in the United States compared to the Scandinavian countries for

instance. The social welfare state, social welfare statism, in Scandinavian countries would support the women from our example much more, than the support in the United States would be - or one could say: In the United States the possibilities of the women would depend much more on her financial status than in Scandinavian countries. Nevertheless, even in the United States the woman would have more possibilities than the lioness.

But is this satisfying? Depending on the country in which the woman lives, and her financial possibilities of course, she would have more or less more possibilities than the lioness - that sounds like fate, bad luck.....another thought.....

The Difference Between A Pride Of Lions And Human Society(ies)

So, humans have many more possibilities than lions obviously - who would be surprised by that? Only to think of medical treatment, for instance. But also communication is by far more complex, the possibility to express something, and I would also say - without discussing this now - that the emotional world of humans is by far more complex. By far more possibilities as such and a by far more complex emotional world, more possibilities to express yourself.....all this should have an impact on the human world, compared to the world of the lions - and obviously, it has!

Would the lioness be able to bring her cub to an hospital, would she do it? Of course, no doubt about that, she's not happy to leave her cub behind, neither the other cubs are. Do lions fight with each other because of food and territory? Yes, they do. Do humans do this? Yes, they do. Is it only about possibilities, is there not more?

What Seperates Humans From Animals?

Without any doubts, humans have more cognitive skills than animals, even if some animals are capable to self-awareness for instance. But what kind of cognitive skills are this?

In the field that's represented by science and technics one can have no doubts - planes and spacecrafts, complex machines like CERN, medical skills.....let's call this the ability to logical thinking.

But there's this other field - let's name it emotions, empathy, moral acting.....again, without any doubt, humans are much better "equipped" than animals - only to think on our complex possibilities to communicate. But what are the consequence of this?

Humans have without any doubts the most complex brains on earth, the best means of communication, but what yields from this? Wars? Humans who starve to death in a world no one would have to starve at all? A world dominated by greed but not by empathy? It seems as something would go wrong. Could it be?

Humans Are Worse Than Animals

What, if you would have the opportunities to change a lot to the better, to the better for the most of us, but you would not do it? Opportunistic? Unscrupulous? Whatever, it seems not to be that "human".

The Christian god is defined as almighty and infinitely good - the "and" is the important word. Formal logic - both, "A" and "B" have to be true that the conjunction "and" is true. So, God has to be almighty as well as infinitely good at the same time. This leads to the problem of theodicy: Why, if God is almighty as well as infinitely good at the same time, there is so much sorrow (grief) in the world. And in fact, there's no real answer to this question, as long as you describe God as almighty and infinitely good at the same time. But this is not about God.

What about a "problem of human theodicy". Why is there so much sorrow (grief) in this world, if

humans were capable to change this? They would have the possibility? Without any doubt!
Conclusion: Humans are not infinitely good. But they would have the potential for substantial change? Yes. But they don't do it? Yes. Have animals the potential for substantial change? No. So:

Animals: No potential for substantial change - animals suffer.

Humans: Would have the potential for substantial change - humans suffer (a lot).

No, humans are no animals anymore, they are less than animals. Humans would have the possibility to change things, the "mightiness". But obviously, there is a deficit in "being good", "human". Therefore, maybe the lioness leaves her cub behind, but therefore she is not "bad". The humans wage war with themselves, destroy their planet, have no problems in seeing millions of them suffering and dying.....every lioness has higher moral values than a human. Humans are the virus that will destroy this planet, it could not be worse.

Daydreaming

Happy Birthday!

"Sixty-six, who had thought that I would celebrate this birthday, especially not while living since a year in the States now. The ocean around the corner, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego down the coast - Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver up the coast. Well, the New England States further away, Chicago in the north, the Great Lakes, New Orleans in the south, the Gulf of Mexico, in between. But there's so much more, and only a little I have seen so far."

"You will have a lot of time now, to travel around."

"Well, I hope so. At least one or two more years or so. And yet, so much has changed in the last ten years, ten years. It started 2020/2021, so insecure I had been at this time. Not everything wonderful now, but I had been very skeptic at this time, would someone had told me that all that would happen during the next ten years.....I've tears in my eyes."

"But it has happened."

"Yes, and that's very wonderful."

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"Yeah, it had been a strange time, the last month of 2020, and the first months of 2021. In the USA, the election of Biden and Harris. Suddenly, after a devastating year, they gain control over the pandemic, they started to vaccinate their people very successfully. In Germany, it had been very different. At the beginning and over the summer they had acted very successful, much better as here in the States, but at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 they could not keep their good performing. The States became better, the Germans worse, at the end of the first quarter of 2021 they had very similar numbers, but here in the States the vaccination functioned much better. Whereby, both had more of this difficult months in front of them. The States got severe problems with their vaccination campaign as more and more the refusal of vaccination came to effect. Conservatives, but also the African American community were to name. Well, at this time they still struggled in Europe and Germany therewith, to get even enough vaccine."

"Biden / Harris?"

"The whole world - well, apart from Putin, Bolsonaro or "rulers" like in Saudi Arabia for instance. But the whole world took a deep breath in November as Biden won, a big relief. And in January, the whole world was shocked as the Capitol got stormed. A long but successful struggle began, first President Biden, then President Harris. Their terms laid the ground for all what has happened over the last ten years."

"And in Germany?"

"Germany elected a new chancellor in 2021, late 2021. In Germany, the chancellor is the political leader, not the president. But Germany had already a multiparty system and popular vote. It was no question about keeping your democracy, they had a political system, much more stable than in the USA. The big question there was, who would follow Angela Merkel after her sixteen years in office - yes, sixteen years! The Germans learnt later from the Americans, that two terms were enough. But for the first time it could have been, that a member of the Green Party could become chancellor, Annalena Baerbock."

"Do you liked this time?"

"No, I could not work.....in a way I liked it, in a way it helped me a lot. I had moments when I felt very exhausted, not really good. I felt very insecure, much changed, but your possibilities were very limited. It was no time I miss today."

"But you stayed in Germany?"

"Yes, a few years till retirement. I had the feeling that it would make no real sense to try to start something new now, in a foreign country. But not only once, also the years before, I did something

that would have had the potential to change my whole life - but it never functioned."

"But now you're here."

"Yes, now I'm here".

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"So, many factors that made it not very obvious what the future could be?"

"No, do not forget climate change for instance. Biden announced a very ambitious climate plan, that the States were back to lead the necessary process. His plans to tax rich people to a higher degree, large corporations. The initiatives regarding police violence. A lot had been in limbo at that time. The future of the GOP, the post "liar from New York, now racist in Mar-A-Lago" era, what would be with people like Cruz, Gaetz, Jordan or Greene - not to forget the old manipulator Moscow Mitch. The problem at that time had been, that there were many contrary developments. The verdict in the Chauvin trial had been good, but that eradicated not the problem as such. The election of Biden / Harris had been good, but that eradicated not the treat of the GOP for our democracy. Success in vaccinations, but still the danger of mutations and the anti-vaccination movement, fueled by the conservatives. No, at the beginning of 2021 some promising developments, but still too many dangers, too many matters that could develop in the wrong way, in a devastating way."

"That was the United States. And in Germany?"

"Germany felt like palladium, like a place beyond the rest of the world, at that moment. Problems with vaccination, relatively high numbers of infected people, an anti-corona movement, but compared with most of the rest of the world? Sure, a few isles, a few Asian nations, but the Germans had a trump. Their economy, they only waited that the worst would be over to restart very fast and vehemently again, like in 2008. And a new chancellor in 2021? Well, it could be Olaf Scholz, Armin Laschet or Annalena Baerbock. Not that they had been the same, but none of them had the ambition to destroy the German democracy, none of them would get an absolute majority. A multi-party system, at least a coalition of two parties, maybe even three, would be necessary to form a new government. Most probably two of the names together with a smaller third party, the liberals (FDP) or maybe even the far-left party (Die Linke). Armin Laschet and Annalena Baerbock, or Annalena Baerbock and Armin Laschet, the conservative CDU together with the Green Party (Die Grünen) was highly discussed. But whatever, it was not to expect that any of this combinations would cause a revolution, or would plunge Germany into an autocracy."

"But what was the biggest threat in Germany then now?"

"To lose temper. Germany could have been patient - March, April, May? It would be a question of weeks - if no problems with new mutations popped up - that they could return to a relatively normal life, that they could jump start. But also in Germany there were far-right forces that were interested in to use this situation for their purposes, to undermine governmental structures. A problem that came to light, and that was for many a problem, especially for those who thought that Germany would be such a fantastic organized nation was, that for example it had been no problem to allocate enormous amounts of money for those who needed support, but that it needed weeks or even months that the money received those who needed it. That was no roaring success and not very "German". It caused a lot of disappointment. But all in all, the situation was much more stable as in the United States of America."

"And yet, just the United States developed in the following years a tremendous capability for progress and change, more than Germany - or?"

"Yes, absolutely!"

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"What do you think was the major step for the United States to develop that strength for reforms?"

"The disempowerment of the WASP. The election 2022 had been the basis for all the upcoming"

"And in Germany, what helped them to change?"

"Jacinda Ardern, Sanna Marin, Paula Weekes, Zuzana Čaputová, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Mia Mottley, Mette Frederiksen, Rose Raponda, Victoire Dogbé, Kaja Kallas, Kersti Kaljulaid....."

2021

"Twenty twenty-one, it became a sorrowful year, so fast a vaccine could get developed, many countries performed so well, but nevertheless, it became a sorrowful year. A few countries, with their irresponsible policy, caused so much devastation, mutations. But also Europe made a lot of wrong, the USA got more and more problems with vaccination. In many countries the pandemic got used politically, the result was always the same, more devastation. It was clearly visible that humans could not work together, not worldwide, but even not nationwide. Self-seeking and greed, the richest got richer, the richer population could protect them better, they, who had more political influence. No, over all this year had been a sorrowful year."

"Over all?"

"In the United States the "minorities" became sick of it, to become treated like second class citizens. The African American population became most active, sick of it to be seen and treated by white "patriots" like former slaves, only tolerated as "citizens" because inevitable. As sad the year was, in that respect, the African American movement, and in the following for all so-called minorities, this year became the basis for the coming. Nearly it could be said that the pandemic helped them in a way, but they paid a massive price, and to say this not only seems to be disgusting."

"So, could one say that this year stood not that much for change, but it became the basis for change?"

"Yes, I think that this is a good description. At the beginning as well as at the end the pandemic had been a topic. At the beginning as well as at the end racism had been a major topic. At the beginning as well as at the end the future of the GOP was on stake. In Germany they had a new chancellor at the end of the year, but this evolved effects not before the next year."

"A year with no dramatic developments, but so essential for the rest of the story?"

"A year of extreme suffering and losses. Not many years in human history had cost more human lives. Some had to bear the most of this, some nearly nothing, but also this insight should become a momentum for the following years."

"And in the USA, Biden?"

"Also an important aspect. In a way he failed, the GOP had been not willing to work together with him constructively. Often he needed sixty votes, ten from the GOP. He never got them. But this stopped him in no way, he did all he could, and the people saw that it helped them and the question became louder and louder - what if the GOP was constructive and work together with Biden, wouldn't this help us people not more? But also this development became more important in the following year, especially at the end of it."

"The elections?"

"Yes, they became the first watershed, suddenly a lot of felt entirely different."

"And in Germany? The had their watershed already in 2021?"

"Well, Germany. In a way it was a sensation, but.....I lived in Baden-Württemberg, one of the most conservative states in Germany. After WWII it had been never a question, the governor was a member of the conservative party - till the day the governor was from the Green Party. A revolution? Well, not in Germany, but nevertheless a sign, especially after his second reelection! No, Germany had been never a place for revolutions, but every so often the Germans can be very surprising people. But as said, it was at the end of the year and became more important the following year."

"Tell me more about 2021."

"Inability, I think that inability would be the best word to describe 2021. Well, of course, not everything had been bad. But all in all, this year revealed some basic problems, that it no longer could function the old ways.

The major element had been the pandemic of course, the worldwide element. Even the richest countries failed to reach herd immunity, not to talk about the rest of the world. New - more and more aggressive - mutations popped up, a vicious circle of vaccinations began. This affected the "Western world" and their economies, but for less developed and poor countries it became a life-threatening danger. The global economy tumbled into a crisis. And this was the pandemic, a pandemic that happened in real time and everyone could see the effects - the even more threatening climate crisis? But we're still in 2021.

In the USA the GOP became more and more radical, more and more a radical cult. This would have its effects in 2022, but in 2021 it became constantly harder to bear the behavior of this GOP. For Biden meant this, that he could not work together with this GOP, this limited his possibilities, but he did the best he could, and the American people recognized this."

"What do you think was the worst moment for the United States in 2021?"

"The terrorist activities of the white supremacists, the Nazis. Even in 2021 it became more and more obvious that this decaying GOP could satisfy a radical minority, but in no way an American majority. Their answer in Washington was, to become permanently more radical, in the nation, to terrorize the American people. Assaults and attacks on opposing politicians, not all failed. The attempts to kill as many Americans as possible, to stir up as much hate as possible, to create a police state. "11/9", again New York, but this time not the Twin Towers, again thousands died. At the end of 2021 it was obvious that this nation had to decide - but it was still such a very long time till November 8, unfortunately."

"And in Germany?"

"At the end of 2021?"

"Yes."

"Well, sixteen years of Angela Merkel had found their end. And it happened, a woman followed the woman, and it should become the "German Stroke of Luck"."

2022

"The last months of 2021, the turn of the year from 2021 to 2022, and even the most of 2022, the development in the USA and in Germany had been totally different. With the year 2023 that development started that continued till today, change, real substantial change began.

The election of a new chancellor in Germany at the end of 2021 became a milestone for Germany. A woman followed a woman, a new party won the election, for the first time a chancellor was a member of the Green Party, everything had been for the first time. This was the signal, change, something new was possible, something unthinkable only some few years ago. Only that a woman followed a woman, a young woman, became to a signal. The United States was far away at this time from such a momentum. The GOP became more and more radicalized, the more moderate conservatives were not willing, had not the strength, to break with this movement. The time from the end of 2021 till the end of 2022 became a devastating year for the United States of America, it had been hard to sit in Germany, to see what happened in the States."

"So, 2022 in Germany had been very different as 2022 in the United States?"

"Yes."

"And with 2023 both nations could start with working together?"

"Well, Germany and the United States are not the world. It was important that the United States stabilized. After the election in 2022 the Biden administration had a basis for substantial change, and they used it, as Germany a year before. But of course, also the other European countries had been important, developments in nations like India, African nations, South America.....the people of many nations did not forget, what had happened during 2020, 2021 and 2022. The next time they

could vote they reminded of, what a Bolsonaro, a Modi, an Orbán had done, how many had to die because of them. Even in Russia Putin got more and more pressured, a coalition told China unmistakably that economy is not all, and that China could not exist in opposition to the USA, Europe, and many other democratic nations. But this started not before 2023."

"2022 in Germany and the USA?"

"I have to separate this."

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"The year 2021 ended with a bombshell in Germany, Annalena Baerbock became the next chancellor of Germany, the successor of Angela Merkel. Especially over the summer it became a neck and neck race between her and Armin Laschet, Olaf Scholz could never catch up with them. Nevertheless, it had been a surprise at the end that the Green Party had won, the CDU/CSU defeated with a slight advantage. And, the SPD in front of the FDP, the two radical parties from the left and right single-digit. But now it became difficult, the CDU/CSU and the Green Party had no majority together, they missed it slightly. That meant, that it would need a three-party coalition in any case, but who with whom? A problem was, that the FDP had announced that with them it would get no tax increases, but all the billions that had been spent because of the corona crisis? No one was interested in to make a coalition with the radicals from the right-win, AfD, and the far-left party, Die Linke, partially communists, had a party program that included to leave NATO, to break with the USA, to go to bed with Putin - absolutely not acceptable for the CDU/CSU and the Green Party. So, it became long and difficult coalition negotiations. This was one of the significant developments in 2021.

The pandemic. In April, March and June Germany performed not "perfect", but a vast majority of the Germans had been willing to get the vaccine, over the summer the situation in Germany relaxed more and more. Over seventy percent of the Germans got vaccinated, plus those who had been ill, Germany had no problem therewith, to reach herd immunity over the summer, not so the States. They managed it to keep the numbers of the Indian variant low, they simply won the race, in fall and winter they even started with a third vaccination, a second for Johnson & Johnson, not very humanitarian regarding the poorer countries, but very effective. With tools like the "short-time working benefit" it was give that German companies had not to hire new employees again, they simply started to work and to produce again. The German economy started in 2021 again like not much would have had happened, like in 2008, and in 2022 they had an impressive economic growth again.

The Germans acted over the first part of 2021 often like somewhat dazed and confused, no clear and effective strategy. Also the vaccination began not really successful. But Germany stabilized more and more with every month, the people enjoyed the summer, and at the end of the year 2021 one could have the feeling in Germany, like not that much had happened during the last two years, only that Angela was Annalena now."

"Everything okay in Germany now? The new administration? Sounds in a way like a fairy tale?"

"The key to the fairy tale was suppression, the people in Germany pretended that nothing had happened, it reminded me of the situation after 9/11 in Germany."

"9/11 in Germany?"

"Yeah, in Germany some said: This event will be the end of the fun-loving society, now a new seriousness will begin. Especially one of the slouches of the FDP said this all the time very seriously - they are always very clever guys, the guys from the FDP. What's to say, nothing changed and after the first shock, after a short while, Germany was as funny as before - and some discovered that Germans could be, in fact, very funny and swinging people. And this happened again, the people had no longer an interest in, to hear every day from COVID-19, we had herd immunity, local outbreaks, of course also connected to poorer neighborhoods mostly, but all in all, Germany decided that it was time to enter normality again."

"But the world around?"

"Hedonism? Collective hedonism. The Germans were happy to travel to Italy, Spain, and Mallorca for vacation again, they could go to restaurants again, they had herd immunity and the luck that no real disastrous mutation appeared, that all mutations could become suppressed fast enough, that the vaccinations had been good enough. And in 2023, at a time when many nations not even had vaccinated their whole people once, Germany had access to the always latest and best vaccines, and the German people were eager to get them in their arms."

"Not much sense of responsibility. But the United States.....but tell me something about the new administration, they formed a coalition at the end?"

"Of course, they had to, Germany is a nation of stability - sometimes Germans can surprise you a lot, by the way."

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"The Germans always loved stable governments, after the federal elections in 2017 there was a big crisis. Before 2017 we had the "grand coalition" in Germany, a coalition between "CDU/CSU" and "SPD". And now, 2017? All had said in the forefront, the worst would be a "grand coalition" again, but now there was a problem. Of course, a "grand coalition" would have been possible again, and with the radical right, the "AfD", not even the conservatives wanted to make a coalition, but there was an alternative. The so-called "Jamaica coalition", the "CDU/CSU" (black), the "Die Grünen" (green), and the "FDP" (yellow). But in the middle of the coalition negotiations Mr. Lindner, the big hitter of the FDP, played chicken and absconded. That was a shock, what to do? Everybody had said that a "grand coalition" again would be bad, but the only alternative had been the "Jamaica coalition" - thanks to the cowards from the FDP, the "grand coalition" was the only still possible coalition again. Now one could say, in many European countries they had minority governments, and it can function, but in Germany? Never ever, the Germans always demanded stability! So, again the "grand coalition", the possibility nobody wanted, but it was the only possible stable option after the cowardice of the "FDP". And in 2021?

Of course, a "grand coalition" would have been possible again - but not again, never again! No two-party alliance had a majority, two three-party coalitions thinkable, with the radicals from the left or right no one wanted to work together. The first possibility had been: "Die Grünen", "CDU/CSU" and the "FDP" together, that what had not functioned four years ago, the "Jamaica coalition". Or, the second possibility: The "Die Grünen", the "SPD" and the "FDP" together, the "traffic light coalition" with the "SPD" (red). Both coalitions came not together, the bigmouths of the "FDP" again. No tax increase, never ever - fine that we had supported our economy will billions in the time of the pandemic. Oh, was there something with something called climate change? And now, what to do now?

Well, sometimes Germany can be really surprising, the "SPD" remembered a time when they had been really progressive, straightforward. The "Die Grünen" and the "SPD" decided to form a minority government, the first minority government in Germany ever, and it should become an outstanding success!"

"So, at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, Germany had a new government in a form like never before?"

"Yes, a chancellor from the "Die Grünen" formed a minority government together with a "SPD" that had become young again - that had been a big surprise!"

"2022?"

"In 2022 they started with a bunch of reforms, it seemed as that they had watched a certain man in Washington. But 2022 was also a year of transformation, the whole situation was new for German politicians and the German people. But the coalition of "Die Grünen" and "SPD" acted very clever and showed over the year 2022 that they could organize majorities. At the beginning of 2022 most media - of course the conservative media, but also partially the left media - had predicted, that this coalition would not see the end of summer. And on New Year's Eve 2022? At this moment it was

obvious to everyone, this coalition would be in power till the next regular federal election, and this released the power needed for the necessary transformation. But this started in a resounding way not until 2023, as Germany, Europe and the, then also stabilized, USA started to act together."

"But the USA had to stand 2022 first?"

"Yes, and this should become the worst year since decades for the United States, since many decades."

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"2022 in the USA, it became the "Year of Disaster" for the USA. The GOP had turned into a cult finally, into an anti-democratic and radical cult. This had two layers.

Washington, Washington became a place of destruction, the GOP became a cult of destruction. The Democrats were the evil enemies, all means were legal to stop, better to destroy, them. As an illustration, the verbal attacks that Taylor Greene was known for, they became a standard for the GOP, they became worse and worse. At the end of 2022, before the midterm elections, it became nearly impossible to govern in Washington, the Capitol had transformed into a madhouse. With every poll it became clearer that the election would become a disaster for the GOP, with every day they screamed louder: Fraud, fraud, it all will be a fraud!

Outside Washington, but also DC, a veil of anxiety and fear covered the nation, right-wing terrorists started with the end of 2021, and during 2022, with a long series of terrorist attacks, they got worse and worse. Assaults on politicians, the death toll rose, for the POTUS and the VP the White House became a prison, Washington a fortress. A minority of the American people radicalized more and more, but a large majority became more and more disgusted. But, this was not all.

Still a pandemic, the USA could never reach something like herd immunity. Especially the mutations harmed the states in the second half of 2021 and over 2022, it was devastating for the people, but also for the economy, especially also the economy in red states. It was awful sitting in Germany seeing this development, but there was a hope, the hope for elections.

Well, of course, the radicals and the rotten GOP knew this, and they did everything to make the midterm elections impossible, or if not impossible, that the people would be too scared to vote. Polling stations burned, in social media terrorists threatened voters from blue electoral districts that they would die, if they tried to vote."

"But the outcome of the 2022 election was unique?"

"Yes, terrorist and radicals always make a mistake. Left-wing terrorist tried to transform Germany into a police state in my youth. The idea was, that the people would rebel against the politicians then, to demand for a new political system."

"What?"

"Terrorists are incapable idiots, they only know violence. Well, sometimes it's difficult to draw a line between terrorists and resistance fighters, but this is something to talk about at another place, at another time. And, I think no one - apart from Nazis - would call the French Resistance, the French people who fought against Hitler, a terrorist organization, only a Nazi would do this. But the French heart belonged to the Resistance, of course not the hearts of the collaborators. In the United States the people felt - apart from the radicals and fascist thinking people - that this violence could be not the truth, this violence could be only an expression of the evil. In fact, many people in blue regions were afraid to vote, but many people in the red regions felt that this could not be the future of the United States. Of course, the polls showed this, and the terrorists started to threaten people in the red voting districts as well, they started to kill convinced conservatives because they demanded to end all this violence."

"And then was election day?"

"Yes, one of the bloodiest days America had ever seen. But all this violence could not stop it, the radical and decayed GOP lost everything, only a very few conservative candidates became elected, America voted therefor, that this had to end."

"But the voting was one thing, to pacify the nation another?"

"Yes, and without some good friends it maybe would have meant the end of America. But Europe had found some new rules, induced especially by Germany. Europe had begun to develop into one body, able to act. Europe, very similar in size and population to the US, together with nations like Australia or New Zealand, but also Japan for example. Even China saw, that a United States that would drown in chaos and violence finally could be not their aim. Only Putin, as well as the domestic terrorists had this aim."

"The end of 2022 bestowed the USA a good outcome of the election, but this not stopped the terrorists, now they tried to destroy everything. But the United States not became destroyed, 2023?"

"Yes, but we have to see first what happened in Germany in 2023, and Europe in 2022 and then in 2023."

"Then start with it!"

2023

"The existing state of affairs in 2023: In Europe, often initiated by or with the German administration, change became reality. For instance, the system of unanimity fell, that had been crucial. A group of European countries decided to become the engine for progress. France, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Germany started, others could join as far as they felt fit for the initiated changes. Very fast the group grew, the Baltic nations joined very fast for instance. Other nations could develop in their pace, the EU practiced solidarity. Some nations could not reduce their CO2 output fast, others could do it faster, together they could reduce the CO2 emissions in the EU significantly. But the EU acted also consistent now, nations undermining the EU for party policy in their nations became punished. Not agreeing or violating the EU norms meant, to get no support from the EU further on. Poland and Hungary got punished, also Turkey. The Ukraine became a member very fast, the EU started to take clear positions, showed that a united EU could not be ignored or suppressed by anyone, that a united EU was one of the big global players.

The now from the Green Party headed new government, a minority government, acted very clever to get the needed votes for their intended laws. They used the pressure from the streets, much of the Germans demanded significant change, expressed on the streets, and the politicians from the opposition could not resist this demand in a significant number. At the end it was relatively easy for the coalition of "Die Grünen" and "SPD" to organize their majorities. Sometimes with the "CDU/CSU", sometimes with the "Die Linke", even sometimes with the "FDP". The "AfD" looked very fast and finally like the douchebags they were in fact. They changed the whole system, they changed a vast number of bylaws and laws to make change possible and faster - green energy, a much better public transport, support for families and low-income people, raising the minimum wage and better labor rights, but real support for small businesses and pressure on the big corporations - a lot changed within a very short time. And a kind of give-and-take began."

"Give us an example."

"Joe Biden started to talk about taxing big corporations on an international basis, the Germans joined very fast after having a new administration, the new EU joined as well. The United States together with the European Union, no corporation, as big as whatever, could oppose this economic power. The moment the EU and the USA stood together, they became the leading example for other parts of the world - only to mention Africa."

"Africa?"

"Some African nations started to ask why they should not do the same, consistent and for their people? Like a new core Europe, some African nations started to form a democratic African union, the "African Union". The USA and the EU supported them, and this African nations, the AU, started to cooperate with the EU and the USA."

"All perfect?"

"No, of course not! The Russians, China.....?"

Russia, Russia became swept away! The Putin Russia became swept away, the oligarchy. The EU, as well as the USA, developed very fast, also in these countries not everybody liked it, but a vast majority supported the change - well, we have to talk about the US later in more detail. But the Russian people saw the EU and the USA flourishing, they demanded for the same, they no longer accepted the oligarchy, a new Russian revolution at the polling stations.

China was very different. To destabilize China would have been no excellent idea, but it was in a way like Rorty had hoped, if I don't misinterpret him now, his „edifying philosophy“, that we should promote our ideas by setting an example. Not telling other countries that they should, or even have to, become democracies, but showing them what it could mean to become a democracy. And the Chinese people saw more and more how good it functioned in the USA and Europe, they wanted more of it for themselves. But these are developments lasting till today. But even China has changed a lot over the years."

"About what years you're talking at the moment?"

"You're right, I rushed forward. These developments happened mainly in the timespan from 2023 till 2025, but they last till today in many cases. Even the developments in the United States or the European Union came not to an end, on the contrary! But the point is, in this roughly ten years so much has happened, so much more as I had hoped for, I could imagine, I had maybe dreamt about, but not thought that it would happen in reality."

"And the USA in 2023?"

"Oh, yes, we have to walk back again, the development of the United States between 2023 and 2025, after the "Year of Disaster" in 2022."

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"The year of 2022 ended with two unambiguous statements. The first came from the American people who had decided that this all had to stop, and the American people placed a duty on Joe Biden and his administration, the Congresswomen and Congressmen from the Democrats, democratic governors and mayors, to save the American democracy and to transform the American nation into a modern democracy. The second statement came from the leftovers, those who thought that it would be better to destroy America than to accept that America would be a free and diverse nation, a nation of equality."

"More."

"The year of 2022 had been devastating, the radical right had tried to intimidate the American public with terror, blood and murder. This was the terrorist part, those who killed, the racists, fascists, simply those who liked it to suppress and to murder. But more devastating had been those "politicians", better terrorists in Congress, like Cruz, Jordan, McConnell, those who tried to destroy the roots of democracy."

"People like Gaetz or Greene?"

"Those were only the bigmouths, not to underestimate in their function, but the really dangerous ones are always the McConnells and those in the economy who finance them. The midterms in 2022 ended with an overwhelming victory of the Democratic Party, they won nearly everything one could win, the American people sent out the clear message: It all has to stop!"

"This was the end of 2022, but the years thereafter? The Democrats had also a substantial majority in Senate now, but still terrorism was a problem? What caused the real change?"

"Biden asked the American people if they really wished real change, if they wished to live in freedom and peace, if they will accept that he will act harsh to protect the American Values, the American Constitution, the American Flag. Nearly ninety percent of the Americans said: Yes! And he acted, and many, not only in the States, had been surprised how hard and consistent the old man could be. With all strictness, the FBI and other governmental agencies started to fight against the extremists. One of the first laws after the midterms limited the rights to possess guns significantly. This gave authorities a good basis to act, the same with the insight, that free speech not means, that everyone can say everything. The American people saw that this limitation for a few meant more

freedom and peace for many - a vast movement started to limit gun possession even more for instance, and a feeling break through that it would be better to have more than two parties. Even conservatives saw this - in fact, there was only one real party at this time, the Democratic Party, the former GOP had destroyed itself. And Biden asked again a question, as his term came near its end: Should we abolish the electoral college, should we have a multi-party system? And again was the answer of the American people, without any doubt: Yes!"

"This was at the end of 2024?"

"Yes."

"But the electoral college was not abolished before the end of 2025?"

"That's right. Not enough time, the presidential elections of 2024 were the last with an electoral college."

"Elections?"

"Yeah, one functional party, the Democratic Party, and a deeply divided right-wing. The GOP had split in several parts, none of these parts could compete with the Dems."

"And the people wanted Biden again?"

"Yes, but he said that he had accomplished so much, that these four years had been so exhausting, that he had to step back, to pass the baton on to a younger person."

"Kamala Harris."

"Yes, she's in her second term now. She and her female VP, yet Joe Biden's administration had been diverse, but Kamala Harris's? Her administration demonstrated finally how diverse the United States were today."

"But for her second term she had to fight."

"No electoral college anymore, abolished in 2025. Two parties established themselves as the main players on the right-wing. After the electoral college was no longer, also the Democratic Party split - a more pro-business party, a more socialist party. And suddenly the Green Party became an important player, like in Germany. No party could achieve the overall majority in 2028, the first time parties had to form a coalition in the USA. But Kamala Harris could combine more votes with her party than any other party, and could form a coalition with a solid majority. Thus, Kamala Harris became POTUS again."

"But even now, and even not today, everything is okay?"

"No, but isn't it much better today than ten years ago? I never thought that this could happen, I would have seen it as a fairy tale, a stupid Hollywood movie, the last shot shows Kamala smiling and waving her hands. But reality is never so one dimensional."

"Tell me something about the years after Kamala Harris had become president, till today."

"With pleasure, we have to talk about Europe again. Joe Biden had found already a good basis to work together with Europe and Annalena Baerbock, but with Kamala Harris and Annalena Baerbock together an entirely new dynamic arose, they became a very dynamic duo. But this is for the last part."

The Years Till Today

""A Tale Of Two Women" could be the title of the final part. Two strong women who were clever as well, and saw that they could achieve a lot by working together. Very fast they found fellow campaigners around the world, clever women in Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia. - Oh, I've forgotten Jacinda! These women around the world did something that shocked their male counterparts, they started with networking, they were interested in, that everyone could take an advantage of their cooperating. Oh, and they were interested in topics like sustainability, that the world has still a chance to prevent the world from the worst aftermaths of climate change, one have to thank these women. The interesting point is, that they could form such a political and economic power, that the world could not ignore them. Thus, more and more of their male counterparts joined them, not all because of insight, some because of pressure, or they saw that they could not resist this

development. Well, many got kicked out of office, autocrats and dictators came under extreme pressure."

"But this development is not concluded, apart that "some" had and still have their problems with all these developments?"

"Oh yes, only to think about such kindergarten mochos like Boris or Wladimir. But hey, would someone would have told me ten years ago, that Russia would be led by a woman and had saw free elections, and sees now regular elections - come on, everybody would have said: Hey man, you're totally nuts now!"

"But it happened!"

"Yeah, and the first necessary step was, that some women came together, some clever women who started to work together, showing that this male macho narcissists had been at any time shit."

"But in the United States it started with Joe Biden?"

"I've never said that a man could not be as clever as a woman, they are only very rare. Give ten men power, many of them scrap. Give ten women power, not much disappointment you will have to experience. The more women, the better it is, it's pure statistic. This not excluded that you can find also excellent men, they are only very hard to find. And there's this conspiracy....."

"About what you're talking?"

"Joe Biden, really "Joe"? Some say there had been a Jocelyn born - Jocelyn.....Jocy.....Joe? But without doubts, this is only one of this stupid conspiracy theories. Whereby, it would be a nice one - I would like it!"

Searching For The Holy Grail

The Holy Grail?

Of course, the Holy Grail is meant as a metaphor here, not the Holy Grail as such. Nothing about Jesus, King Arthur, the Templar and so on, it's about the humans.

But it's not that the Holy Grail stands for a question like, what makes a human to a human? Or, why humans cannot live together - obviously they have many difficulties in doing so. It's a different Holy Grail that I'm searching.

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The Holy Grail, a myth, a legend, a real object - an illusion? Maybe only a fixed idea? Isn't it that human beings carry a lot of them around with oneself?

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No one knows what the Holy Grail is, a stone maybe, maybe a chalice, maybe. Search for the unicorn, this wonderful creature. And yet, only the maiden would be able to touch it.

The Humanly Holy Grail

Yeah, of course, I think that the Holy Grail is a myth and has never existed, but it's an interesting metaphor. Apart from that, that there is not only one narration about the Holy Grail, that different versions to nearly all aspect according to the Holy Grail are existing, one is all in common, the Holy Grail is something exceptional, and its possession will cause something exceptional. So, what would be the effect, would you possess the humanly Holy Grail? Well, to understand the human behavior as a first step, but much more, to be able to lead the human behavior towards a "more sustainable" direction? Nearly you would be a kind of god, or maybe at least the son of a god, then.

And now? No Holy Grail in reality, no substantial answer from any religion, no philosophy has found a final answer, neither psychology nor sociology nor..... - suddenly a naive thought! Could it be, that the humanly Holy Grail the humans themselves are?

The Human Rationality As The Humanly Holy Grail

The FDP, the liberals in Germany, have always one answer for everything: The markets will fix it! Give the markets free rein and everything will be all right! So, let the humans free rein and all will be all right at the end, they will not extinguish themselves, like unregulated markets will not destroy the environment, our basis for life, and will not exploit the workforce..... - sounds not good! I'm in a crisis.

Immanuel Kant says, that there can't be a proof for the existence of God, however, we need him to give us a moral basis. This would mean, that the human beings cannot give themselves a moral basis, that human beings are moral failures. Well,.....

Give Me A Plot!

Don't Look In The Rearview Mirror!

It was late at night, a new day had begun, and I drove back home, had spent some time in my favorite bar. Three cocktails, three hours, I was a slow drinker, but no girly stuff, nothing shaken and maybe even with a straw in it or such nonsense. Hard, stirred, one large cube of ice in it - just like a cocktail had to be!

But it had been a long day, the night before had been very long, the last forty-eight hours I had had not much sleep, one could count the hours with one hand. I had finished a case, a very hard case, a very emotional case, tried to forget it, was not easy, even after three cocktails.

I was no drinker, I even not smoked, not very classic in my job, but I liked the classic idea of a cocktail. Not, that a very skilled bartender, like the one in my favorite bar, would be unable to interpret this classics in a new way, like a very skilled musician, but the classic essence had to be preserved. I saw "it" only, a kind of silhouette, for the fraction of a second, then the jolt, I stopped the car.

I drank only tea at home, no alcohol at home, never! Once a week, never more often, rather not so often, I sat in the bar, most time one or two cocktails, seldom three, I liked the hard ones. I took a deep breath, should I look in the rearview mirror? What would I see, a pair of eyes in a NY cab?

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I closed my eyes and raised my head, should I open them? Was this the fucking beginning of a fucking crime or horror movie, one of the cheap ones, with no ideas and imagination? Therefore, what could be the worst that I could see, at least if assumed that this could be in no way a fucking crime or horror story, one with no ideas and imagination? Well, I opened my eyes and saw, well - nothing! No animal, no dead body, nothing! Could it be that something broke, in no case one of the tires, maybe a suspension arm or the powertrain? Yeah, I had no real idea about cars, but I had watched some car shows on TV, and they talked always about such things. I decided to leave the car - never leave the car, always a mistake!

My "inspection" yielded nothing, I could see nothing that looked broke, should I try to start the car again, simply driving away? I looked down the road, some clouds but many stars, a young moon spent some light, the street looked wet somewhat further down. Should I? Well, of course, I had inspected my front end and had found nothing suspicious, why I should be interested in the "wet" street? On the other hand, it was a nice balmy summer night, the stars and the moon, the air did me good, why not a bit street walking?

Blood, without any doubt blood, I was an expert, not the first time that I saw blood, mine or that from others. No CSI, would be nice to do some testing now - definitively no human blood, no problem to continue driving. And if not? Obviously "something" had schlepped oneself towards the bushes and small trees alongside the road, but I could see nothing - I would have a torch in my car, a very bright one. I walked back to the car.

*

I looked at the "wetness" with my powerful torch - yes, blood, not only a bit, and a trail of blood lead the way into the bushes and small trees. I tried to see something in the light of the torch, should I follow the blood trail? What would be more dangerous, an animal or a human, more deadly? Well, the most rational would be to call the police, had alcohol in my blood, but my car showed no damage, too much blood on the street for a car with no damage at the front end. I stepped towards the first bushes, they reached my chest, I would have to go further on, would I try to get certainty, but even if it would be only an animal, maybe fighting with a hurt animal? It all made no sense, this

was no stupid horror movie for teens, I was a private eye, it was hours ago that I had started with drinking, not so much alcohol could be still in my blood - I dialed the number of the police.

*

I waited in my car till the police arrived, listened the music. *No master or gods to obey - Save your prayers for yourself / 'Cause they don't work and they don't help.* I liked their new album. The "bonus tracks"?

.....*this is the apocalypse.....the horses.....*

*Stop those voices in your head
They eat away your will
You've everything you need
Hate the way they make you weak
They bring you to your knees
And steal your power away*

The police car arrived, I stopped the music, no more garbage, left the car and walked towards the police car.

*

I felt suddenly like in Brainerd - no, she was not pregnant, no snow around us, much too much in the south, even when in some kind of mountain locality, I greeted her.

"Officer, my name is Peter Maurer, I'm from the city, and I'm a private investigator."

"Fine Mr. Private Eye, I'm not from the city, and you have called for help? Some kind of strange car accident?"

"Well, as you can check up, my car shows no signs of an accident, especially no blood stains. But somewhat down the street - she had come from the other side - there's a lot of blood on the street and a drag mark towards the bushes and the small trees."

"On your side of the road?"

"Yes."

"You drove over "something"?"

"To be honest, I had that feeling. But strangely, my car does not show any sign of any kind of incident."

"You moved your car?"

"No, after the feeling that "something" has happened I stopped the car right here. I've set up a breakdown triangle before the curve."

I pointed downwards towards the next bend.

"You're a private eye?"

"Yes."

I showed her my license.

"Well, I think that I can believe you for a moment that your car shows at least no real damage. But it would be good to examine this later more precisely."

"Of course."

"Did you have a drink?"

"Three cocktails, but hours ago."

"We can do this later. I think I should see the blood."

I led her down the street.

"Wow, much blood - really, no blood on your car?"

"At least not in that way, as would you have run over an animal or a person. Maybe from the blood

on the street."

"I'm hunting, this is a lot of blood, even for a large animal this would be a lot of blood."

"And it's still alive - hopefully it's a "it"."

"Why "it" should be still alive?"

"The blood that leads towards the bushes and trees? The tracks that you can see there?"

"You're from the city?"

"Yes."

"You're hunting?"

"At least no game."

"You're not hunting, what about a dead animal or body and someone has pulled "it" in the undergrowth?"

"Well, that would explain at least some."

"Yeah. You wait here, I will follow the track."

She pulled her weapon out of the holster.

"I've a .45 in my car, maybe you should not go alone?"

"A .45? Not always the size matters. It's hard for men to believe this, but there's a reason why we women are smarter."

"But regardless that fact, maybe it would be no good idea to go alone anyway?"

"Okay, fetch your "tool", I'll wait for you, as women always do."

I jogged up the street, had some problems to breathe as I reached the car, grabbed my .45 and walked back.

"That looked not so much sportive, Mr. Private Eye, but maybe we will not have to run. Follow me."

I followed her, she with her torch in one hand and the duty weapon in the other, I with my torch in one and the "tool" in the other. We reached the small trees.....

"Stop, I think I can see something."

"What!"

"Not sure if you will like it, but I see a forearm and a hand, at least what's left of it."

*

"What will we do now?"

"Walking back and calling for back-up, this is a crime scene now. I will only have a closer look at the body, a woman obviously, that she's dead in fact."

She made a few steps forward, pushed away some branches of a bush so that she could see the body better - the sound of a shot, she fell backwards.

I ducked, looked at her, could see her face, she rolled her body towards some bushes nearby.

"Look for shelter, I'm bullet-proof, there's a fucking sniper!"

I tried to hide behind one of the bushes, near the ground, could no longer see her, but could hear her swearing, she felt pain. I had switched off my torch, hers lay near the body where she had dropped it - luckily the beam of light pointed not in our direction. No further shot could be heard.

"No silencer, why he's not using a silencer - can you hear me?"

I whispered.

"Yes, stay where you are, I will come to you."

"Wouldn't it be better that I come to you, are you badly hurt?"

"I've a bullet-proof vest on, the bullet hit the left shoulder area. I fear that I've a broken collarbone. The sniper uses a fat caliber, it knocked me on the ground, I hope that he has no infrared devices."

"An infrared scope would be fucking, as well as if he could hear us."

"I would say that he's in a far distance, up the mountain, the sound of the shot would suggest this. Would be bad for us, good overview, but the sniper should not hear us."

"Then continue talking, I come to you."

She told me about that she had thought that she had to come to one of this crazy guys from the city -

I'm a private investigator from the city, in a way it seems as that I could have had a car accident, but I see no damage on my car, but a lot of blood on the street. Well, why not, shift nearly over and now this shit - I reached her.

"Let me see where the bullet has hit you."

It was not easy to see something, no moon or something like that, but the hole in her vest wasn't that large.

"Not so much a fat caliber, maybe a full metal jacket or a high-velocity projectile or something like that. It looks like a special rifle that he uses."

"He?"

"Such assholes are nearly always men."

"My words."

Another shot, but we could not see any impact.

"He tries to startle us up, that's good, he has not idea at the moment where we are. But....."

"But....."

"I would say that this shot was definitely nearer. He tries to hunt us."

"How long they will need to send us backing? I hope you used your radio and called for backing?"

"Of course, I'm no amateur detective. Not that long, ten minutes, maybe. I've said that I'm under fire."

"And I?"

"The sniper fired at me, the dead body is a woman, maybe he hates women. He did not fire at you, maybe the shooter is not interested in male game."

"Whatever. If he would find us, he will not let me alive. Shall we try to find better shelter till your colleagues will arrive?"

"He comes from the small trees, we should crawl towards the small trees. Towards the street in no case, we would be an easy aim there."

Another shot, this time we could hear the impact, not far away.

"Fuck, he anticipates where we are - or it was only a lucky shot."

"He comes nearer, but I cannot hear anything. He's still up the hillside, it would make no sense for him to come down. He's in motion, I think he has no real idea where we are."

"How long, maybe we should stay till the back-up arrives?"

"Give me a second.....they should arrive any moment. Yes, maybe it's the best to wait here."

Maybe.....the next shot, this time we could not only hear the impact, the bullet hit the ground very near to my head.

"I fear that he also likes no men."

*

"Towards me!"

Her voice was sharp now, but it was obvious what she thought. He had shot at me, in the direction of my head, obviously he could see my head from the perspective he had now, but not more, most probably not her.

"He has nailed us down now, now the cavalry would be good - if they arrive they will be a fucking good aim. Why he missed my head?"

"Ask the shooter, and I've said to you that I'm no amateur. I told them to stop at mile thirty-two, it's fifty yards up the street after the next bend. But that they should use their sirens, so that the shooter can hear that we get support."

Good timing, just at that moment we heard a siren from afar. She grabbed her radio to give them some information. That the shooter had nailed us down, that the situation had become bad for us, that they should not rush into problems, that they should stop at the milestone.

"You're not good by foot, do you think you could run for a while?"

"You've a damaged shoulder, isn't it more the question if you can run?"

"I'm a tough woman, you're one of this guys from the city. I can handle the pain, at least for a

while."

"What's your plan?"

"You start to run upwards. It's the harder way, but you will run towards our backing. Do not forget to sidestep all the time. I will run downwards. He has to decide on whom he will aim at, but we both will be moving targets, very difficult to hit from a distance. And the pressure that we're no longer alone, maybe the shooter will give up."

"If not?"

"I hope that he hates you more now, than me. One.....two.....three."

She had pointed while counting in a direction, my direction, I started to run. Now everything had to happen automatically, running, sidesteps, from one bush to the other - I waited for the next shot. As it happened, I ducked automatically, but continued to run, no indication that I had been the aim. A salvo, at least twenty or so shots, definitively I wasn't the aim, the shots shredded the night – silence, a deadly silence.

My head nearly exploded - running, do not stop running, continue running, sidesteps, whatever happens down the street you have no means to change it, give him no chance to hunt down the second prey. I nearly crashed into the police officer, had not seen her behind the bush, I stumbled over something, maybe my feet, lay on the ground.

"You're not the shooter, or?"

"He's this other guy from the city, the one Linda has talked about. Where's Linda? Where's the shooter?"

The voice of another woman, I gasped for air.

"She has run downwards, she's hurt, the shooter is somewhere up the hillside, he moves."

"You can drop your gun now, we will do the job now. Walk somewhat more up, this direction, there you will find our car on the street, there you can wait."

"Is it a long way? You both are alone?"

"Others will come soon - you think that we two women cannot handle the situation?"

"I think that there's a mad shooter up the hill, we would need more people to pressure him."

"Wait at the car, soon we will have more people here."

I walked to the police car, two more shots - still Linda? The other police officers? I had still my .45 in hand - yeah Harry, maybe in "Frisco" in the 70s, nowadays you needed other calibers. We lived in a country where every gimp could enter a gun shop, and leave it after a short time better armed than any elite soldier.

The next shot, the same sound as always, he was still active. The car started up, I had needed a moment to hot-wire the police car. The .45 by my side, sirens on, I had to do something.

*

Full throttle, I needed some action - my plan? I had none, something would happen would I corner, all lights on, the sirens as well. Or maybe nothing would happen? It happened something!

The bend behind me, I saw mine and Linda's car, did not hear the shots, but the impacts all the better. Was he a fantastic shooter to hit the car not only once by chance but several times, I drove over 50 miles an hour - did I have time to look at the speedometer? I hated this fucking guns, ammo clips with a hundred rounds, if he wished it, his fucking gun could send them in fifteen seconds, no big deal to hit even a fast driving car.

I heard glass splitting, hollow tones when a bullet hit the metal, I felt something - he maybe could hit the car, but hitting me would be a fluke. I lost control over the car, but managed it not to leave the road on my right side, downhill, but to the left side, towards the bushes and the small trees, uphill. I touched something, the car came to a sudden rest, this idiot had hit me, I opened the door, dropped out. Where he had hit me, one time or more often, severe? - Severe, I had no bullet-proof vest on, Linda had not shown it, but even with her vest on, the bullet had caused bad damage in her shoulder area. Collarbone broken, but most probably also damaged muscle tissue, blood

vessels.....if lucky, she would have an enormous bruise. If not, her shoulder area would be destroyed forever.

Was nice to live in this lucky country, every psycho could not only buy assault weapons - mentally ill, no problem, on a no-fly list, no problem, a Nazi, no problem, this country had fucking guns for everyone. But even as if this would not be enough, you wished the most deadly ammunition possible, hey, the United States offered their patriotic gun lovers everything, Las Vegas proofed! No shots anymore, but suddenly a light in the sky, everything became daylight bright, but where was the tunnel? I passed out.

The Desert Behind The Mountains

In The City Again

In the city again, as always arrived at LAX, as always by FlyAway to Union Station, and per taxi to the best part of downtown, Downtown West. A shower and new clothes at the motel, and then the first highlight, down third street. Gus's Drive-In, what would I enjoy this time? Well, of course, at least if still available, the soup of the day. No matter, whatever, always a perfect choice. And my plans for the next days?

Tomorrow, of course, I would stand up to walk to the metro station, of course the metro to Santa Monica, the beach, the pier, the big ocean, my graveyard, the place of my last rest. And then? As always, I had no distinct plans, what would happen, would happen. Well, not quite.

I would rent a car this, not only public transport and many miles by foot. To drive through the city - for what reason, I still had my feet, still a TAP Card? But there was a place, difficult to reach without a car, the land on the other side of the mountains, the desert land.

Steak, I had the steak, of course the soup of the day, chicken today, salad, as always fresh orange juice and coffee. On the patio, enjoyed the presence of the other guests, a nice neighborhood this was. Maybe I would walk to the park later, as said, I liked it to be here, I was happy to be here again.

Towards The Mountains

I sat in my rented car - no, no American icon, none from the past, none from today. A small European car with gear box, just as I was used to from home, the Ventura Freeway. First I had thought that it would be cool to cross the Colorado Street Bridge, maybe a short stop? But hey, I had stood on the Golden Gate and had looked deep down, and the freeway system was complicated. At home everything was clear structured, straightforward. Here, in the States, in L.A., all these freeways with their many lines and chaotic exits and ramps? Yes, of course a nav, but I thought it would be easier to just follow the Ventura Freeway till San Bernardino, I had reached Azusa so far, with the metro. My further plans?

Well, I would not reach San Bernadino, I would use the 15 to head towards the mountains, to cross them. I would follow the 15 as well after the mountains, a first stop was planned in Victorville, lunchtime. After the lunch again the 15 till Barstow, a round through Barstow, and then the 58 till Kramer Junction, this should be desert land.

I had planned the trip this time, it would be my first time in a desert, maybe not the best area to just start a trip and then just seeing what would happen. I had seen on Google Earth some interesting looking landscapes, I had planned a round trip. Kramer Junction should be the final aim for the first day, I planned to stay for the night there.

The second day. Again the 58 till I would hit the 14, from now on back to the mountains again, back to L.A., back to the big city. A stop in Lancaster and / or Palmdale, still the 14 though the mountains again, till I would hit the San Fernando Valley - I had been in the south part so far, had used public transport, very interesting, had liked it. I reached Pasadena.

Surrounded By Mountains

From Pasadena to Azusa, this way was not new to me - well, at least not with the metro. A densely populated area, the mountains to your left, the very interesting looking mountains. But I was interested in what was behind the mountains, the desert, but still some miles to drive.

Azusa behind me, past interesting looking places, always a stop would have been worthwhile, liked

the houses, would have liked it to have a place here. A botanic garden, I liked botanic gardens, a smaller airport, I liked aviation, so many that lived here, so many whom I would never meet - the freeway interchange, I had to concentrate now.

I would leave the Ventura Freeway, now since a long time named the Foothill Freeway, to change the freeway, the Ontario Freeway would guide me towards the mountains - the mountains.

The mountains, impressive to climb them, now named Barstow Freeway, but I had to head on. And no, not the historic Route 66 I used, I was regularly at Santa Monica Pier, at the end of Route 66, I lusted for the land that I would see soon, downwards I drove now.

The transition from the mountains to the flat land, but this was no dessert, a kind of steppe maybe, but no desert, not now. And, the area was densely populated again, Victorville came nearer, I reached Victorville.

My first aim, I would rest, would eat something, now my travel would begin. And yet, so much I had already seen, days one could have spent to travel from L.A. city to Victorville, I had needed a few hours, not interested to drive as fast as possible, but on the other hand also not interested in loosing time by stopping at interesting places. Now I stopped at the, Made It Vegan.

Vegan In The Desert

I had driven around Victorville a bit to decide on a restaurant, "Made It Vegan" had found my interest. I parked my car - well, the virus. I could order, I could get my food, but I could not sit down and eat it, but this was not the surprising. Tacos and burritos and suchlike, not so surprising in this area, but variations with pollo? Pollo wasn't that much vegan, or could I simply not understand it? I ordered some Asada Tacos and Asada Fries to eat them now, as well as two California Burritos to have them for later, should I get hungry again, before I would reach me last aim for today. And now?

Well, I had planned a short stopover at the Mojave Narrows Regional Park anyway, so I took my food, paid and drove the short distance to park my car at the Horseshoe Lake. A lot of dry land in this area, but a park, a lake, an adjacent housing area with a much larger lake, a country club with a very green golf course - California, every year less rain, every year more fires, but.....the food was very tasty, the area very nice, but I should not spend too much time there. The next aim would be Barstow, and then Kramer Junction. There I would spend somewhat more time, would spend the night. Therefore I entered the 15 again, an interesting landscape awaited me.

The Dry Land

A straight road, dry brown land, flat, soft hills, small somewhat green bushes, scattered, brown clumps of grass, scattered - and yet, I liked it, a in a strange way fascinating landscape, nearly hypnotic. An u-turn, and in a not so long time one could be in the big city again.

I had a lot of water with me, maybe silly, not that empty land, traffic on the street, the phone in my backpack. But it was hot, February, the coldest month in the year, but what should mean this, the last years. Every year less rain but more heat, more fires. Even at the Washington-Canada border heat like in San Diego, a day with clouds and sun, I looked forward to the stars at night.

The distance from Victorville to Barstow was not much, only a very few miles, but I had the feeling for some time, that the street could be endless, I stopped the car at the side of the road. Why should one decide to live here? In the morning I had been in the middle of the big city, now it seemed that for the next thousand miles no human settlement would be reachable, a feeling that gave me calm, that comforted me. I entered the car again, drank nearly a whole bottle of water, and very soon I passed "The Outlets of Barstow" and a McDonald's.

The Way To Kramer Junction

I left the 15 and entered Barstow Heights, a very strange area for someone like me. The rectangular spaces, circumscribed by streets, built-up with two houses normally, with large, mostly fenced-in areas, of course mostly with a pool, if not visible, then behind the house. This was a desert area - or? But this was not Barstow as such. Barstow as such not so large, but of course, more densely populated, but of course pools also there, passed a Subway and a Domino's Pizza, two nice little parks, Roy's Cafe looked interesting, the Village Cafe also. But this should be only a drive through, therefore I did not stop.

Amigos Restaurant, Plata's Mexican Food, Rancho Mexicana, I nearly stopped the car now, but I had an aim in mind. So, I passed Sunny's Too Tavern also, to hit the 58 now, the street that would lead me to Kramer Junction. And yet, I drove through an agricultural area right after Barstow, the green circles of different sizes looked strange in the brown dryland, it nearly seemed as water would be no topic in this area. The Californian curse, as such the soil was very fertile, only water was needed, water, the matter that got rarer with every year. I entered the desert again, followed the Mojave-Barstow Highway, a short side trip to one of the strange-looking landscapes - Google Earth - an old airfield? What a short trip, Barstow to Kramer Junction, and yet, so many impressions in a seemingly unimpressive landscape. Again, the straight street, no clouds anymore, the sun up high, I walked through a desert, no water anymore, waited till it all would end, with a smile on my face - I reached Kramer Junction.

Kramer Junction

Kramer Junction - looking at the map, it had been obvious, this was the place to stay for the night, not Barstow, and definitely not Boron, it had to be Kramer Junction.

Kramer Junction - it had all one would need. Not the solar farm, but a place to eat, not the Burger King or the Subway, but the Roadhouse Restaurant, a place to sleep, the Relax Inn, and especially an overnight parking which I would not need because, of course, I could park at the motel overnight. The Mojave Desert around, Kramer Junction had all one could dream of. I left the highway, only to turn right just after leaving it, I had no reason for a rush - the "Kramer Junction Pottery" and the "Antiques", but first the pottery.

Well, had I to say that much of the stuff seemed somewhat.....kitschy to me? But then I saw some special animals and I had found my objects, they looked very impressive to me - and the prices? They seemed very fair to me, to say it that way, at least I could not imagine that one could buy such a high-quality pottery in the city for such a price. Well, I was definitely no expert for such objects, but they looked like made by a skilled person, at least to me, very true-to-live, I had to buy the wolves - it were wolves? A large one lying, another large one and two small ones howling, I as very satisfied with my purchase!

The "antiques" shop - well, from Europe, my town of birth, way over a thousand years old, "antique" had a very different meaning at home. But these were the United States, and it was unbelievable what one could buy here. I had seen such places in TV, even in Europe one could see this guys in the States buying nearly everything, nearly everything was "antique" for them - this was the place. I was overwhelmed and decided to buy nothing, but I would pass by tomorrow again, on my way to the 58 again - maybe a second stop to come back, before heading back to the big city? I entered my car again, drove a few yards, and parked again. This time in the parking lot of the Roadhouse Restaurant.

The Roadhouse Restaurant

I entered the place, a nice room with wooden tables of different sizes and comfortable looking chairs - well, no L.A. fine dining restaurant interior, but cozy looking, and I had a lot of hunger, had eaten one of the burritos, the other one still in the car, and I was no fan of this "hip" L.A. must-go restaurants, liked the patio of Gus's Drive-In, I chose one of the small tables at the wall, had not to wait long, a waitress came.

A beautiful woman, I thought - why not? I was surprised about my thoughts, no beautiful women in the desert, or at least not at a place like Kramer Junction? Her beauty was not that of a L.A. / Hollywood beauty, this boring beauty, not to talk about this ugly beauty of artificial Kardashian breasts, of Botox faces, she was a natural beauty. Younger than I, but this was not difficult, in her forties maybe? Whatever, she had a nice smile.

"Thank you."

She gave me the menu.

"Do you have orange juice?"

"Yes, of course, fresh squeezed orange juice."

"Then I would like to start with an orange juice and a coffee with milk and sugar."

She walked back and I started to read the menu, many interesting dishes, have had looked at the menu on the Internet already. I needed not very long therefore, and as she came back with the orange juice and the coffee and I could order.

"So many nice dishes on your menu. It's good that I will stay for the night. This will give me at least a chance to have also breakfast here tomorrow. But I would take the rip eye medium for now, no soup but the salad, it's still very hot here in the desert, steamed vegetables and mashed potatoes, also the mushrooms - I've really a lot of hunger."

She smiled, and I was unsure about, how I should interpret her smile. Well, many truckers here of course, maybe my order was not that large at all?

"Would it be able to change the dessert? The lemon meringue pie seems to be interesting, à la mode with vanilla ice and cream? I would pay an additional price, of course."

"No problem, sir. Changes are no problem."

She walked back again, with the menu, and I had to wait, till she would come back with my food. I emptied the orange juice very fast, I was thirsty, but had drunk a lot during the day, but I had also sweated a lot - would it hadn't been better to drive to the motel first? A shower would have been not bad, I feared that I would smell, all that sweat, the truckers? I feared that they would take a shower first, then they would enter a restaurant, I felt insecure, started to sweat, not because of the heat, not heard her.

"Another orange juice or something else to drink, sir?"

"Well, yes....."

"Some water now?"

"You have mineral water? Sparkling? It's my first time in the desert. Even now, in February, it's pretty hot for me, even in the evening now."

"I would recommend you non-carbonated water. Our water is excellent, even here in the desert - you're not from here?"

"No, I'm.....well, a tourist or so."

"But it's not your first time in Los Angeles? You said that it would be your first time in the desert, you did not say that it would be your first time in Los Angeles or California - you're from Germany?"

"That's true.....?"

"Your accent, a typical German accent. I bring you some water."

The prospect of some cold water was promising, she came back with a large carafe with cold water, also with the salad as starter.

"My accent, is it that obvious?"

"Well, some of your words sound very "German"."

"Some Germans live in Los Angeles, some actors and musicians. Do you hear a German accent often?"

"Well, we have TV also in the desert, and Germany was often in the news over the last few weeks - one of my neighbors has German ancestors, he has only a slight, but very typical, accent."

"Here in Kramer Junction?"

"No, most who work here are living in Boron. I also."

"Baron, I will pass Baron tomorrow."

A bell rang.

"Food is ready, maybe your steak? You should eat your salad."

"Sorry, I keep you back from working."

"Oh no, had been a nice conversation."

A Fine Dinner

It became a very nice dinner, the food was fantastic, and I had definitely no hunger anymore afterwards - the pie was delicious. I drank another coffee, I felt very satisfied, it had begun to darken, hoped that I could see the desert stars when stepping out. I closed my eyes, felt like at home.

Linda, the waitress, came to ask if I would have a further wish, but I was absolutely satisfied. I paid and walked out.

The Stars Of The Desert

It was shocking, to see all this stars above me, the starry firmament. Jupiter and Saturn near the horizon, the waning moon would appear later, but she did not disturb the star's glister yet. I walked a few steps away, enough to be near the cars, even more stars visible yet, still "in midst" Kramer Junction.

Some lights still disturbed, the restaurant, some houses, some cars and some trucks on the street, but even yet it was such a beautiful sight. How much more it would hit me in midst the desert, no streets, no cars, no houses, no restaurant anymore? I thought to drive, but then I stopped, under a tree, sat down, first I had to try to come to terms with what could be already seen here, in midst the.....town.

I lent against the trunk of the tree, looked at the stars between the branches and the leaves - Andromeda, millions of light years away, so effortlessly to see. The twin cluster not far away from the distant galaxy, so much could be seen, my cheeks got wet, not from the dew. No time was anymore, only the stars moved slowly. Some disappeared behind branches and leaves, others appeared, and I heard a soft voice.

"I feel it would be better not to disturb you, but I saw you on my way to my car. You have sat the whole time here outside, since you have left the restaurant?"

"Yes, but it had been only a shorter time."

It had been Linda, the waitress.

"Well, it's after midnight now, the restaurant has closed already, I'm on my way back to Boron."

"When I've left the restaurant?"

"Around 10 PM I would say - it's because.....the desert can be a freezing place at night, and you wear only light summer clothes. Good during the day, but, especially if you plan to sit for longer on the ground, you might fetch a jacket at least, long trousers would be good as well. People who not know it underestimate it very often, how chilly a desert can be at night, so hot during daylight."

"You're right, now that you say it, I feel the cold now. I thought to drive into the desert, to leave even the last houses behind me - the sky has to be even more breathtaking there."

"Oh yes, but you're not used to it, you said that it's your first time in the desert."

"That's true."

"I would strictly advise against doing it, to drive into the desert, especially at night. But you have only to do some more steps, up there you can find a very dark area, but first you should put on some more clothes."

"Would you show me that place, where I can see the stars even better?"

"Why not?"

Linda

"Better now?"

"Yes, has been a good idea to put on other pants and a jacket. Of course, have heard about it, that the desert can be freezing at night, but the drop in temperature, so fast, it's very strange."

"Yeah, and yet it's not that cold as such, but the difference compared to a very few hours ago is difficult for people who are not used to it."

"People like me."

"Well, it's your first time in the desert."

"You're living your whole life here, or do you moved to Borow, from the city or so?"

"Why all the people who come here to California think, that we all would have to live in Los Angeles or San Francisco, or, that at least, we all would dream about to live there? California is a little more than "L.A." or the Bay Area."

"Yeah, I know the Central Valley a bit, all the farming there. But here, in the desert?"

"Kramer Junction, a place where several traffic lines meet, cars as well as railways."

"Yeah, it's a good place for a rest, a good place to offer food and accommodation. And then there's a mine nearby, I've seen it on Google Earth."

"Yes, a lot of the people living here work there."

"What kind of mine is it?"

"A gold mine."

"Really! Oil in Los Angeles and gold in Kramer Junction, that's also a part of California, maybe not the best - I mean the gold rush, had not been the best time in the Californian history."

"Depends on, there are always winners and losers."

"You like it, living here in the desert? I mean, only some miles away, on the other side of the mountains, there's this city, people around the world dream about to live there."

"But not in Kramer Junction or Borow, that's what you mean?"

"I do not feel certain, there are many places in Los Angeles, boring and banal, stupid and deeply corrupt. But on the other hand, there are places I felt deeply in love with. I do not feel certain, I don't feel that I would like it, to live in this city - apart from that, it's often hot for me even in February, I would not be interested in, to be there in summer. Maybe in the north of California, or even more northern, but not in Los Angeles."

"I fear.....that living in the desert is definitively no option for you then, even when our night skies are very wonderful."

"This night sky is breathtaking. At the horizon it brightens, the moon will rise soon. No, daylight wouldn't be good for me, but the nighttime would be mine. But that's maybe somewhat too kitschy."

"Well, more northern?"

"San Francisco is much greener than Los Angeles. I hope that I can be also in Portland and Seattle one day - yeah, with heatwaves and burning woods. I fear, it will be very difficult in the future, to find a nice and cozy place to stay."

"Maybe it depends more on, to find someone with whom to stay?"

"You mean that at the end, every place could be a good place, or a bad one? That there are other circumstances at a higher level at the end, that would decide upon it, whether it would be a good or a bad place to live?"

"Isn't it a nice sight, the moon arising from the horizon? I once sat at Santa Monica Beach, watching the sun drowning in the ocean, it had been such a wonderful sight. But isn't this not also a wonderful sight?"

A Woman Named Linda

Back In The City

Sat in my office, not waited that someone would phone me. Would someone try to phone me, this person would hear only a message, that I would be not in town at the moment, that I could not definitively say when I would be back again. Sounded better as to say that the doctor had told you that it would take still some time, most probably it would be never again as before. But what should this mean, I was a fifty-six-year-old man, it would be never again as it had been with twenty or thirty or so. Mentally I was still a youngster, maybe a shrink would say that my intellectual development had stopped in an early stage, but had this to be a disadvantage? But my body had not heard this, unfortunately, my body had not stopped to "develop" in an early stage. But of course, it helped also not really, had your body to deal with some additional metal.

I raised my tea cup, still pain in my left arm, as a left-hander fucking - I used the right to sip at my hot tea. One of the big classics of my youth, black tea with leaves of roses. Well, of course not the highest quality of tea, would have "more sophisticated" tea in my tea cabinet, but I needed this taste from time to time, like vanilla tea. Sitting in a brand-new police car, highly armored, the pride of the whole police department - I used it once, and it had been junk. And even sitting in such a high-tech vehicle I had not been fully protected, not at all. Wow, impressive, what a fucking bullet was able to cause today, you had only to be happy enough to live in a country where they allowed everyone to buy every fucking rifle and every fucking ammunition. And yet, how one had to feel, to be his aim, only protected by a fucking cheap bullet-proof vest?

I thought about to drive home, for what? To watch the fucking news, to see lousy wankers like McCarthy or DeSantis, hearing pompous swines like Jordan or Cruz, having to puke when seeing Carlson. We would need more women like The Squad, I absolutely not shared all their opinions, but it would be nice to see them in power, kicking these males in their asses and nuts. But maybe this was too much dreaming, Biden was better than I had thought, but it would be necessary to overcome this ideology of the Clinton Dems, also Obama had been a Clinton Dem.

Maybe I should drive around for some time, till the night would fall in, all night long, till dawn, hearing music, trying to forget it. But this would make no sense, one could not change facts, one could deny facts, in Washington they did it every day, but in the end the facts would be the facts. Climate change? It made no sense to deny it, it made no sense to deny that the climate change was man made, the climate change would not be impressed by all this denying, the climate change would come. Systemic racism, domestic terrorism, a flock of ruthless politicians that stained the Capitol every day? Of course, one could deny all this, but this not erased it.

At the beginning I had counted the days, and in fact not so much had been since then, but it was the uncertainty, would you know a fixed date.....till then, and then, but so? Maybe, eventually, we have to wait, we have to see, if nothing unexpected will happen, could be that - that demoralized you. Like waiting in a trench, knowing that the enemy cannot be far away, that the next battle would be only a matter of time, but not knowing, when. I picked the phone and dialed the number, one time I had to do it.

"It's me, Peter - Linda."

The Price Of Blood

How much is a gallon of blood, or two, worth, pumping lungs, a beating heart, a non-dead brain? How much bloodshed is an aim worth? A logical answer could be, that it would highly depend on the aim, the reason.

To stop Adolf Hitler or a young African American man in his car, who would say that this would be the same. But what if, those who would move out to stop the killer, who would have to respond one

who killed dozens in ten minutes, and wounded hundreds, killed quite a number in a supermarket in seconds, who would outperform them in firepower totally, what price would then be still acceptable, how much would be the price of one or two gallons of blood then?

*

Two dead police officers, one no longer fit for operations, an attacker who not pulled back until he got combatted from air and at the same time by arriving additional forces, who had lost the overviews of the battle zone. He pulled back, he managed it even under these circumstances to pull back, to drive home, to shower, to store his weapons, to go to bed. Yeah, the police managed it to track him down only two days later, he just cleaned one of his weapons, drank a nice cup of hot tea, a gun battle, a big explosion, more casualties, a dead coward.

Data that showed that he had planned something big, that he could not wait, had to do something, dozens of weapons, thousands of rounds, highly explosive material. Jews who corrupted the world, "niggers" who stained the world, Latinos who tried to destroy the pure white society, a faked president, a cheated president, a first try in January, a first battle in a just beginning war, all this fucking shit and more.

*

A highly divided nation, a nation that knew in many ways no limits anymore. Guns, no problem. Calling a human being scum or vermin, no problem. Lying to a degree that it became breathtaking and surreal, no problem. Suppressing those who fit not in a strict scheme established by a small rich group, no problem - a list that could be endless. But to vote, why this should be easy? Simply entering a grocery not having to fear to get killed, why? Would this nation be a human being it would be called schizophrenic, highly disordered, a very long stay in a nut house.

*

"I would like to invite you to a cocktail."

The Magic Of A Good Cocktail

"A nice place here, really, with very sophisticated cocktails."

"Well, a bar that calls itself "Old Fashioned" should be a bar that offers a classic impression, and behind the counter should be a bartender with at least some skills."

"And this bartender has definitively not only "some skills"."

"The best you can get you get, if you simply give him some hints, what your mood tells you at the moment. An idea, a taste, a certain kind of alcoholic beverage, something like that. It sometimes seems as, the less you tell him, the better the cocktail will fit."

"And if I tell him nothing?"

"You've told him already quite a lot. You have a cocktail already, and you told him that you like the combination of sweetness and bitterness very much, that you like the taste from the overproof very much. Not that he would know everything from you now, but at least that much, that he could start with some recommendations."

"That's right, we reveal most of the time more than we think and wish."

"Can I ask you a personal question?"

"If you not necessarily expect an answer."

"You hate that you responded to my call - that in that night, I mean?"

"I was nearest, it was my job, I'm a police officer."

"Yeah, office work from now on."

"Could have been worse."

"Yes, two dead."

"And two more seriously wounded as they tried to arrest him, both still in hospital. A wonder that no one got killed at that ground, that's our risk. I will see you at the funeral?"

"I have no distinct information about it."

"Tomorrow at ten, you need the place?"

"I'm not good in such events. We weren't colleagues, but maybe I would have to honor them."

"You not like funerals?"

"You?"

"You get used to it, over the years. I could be there now as well - I see you?"

"Can I ask you another personal question?"

"The same as above."

"You've an office job now, I always thought that it would be good to have a.....secretary."

"I'm no secretary! I'm still a police officer, I'm still somewhat over-qualified to work as a "secretary". Maybe my physical skills are limited now, but no bullet hit my head - not mine at least."

"Sorry, maybe "secretary" was a stupid description. I'm superb in business, I could need some help, someone with a police background would be excellent."

"As a part owner?"

"Well, I thought about to open a new agency in a smaller town, more in the mountain area maybe?"

"That's a pity. I thought that living in the big city could be interesting now. I could use public transport for instance, difficult to drive with one arm, would have many possibilities nearby here.....sounds good to me?"

"Let be told by a person who lived his whole life in this city, the most you've heard is all smoke and mirrors in fact. Over the years I thought, why you're still doing this, why not looking for a nicer place, with not that much trouble every day, only to drive to the office can be totally nerve-racking. When was the last time that you stuck in a traffic jam for two hours or more?"

"Two hours or more?"

"Now you see it, the big city is shit, smaller cities are much cozier."

"Yeah, with nice psycho neighbors."

"Okay, that was not nice, but how many murders you had last year?"

"I was involved in none, I think three.....or five?"

"In a week? We have statistically every day more than one murder, one suicide, several rapings, not to talk about other severe crimes. And I talk about the city as such, not about the suburban areas. I did some research on the Internet and have found an offer, one could use it perfectly for a private investigation firm. Maybe you could tell me something about this neighborhood?"

"Well, not the best neighborhood, but sound, but I fear that the market for private investigators in my city will be very limited."

"Well, I've information that this city has only one substantial agency at the moment, after another one has closed last month."

"You see market potential?"

"I'm a good private dick, I've some reputation, with a good partner - yes, I see a lot of potential. The city has a little over a hundred thousand citizens - well, many suburbans of this city have more citizens, but this is my point. A hundred thousand are enough, no one need millions."

"And the bar, this is a very fine bar?"

"One would need a little more than an hour to reach the city. Two hours or more traffic jam was no joke. I know enough who need for their daily commute more than two hours, no matter if they use a car or public transport."

"I'm stressed sometimes, when I need more than half an hour to reach the grocery."

"Is there a weekly market?"

"There's one near my home, but it's definitively not the only one in the city. You can buy food directly by farmers, we have two very nice indoor markets - you like it to cook?"

"I'm a single - I've mentioned it? I'm not the best, but I know some nice recipes. Of course, I will not insinuate that I would be the better cook."

"Well, I'm very well known at the pizzeria near my home, as well as at the drive-in counter of the local fast food restaurant."

"You're living in your nice and cozy city and eat the same shit as the always stressed people here?"

"Seems so - maybe you've wrong information about living in a smaller city like mine?"

"I would like to try it."

"Nobody hinders you."

"What about my job offer?"

"I would need further information. Maybe we will meet tomorrow again?"

"I think so."

Lusts And Longings

Findings About Humans

He thought, was there something to it, that the older you got, the more you would change? Well, bullshit he thought, maybe on the surface, but never deep inside - well, maybe with drugs and pharmaceuticals, substances that change - or destroy - your synaptic connections. Right in my youth, he thought, right in my youth most of TV had been shit for me, that has not changed, on the contrary, especially in the last few years it has got worse and worse, only there, to dull the peoples minds.

What, if school showed you, as a school kid, all those wonders there outside? Only to think about music, music in its totality, not to learn notes or what a rondo is, only to listen to music, every week two hours listening to music, every Wednesday, from 10 AM till 12 AM for instance. What these two hours could bestow a young person! And two hours of literature, only listen to a text someone would read. Two hours visual arts, looking at pictures and sculptures, buildings. Two hours about the wonders of the universe, two hours about the life of animals and the diverse plants, just like the famous explorers did it, what an astonishing timetable this could be, how much this could inspire a young person.

But would this person longer been interested to work at MacDonald's, or eating this overpriced shit? Would they not demand for more, now knowing what all it would give? A young person had all possibilities to change, not set in the bleak adult reality, the synaptic connections not created or even permanently weld, a brain still in the phase of formation, not like his old brain.

Lusts and longings, the human driving force, or the human perdition? Overcoming all lusts and longings, the door to a higher human consciousness? Nothing left to lose, pathetic Janis, flying with the helicopter to Lyle to get the next fucking tattoo - I fucking die, when she sings, don't you cry, when she cries!

Buying Stuff

*Terminated
(For the moment?)*

Grand Opening

Maurer & Haines Private Investigations

"Looks nice, the sign."

"Haines & Maurer?"

"I stick with it, "Maurer & Haines" sounds simply better."

"The amateur named ahead of the professional?"

"I stick also with it, that we will have equal rights."

"We own both a half of the company?"

"And the customers can decide whom of us they wanna hire. Should a case become work-intensive, we can work together on it."

"The famous private dick from the big city and a former local police officer? Yes, this will get interesting, whom the locals will prefer."

"I'm no famous private investigator, had a few big cases, most of them ended not very flattering."

"Well, but they gave you a certain reputation, some compared you with....."

"..... yes, and with the others as well. And the fun fact? They are all fictional characters, they are boring."

"Why they should be boring? Others would say that they are iconic."

"Well, an author wrote their stories. He decided whether the case got solved or not, who died or not – not really the real life? One could write the same story a thousand times, always with a different outcome - reality always knows only one outcome. You dislike the movie's ending, tell the director to shoot a different ending or the movie will never be released. Where's the thrill, the thrill that reality gives you?"

"Maybe the thrill of a novel is to see, what the author has decided, if he decides something. It's like Schrödinger's cat, maybe reality is boring? Reality opens the box, now you can see whether the cat is dead or alive. But in a novel everything is possible, maybe even after the last full stop. Maybe the cat is a spitting cat, or a purring cat? Maybe a pet cat, maybe an alley cat, maybe a stray cat? Maybe a tabby cat, or a spotty cat, or maybe even a ginger cat? Maybe a domestic cat, maybe a big cat? Reality would determinate it, but in a novel all these and many more opportunities would be possible - isn't that much more thrilling?"

"But....."

".....I'm Linda, in a novel I can be small or tall, a pretty darling or an ugly bitch, everything you would be able to imagine."

"But the author will determinate it."

"Not necessarily."

*

"You like your new small-town living?"

"Well, it's not a that small town, and yes, I like it to live here now."

"You really don't miss the big city, with all the opportunities there?"

"We had this before, it's easy to drive to the city, I'm privileged. I can live here, in this nice town, can work here, can drive to the big city whenever I want to. I can have the best from both worlds."

"It's not finally spoken if we will earn enough with the detective agency. We have to finance two livings with it, yours and mine. No disaster so far, but we have to become better."

"I'm satisfied so far - sure, I have to contribute private money thus far, but I had expected this. It's still a very difficult and puzzling time. Wildfires everywhere, floods at other places, the pandemic, Biden battered now, he appears frail now, Afghanistan is a real mess. The attacks today, I was ten years old, the disaster in Vietnam, I was a boy, this is the Vietnam of the old man now, forty-six

years later. And I've the feeling that this time the defeat is worse than back then. I've the feeling that this defeat will have very brutal consequences, especially for the Afghan people. No, in such times I'm very satisfied that we had such a smooth start so far."

"Bread-and-butter business so far, but I agree therewith that it could be worse. Also, that we're privileged. I could work for a security firm for instance should we fail, office duty or training and education for instance. How many spectacular cases you had in all those years?"

"A handful maybe? Most is daily routine, as for every police officer, a lot of paper work. But this means not that you cannot help people also therewith. Like a police officer who helps a person by an everyday problem. Maybe a bagatelle for you, but for this person maybe essential and very helpful."

"But we should be in the black one day nevertheless."

"Yes, but this is normal. I had months and years when I earned a lot of money, really a lot of money, and this has nothing to do with "spectacular" cases. But then you have periods of drought sometimes - you should not spend all your money when it woks well, that's the only rule you should be mindful of. We had a soft opening so far, to have some first cases, to get some reputation, to become somewhat visible. Only very limited ads so far, we will change this soon. And hey, for sixty percent of our customers so far, you had been the first contact person. This could be a first trend."

"Well, nicely said, but with only a few routinely cases so far?"

"This will change very soon, I'm convinced about that."

"Really?"

"Sure, otherwise this cannot become a series of short stories, it's as simple as that."

"Well, if so....."

A Vicious World

Yellow Ribbons And Golden Stars

A yellow ribbon transforms into a golden star, hope into tears. A question of meaning, of to live or to die, in his country all this was not a part of society, at least not in that way, a very different historic past. Walking down the streets, seeing the trees, the flags no longer with a blue star, some with not only one of this so nice looking golden stars. Dying, the craziness of war, as if there could be even only one reasonable reason for killing another person, all this so-called reasons only creations of mad minds, crazy, sadistic, brutal, schizophrenic, megalomaniac, a pestilence has infected humankind, severe fever convulsions have seized the body, more dead than alive, a live and death fight, not finally decided yet. A yellow ribbon wafts gently in the wind, would it yet never become one of this golden stars, this so shiny Golden Stars.

A Trench 1916

Poison gas wafts over the battlefield, dead soil, soaked with the blood of millions, near to going mad in the trench, nobody can imagine at this moment that this insanity will ever become outperformed - and yet, only a few decades later it will happen

Torn Into Pieces

Bodies, torn into pieces, the smell of death wafts in the air. Desperation, chaos, pain - and yet, some are happy, talk about a success, would be even more satisfied would they see more torn up bodies, more desperation, more chaos, more pain.

Europe Again In War

Flags wafting in the wind, many flags, an ocean of flags, they love flags. They love symbols, they love themselves, they love to deliver speeches, to explain, why they who follow them are more worth than others, why they who are different have to become erased. Many cheer, unleashed, too many cheers, the cheering knows no limit, it's nice to know to be someone special.

The Greed To Dominate

The smell of greed wafts over the land, the greed for dominance. The more one dominates, the higher one's status, the more one counts. Men lusting to dominate women, men lusting to dominate other men, men lusting to dominate the world, men lusting to dominate everything. It's a disgusting smell, but some like this smell, like they like the smell of rotting flesh when wallowing in the cadavers of those they had dominated.

Important Cases, Spectacular Cases, Cash Cow Cases - The Daily Routine

The Daily Routine

"One could say, a day like any other, but that wouldn't be true, at least not when being a woman."

"It's a shame what happens in Texas at the moment, and the acting of the Supreme Court is devastating. All in this country is politically driven, even the decisions of the Supreme Court. It's a joke that the president installs those judges, that's a mere joke."

"And it's a joke that a small white and rich minority has such a power and thinks that they can force everyone to accept their rules."

"I could accept this in some ways, at least if they followed their own rules. It's like with those TV pastors. They preach their rules, and behind closed doors they give a shit on them. Their rules are always for the others, they will have every right to bend them."

"Sometimes I could - oh, the phone. Shall I.....?"

"Sure."

Texas, maybe it would be better would they decide to elect one of their cattle as governor, this piece of cattle would not act more animalistic than their fucking governor. And in Florida, the same fucking conservative wanker - something was wrong with our nation. In New York they drowned, next door the storm destroyed all the homes.....would I be religious then I would say, Armageddon is near. But, I wasn't religious, nature was sick of this fucking humans, that was my theory, the new variant maybe, Mu?

"What?"

"Shall we?"

"What?"

"The call.....?"

I needed a moment to realize that Linda had still the phone in hand, she covered it in a way that the other side should not be able to hear us.

"Well, yes."

"You've no idea, or."

"A case?"

"Yes, but....."

".....a case is a yes, we're new in the business here in town."

"Okay."

At The Country Club With No Golf Clubs

"We've still plenty of time, that's one of the benefits of living in a smaller city. Not for hours stillstand on the freeways, two times a day."

"We have also traffic jams."

"Yeah, in front of red traffic lights. This are no traffic jams."

"The arrogance of towners - I'm surprised that you're interested in this case."

"Why not?"

"Well, there are some statements you made?"

"My life was long and I said a lot - details?"

"What I mean is, that you're known to work often for people with not so much money, sometimes you worked for free?"

"Well, that's not entirely wrong, and one of the reasons why I'm still no rich man. But also I had to make a living, and living in the city was costly - the rent for the office, my condo? I have to pay only a fraction here. No, I had also to have a surplus at the end of the months, not necessarily every month, but at the end of the year? You need also cases that allow you to make money."

"That's the reason why we drive to the country club now? Where the money is."

"The possible client gave you no details at the phone, as normally. We will hear what's the matter, and then we can decide if we will do the job."

"And our daily rate will be higher than normally?"

"It's the country club, one of this American institutions. Every little town has its country club for the local gentry, or two or three. Sure, we will not work for free."

"You own golf clubs?"

"Are you crazy? Can you name me anything that's more boring than golfing? Of course, to meet people with your "social status", to do "networking"."

"Are you convinced that we should hold this meeting?"

"Yes, for not only one reason."

"They would be?"

"We're new in town, I'm new in town, our business has to develop. I'm not only since yesterday in this business, had a handful of spectacular cases, had some important cases, a very few times I had the feeling afterwards that I had won. But then you need a case from time to time that can be a cash cow for you. And, country club? No golf clubs, but why not some networking?"

"Well, there we are, the local country club - not bad or?"

"No, not bad. The rich know how to live also in the countryside - I would kill myself would I have to spend my weekends at such a fucking boring place. Let's park."

"That's the country club, they have valet parking."

"Latino scum or a nigger?"

"That's not politically correct!"

"What, that not a few who spend their time here have such a thinking, or that I address it?"

*

A Latina woman parked our car. Nobody had to ask why they had hired her, nobody had to ask that she would have deserved a better job. We entered the enormous building, of course a portico with large columns and Corinthian capitals, just like it had to be. The inside was not less sophisticated - of course, it was built for sophisticated people, not for an unambitious guy like me.

It was like in one of this famous world-class hotels. The Four Seasons in L.A. could come to mind, famous for so much, or the maybe Château Marmont. They looked glamorous from the front side, if you entered the hotel from this side. But if you entered the hotel from the backside, then one could see another world, not very "sophisticated", but often ugly, bad and somber, if not worse - I had some background information. But we entered the country club from the front side, so everything was okay. We walked to the reception desk. Of course, a friendly smiling good-looking young woman, but of course with modest make-up, awaited us - beside her the sportive young man for the women and gay members. Did they have gay members? Rather than blacks in any case, but we lived in enlightened times, an African American golfer was a good poster boy for every country club, as long as no Latinos or Chinese or Koreans.....disturbed the mood.

"What can I do for you? This is your first time in our wonderful country club?"

I hoped that it could be the last time!

Sitting Around The Table

Well, after we had said who we are, we ended at a table. A nice table, wood, most probably more expensive than our whole office furniture. The rest of the conference room also not bad. Artworks of course, pictures, two sculptures, and most probably the vase was a designer piece, at least it was an ugly vase. The chairs, uncomfortable, no words about them, my chair behind my desk had not cost a Benjamin. I had the feeling that Linda thought the same. We were four persons in all, two women, two men. The other man started the conversation.

"As I said to your partner on the phone....."

"....."she" is not "my partner", we both are owners of the agency with equal rights. There's no difference between her and me, you could also address her, but talking with both of us would be maybe a clever idea."

"I think that you know the wording of the phone call?"

"Of course, we can start with the substantial matters."

"Straight ahead, I've expected nothing than that."

"And we both are still not alone in the room."

I looked at the other woman at the table. I had politically incorrect thoughts, that she could be a star in every office porn, she was simply perfect.

"Miss Laurence will contribute later something."

"Wouldn't it be nice to tell us who she is - maybe I can address her directly without asking you first?"

"Yes, sometimes reputation is very telling. Miss Laurence, well, we can see her as my right-hand man."

"The "man" for the dirty jobs - nice to meet you, Miss Laurence. Do you like your job?"

"You're right, Philip, he's very straight."

"You can say a hick, I like it straight."

"It's always the same with supposed alpha leaders, maybe we could talk about the case?"

"Well, Miss Haines, an excellent idea. It's a somewhat delicate matter, about we have to talk. We have a little problem, but I'm confident that we can solve it with your help."

One of the good things of being a private investigator and not a cop was, that a cop had to do every job, a private investigator had the possibility to say: No! And I had the feeling that I would pronounce exactly this word very soon. I was definitively at the wrong place at the moment.

A Dirty Story

"We all know these stories all the well. One of our female employees, I should say former employees, accused a long-time member of having raped her. And before you react too quickly, Miss Haines, give me some time to give you some additional information."

I looked at Linda, she was not amused about the heard, I gave her a sign. He should continue, it would be interesting to hear his story, a story we all knew all to well.

"I think that I speak for both of us when I say, that we're interested in to hear the whole story."

I looked at Linda.

"Of course. Please continue, Mr. Gardener."

"I know all to well that this sounds not to be in favor for us, but let me continue."

Nobody disagreed.

"This female employee accused one of our most respected member, a man beyond every suspicion. She did not go to the police, not hired a lawyer, not went to the press, waited two days, and then she stood in my office and accused this member. But what was even more interesting, she's done not want that the defendant should get punished. No, she wanted money, a lot of money, otherwise she would make the case public - your assessment Miss Haines?"

"Well, if there was no raping, it would give no evidence for a raping, especially not two days later. I would say that you did not pay and fired her, Mr. Gardener."

"She told me that she would have evidence, she gave me no details. But she had a superb idea about all the trouble she could make us, only by claiming that this man would have raped her. Well, we talked a bit longer, we talked about money, and we found a sum that was acceptable for both of us. I have not to tell you that the accused member has no awareness of this incident."

"Fine, case solved, we can leave - or why we're here?"

"Because this was only the first act."

"So, the story has a continuation?"

"Yes, Miss Haines. Someone blackmails us now, a week ago we got the first letter, three so far."
"Any ideas regarding whom the sender is?"
"We think that it's our former employee, greed for more money."
"Greed for money, a very unknown abomination at a place like this."
Well Linda, she started to enjoy being no longer a cop, unbound now - she looked at me.
"I have to agree with my partner, can we cut to the chase? Your former employee has an address?"
"We're no idiots, she no longer lives there - well, she's rich now."
"You asked me for help, or I'm wrong? Rich in your world or in hers?"
"I am not convinced that....."
".....and I thought that you would be aware of my reputation."
"I think that we should let Mr. Maurer develop his thoughts, Philip."
"Wow, your second line. The less they say, the more important they are, the more dangerous they are. The postmark?"
"Within the city limits."
"So, your idea is, that your former employee is still in the city and tries now, to get more money?"
"Yes. Who else should blackmail us? I know everything, I make it public if you don't pay. Very creative."
"Another woman whom she told about it, her boyfriend, many possibilities."
"Maybe it would be good to start with the obvious?"
"I guess that you're an excellent private eye - I like it when others explain me my job. Is it difficult to run a place like this? My job is sometimes effortless, nearly trivial, and sometimes very complex, even deadly. You should not tell me what I've to think or to do. You can hire me or not, but you will never buy me or own me. Still my question, why we're here? To find your former employee?"
"To find the person who blackmails us."
"Teachable. Why not the police, why not another agency, why we?"
"I think that the police is obvious. The other agencies in the city are good to find dogs and run away wives. You've your reputation, and together with a former cop from the town? I think that this should be an excellent team."
"Have we to talk about money?"
"No."
"I need some more information, the letters of course - and the information, who Miss Laurence is. I mean in reality."
"I doubt that this is important for you."
"It's okay, Philip. I'm already surprised that Ms. Haines not knows me. I'm....."
".....I've not said that I would not know you, Mrs. Banister."
I looked at Linda.
"I tell you later."
Wow, no secretary, but hey, she would also be a good dominant..... - fuck, I was too old for all that political correctness.
"I told you that it's no good idea to join the meeting."
"I fear that Mr. Maurer - and Ms. Haines - are no idiots. Maybe I should tell my story?"
"I'm all ear."

A Real Dirty Story

"Philip and I have an affair....."
".....are you crazy to....."
".....do you think that they are idiots? Mr. Private Eye knows it already, I can feel that he can feel it. And our local police woman? She would had been lousy in her job, would she have not heard at least some rumors. You know it - or."
"Well, not with him, but you're often enough in the press, the tabloids."

"Yes, it's a burden, but as a public figure.....sometimes it would be nice to be only a homely police officer, but.....but that's not the point. The point is the idiot I'm married to. Of course, it's nice that he has money, but sometime more brain wouldn't be that bad. A few years ago he had a little problem, a....."

".....little problem? He had sex with an underage girl, she got pregnant!"

"Darling, it had been okay for her parents....."

".....he paid enough that they said nothing....."

".....and he gave her a nice sum for the child."

"And I think that she agreed to, that her child would never have the right to be entitled to inherit."

"Of course."

"Is this legal?"

"Money rules our nation, money makes a lot possible, Linda. But I wonder, where's your dirty story. I heard nothing so far that I have not heard a million times already. Every time when dealing with our sophisticated upper class, in any case. You both bang, okay. Your husband has cheated a young woman, not only in one respect - okay. You can see this stuff in every soap opera every day, so.....?"

"So, what?"

"I think this should be answered by our sophisticated society lady."

"I fear that this incident could pull this old story to daylight again. I would be interested in, not to make it public."

"Would collide with your private plans?"

"In some respects, yes."

"Political ambitions, or only money interests?"

"You said earlier, that the one who says not much is the most dangerous one. I've the feeling, that at this table you're the most dangerous person."

"I've a reputation to affirm. By the way, this story with the pregnant young girl, shall I dig deeper to find the rest of the dirt in your husband's cellar? - You've also a cellar, right?"

"I'm not convinced that he's the right one, Philip."

"I said that it would be better would I handle this alone."

"Can I ask a question? Why not paying? Money seems not to be a problem for you both?"

"Well, Miss Haines, you haven't learned as a police officer that this will most probably develop into a never-ending story. It would be no problem to pay once, but not regularly or so."

"I would have another question. You said that the other agencies in town would be only good to find dogs, and maybe your wife, who dumped you a few years ago. We all at the table know that this is nonsense."

"We've said earlier that money will be no topic?"

"What? Why you start to talk about money now?"

"Because we will do the job."

"My opinion is not relevant?"

"Believe me, this will become a very interesting job. And some income will be also nice."

"So, you will work for me?"

"We will work for us - by the way, a few years ago I was involved in a case regarding a group of men who enjoyed having sex with young girls. I was not in the spotlight, but involved. I think that I can remember that one of the traces led to this town - but maybe my recollection is wrong. Money was no topic?"

"No. And you should be aware of, that Mrs. Banister will run for mayor next year - as a first step."

"Then it's good to have connections to persons, who have knowledge about my past. I will find a solution, maybe it will be a bit costly, but for ambitious people like you both - already divorced?"

"And I have nothing to say?"

"Trust me Linda, it will be easy money. Maybe I should buy me some golf clubs?"

"As the owner of the country club, it would be a pleasure to play golf with you one day."

"But not as a member."

"Of course not.....I fear you will be unable to afford the yearly fee."

"Yeah, I also. Linda, has the town a soft ball team, or flag football?"

"I would say both."

"That would be fine, would fit better to me, forget this fucking boring golfing - I think that we can drive home."

On The Way Back To The Agency

"I'm not sure what game you're playing, Peter."

"No game, but if I'm not wrong - and we will easily find out whether I'm wrong or not - than it should be a simple case. And we should make a good deal of money, would be a good financial cushion."

"Did you tried to impress them?"

"Gosh, you not really think that I guy like me could impress two such arrogant assholes? They think that I'm a total loser, that I'm nothing compared to them. They are the same pathological narcissists like our former fucking president. Waste not one thought on them, they are good to make some money, the rest forget."

"And now?"

"Let me find out whether I'm right or wrong."

Sometimes Cases Can Be Very Trivial

"Are you kidding me! Five hundred thousand dollar?"

"I did some research, you spend at least two or three times a year some days in Las Vegas."

"That's not your business."

"You like playing poker. And yet, you are a lousy poker player. But you've money, and the casinos and hotels like guys like you. As far as I heard, you always let your money in Las Vegas, and sometimes even your wife."

"You're on thin ice now, Mister Maurer. Maybe you better leave now."

"Well, last time in Vegas you lost at least four hundred and fifty thousand dollar - your future wife, the coming mayoress, knows your little gambling problem?"

"It's poker, not a "gamble". Bovine people like you cannot understand this. I've sat with the most famous poker players in the world at one table. Do you think I do this to make money? Money I've enough, I do this because of prestige. This is not your world, Mister Private Eye."

"No, definitively not. The money, could I get it straight away? And, could I get it in a bag or so, I've forgotten to have a suitcase with me."

"Have you ever seen half a million dollar in cash?"

"Sometimes I watch poker in TV - I've the feeling that your not one of the big shots, coming to Vegas with a few hundred thousand bucks, but a nice runner-up. The money?"

A Woody Allen Moment

"You're playing a dangerous game."

"You know how they treat especially us female employees there?"

"Well, sometimes I've weird fantasies. Fifty thousand dollar?"

"A lot of money."

"Not for them."

"That's why I wanted more."

"Another fifty thousand?"

"A hundred thousand dollar are a fortune at home."

"And what was your plan? To travel home with a hundred thousand dollar in a case?"

"Yes."

"I found you, they can find you. You should be cautious, especially with half a million dollar on your bank account."

"Fifty thousand, and I've the money here."

"No, this money is mine now. I will take it. You should travel back to your country and ponder about what all you can do with the five hundred thousand dollar on your bank account. It's a Swiss bank account, that's the number."

"I need money to go back."

"This is an address in the city, it would be better to travel incognito. Some in this town no longer like you."

"Thanks."

"Well, thank Woody Allen - fuck, he's no longer socially acceptable. He's a misfit nowadays."

The Final

"Why you could find her that easy."

"Some friends in the city who have some friends in the town."

"You asked her not, if he really has raped her?"

"Why I should?"

"Half a million for a possibly faked accusation?"

"Well, I've the feeling that it's good "invested" money in any case."

Dune

Dune

We orbited Dune now, now we had time to look at this strange planet - well, at least for me, it was the first time that I saw the planet in reality. Dune, of course, named after the planet in Frank Herbert's famous novels - I had never read one of it. The failed attempted to cinematize the novels? The stupid movie, a new one one could watch now. Yeah, Frank Herbert's Dune, but I looked at a real planet now, maybe the strangest place in the whole universe.

It had been a cast of fortune, that it had been obvious from the first moment after discovering this planet, that this was an exceptional place. No, no giant sandworms, no Fremens, but in some ways both planets could be twins, the dunes. Well, the first images from Dune, the Dune I looked at the moment, showed a desert-like landscape, but this was only the beginning.

The first spacecraft arrived at Dune a hundred years ago, of course the planet as such was known for a much longer time. A sun, very similar to ours, a billion years older, somewhat more developed, but not dramatically. The planet well within the habitable zone, twice as large as Earth, but therewith nothing special, a normal super-Earth. But what was strange from the beginning, the atmosphere seemed to be like one you would expect when observing a very young planet, but not an old one, older than Earth. Oxygen, very little oxygen, but carbon dioxide, and water, water vapor. The atmosphere seemed to be in a stage between the second and third Earth atmosphere, obviously no place for advanced life, a billion years older than Earth and very similar to Earth, with a very similar sun.

The first orbiter, uncrewed, showed a very dynamic world. In the Northern Hemisphere a larger continent, desert, Dune. In the Southern Hemisphere, two smaller continents, both with large active volcanos. The rest of the planet one big ocean, plate tectonics, a magnetic field, very much like the young Earth, but a billion years older. And.....

The orbiter searched for life, of course no one expected dinosaurs or even intelligent life, it seemed as that the planet had got stuck in a very early stage of its development. But simple life, protozoans, or somewhat more developed lifeforms, should be easily to find. But the orbiter found nothing, not even one variant of amino acids the orbiter could find. Dune became suddenly a prime focus of science.

Amino acids, one could find them between the stars, in molecular clouds even highly complex amino acids could be found, but not on Dune. Nothing, nothing what even slightly could be seen as life, or the preliminary stage of life, could be found on Dune. Not even a virus, no DNA, no RNA, simply nothing. The conclusion was, Dune is most probably the most sterile place in the whole universe, and that made absolutely no sense! Dune, since a hundred years the question was, what has happened on Dune, it could be nothing natural.

"Disappointed?"

"Thrilled."

"It's my third time, but always I've this oppressive feeling, one day something will happen."

"Since a hundred years nothing happened, do you expect a black monolith or something like that?"

"We all know that this world is not normal. It's such a dynamic world on one side, but then totally dead."

"But you don't believe in one of this weird theories - or."

"We've found no energetic life forms, no portals that would lead to other dimensions, the ocean is a simple ocean.....Dune is simply dead."

"I'm not convinced."

The Dune Regulations

Immediately after it became obvious that Dune was, perfectly, a sterile world, discussions started.

One group argued that we should contaminate Dune with bacteria, maybe should plant plants, that we should even abandon animals. Then we should see what would happen, if they spread out, or, that Dune would annihilate them in a way, that this would be Dune's secret. Another group said, that this would create most probably an irreversible situation, that this maybe would destroy Dune and its secret. They argued that everything should be done to ensure that Dune would not be affected by human activities.

The second group won, what slowed the research of Dune extremely. Only orbiters were allowed for a long time. Later, after a permanent space station in the orbit of Dune could be established, and technologies to totally sterilize probes were available, the direct research started. Samples of air, land, and water could be gained and analyzed. Scientists contaminated these samples from Dune on board of the space station with viruses and bacteria, with RNA and DNA - life literally exploded in those samples. Dune seemed to be the perfect place for flourishing life of all kinds, but it was a dead world in reality. A new discussion started.

Waited Dune only that one came to launch the process of life on it, and we humans were those that Dune awaited? Or, was Dune a special place that had to be obtained as it was by all means? Again, the conservative group won. Around two decades ago, the first humans set foot on Dune, more or less. They had to wear special protection suits. One reason was the higher gravitation, the suits had an exoskeleton. The atmosphere was toxic for humans, but above all, humans were contaminated by viruses, bacteria and more. Would only be one human on Dune one day, without a suit, Dune would be no longer Dune, Dune would change forever. An accident?

The protection suits could not be opened outside the space station, they were built to resist extreme strain. A lander with two scientists crashed on Dune one day. Of course, the lander was sterile, and the scientists? They had to wear the suits from the moment on, when entering the lander, one of the scientists in his suit could be salvaged severely injured, the other one was dead, the protection suits had only some minor damage.

The Superior Regulation: Dune has to be obtained in the status, as discovered by the humans. No action is allowed, that could be a risk for Dune's current status.

A Last Time On Dune

"Our third and last time on Dune. Maybe you can return one day, Peter."

"And you?"

"No, this will be my last time. The travel to Dune is not easy, I did it three times now. A fourth time would be too much. But you could do it easily again."

"No, I will never return to this strange world."

"Other plans?"

"Yes - I think we have controlled all instruments now?"

"Yeah, now we can return to the orbiter, and then back to earth tomorrow. For the next years the orbiter will be working independently again, without a crew, till the next crew for the next inspection and overhauling will come."

"Since a hundred years we do not understand this place, many theories but no substantial answer. The answer is sometimes so very near, can only not be seen."

"Maybe Dune is only a whim of nature, no higher meaning, nothing transcendental like some say. But isn't it strange to be here, all this sand around us, and the soft waves of the ocean. Okay, yesterday we had a storm, yesterday it had been not so calm at this place, but today. All this around us, so fertile, yet totally dead. The mystery of Dune."

I walked somewhat forward, away from Caroline, to the place where the water meets the sand. The water touched my protection suit.

"Yeah, everybody has this feeling. What would be, would it be possible to take off the protection suit, to swim in Dune's ocean. But the poisonous atmosphere alone makes it impossible. On Earth

they have simulations - I do not know if you know them - of Dune, there you can swim in Dune's ocean. Once I was there, but for a person who stood here in reality, it's a mere disappointment. - You should be careful by stepping forward. The water sometimes gets deep very fast, or the ground can be very rough suddenly. Drift can also be a problem. Sure, in the end nothing sever can happen, the protection suit will react immediately should you lose ground, you would swim, like with a life jacket. It's for the case that a patrol flight would have an emergency over the water. But I have to say that I would have no funny in starting a rescue mission on the second last day of our mission - Peter, what are you doing? Peter! Are you crazy, Peter! Come back! Peter!"

*

I no longer heard her, more and more the water surrounded me, I lost ground, I started to swim. The protection suit did, for what it had been constructed. All strong but light material, air pockets let me swim. I started to open the closures of my helmet, Caroline could obviously see what I did. In a moment I heard her saying something like, that it would not be possible to open the closures of the helmet outside the orbiter - right and wrong, Caroline. Right normally, but wrong if somebody had used his spare time therefore, to manipulate the orbiter's safety protocols - I had done it. My whole life I had known, at the end of my life, at the very end, in the second that I would die, I would dissolve in an ocean. I thought for a long time that it would be one of the two oceans on Earth, but then I became aware of Dune, then I knew which ocean it would be. Everyone dreams about of being immortal, at least, that your name would not get forgotten, would live forever. But, a name? The person? Only an illusion! But, bestowing a whole planet with life? It had been an arousing cognition.

*

I opened the helmet, no longer I could hear Caroline now, the smell of the poisonous atmosphere penetrated my nose. But it was no problem, the protection suit began to fill up with water, faster and faster, soon I would sink, I had to hold breath for a few seconds more, then there would be no atmosphere anymore. Then, nothing could harm me anymore.

*

Water all around me, at the end as at the beginning. A pounding was to hear, the pounding of Dune. I took a deep breath - death and creation.

The Art Of Writing

How Much Reality Is Acceptable

I wrote once, that I would know no real anti-war movie - why? Well, war made soldiers sick, they ran mad, they had to puke when their comrade got shredded by a grenade. And the spectators at the movies?

Oh yes, you cannot show reality, I've pondered on it during the last few years at several places of my writing. But fuck, it has happened! The hell of the gas chambers, mass executions by the Nazis. They, the mass executions, had been that cruel, that those who killed needed psychological help after it - not because they regretted their deeds, it had been a "job" for them, but simply because it was such an insane doing. The reason for the "invention" of the gas chambers, this form of killing was more "humane", not so "burdensome" - not for the victims, but for the murderers!

Talking in metaphors, why not speaking it out? Okay, living in a dictatorship for instance, suppressed by a radical religious group, but in countries like Germany or the USA? "House of Cards" - let's forget the person Kevin Spacey for a moment. Why such a - at that time - so prominent and positive connotated actor for such a character? "The Blacklist"? I'm not certain, "Dystopian Dreaming"? Like in a political campaign, never ever tell the voters the plain truth, for example about climate change. I'm not certain.

I ask myself, not for the first time, whether it wouldn't be more interesting to work in the field of documentation or journalism. But at the same time, I like poems, novels, short stories.....fictional narration. I've no good idea.

*

Writing a novel to express your political opinion - why not simply writing down your political opinion? Writing about lovers, in Kent, the Normandy or the Tuscany, how difficult it was, but in the end they found true love - is it crooked to write about anything else than your own person? Is it not more veritable if someone writes about the Holocaust who went through it? But what when all those will be dead, who then writes about it? Historic novels?

The clock on the wall ticks, the only sound hearable, no TV, no music, nothing - well, your own breathing and the sound of the struck keys. The scarcely audible sound of the running computer. A voice from outside, but not more.

"High Literature", what shall this be? A sophisticated meal - truffled guinea fowl cooked in a pig's bladder? Michelin-starred kitchen. I always thought that Chandler tells you much more than Goethe - Bukowski as well. Not to talk about Silvia Plath.

I've the feeling that this is a very fascinating time. All what has happened during the last two or five years, the last sixteen years, the last months.....I never felt like this, while striking the keys, it's like yesterday that I did it for the first time and thought: Will I bring something to an end this time? It would be nearly a wonder if. And today? Don't know, have to ponder on it.

*

Writing, in a certain mood, with certain emotions, a certain relationship to the world outside. What's important in your life, what are your dreams and hopes, your opinions and convictions, your circumstances of life.

Three hard workweeks, headache and tiredness, writing will change. Desperation will change your writing, a cold, wet and cloudy day like today will change your writing, at least if your writing is connected with your person.

I sit in a Japanese garden, a rock garden, following the lines and waves, observing the rocky isles, drown between the pebble stones, finding a certain kind of inner peace. Bamboo bestows shade, yet

the Japanese culture is such a sick culture, little girls and a brutal hierarchic society. I like Japanese green tea and for a short while, I had started to practice Kyūdō.

Life is full of contradictions, all of my bonsai could have become large trees, if not planted in such small flower bowls. I like them, the apple tree is full of red apples now. Is this against nature, in nature you can find natural bonsai, some of the oldest bonsai had been found in nature? Where and what is the contradiction?

I have to ponder on it, but now I think it wouldn't be bad to stop writing, to relax somewhat, to sleep for a while.

*

The solution for all of it is maybe: It does not matter why you're writing, it does not matter what you're writing, it matters only that you're writing. In the same sense: That you sing, play an instrument, paint, dance, and so on.

The problem: A kitschy novel, a horrible but successful singer? Agitprop, commissioned art, especially from the church or a government? But maybe that's not the important item.

Don't try, do it. Maybe that's the solution? Do not try to paint - paint! Once I tried to paint, but I did not paint. What have I done since the beginning of 2015?

An Ordinary Day In An Ordinary Town

Shopping At The Weekly Market

"We have the vegetables, do we need meat?"
"Not for me. A curry, vegetables and potatoes?"
"Sounds good. Do we have still from the curry paste?"
"In any case. What do we still need? Cheese definitively."
"And we should not forget eggs and milk."
"Some herbs?"
"I fear we will need some more time, till have all."
"No need to hurry. We've still two hours till we have to open the office."
"Would give us even time for a coffee?"
"A coffee is never a mistake - wow, these tomatoes are looking very nice."
"Let's fetch some."

*

"We could have our coffee also at the office?"
"Sure, but I think they have also some nice Danish pastry."
"You're eating too much sweet stuff since you're here."
"Well, that's the country air. Well, maybe the fact that the food here is much better than in the city. In the city you have to search for nice and healthy food, that's much better here."
"Because Danish pastry is so healthy."
"Very delicious, in any case - let's enter."
Some "bangs" were to hear. Not from inside the café, not very nearby, but also not far away.
"Shots?"
"I think so. Somewhere down the street, I would say."
We looked down the street, a woman ran out of another shop, clothing as it seemed. Two more "bangs", and she fell down.
"Fuck, not in my town."

*

"You have your gun with you?"
"No, in the car - you?"
"Neither. But even if, sounds like one of this AR-15 style weapons. He would blow you away before you would be able to fire one shot, not to talk about if he's protected."
"He?"
"Have you ever heard that a woman has committed such a fucking crime?"
"No, it's a privilege for men, white men. But we cannot stand around and wait, we could run back to the car to fetch our weapons?"
"Or we could try to get an overview, this could help the police more than trying to be little heroes?"
"Okay, I wasn't in this shop before, but all shops here have two entrances. One to the street and one to the parking behind."
"I would bet my money on the parking behind."
"I as well."
We entered the café, but only to use the other door to get to the parking. Inside the café was panic.
"All in the place here, please listen to me, I'm from the local police."
Well, no longer, but that doesn't matter at the moment.
"Please stay here, this is at the moment the safest place for you. Do not run on the street, we have

already a victim there. And do not try to get to your car on the parking, we fear that the shooter will appear there."

I had reached the door, opened it a bit, tried to get an impression about the situation. Panic on the parking as well, at least two cars had already a crash, many horns were to hear, but no shots.

"No shots anymore - or."

"No, but it seems as he would be still in the shop - suicide?"

"Would be not the worst, let's get out."

We left the café, no shooter was to see, no shots to hear. The shop with women clothes was three shops away.

"Shall we try to go to the shop, have a look inside?"

"No, go back to the street. We wait till the police arrives - we can tell them then at least that he's still inside."

"And the people inside?"

"It's no big shop, strange, no supermarket or so. Whatever, not so many can be inside. And those who had been inside - we should try that there will be not more victims outside."

"Okay, and if he leaves the shop?"

"Then we should try to follow him as good as possible, without risking too much, to be able to provide information."

Linda was on her way back to the street, now we could surveil both doors. I was nervous, it was too quiet in the shop. All dead, the shooter as well? I thought about to draw nearer to the shop, hopped that Linda would have no such stupid ideas. Still some chaos on the parking, but not many people were to see, at least outside their cars. Via two entrances one could enter or leave the parking, surrounded on three sides by shops, on one by a wall. One entrance very near to me, one on the other side. Should the shooter had come with a car, then this car should be near to me, my entrance should be the place where he would intend to leave the parking again. I started to draw back towards the entrance, away from the shop, then the police arrived.

A sea of sirens suddenly, on both sides of the building, but they did not enter the parking, but blocked the entrance - as far as I could see, also the other one. Officers left their cars, I was inattentive for a moment, but saw in the corner of my eye that the door of the shop started to move - he had waited for the police. As always, a fucking guy in full protection armor, not the slightest chance with a handgun, with an assault weapon and a fucking big magazine. I was a fraction of a second to slow, would not reach one of the cars to find cover, he would be faster, he would give me no chance - but.....

As I had managed it to cover behind the nearest car, no shot had been fired, I slowly stood up, saw him jumping into a car, a fat SUV, parked directly in front of the shop. Full throttle, directly in the direction of the blocked entrance, like Bonnie and Clyde.

The American Symphony, the sound of weapons, one hundred and sixty-seven times. Would Penn again use slow motion, no Faye Dunaway this time, handsome Warren Beatty with a helmet on? 1934, Mai the twenty-third - 2021, October the sixteenth, what had changed? I walked to the shop, no idea why, opened the door. Immediately I could see the dead bodies of two women, one could be the saleswoman, one a customer, both hit by several bullets. And a girl, maybe twelve or so, looked at her body, not so much left from her face. Now I had found Bonnie. The American Symphony, not Gershwin, but Peckinpah. A symphony with only one consistent subject - violence, death, murder and blood.

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"Has been no good day for the town."

"No, definitely not. We have a gun problem, we have an opioid problem, we have a problem with systemic racism, we have a problem therewith to ensure our democracy, we have a whole bunch of problems more. Almost always money seems to be a key element, but always the core element are white men, mostly old conservative white men. Get rid of the NRA, and all the politicians they have

bought, from both sides of the aisle, and much would be better. We have some very severe problems in our country."

"Opening the office tomorrow?"

"Sure, life goes on, at least ours."

The Cult

The Determination Of The Women

A girl appeared, dressed in all white, fifteen years of age maybe, coming from the right, seemingly out of thin air, stopped in front of something looking like a kind of altar, the gown transparent, she wore nothing under it.

"Our today's congregation is opened."

The assembly hall turned into complete silence now. A hall, not that large, but very high, flooded by the reddish light of the setting sun, which broke through high colorful windows.

"We have assembled today, to accompany two of our parishioners, from childhood to adulthood."

The assembly hall wasn't that much decorated, but looked elegant and impressing. On pedestals and on the walls, artworks from all centuries, from all over the world. All had one in common, it were erotic artworks. From ancient Greek, from India, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America.....no place on earth seemed to be forgotten. Some were very new, some several thousand years old, one around thirty thousand years.

"I hand my voice to the honorable lady now, the honorable lady who educated our today's hopefuls, the Honorable Lady Penelope."

The girl disappeared in the same way like she had appeared. The hall was divided in two parts, left and right, divided by a relatively broad aisle. On both sides rows with wooden benches, stunning benches, artful carvings, comfortable upholstery made of velvet, Bordeaux red velvet.

On the right only men sat, on the left only women. It was obvious that in front the older sat, the younger in the back. The oldest women maybe somewhat over sixty, the oldest men somewhat older, the youngest women thirteen or fourteen, the youngest men fifteen or sixteen. No actually old men or women in the hall, but also no actually young ones.

The women were all dressed in the same style, a blouse, or a sweater, simple looking but obviously made with very exclusive materials, silk, or cashmere. All wore long skirts, not all the same color, but all muted, up to the ankles, all pleated, now sitting revealing the stocking-footed ankles, all white, and the shoes. Also the shoes looked simple, but obviously crafted, made of exclusive leather, not flat, but only with modest heels, black, very elegant looking pumps. Most of the women wore pearls, delicate bracelets and ear rings, no rings at the hands, but elegant women's wristwatches. And also there one had not to ask, all simple looking but obviously very exclusive. Whereby, there was a considerable downgrade from the front to the back. The woman who had sat in the middle of the first row stood at the place now, where the girl had stood before.

"I thank the Holy Virgin for opening today's ceremony, today we will introduce two of our young parishioners into the circle of the fertile flock."

She turned and walked to the altar-like object. Not very high, four or five feet maybe, but definitively longer and broader than an altar. Completely covered by a white blanket, it was not to see what's under it, the blanket even covered some ground. On it, at each corner, a huge and spectacular looking candle holder, with a burning candle in it. One obviously made of gold, one seemingly made of bronze, the other two maybe made of silver and platinum. In the middle a statue, the finest china as it seemed, huge in any case, of a copulating girl and boy.

The Holy Virgin appeared again, and the Honorable Lady handed her one candle holder after the other. She had some problems with the weight, and the burning candles, but managed it to put the four candle holders on a wooden table standing aside. Two men from the first bench stood up now, they did the same with the huge and heavy statue from the middle. As they had sat down again, as the Holy Virgin had disappeared again, the Honorable Lady turned again and looked at the present crowd.

"Before we begin with the ceremony now, let me say some words first."

"God created the woman, and he did very well. He sculpted her body as a body of desire, he sculpted a body to arouse the man so that he can lustfully give his semen, to fertilize the woman. It's God's will, that the woman arouses the man. And it's God's will, that the man creates new life. We're here to celebrate this.

It's the most honorable task for the mature woman, to educate the young, the young men and the young women, to prepare them thereto, to fulfill God's will. It was on me to do this for our two today's hopefuls. The childhood, the time before a young one can fulfill God's order to propagate, the man by creating life, the woman by giving birth to this life, comes to an end for a young man and a young woman today.

I taught the girl therein, that the beauty of her body is there to energize the men's possibility to create life, that her role is, to provide the man the vessel to fulfill God's will. She has to arouse the man sexually, that he can emit his semen in her, with her beauty and all means she has.

I taught the boy therein, that he has to accomplish a divine mission, to replicate the divine creation, to become a creator by oneself. The woman helps him thereby, by offering her beautiful body, by doing everything to arouse the man. The man penetrates the woman to fulfill his divine task, I taught the young hopeful everything he has to know about, how to use and to penetrate the woman's body."

The Honorable Lady interrupted her speech for a moment, the Holy Virgin appeared again, hand in hand with the two hopefuls. To her left, the girl, thirteen years of age, dressed only in a simple, completely transparent, gown. She led the girl to the left side of the altar. The boy, fifteen years of age, on her right side, she led to the right side of the altar, he was dressed in all white. A shirt and a pair of trousers, made of silk and best cotton, both very sophisticated tailored, white shoes made of calf leather. As the hopefuls had taken their place, left and right of the altar, looking at the attendees, the Holy Virgin disappeared again.

"We all will be witnesses now, of the deflowering of the girl, so that she will become a woman. We all will be witnesses now, of the first official penetration of the boy, he will prove his manhood, will become a man. I hope that I was a good teacher for both of them. The ceremony shall begin now, let us welcome our Holy Leader."

With these words, she walked back to her place on the bench. But she did not sit down, as she reached the bench all others stood up and started to sing. An organ played, and the lyrics dealt with, how wonderful it was to be a woman, how wonderful it was to fulfill all the men's wishes so that they could fulfill their divine task. From the background, from behind of the altar, a man appeared. He wore a floor-length vestment, no pope ever had worn a more splendid one. Gold seemed not only to be gold, gemstones and pearls, alone the breathtaking chain of office, the numerous rings. And yet, he wore no kind of hat or crown, only some somewhat longer hair. He passed the girl first and touched her hand slightly, then he walked to the boy and said something to him, not hearable, the boy nodded. He smiled at the boy as he turned and, as he had reached the place where the Honorable Lady had spoken before, started to speak.

"I thank the Honorable Lady Penelope for her kind words."

He looked at her and bent his head. As she requited his gesture, all sat down.

"Let us begin, the girl has to become a woman so that she can get pregnant, that she can fulfill her purpose. But first, she has to prove her virginity, even if there's no doubt about the reliability of the Honorable Lady Penelope. A tradition is a tradition, the Holy Examineress shall do her duty."

An "Imposing" Ceremony

The Holy Virgin, as well as another woman, obviously the Holy Examineress, appeared again. The other woman, the Holy Examineress, wore a white gown, simple in a way, but very elegant looking, in a way like one that could have been worn by a 40s or 50s Hollywood diva. Both women helped the girl, first to sit on the altar, then to lay down on it. Then they pushed up her light gown, up to her

bellybutton, spread apart her legs. The Holy Examineress knelt down, it was not accurately to see what she did, because of the girl's leg. But one had not to have much imagination to know what she did. Also, no excessive imagination was needed to see, how the girl felt at that moment. The Holy Examineress stood up again and stepped forward to the Holy Leader. She whispered something in his ear, then she disappeared again, together with the Holy Virgin. The Holy Leader raised his arms and started to speak.

"The Holy Examineress has told me her verdict: There is not the slightest doubt about the girl's virginity. Thus, we can start with the first part of our today's ceremony, to accompany this girl on her way to her womanhood."

After saying this, he walked to the altar, stood in front of the girl's spread legs. He bent forward, touched the girl's cheek, her breasts, her belly. Then he touched the girl's knees, her inner thighs. At the end he knelt down, kissed the girl's pubic hair, then obviously her vagina, what was again difficult to see because of the girl's leg. After all this he stood up again and the Holy Virgin and the Holy Examineress appeared again. And, the Honorable Lady Penelope stood up again and walked also to the altar. The three women arranged themselves around the altar. The Honorable Lady at the side of the girl's head, she knelt down and talked quietly with the girl, laid her hands on her shoulders. The Holy Virgin sat down on the altar, near the girl's pelvis, she placed her hands on the girl's knees. The Holy Examineress also knelt down, aside the Holy Leader, obviously she touched the girl's vagina. Finally, the Holy Leader raised his vestment, he was naked under it, his penis erect. He stepped one step forward, took a deep breath, and obviously penetrated the girl, whatfore he needed a bit of time, more than one attempt. Again, the girl's leg made it difficult to see everything. The girl on the other hand moved not a bit during the whole time, but seemed to be more relaxed as it had happened, as the Holy Leader had obviously penetrated her. The Honorable Lady wiped away some tears, running down the girl's cheeks. After all this, the Holy Leader, his vestment still raised, showed the attendees his penis, a penis stained with blood.

"A girl as she laid down, a woman now, when she will stand up again. But first we have to celebrate the second part of today's ceremony. A boy will become a man."

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The Holy Examineress and the Honorable Lady accompanied the boy to the other side of the altar, he stood in front of the girl on the altar now, the Holy Leader stood a bit aside. It was the Holy Virgin who opened the boy's pants, pulled down the pants and his underpants - so far to see, he had no erection. Now the Holy Leader came back, stood behind the boy and talked with him again, again it was not to hear what he said to him. The Honorable Lady Penelope started to touch his penis, to stimulate his penis with her hands and mouth, till the boy got an erection. Now the Holy Leader pushed the boy forward, the Holy Examineress touched, as far as it was to see, the girl's vagina again, the Honorable Lady had the boy's penis in hand. The girl on the other hand, the Holy Virgin sat again on the altar, her hands touched the girl's knees again, showed no reaction. Also not, as it seemed as the boy would penetrate her, at least the Holy Leader turned to the attendees and started to speak.

"This boy, now a man, has, testified by the Honorable Lady Penelope, The Holy Examineress, The Holy Virgin and me, done his first public penetration. He has become a man therewith, he has all the rights now, that manhood gives a boy. Therewith our celebration comes to an end now, let us end with another singing."

The Honorable Lady had accompanied the boy who stood in front of the attendees now. She had lifted his shirt, the pants still down, everybody could see his penis, no longer erected now, but stained with blood. The Holy Leader had lifted his vestment again, his penis still erected and blood stained. The Holy Virgin and the Holy Examineress had helped the girl to stand up, she had problems to stand upright, the two women had to support her. So, they started to sing again, a song about, how wonderful it was for a girl to be a woman now, and for a boy to be a man now. That was, what I had saw.

*

The hall began to empty, around the altar no one was longer to see. I thought about also to leave, as I heard a sound behind me. I turned, the Holy Leader stood behind me.

"Now, you liked it? I hope that you found your pleasure, had an erection, I hope that you ejaculated not only once."

"I am not convinced about, that these events had been some who should make you horny."

"Ah, come on! Did the girl on the altar arouse you more, or the Honorable Lady Penelope?"

"Maybe the Holy Virgin or the Holy Exeminerness?"

"Well, I would not exclude this, but they are beyond your reach."

"What do you mean with this?"

"Well, this celebration is not over, we will start with a nice festivity now. I would invite you, and it would no problem to arrange a nice copulation with the girl or the Honorable Lady Penelope. Well, the Holy Virgin is a virgin in fact, at least till her sixteenth birthday. But even after the end of her service, she will be reserved for a small circle of the most honorable men. The same does apply to the Holy Exeminerness. But the other two women, as well as most of all the others you have seen down there, would be within your reach."

"But I'm no member of your cult, why I should be allowed to do this?"

"You're confident? Whatever, after this experience you will be a member in any case."

"I doubt that I'm interested in your invitation."

"Little liar. But, give me one honest answer. The girl or the Honorable Lady Penelope? You would be a wimp but not a man, would a wonderful lady like Penelope not arouse you. Her wonderful natural breasts, her gorgeous legs, the rest of her body? But hey, this nice little girl, in her innocence? You don't tell me that her nice body, the imagination to deflower her, not bestowed you a boner?"

"Was she drugged?"

"Gosh, you're not only a liar, you're a hypocrite. If you like to join us, you know where to find us. Follow your instincts, it will be a very nice experience for you - but that I haven't to tell you."

He turned and disappeared. The hall was empty now, I felt left-behind, and confused.

Killing, Because Of Self-Defense

Drop Your Gun!

"Drop your gun," I shouted, but he did not so. He stared at me, at least I thought so, the illumination in the backstreet not fantastic. Most of the light the moon spent, a bit came from two windows, windows ahead of us.

I had followed him, had hunted him, the whole time he had this fucking gun in his hand. Well, of course, I had also a gun in my hand, but I was no gosling like he was, I was a private dick in his late fifties. I had monitored this area, where my client had been robbed a few days before. It had been not the first incidence of this kind in this part of the city, my city - handbags, purses, even wristwatches.

I had not to wait long, it had been not difficult to spot a suspicious person. A young man, he was obviously very interested in the other people on the street and the small plaza. A woman waited till her tacos would be ready, his hand slipped in her bag, found her purse. As he walked away, I followed him for a moment, till I was behind him, then I addressed him.

He was not very impressed about, that I told him that I would be a private investigator and armed. He told me: Not only you, and from now on, I had to run after him. At the first moment I thought that he had only tried to impress me, in any case he was very fast, but then I saw the gun in his hand. I continued the pursuit, he made the mistake to run into a backstreet, a dead-end street.

"Drop your gun, buddy. It's only robbery, no reason to start a gunfight. Especially because I've my gun at the ready."

"Yeah, come on, I'm the black guy. Shot me and tell them then that I did a suspicious move, that you had to shoot, several times."

"I'm no racist, it's not my intention to kill you."

"But you're white, it often enough seems that this is enough."

"Okay, I hope that you're not thinking that all whites are racists, but I can understand your concerns. But sorry, you don't expect that I drop my gun?"

"But I mine?"

"You committed a crime, not I. I'm the private eye, not you. Looked at it in that light, I would say: Yes, I expect that you drop your gun."

"I don't trust you."

I told him my name, mentioned two or three cases of mine.

"You're really that guy?"

"Yeah, I could show you my license, but you cannot spot it from that distance with that little light."

"Okay, I trust you."

He dropped the gun, at the moment the gun reached the ground a shot was fired, then two more. Even through this distance I could see the eyes of the young man in front of me, torn open, in deep disbelief, his head lightly shaking.

"You fucking swine," his words were hardly to hear, then he slumped down. As he hit the ground, I heard a voice above me.

"Good teamwork. This will tell these niggers that they cannot terrorize us any longer in this quarter."

As I looked up, I saw a shabby white man, he fulfilled all clichés. Badly shaved, no shower for a longer time obviously, in his undershirt, overweight. But what caught my eye was the gun in his hand. I realized that, would I not please him, he would use it again. Should I try to be faster? He had the by far better position, on top of me, I tried to please him.

"Yeah, even if this was the beginning of his career as criminal, he was not that old I would say, we all know that he would have become a real criminal in the end."

"Two weeks ago, not far from here, round the corner, two or three of this niggers have raped a woman, I think they have killed her as well. They all were not older as this one"

I had no idea, about what incident he talked.

"Nevertheless, the shots have been heard. It would be the best you would call the police, or I would do it. We have enough time, then we can straighten out, what has happened here."

"Can we him not simply let lay here? Someone will find him?"

"You have seen CSI?"

"Which one?"

"Not relevant, but they will have no problem therewith to determine where the shooter has stood."

"Yeah, you're right. But you could move the body somewhat? Then it should be no longer a problem - or."

"That's a clever idea, really clever."

I walked to the dead body, his dead eyes still stared at me. I moved the body so, that the head pointed towards the street.

"But now I have to leave fast, otherwise the police will get me and I have to explain them too much. Maybe the police will be here fast"

"Yeah, and I will go to bed."

I gave him a sign with my hand, to say farewell, and started to leave the backstreet, the man in my back now. Could he be really that stupid? I closed my eyes and awaited a shot, but no further shots were to hear. As I reached the street, I turned left, walked a half block. More I was not capable to, I collapsed and started to cry, fetched my phone and called the police.

A Case, Crystal Clear

"That's pervert."

"This will be the strategy of the defense."

"That's the strategy of not telling the truth, and the attempt, to let a cold-blooded murder unatoned."

"Are you sure that he did not think, that you would be in danger?"

"Gosh, he did not talk about that he would have rescued my life. He talked about that his deed would be a lesson for those "niggers"."

"But you said that he did not call the police."

"Not as long as he was at the window. I cannot say why he called the police later, after I'd left the crime scene. Maybe he became aware of, that it would not look good for him and his story, would he not call the police."

"In fact, he called the police faster than you, and you left the crime scene?"

"I stood in front of a cold-blooded murderer, and he had the better position. I tried to be no longer in the line of fire."

"Can you exclude that everything appeared differently, seen from his position? That he thought that you were in danger?"

"Yeah, yes, his talking? He did not talk about that he would have helped me, rescued me, he talked about that he has punished a "nigger"?"

"But no one has heard your conversation."

"I'm a private eye, my words count nothing?"

"He's an American citizen as well, and he has a clean criminal record. I need some hard evidence."

"This is fuck! I drive to Georgia and look for a "nigger", or someone who has dirty legs, and shoot him to death. And in court, in court I start to cry then - hey, I'm the white guy! This blacks, Asians, these Latinos, all this not real Americans are frightening me. I have to protect me, I have to protect America - sorry, but I have to puke!"

"Believe me, I believe you, but it requires evidence to start a trial. We will have a closer look at him, maybe we can find something."

"And so long, maybe forever, he will be a free man?"

"Yes."

"And a sixteen-year-old African American man is dead now, why I chased him?"

"Because he committed a crime."

"Yeah, and for a "nigger" that means automatically the death sentence. Some pot, welcome to prison. Driving in a new car, shot at him. Touching the hand of a white woman accidentally, burn down their blocks and kill them. This swine will not get away with it."

"Please, don't do any nonsense. It's not over now. We have still possibilities."

"Yeah, those we have."

*

"Your conversation with the prosecution? You do not look pleased, Peter."

"He murdered this young man in front of me, cold-blooded, because his skin was not white. I'm not sure Linda, for a moment I considered shooting at him, I should have done it. Come on, when everybody can shoot someone to death, and all he has to do afterwards is, to tell a nice story? Our court system is shit, these juries are shit, this is no fucking Sidney Lumet movie. Maybe this is arrogant, but maybe some should stop to pray, and start to act."

"You do not talk about violence - or."

"No, but what about a nationwide strike, for instance? If someone slaps you in the face, the other cheek? Maybe blocking the next slap? Maybe.....I'm only one of this fucking white men."

"I would say that you need a hot tea and some cookies. And then we should talk about it - okay?"

"If I were a black man, I would be sick of talking. But, as said, I'm one of the white guys."

Local TV

"I've said what I've said, I've nothing to change."

"The lawyer of the man you accuse, has threaten you to accuse you because of defaming. He talks about large sums."

"His argument is, that I can prove nothing, and therefore it's wrong what I'm saying - that's nonsense. His client also cannot proof that he tells the truth, therefore.....? We have two different statements, it's on the investigation authorities now to find hints, or better proves, to support the one or other version. I say that it has been a cold-blooded murder, that's what I say."

"Do you see parallels to other cases?"

"Do you mean cases with young African American men involved, men who are dead now?"

"Yes."

"Why then not saying it? A fifteen-year-old African American man is dead, he had not to die, many had not to die. Every idiot can possess a gun in our country, we're a gun-mad nation. And the worst? You can shoot someone dead, and later you say that it was because you felt threatened - of course, it functions only as a white guy, threaten by a black man."

"Is your theory that he has killed the man because he's a racist?"

"He's a fucking racist, he's one of those why we have such trouble in our country with racism."

"I think that his lawyer will be very interested in your words."

"I've said this not for the first time, and this is free speech for me. Not to say that Latinos a scum, that Asian Americans are lowlives, that African Americans are vermin, but to say that this man is a cold-blooded murderer, because of his racist thinking."

"Thanks for your coming and your distinct answers, Peter."

"Thanks for having me, Janice."

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"You feel better now, Peter?"

"Yeah, we cannot be silent when such things happen, Linda. This behavior has to have consequences, we cannot accept murder, "even it was only a black man". We cannot accept this."

"But this will become political."

"Good so, then you will clearly see, who's your friend and stands by your side, and who's not."

"I hope that the police will find evidence to charge him. It would be bitter, wouldn't it gave a trial."

"I'm sure about, that there will be proof that will support my version."

"You have no illegal thoughts, or."

"What's illegal at it, to expiate a cold-blooded racist murder?"

"Would you kill him, for instance, then this would be a cold-blooded murder as well. You're no judge, you're no god."

"But I looked in the eyes of a young man, while he died. A young man who trusted me. I have to prove him that I did not betray him. Would his murderer die as a free man, then we all would have betrayed him."

The Brutal American Reality

"It's nearly a week now, nothing, he's still out of prison."

"But under severe public pressure."

"That's why I most probably have to face a civil lawsuit."

"Not many doubt your words."

"Party lines."

"Not exactly. Even some conservatives are on your side. I would not call our local newspaper progressive. But the article about the difference to know the truth and to be able to prove the truth was very telling. I am not convinced that many are truly on his side. Especially because more and more racist comments and post of him are popping up."

"Yeah, but he can simply move to another city, another state. His victim moved to the graveyard. This was a hate crime, like the KKK lynched someone. Do we need always a video that someone acts when a black man lies dead on the street?"

"We're a nation of law, you need proof to charge someone."

"That's true if you're white. If you're black, then proof is not so necessary. I cannot forget his eyes and his last words."

"Give it some time. You've made it public, there's a lot of public pressure on the investigation authorities now. You acted very clever so far, you should not screw it up now."

"Why should I?"

"Maybe because some say that you sometimes tend to act very emotional and impulsive?"

"Rumors. If they were true, then I would have tried to kill this swine immediately. I'm too rational sometimes, that's what I'm scared of."

"Really?"

"Yes, otherwise I would grab my gun and would gun him down. It would be my obligation, to do so."

"That's nonsense and you know it. Yeah, the lone rider and his revenge. That's so stupid, so typical man."

"And what would the smart woman do?"

"His face is on all channels now. Yes, for the far-right movement he's a hero, but others tell him clearly what they think about him."

"Yeah, and threaten him that they would kill him."

"And what are you doing?"

"I'm directly involved in it, I would think that this is a very difference. And I did not say that I will kill him now, I said that I maybe should have reacted differently, in that night. I know that I'm no Clint Eastwood character. A duel and everything would be good. One of us would be dead, and because I'm the main character.....well, sometimes there was no happy ending. Movies were sometimes very realistic."

"And what are your plans now?"

"Maybe a smart woman can give me some advice?"

"Would be not the worst idea, Peter."

"Yeah, Linda."

A Stupid Old Man

I sat in my car at the side of the road, of a special road. He left the building and I tried not to lie low, I hadn't done it the last few days. He saw me, I greeted, I did not follow him, I simply waited, waited that something would happen.

After round an hour a police car stopped behind me and two officers came to my car. I rolled down the window at my shoulder, one of the officers, I did not know him, bent forward and addressed me. The other one stood behind him.

"Well, Mr. Maurer, I think that I have not to tell you why we're here?"

"No, it's a fucking cold day and the fucking Supreme Court is a fucking bunch. I should move to Texas. I could rape a woman there and make her pregnant or could fuck my daughter there, who I don't have, and make her pregnant, and both women would have to carry the child to full term. I should move to Texas, the state where the real men live."

"We will not discuss Texan law now, Mr. Maurer. We live in this state and this state has its laws."

"Yeah, but, we also live in the United States. And this nation is a fucking free nation – okay, for a woman or a black person.....but it's a very nice nation for a white man. This nation gives me, as an example, the right to park my car right here, exactly at the place. And if I like, I can sit here the whole fucking cold day."

"We both know why you're here, and I would love it if you looked for another parking."

"Who's "we"? And, can you give me details about my crime?"

"I think it would be better you would get out of your car now. Harassment is no joke."

"Why you harass me then? A fucking shit I will do, getting out of my car. Did they not instruct you that you can talk only to men with dark skin in this way?"

"Get out of the car now! We will continue our conversation at our station."

"Yeah, have I to stop the live stream first?"

I pointed to the little camera, pointing directly at him.

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"Not exactly my advice, Peter."

"Yeah, I know. But it's sometimes the best to do something to see what will happen."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, it has been a very instructive and productive day. I've a very charming video now and the insight that my man has "nice" friends. But only recently, since he has become "famous", or already before? Would be interesting to know."

"I would say, since he's in the media. The police found no evidence so far that he's involved in any kind of group or organization."

"And he has so good connections now, out of nothing? Could be, but.....let's see what will develop."

Arrested

No client, I sat in the office as three men entered it – not interested in my service.

"Mr. Maurer, private investigator?"

"Yes, that's exactly me."

"You're arrested."

"What I've done? To long parked at one place?"
"No jokes, parking would have been no problem. But in any case, killing him."
"Well, then I think I should call my lawyer."
"You can do this on the police station. Where's your partner?"
"Linda?"
"You have more than one?"
"No, she's on the way to the bakery to buy some pastry."
"She can bring you some to jail."

At The Police Station

"This is not very funny, Mr. Maurer."
"It depends on your perspective. But I think that my lawyer will be in during the next hour or so."
"It's a long way from the city to our town, maybe we can have some small talk until he arrives?"
"He is a she, about what you would love to talk?"
"Well, there's a man who's dead now, a man who said that he has rescued your life. You suggested that he would have been a murderer, a cold-blooded murderer. And now he's dead, you're sad about his death?"
"Even if it will make me happy, what would this prove? You've arrested me, not only an interrogation. This would indicate that you have a direct link between me and the murder, otherwise my lawyer would cause you many problems."
"Shouldn't we wait until "she" arrives?"
""She's" known therefor, that "she" likes it to deal with cocky males. Right, we can wait."
I lent back, looked at my paper cup.
"Could I have another cup of coffee?"
"We have a witness."
"Who saw that I've killed him? Well, then it should be an easy case – oh, unfortunately I cannot remember that I've killed him. It seems as this will become an interesting case."
"We have a witness who heard his last words."
"Okay, and what he said?"
"I have rescued your live, why you wanna kill me now?"
"Wow, this will become a dull case. Believe me, I've some experience, these are only words."
"You own a .45?"
"Yes. The piece lies in the top drawer of my desk in my condo. But I fear that I've used it not for a very long time now."
"We will see. I've the feeling that you have used the gun a very short time ago, and that we have found it at the crime scene in a waste container."
"And I've the feeling that the gun will not lie any longer in the drawer."
"What time you saw it the last time?"
"Well, I own it for a special reason. I do not look at it every day. Could be that I need a lawyer very badly?"
"Well, have heard that "she" should be a fantastic one."
"Can you tell me at what time he got killed – last night, you've said?"
"2:48 AM exactly. As said, we have a witness. – You're smiling?"
"Oh man, you don't tell me that you guys have stolen my gun and killed him with it? And then, such a mistake?"
"Good bluff – maybe we should have a walk until your lawyer arrives?"
He tried to motivate me to stand up, but this would have been a stupid mistake. Had I made a mistake? Had I said too much? I had heard a lot, knew that they had made an idiotic mistake. It would be effortless to prove my innocence, at least if I were not dead until then. Kate! It would be nice, would Kate arrive now. - Linda, the pastry?

The Cult

Welcome To Our Festivity

An enormous wooden door I stood in front of. It seemed as the door knocker, obviously solid iron, would weight several pounds alone. Well, we lived in modern times, of course, there was also a doorbell, but who would be such vulgar and would use this ugly item? I lifted the door knocker, in fact, weighty, and knocked three times. Not that this would have any meaning, or that I had been told to do so, it simply seemed to be appropriate. I had to wait for a moment, then the massive door opened, without making any noise. It also seemed as it would be absolutely no problem to open this solid door, maybe well mounted and perfectly balanced? In no case, the reason could be that the person who opened the door would have an enormous strength, a young woman became visible, smaller than me and possibly half my weight. She wore the uniform of a maid, but not one knew from porn movies or other men's fantasies, with black fishnet stockings and high heels, very short skirt, potentially no underwear – that stuff. In fact, her long dress was simple, but looked elegant in a way, her hairdo simply nice. She looked like a maid, one knew from vintage photos, made in the Victorian era.

"Might you come in, Sir?"

I was surprised by the question, of course, that was the reason to be here. But then I realized that I had not moved for a while, had looked at her, had I not heard her address of welcome?

"Yes, of course."

I stepped in and she closed the door. It was effortless for her to do so, this small person and such a massive door? Even more impressive the hall in which I stood now, of course a breathtaking double-flight staircase, marble, what else it could be. The height of the hall was frightening, colored glass high above, could this fragile architecture withstand even the slightest storm? I noticed that she stood beside me, she gave me the time to be impressed by what I saw.

"Impressive, isn't it? Everybody is impressed by this sight, seeing it for the first time, and not only when seeing it for the first time."

Step by step, I realized all the other elements now. Paintings of course, and statues on marble pedestals, columns, Corinthian of course, with acanthus foliage - it would need hours to even get a simple overview.

"Yes, very impressive. The house alone, seeing from outside, is impressive, but the inside? And this is only the hall."

"You're right, Sir. The ballroom, I will accompany you when you're ready, is the gem of this manor."

I gave her a sign with my head, it would be senseless to stay here for longer. She turned and headed to the staircase, I followed her. She did use the left staircase, had this any reason? Maybe we would be nearer to the ballroom, by using this side? It required quite a time to reach the last step, I was impressed how she managed it with her long dress. We stood in a long, but narrow, corridor now, several doors with a regular gap between them along one side. I anticipated that every of these doors would lead to the ballroom, that the ballroom was on the other side of the wall. The old state gallery in the next large city to my hometown. Every door leaded to a part of the exhibition, in one large room – I looked at her, and she could read my thoughts.

"Yes, there behind is the ballroom. But these doors are not meant to enter the ballroom, one can leave the ballroom in that way. We will use the main entrance at the gable end."

That was the reason to use the left staircase, the gable end was on the left side. I followed her, and it seemed as we would enter a different part of the house, walking through a relatively small door. But we entered a kind of vestibule, not that large, but palatial decorated. One large door at one side.

"This is the main entrance to the ballroom. You can verify now, for a last time, that all is in perfect shape."

She pointed to one of the large mirrors, now I understood their function. It was easy to see oneself in the mirrors, also your backside. And I asked myself, with these clothes?

"I fear that I will become a laughingstock, walking through these doors, dressed like this?"

I looked at her.

"You're invited, Sir. I doubt that your clothes will cause you any trouble."

"And what could cause me trouble?"

"A wrong attitude, Sir."

"And who decides upon, what attitude is right or wrong?"

"As if you would not know this.....Sir."

"Then I should walk through the door. Doors are made to alter to another side. It's meaningless to wait in front of a door."

Where Conspiracy Starts

Not Dead At Christmas

It had become Christmas, Christmas Eve, the twenty-fourth. I sat in my condo, at my desk, looked at the screen of my PC. Linda had asked if I joined her, she would celebrate with some former colleagues and friends, I preferred it to be alone, as usually at this time. I disliked this ordered joyfulness, at Christmas, at New Year, birthday, Independence Day, and so on.

Still alive and not in prison, a nice Christmas present, another former police officer sentenced, Omicron everywhere, a fourteen-year-old girl dead because a police officer had no better idea than to shoot – first shoot, then ask, and never use your brain first. Collateral damage, like so often in a car chase, I tried to get other thoughts.

Some confusion, who had killed the killer? It had been my weapon, no doubt about it. My .45, not bought to kill someone else. I had been at home at the questionable time, alone. I had unfortunately joined a Zoom meeting – yeah, thanks to today's Internet possibilities, and my interest in science. And who killed the killer now? Still an ongoing investigation, I was not that much interested in at the moment. The killer was dead, justice satisfied, not I. I still saw his eyes, heard his words, he died with the belief that I would have betrayed him. I heard the phone ringing.

Neither Dead After Christmas

A new groundbreaking sentence? She would have to spend the rest of her life behind bars, most probably, if not.....she would become a state witness. But, shouldn't it be a case, why it was possible that such activities could last over decades? The same reason that abled dictators to establish their regimes, enough people who collaborated, mostly because of personal greed, or who simply looked away. It nearly seemed as being Don Quixote.

Being a private investigator, fighting for the good – what was the good? A wife cheated her man, you proved it for the husband, but maybe the man a swine, who treated his woman like a piece of shit? Reality, right or wrong, never it was a simple matter. But who should decide? A highly politicized Supreme Court, possibly? The voters in a state with extreme voter suppression? Politicians on the pay-roll of the NRA or the Sackler family? Was this a world, corrupt and degenerated until the bones? Was this the beginning of a paranoia?

The eyes of a young man, he had been a criminal, had stolen purses and more. He potentially would have killed somebody one day, how many the NRA or the Sacklers had killed so far? Cold-blooded. Kill one, and you are a murderer, kill two dozens, and you will have fans, kill many dozens, and your name will never be forgotten again, kill millions, and you will be a leader. Alexander the Great, was he more than a fucking bloody murderer? Adolf Hitler also "searched" for new "Lebensraum" (space to live), especially in the east.

I lusted for summer, sun most of the day, warmth, hated this fucking weather. In what a world I lived, I could not answer the question. Soon a new year would begin, this year it was different. I had the feeling that, either some matters would be different next year, or this would become my last year. I hoped for the first, but felt a deep insecurity.

Nor After New Year

Was in the big city, had returned, but only till we would open the agency again, next week. Linda was together with friends in town now, had stayed with her parents during the holidays. I walked around, visited some places, all too familiar to me. The city, had been an.....what a time it had been? A "yesteryear" in any case, had the feeling that this would be my last time that I would be

there. Lived in the town now, not so far away, nevertheless an entirely different world. Or, maybe not so different at all, only not so aggressive, not so exaggerated as the big city.

I pondered on, what should be the aim for the rest of my life. Had I screwed up my life, or could one see it as interesting and "rich in variety"? I had the feeling that I would not like to miss one piece of it, but for others it possibly would look like a big mess, a person who could not decide, who could not bring something to end. And that was not that wrong as such, but had this to be a problem? Not for me, at least. Next week we would open the agency again, new cases, new stories. But I had the feeling that it would be never the same again.

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

A Boy With A Huge Bouquet Of Flowers

It's not for the first time that I talk about this, but I think it had to be the beginning of the kitchen stories.

As an apprentice, presumably sixteen years old, I walked with a huge bouquet of flowers, roses, from my workplace, a castle on a hill, down the hill to the small town there, through a good part of the town, to a restaurant. I entered the restaurant, asked the owners if one of her daughters is there, handed the huge bouquet of flowers to her, in front of her parents and some guests. Whoever will believe me this story?

What's puzzling for me, would I see this in a movie or an American sitcom, I wouldn't see this as a very likely story, in any case somewhat pepped up. But, I did it, and I have always to smile when thinking of it – a nice detail?

I always spent my days off at home. My parents fetched me and brought me back. I bought the flowers at home, my parents asked not too much for whom the flowers should be, driving me back. Why is this a true story?

Wouldn't it be true, or I would be an American, than the punchline would be, that I would be married to this girl today. In fact, all is a bit more complicated, and I'm still a single. Her cousin – "My Dark Heart", 6. Chapter, "The Female Form".

Will all these stories be that "romantic"? No, not at all.

The Cult

Joining The Festivity

The massive doors opened, I got visible the room behind. A ballroom, of course not like in Versailles or so, but huge anyway, high, splendid, a lot of gold, crystal, mirrors.....the room was divided in various parts. Musicians played on the other side of the ballroom, maybe ten or so, all women as far as I could see. Before them a dance floor, several people danced, seemed like a kind of classic music, classic dances, but I could not really say.

Strange was the middle part of the ballroom, the middle part was carpeted. An aisle in the middle, left and right various kinds of sofas, low couches, recamiers, divans.....many of them. It was not necessary to ponder on their purpose. Two or more people had sex on many of them, or pursued other amusements.

The third part of the ballroom was the area directly behind the door. Numerous people stood there, a drink in hand, conversed. I could see the Holy Leader, still wearing a vestment, a more simple one now, but a lot of jewelry. And the Holy Virgin, dressed in a orgasm of ruffles, white, not so transparent as before, but no question about that she wore not more. Others I could not see. The Honorable Lady, for instance, or the boy and the girl. All the people in the front area had stopped with their conversations as I stepped in, all looked at me, all the others in the ballroom seemed not be interested in my coming. The Holy Leader came towards me.

"Hello Peter, nice that you come. Not that I had doubts about it."

He smiled and gave a sign to one of the servants. All were women, most of them had darker skin, some obviously Asian. All wore maid uniforms, this time it looked like being in an American porn movie. I said nothing.

"A drink? Champagne? If you want something different, the girls will fulfil all your wishes."

"All wishes" was meant as it was meant. Some servants were involved in the activities in the middle of the ballroom.

"No, thank you. I fear that I'm wrong."

"You dislike what you see? Do you not like the music?"

"The music is very nice, but....."

I looked at one of the nearest divans. Two men, assisted by one of the servants and a woman, only wearing some of her Victorian style underwear, penetrated a girl, not the one from before.

"Will you join? She could pleasure three men at the same time."

"It doesn't seem as that she takes delight in, being treated in this way."

"But you're enjoying it seeing it, when she's treated like that, obviously. But that's okay, we're here to live out our wants."

"Yeah, your wants. But what about her wants?"

"Well, ask the ladies. She will grow up, will become a lady. Her defining now is to please the men's lust, she will later teach the boys. We all have different duties during different stages."

"And she has decided to be a part of this?"

I pointed to the dance hall.

"This girl," he touched the buttocks of a servant near to him, "became born as a woman, with a perfect body and this wonderful dark skin like dark chocolate. She has not chosen it, she got it."

"And her sex and her skin defines what?"

"A girl born in the slums of Calcutta, could it be that it would not be the worst for her, would she become a child prostitute, and a whore for the rest of her life? Alternatives? And do not play the starry-eyed idealist now, stay a realist."

"This all is only fucking hedonism, and your argumentation is shit!"

I felt someone behind me, a stunning perfume, she put her arms around me, I tried to turn.

"Stay calm. I've taught many boys, you will like it."

I wasn't certain why, but I was confident about that it was the Honorable Lady Penelope. One of her hands slid down between my legs.

"I will help you find your destination."

I had the feeling of losing consciousness.

*

As I woke up, I lay in a bed, the Honorable Lady Penelope next to me. She looked at me, naked – well, the sheet covered our both lower parts. I was naked, her breasts were arousing, the room was only lighted by some candles, she smiled.

"Awoken?"

"I think so. I'm not certain, where I'm?"

"Well, I thought that you have been somewhat uptight, not interested in having sex with me in the ballroom, in front of the others."

I looked around.

"We're alone, disappointed? Would you have liked it, would I have brought along one of the girls, up here to us?"

"No, why I have no memories about what has happened?"

"Well, there would be no reason to be ashamed. You could remember everything, if you wished."

"That's the same ridiculous chatter as this silly Holy Leader has delivered."

"Do not struggle, let it happen."

She pulled away the bedsheet – I had an erection.

"It's no problem in the end, that....."

She followed my body with her eyes, down. And like a lady, she did not finish the sentence.

"Whereto this all should lead?"

"That you start being yourself."

"Like this hedonist swines in the ballroom?"

"Come on, you would love it."

"You really think that this would be the truth?"

"Would you be king, in your realm, a king with unlimited power, how you would act? Would you have one little queen, or would you enjoy it that no woman, no matter if old or young, could oppose your sexual desires?"

"Maybe it should be the question, if one should have unlimited power? That your "wishes", your freedom to do something has to end, where the autonomy of another person begins?"

"Yeah, the argumentation of the weak ones. And now, do we play a bit Rousseau, or whom you would prefer? The human rights, the rights every human have – there's only a little problem, that there's no solid explanation, why they shall exist. The weak are anxious, that's why they fabricated something like "human rights". The strong do not need them. Do you like my pussy?"

She opened her legs.

"I would say, yes. Take my pussy, fuck me, you wish to fuck me, you dream of to fuck those girls. Be strong, no longer one of the weak."

"For some everything, for the most the crumbs."

"That's how the world functions."

"Yeah, but you know, you have to drug those girls. They wouldn't be willing otherwise. You have to betray those girls. They wouldn't be willing otherwise. Maybe you're the weak?"

"And, where's the issue? We can drug them, we can betray them, and nobody is there to stop us. And please, do not talk about revolution now, don't be silly. Yeah, they killed some French kings and queens – wow, and in Russia! And what do they have in Russia today? France, a nation today, where no "elite" exists anymore – don't be silly, please!"

"Yeah, do you know what I ponder on?"

"Tell me."

"These girls, down in the ballroom, they all have a certain age. What about real young girls?"

"Oh, you like them younger. Well, this is an orgy, the intention is to fuck as much as possible, to make the girls pregnant. I can arrange an evening with real young girls for you, babies if you like, with their mothers – is this what would make you hot? - It seems so."

"Yeah, at one point you have to make a decision."

How To Justify Human Rights? - and - What Rights Are Human Rights?

Philosophy?

Well, we can cut short, there's no answer philosophy can give you. Yes, we could talk about a "law of nature" now, for instance, that every human has rights simply given because he is a human being, like they would be scientific laws. We can agree about human rights, but this makes them not scientific laws, you can simply disagree. You cannot disagree, regarding the law of gravity for instance – okay, you can argue that earth is flat, but maybe we should not discuss this on such a low level. So, the law of gravity is a scientific law, but human rights? It would be easy, could one measure them, discover them, finding them, but they are a human construct, not a part of nature. Gravity also exists without the existence of human beings, you need simply two masses. But without humans, no human rights. Therefore, it seems as this is a hard to answer a question. You cannot simply do it, looking how it is. If you ask yourself if red cars exist, look and see. But have humans right, and if what rights? This seems to be a bit more difficult – oh, the earth is flat? Enter a plane and start, some questions are effortless to answer. In the end, the ancient Greeks required not even planes, four thousand years ago, to answer this question!

?

Yeah, there's only one way to "find" something like human rights, you have to define them, it's as simple as that. The only problem is, who shall define them. The churches or religious groups? The powerful and rich? Everybody?

Everybody seems to be logic – at least if you stick to something like democracy. As a Nazi, a white supremacist, "everybody" seems to be absurd, like the idea that everybody should have the right to vote, but there's another issue.

Not everybody will have the same idea about, what human rights should be. Should women have the right to vote? Shall people have a right to live wherever they wanna? "Pursuit of happiness", what a nonsense, or.

The people in the former GDR had no right to travel where they want to, in the FRG the people had and have the right to do so – at least if they can afford the travel. Is it a human right to commit suicide? It's a question of definition.

*

The United States of America are a very fine example of the difficulty, who should be defined as a citizen and what shall this mean regarding the rights this person gets. This was no issue as long as a white Western European founded wealthy "elite" could be sure about, that they have the ultimate economical and political power. But a person like AOC is a clear signal for them that their status is endangered – on both sides of the aisle. The Dems talk again about Hillary? What a joke is this!

*

The difficulty of human rights is the difficulty of democracy. Both are not simply there, there's no blueprint, neither for human rights, nor for democracy. And now? Asking the Chinese people if they wish to have more democracy, more civil rights and liberties? Rorty? Setting an example by the way you live. "You" can be a person or a nation. But, looking at Germany, Europe – gosh, the United States? Where's this fucking beacon, about whom Biden chatters so often? The USA, a shiny democracy – who shall believe this shit! Human rights, the same rights, for everyone in the USA – who shall believe this shit! Pursuit of happiness – does one person have a real idea what it shall

mean, not only for one person or some, but for all?

*

Human rights have to be defined, they are not simply there. Health care is not simply there, a pension fund is not simply there, unemployment assistance is not simply there, the right to life is not simply there, the right to property is not simply there. One has to do something.

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

Cooking For The Old

I've worked in several retirement homes, for different companies. I seek employment currently. Apart from, not as cook as such, in no case I would work again in a retirement home. I got a job offer to apply there from the job agency – cook in a retirement home. Well, makes no sense currently, but I read it.

They talk about that they would search for someone, who would cook with passion for the old people living in the retirement home. Who would cook 100 till 150 meals a day and would present them to the residents attractively. Okay, I had a phone conversation with the manageress. They cook 150 till 200 meals a day, she told me – okay. I asked, only for the residents? No, was the answer, also for a school and a kindergarten as well as for meals on wheels – oh, forgotten to mention this in your job offer, I thought. Then I asked a question I always ask: How many people work in the kitchen, how is the kitchen organized? This is a standard question, it should be a matter of course that a potential worker is interested in this. Her answer was, in a very aggressive way: Why you're interested in this! I was baffled.

The problem is, that it would be nice would the kitchen cook only for the inhabitants, but this is no longer reality. You have often to cook for more people external, than for residents. The difficulty is, that it costs you a lot of time to provide all the meals for the different external places, time you have no longer to cook. But you get more staff if you have to cook for externals? And more hardware, of course – yes? Dream on, it's all about making money, extra meals are pure money!

I will not exclude that you can find exceptions even today, but these are exceptions. And do not believe what they tell you. Another job offer? We're a small group of fifteen houses – yes? Well, forgotten to say, that at the end, this nice group belongs to a French mother company which operates all over Europe and that all "orders" come directly from France – Brave New World! Yeah, all for the residents, all for the shareholders, what story is true. I, at least, will never ever again work in a retirement home.

The Agency

Grunt Work

Linda searched for a pet and I drank a cup of coffee – not a very busy time at the moment. The usual drama in Washington, a possible breakthrough for the January 6 committee, Biden with low approval rates, what this all would mean for the midterm elections at the end of the year? It would not be really honest, would I say, not to be worry about the future of the USA – maybe I should stop pondering the whole time on the same matter? A fact was, that it was impossible to say in what state the United States would be in twelve months from now on – it was nice to hear that someone came.

*

What would be a client you want to have, a client not necessarily? Well, a in a way good-looking young woman? I wasn't certain about it, in an aloof manner.

"So, you have these problems with your parents, Miss DeVos?"

"Why still so formal, call me Sharon – please."

Well, "Sharon" had turned eighteen three months ago, and had some troubles with her parents, her somewhat wealthy parents. She had some ideas, wanted "some" money, but her parents had other ideas, they refused to give her the money that she wanted. What a drama.

"Yes, I'm their daughter and the only what I want is, that they give me some of the money that I will get sooner or later anyway."

"Maybe this is not the best line of argument? And, sorry, I'm no lawyer for family matters."

"But maybe you could do something for me? And of course, I would pay you good?"

I looked at her and feared that she would interpret it in that way, that I looked at her because I was riveted by her body. She looked like one of this it girls from the Internet, everything appeared put-on. I toyed with the idea of asking her, how old she had been at her first boob job.

"As far as I can see, you cannot pay me at all?"

"Have you any idea how much my shoes cost? My dress or my watch? My jewelry? And this is the stuff for daytime? I've not enough to implement my business ideas, but for paying you I've enough in any case."

"Why our agency, there's a nice one at the boulevard?"

"Maybe they know my daddy, I need someone for a job to do."

"I know your daddy, and your mommy."

"Yeah, from the newspaper or TV. But not from the country club or so."

"That's true. What would it that I could do for you, Sharon?"

"Nice, Peter. I've knowledge about some of daddy's skeletons in his closet. I thought that you could have a conversation with him, in the fashion of, that it would be better for him to be nicer to me."

"That sounds weird, shall I blackmail him for you?"

"I think that you tell him something like, that you got knowledge therefrom, that I know a much about his little secrets. And, that I'm very depressed because he's not willing to support me."

"Well, shall I be a kind of scapegoat, a kind of fool? I go to him, tell him that I would know about his wheelings and dealings, but that I would keep my mouth shut when he finances your business ideas? Is this your plan? Seriously?"

"Sounds good."

"Wow. Would I be him, I would give you a spanking – of course only metaphorical – and I would send some nice guys who would have a nice conversation with me. Fantastic plan."

"Hey, you're old, but no movies? First, we do not talk about a park ticket. And, what about writing it down, in an envelope? And, if one would killed you, the envelope would get automatically to the DA?"

"Why not telling this your father, that you know his dirty secrets?"

"And, what shall I use as leverage? If he has to go to jail, if his good name is ruined, what would this help me? But a person like you? My research yielded that you're a socialist like Sanders, that you hate the wealthy people. He would have to fear you."

"Wow again. And why for heaven's sake you think that I would help you, Sharon?"

"Come on," she looked around. "You don't tell me that you're not corrupt?"

She bent forward, very tight dress with a massive cleavage. Should I tell her that I wasn't a fan of Botox and that I hated artificial tits? Even if part of an actually cute eighteen-year-old girl?

"Well, maybe this will be a shock for you now, but I think that this conversation comes to an end now. You know the word "no"? Behind you is the door. I think you will be able, to find the way out of the office by yourself."

"Would it be good for your business would I accuse you of harassing me?"

"Not sure, it would be your word against mine. Let's see, my reputation is excellent, most say that I would be a man of strong principles. What would your father say?"

"I'm not that stupid like you think I am, Mr. Maurer. Evidence will be a matter."

"Yes, have I told you that we have video surveillance here? I fear that I have forgotten to mention it?"

"You cannot fool me."

"There's the door, it's your decision. It's your reputation, I would be somewhat more careful in the future."

The door opened and Linda entered the room. Under the desk was a button, if one pushed it an automatic message got send to our cell phones – come back as soon as possible.

"Hey, I'm Linda. - Could I ask you something, Peter?"

"Yes, of course, Linda. Sharon and I wanted to say goodbye, right as you stepped in. We cannot help her, unfortunately."

*

"Hey, wasn't aware that you go for such Internet beauties."

"I will laugh about it if having time later. I'm absolutely undecided whether she's simply a nuts and spoiled daughter, like a little Ivanka, or a dangerous bitch, like the real Ivanka."

"But she was a real little hottie, was it hard for you sitting on the other side of the desk?"

"Well, in a way they are nice. But having a closer look, at their artificial eyebrows and eyes, their artificial lips, their artificial breasts – on her buttocks she sat, but it wouldn't be a surprise would they be as real as the rest."

"Come on, you did not look at her delightful ass under the tight woolen dress as she walked out? I did, and I would bet my money on that she wore no underwear."

"Okay, yes, she was hot. But my problem is, that if you look at her for longer than a moment, they become more and more boring with the time. And one looks like all the others, it's very difficult to distinguish them."

"Yea, poor men."

"She tried to fool me, use me – she threatened me?"

"Well, sounds like a woman would talk about a man. Okay, let's be serious. Do you think that she could be a real threat?"

"Not sure. Would this be a hard-boiled story, then two continuations would be plausible."

"Yes....."

"She could be dead very soon."

"Or."

"Some guys would beat me up, would dump me to hospital."

"And?"

"Let's see."

A Surprising Twist

"Well, that's surprising but also very satisfying."

I had decided, after the "nice" encounter, to have a trip to the large city. I met with a police officer who had been my friend for a long time now, even if we no longer met that much, since I lived in the small town – Yves.

"Yes, but these are still classified information, still an active investigation."

"Yeah, I can wait till it's official. It's funny, his daughter, and her concerns about the family reputation, daddies reputation. I fear that her business plans will have an abrupt ending."

"Maybe, maybe not."

"You mean.....?"

"Come on, we live in the USA. Yes, daddy will spend some years in prison, most probably. It will depend on his lawyers and to what an extent the trial will become a public event. But his daughter, the little innocent girl? Most probably she will write a book, the first millions. Maybe a reality shown, in any case all the talk shows, and then she will launch a company?"

"Yeah, it will become a big success."

"Yes, a nice little scandal at the right moment."

"But, why she did not simply leak the material she had to the press?"

"I would say that it would not look good, would it become public, that she has discredited her daddy because of her personal benefit? It's much better a private dick would be involved, perfect the police."

"The investigation authorities? They have their information from.....?"

"Good question."

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

The Life And Times Of A Cook I

A festivity, the boy an apprentice, maybe sixteen-year-old, most probably fifteen. A knight's castle, the restaurant, and the kitchen, on one side of the castle, the cooling houses on the other side. In between an inner ward. The specialty, the ward was extremely inclined. If some wants to have a look, it was the Burg Hornberg in Neckarzimmern.

The dessert of the festivity: Red Berry Compote, filled in slim and high champagne flutes. His task: to carry them on large trays from the cooling house to the kitchen. His problem: He was totally nervous, anxious about, to drop them.

I think, the story is told therewith. It happened what had to happen, the boy in the middle of the inner ward, all the desserts fallen over, some still on the tray, many on the ground, many glasses broken, red berry compote everywhere, also on his clothes. The only positive? He had to say nothing, they had heard it in the kitchen, the fuss started.

Blessing in disguise? The red berry compote was also on the menu, more had been made therefore, more than needed for the festivity. They had still five or six more at the end than they required for the event. Nevertheless, for the boy it had been a disaster.

The kitchen chief outraged, at least 6 foot 4 and massive, but the sous chef intervened and asked, why for heaven's sake the youngest had to carry those heavy trays the inclined way to the kitchen. Was nice, but helped the boy not much. And today?

Today he can carry four plates with one hand, and at the same time two more with the other hand. But a tray with beverages, not to talk about wine glasses or even champaign flutes? Well, he's a cook, not a waiter – nearly he became a waiter, but that's a different story. And to be precise, he was a cook, but this is definitively a different story.

The Agency

Born In The USA

"Good morning, Peter."

"Good morning, Linda. I can already smell the coffee, how long you're here?"

"I arrived not much ahead of you. Ten minutes, maybe."

"I made a little detour and bought some croissants."

"Do we cultivate the French style this morning?"

"Then we have to pour a lot of milk into our coffees. But I have to say, a croissant with butter and marmalade dipped into a café au lait, that's something nice. Not easy to eat, but nice."

"Yeah, that sound very French. Strange, I've suddenly a taste for eggs and bacon, crispy bacon."

"We could start the day tomorrow in the diner?"

"And today we celebrate the Frenchmen style?"

"You will love it. In the big city, I know a charming place there, where they offer high tea – isn't it that the queen celebrates her anniversary today? Poor Charles.....in Britain they would kill me would I have to ask this question."

"High tea?"

"You not wanna tell me that you're not familiar with the wonderful tradition of high tea?"

"Sorry, for being only a redneck, Mr. from the so cultivated big city. But this is backcountry, we do not know more than eggs and bacon, ham maybe."

"High tea is a pleasant British tradition for cultivated older English ladies, I did it one or two times. An early.....supper, with sandwiches, scones, and other sweet stuff."

"Sounds very exciting, I'm born in the USA. Well, sometimes, nowadays, I've the feeling it wouldn't be bad to live elsewhere, but the UK? Well, we have no longer our disgrace in office, they maybe not for much longer, but I thought, Canada maybe?"

"Canada?"

"Would you stay in the States, whatever would happen?"

"Politically?"

"Yeah, but also economically. The USA was never the dreamland for all, at least in reality. We live in very unstable times. You never thought about, to leave eventually?"

"Wouldn't be sure, whereto. Canada, well, Canada sounds like an alternative. Mexico, maybe there will be a time, not very far away, when Americans ask for asylum in Mexico. Perhaps it sounds crazy, but I've still some hope, that it will not be necessary."

*

The United States, what one should say? A country? A union of fifty nations, and some territories? What one should see as a nation, Wyoming with under 600,000 inhabitants? Even the District of Columbia had over 600,000 inhabitants. Nearly half of the states had less or nearly the same number of inhabitants than Los Angeles City, the city as such, not the urban area. Fifty nations in a union?

Well, Lichtenstein had no 40,000 inhabitants, Monaco only a few more than Lichtenstein. The other way around? California had nearly 40 million inhabitants, only seven European nations (Russia not included) had nearly the same, the same, or a larger number of inhabitants. Nine European nations had less or the same number of inhabitants as Wyoming, not to forget the Vatican City State with 453 inhabitants living there, and 618 in total.

The United States of America had one president, one Congress. The European Union far away from that, even not one currency they had, Brexit? No. Could one, living in the EU, have a look at the United States of America and shake the head? Was it not more on the Americans, looking at the EU, at Europe as such, at their bloody history of wars - WWI, WWII - to have the right to shake heads?

"Could you imagine that you would go back, to the country of your ancestors, Germany?"

"Well, a lot would be easier than. Only to mention health care - gun violence, of course. But, is everything better there? Even there they have their problems with extremist right-wing groups, racism has a different face there, but is not non-existent. Sure, not comparable regarding to what a degree democracy is endangered in the USA today, but with their history? Is it a difference to be a Nazi in the USA, Sweden or Germany?"

"I think it depends on your beliefs. Whether you think that people and nations can or should learn from history."

"What are your plans for the morning?"

"I will visit the PD, maybe I can get some information about my squabblers."

"Be careful, this neighborhood rows can turn very fast ugly, not to say bloody."

"Yeah, wouldn't be for the first time. And you, you've a case?"

"You know that I've no case at the moment. I will do some office work."

"Now I know why two croissants are left. Delicious with butter and marmalade dipped in coffee with too much milk - I've heard so."

"What about lunch in the diner later?"

"If it will be not too stressful for you?"

"I will try my best, Linda."

"See you later, Peter."

She closed the door and I looked around. Well, there would be not so much office work to do. Should I see what dramas would happen in China at the moment? How many hours time shift? Dirty games in a fascist nation, but could you miss all the drama and excitement? To see our athletes winning, or maybe seeing their dreams disappearing? Whatever, time to celebrate and suffer with them - no, not with the no longer interesting Uyghurs. This all was so fucking disgusting, what a bitter joke this all was - I heard something. Someone was there, I had not realized it. I was relieved, better than pondering all the time.

*

Well, I wasn't that much delighted to see "her".

"I doubt that I can do something for you."

"I'm only here to say: Thanks, Peter."

"For what? I did nothing."

"You did for what I've chosen you."

"So, you chose me to do nothing, very impressive. But I've an appointment. You know where the door is."

"Pitiful man, I would have a job for you."

"Unfortunately, I'm not interested in. There are other agencies in town. As said, I've an important appointment."

I showed her the way to the door with my hand.

"You're a lousy liar. You might think that I'm a dummy, but some also think till today that Paris has been one. I've made more money the last weeks that I would need to buy the whole building, not only your little agency."

She not only looked arrogant.

"Yeah, people like you always make one special major mistake."

"You do not expect, that I ask you now?"

"No, because you're extremely dumb, in fact. But why I should be interested in, that you will die that dumb one day. The door, please!"

She shook her little beautiful head, too much make-up, less would be nicer. She walked towards the door - yes, a pleasant little ass, but needed it that kind of dress? Frantic, all was exaggerated, too much ado. As said, she walked towards the door, but of course not without a dramatic exit - she looked behind, at me.

"Next time you will come to me. And, to ensure you, I will listen to you."

Then she left, and I was happy. Hey, this was no fucking Hollywood shit movie, this was reality. Not the first time that someone had said something like that to me, and really big shots among them. Not that this should mean that I wouldn't take her serious, these were the modern times – or the post-post-post-whatever-modern times? Whatever, that she had mentioned Paris Hilton had been no mistake, why not Kim? Mike Hammer, he would have grabbed her, kissed her, tamed her, most probably would have fucked her. And later some guys would have beaten him up, today they would simply ruin you. Marlowe and the women?

I looked at the watch, still time till lunch, but why not a coffee ahead? I grabbed my stuff and walked to the car. Should I tell Linda from the nice visit? I would have to, we were partners. But first I drove to a charming little park. I bought me a coffee, sat on a bench, an article I had read recently. Alone a book-deal had fetched her millions, couldn't she simply stay in her world? Why they always thought that everybody would envy them because they had a fucking lot of money? I envied creative people, who found their way to express themselves. I envied musical people, who could play an instrument or could even sing. Money? Sure, to have none was fucking, but from a certain amount on it became redundant. Jeff's new super-yacht would be ten feet longer than mine? If this were my problems, then I would kill me.

I stood up and felt relaxed. The coffee had been fine, the sun shined, and I had had the time to sit here for a while. And now I would drive to the diner to have lunch with Linda. I sometimes wished to be a woman, but if this meant that I would have to care to look perfect all the time, my legs smooth and my ass toned? No, it was definitively okay to be a man, to have the right to be sloppy most of the time. Had not shaved the last two days.

*

I told Linda about the nice visit I had had earlier.

"Do you take her serious?"

"She's like one of this spoiled and pampered babies, which I already hated in the city. Okay, as long as they stayed in their estates in the valleys or up the hills, among themselves, I had no problems with them. But if they thought that I would have to be happy to see one of them, when they thought it would be nice to spend some time in one of my unprivileged neighborhoods – they are like nerving pets."

"Really?"

"Come on, Jeff has a new mega-yacht? I have not even a small yacht? Gosh, do I have to be sad now, that I've no yacht at all? I had a charming breakfast, and now a fine lunch. At least I enjoy my lunch."

"Yes, also my lunch is tasty. But, be honest, if you could get caviar and truffles now?"

"Caviar is nothing special, it does not hit on me. Costly mildly salted caviar somewhat. But any mussel tastes better – a good clam chowder while looking at the bridge for instance? At least as long as no one jumps. And truffles?"

"You've eaten truffles?"

"Yes, and most people cannot taste them really. Summer truffles are shit, those from the winter somewhat better. The white ones from the Piedmont, okay. But not a joke, I love morels much more. Okay, also expensive, at least if of good quality. But you have to buy dried ones. You have to put them into cream overnight, the sauce will be to die for, for pasta for instance. King oyster mushrooms are very intriguing mushrooms. And even with a simple champion you can create a fantastic dish – you have not to forget the onions and the garlic. If I missed certain food, definitively no caviar and truffles. The only aspect on them is that they are expensive, but especially tasty? Only a person who never have eaten them, or a liar, would tell you this."

"Then I'm happy with my dish - no caviar, no truffles, no oysters."

"Oysters are very nice. Cold, raw and salty. The last ones I ate while looking at the bay, with a glass of white wine."

"Well, oysters and a glass of white wine, looking at the bay at night. You're a little gourmand?"

"It was around noon, and later I had a Dungeness crab. The sweet meat of a Dungeness crab, much better than oysters. At least for me."

"And your lunch?"

"A wonderful salad with avocado. The dressing is perfect, I'm totally satisfied."

"And what shall we do with your new girlfriend now?"

"I hope that I will never ever see her again."

"I have to visit a new possible client now, what will you do?"

"Sounds like you would do all the work and I would do nothing. Back to the office, most probably?"

"Could you get me something on your way back to the office?"

"Of course."

Sitting Round In The Office

Back in the office, I sat around, I was pissed off. I once had heard one asking, what would happen would we get rid of only the twelve most toxic male asshole politicians. Well, that would not be uninteresting to see, but maybe it was too narrowly considered. Even the idea to replace them with women. White racists, white supremacists, but how to deal with Asian racists? How fascist Germany had been in the 40s, how fascist Japan? Could a man from Central Africa be a slaveholder, a black man? Indeed, was it necessary to ask such a question, or wasn't it unnecessary to ask this question because the answer too obvious? I hated it when I started to ponder, especially if it was because I was bored. Someone came - no one came. Even Miss DeVos would have been a pleasure now.

*

No one came, also Linda came not back. Had she forgotten that I had bought her stuff? Often enough this job was simply boring, I started to ponder.

What could have happened? She had said, that she would visit a "new client" now. Maybe a lie? Perhaps something had happened? I had found no information about a "new client". Yeah, sure it would have been easy to phone her, but why not giving your imagination free rein?

She would never come back, would I find out who this anonymous "new client" had been? Would he has murdered her, could be the beginning of a cool plot? Sure, I would take vengeance, I would read all the Hammer novels first, then I would be prepared. Hammer slaughtered some ridiculous communists, I would kill – of course in self-defense – some white supremacists. They would have tortured her, but I would.....

"Did you buy my hygiene articles? I hope that this was really okay for you?"

"Yeah, of course. I'm a modern man."

"Fine, thanks."

Okay, she was still alive, but why she had needed that much time? What was the secret, would I get knowledge.....

"It was very stressful, he did not stop talking. And in the end? I've no new case at all."

But was this the truth? Or was there a terrible secret?

"Well, I've also no new case. Not one possible new customer entered the office today, apart from my new girlfriend. Maybe I have to call her?"

"I don't think so. The last weeks and months had not been that bad. We have a good average, two or three weeks with not so much to do will not hurt us really."

"Maybe we should close? Two weeks vacation?"

"Come on, spring is not so far away, and the virus gets more and more irrelevant."

"Yes, this summer should be relatively normal. It's to hope that next autumn will be different."

"What about closing the office for today?"

"Nice idea, Linda. What about a coffee at the diner?"

"Had two on the way back. Needed them after all this chattering."

"Details?"

"Not today. To be honest, I've some headache now."

We decided to close the office for today, I would tidy everything, would close the door. Linda left the office, had she drunken something, while speaking with the "new client"? Poison possibly? Perhaps she did not mention it because she had memory gabs? Who would die? Miss DeVos, the "new client", Linda perhaps, or even I? Well, "I" would be interesting, a shift in narration would be necessary then. In the end my death would have been faked, of course, simply because "I" was still a man.....

Thoughts About War

That war is the ultimate illustration of the human craziness is no very new insight, but this does not debunk this insight. On the contrary, it shows only, that humans cannot learn.

Or could this be proven wrong? France and Germany, the biggest enemies for a very long time, and today? Could one imagine that France and Germany would wage war against each other today? France and the UK? Okay, Boris the dumbass, but even he would not be that crazy. But what's maybe more important, even if, would the British parliament follow him, the British army, the queen, the British people?

We need democracy in the world, the people have to decide, we have to get rid of this impotent toxic male politicians, we have to learn to work together. But even the European Union or the United States of America have problems therewith.

A long text now? Why, it's like a singularity. We have not the mathematic tools to describe a black hole or the big bang – or whatever happened – but this not means that there's, in fact, any kind of "singularity". War is like a singularity, a point where all our tools work no longer. But means this that we have to accept this? No, we also do not accept that we have no tool to describe a black hole or the big bang.

The difference? Should we never find a tool to describe a black hole or the big bang (completely), will this not kill us. Should we not overcome the insanity of war, this would be different. What's important is, Putin has to fail, he has to fail completely. Would he triumph, war would triumph. War has to fail. Looking at the world? China, Hong Kong, the Uyghurs.....other nations.....the radical "pro-lifer" in the USA.....aren't this not also wars?

We have to get rid of this macho assholes who jerk off on nationalism. We have them also in Germany. And then there are those who need the "free markets", social Darwinism, to jerk off. And those who have to suppress women, to be able to jerk off. We're talking of all this fucking men – sometimes S.C.U.M. seems to be a very obvious solution. In any case, S.C.U.M. wouldn't make the world to a place worse.

*

Yesterday, these words have been in a way theoretical. Today, the bloody war has begun.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, we have to limit the power of individuals, we have to overcome the fucking nationalism, we have to overcome greed, yeah, yeah, yeah.

It will be very telling now, how "The West" will response, what Putin's future will be. He invaded the Crimea and we accepted it. Some even applauded him, could understand him, not only in the USA, also in Germany, especially also in Germany. The fucking radical right but also the fucking radical left. This illustrates perfect that all these radicals are shit, you have not to distinguish one lousy bunch from the other lousy bunch.

And now? Fight for democracy, unless you are a greedy psychopath. Education, education is the key element. Education and getting to know each other. Fight against radicals from both sides of the aisle in your country, and forget this shitty nationalism.

A New Case

In Disbelief

"It's a shock."

"If one were at least able to say: Yeah, this fucking Russians. No one can trust this fucking Russians. Only to remember the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Hitler-Stalin Pact). But it isn't that easy, we have to see also the USA."

"All the treaties on that the former president has shit on. In such a world peace cannot flower, in such a world this flower has to wither."

"Yeah, as long as this nation cannot accept non-whites as equal. This is an insane world, a world totally mad."

The phone rang, we both looked at it.

"You want to take the call?"

"Well, not very motivated? Maybe a new client?"

"You want to have a new case?"

"Not really, not now, not in this situation."

I grabbed the phone.

*

"And?"

"Not much. An inquiry, whether it would be possible to meet on Sunday in a diner."

"You, or I, or we both?"

"I."

"And?"

"I will go, even if it sounds strange."

"You need backing?"

"Backing is never a mistake. At 9 PM, the diner at 3rd Street."

"Wow, with the terribly lighted parking?"

"Yeah."

"I would say that I will drive first, and you come later."

"Yes, but be careful. Stay in the car. Chose a parking space with another one nearby, which I can use."

"Okay."

A New Case

Sunday, I was on the way to the diner, what would happen? Well, whatever, I expected at least not to die – or maybe anyway? Much dying over the last five days since Wednesday, dying far away. Coverage round the day, CNN on-site, but unfortunately not embedded, not so good to get the best possible information.

But, what information one needed, war and dying, we had had the luck to get rid of our Putin. At least for now, until 2024 at least – wouldn't it be a staircase wit, would the real Putin thwart with his bloody war that our wannabe Putin would get a second chance to destroy our democracy? Okay, the price would be some "collateral damage" in the Ukraine. But it all could potentially also lead on to the end of the real Putin? Whatever would be the outcome, the world would be deeply indebted to the Ukrainian people, their suffering. And possibly also to the Russian people, who, it seemed so, stood up in a rising number. Yeah, in the United States one could say nearly everything, as a president that the own people were scum and lowlives, Nazi language. I turned into 3rd Street.

The diner was ahead of me, the parking behind. Linda had come from the other side, she had around

five minutes advantage. I turned into the parking, the parking was nearly filled – Sunday evening, had to search for a free spot. The car I passed now was Linda's car, the car Linda had used, not her normal car, a car from a friend. No free parking near to her, I had obviously to use a parking space away from her. In the rearview mirror I saw that she got out of the car to walk to the rear entrance of the diner. The parking space I found was not far away from this rear entrance, a lucky guy I was. As I got out of the car, Linda was near the rear entrance, but she did not enter the diner, could not really see what she did.

The parking space was not well lit, very dark in fact. Now I noticed that Linda rummaged around in her bag – what a cliché, Linda. The area around the rear entrance was better lit, I stood at the edge of the lit area around the rear entrance with my car, in semi-darkness. I started to walk towards the rear entrance, as nothing happened. I could hear nothing, saw nothing conspicuous, also Linda obviously not. She opened the rear entrance to enter the diner, I followed her right after, a short corridor, a man squeezed past her. He looked at me.

"Mr. Maurer?"

"Yes, you phoned me?"

He said nothing, but had very fast a gun in his hand and started to fire, the bullets hit me. I went down, more shots, the man hit the ground near to me. I looked into his eyes, his dead eyes, blood at his head, Linda had shot him in the head. My chest pained, of course I wore a bullet-proof vest, he had no tried to shoot me in the head – big mistake. But he would have had to raise the gun more therefore, would have needed time to aim, time that would have given me time to react. But, did he really think that I would wear no vest, that I would come alone? I saw Linda over me.

"All okay?"

"Yes, no big caliber. Maybe a bruise or two. He has more problems."

Or maybe none anymore? I moved my head into his direction, tried to stand up, but had to realize that it wasn't that easy. Now I felt the pain at my left pelvis, a bullet had hit me there. Not much blood, obviously only a grazing shot or so.

"I call the police and an ambulance."

"He needs a meat wagon."

"Not for him, for you."

"I need a band-aid, not more."

"Yeah, the tough private dick from the big city."

"He nearly had hit my dick."

"You still need him?"

Well, potentially better stopping now. I looked again at the man aside me, why he had known that I would enter the rear entrance? He wouldn't tell me, he would never ever say anything anymore.

Death was a regular guest in this nation – schools or concerts in Las Vegas, trying on clothes in a shopping mall, death was everywhere in this nation. And yet, even under these conditions, it was nearly a gift of God to live here. There were other places on earth – war in Europe again, so much different from war in Syria or in Afghanistan? The dying was always the same, the suffering of the people as well. ISIS or the Taliban, Assad or Putin? Well, it was something different if war was near, if war effected you directly, if sanctions could affect you directly, at the gas station for instance. His dead eyes, how many dead eyes one could see in the Ukraine today. Dead eyes of women and men - of old, young, and children. Ukraine soldiers and Russian soldiers - I passed out.

Stayin' Alive

Life goin' nowhere, somebody help me
Somebody help me, yeah (ah, ah, ah)
Life goin' nowhere, somebody help me, yeah
I'm stayin' alive
(Stayin' Alive, Bee Gees)

I stayed alive, not died, why should I have died? Okay, the wound was not that petty, but by far not life-threatening. My mistake was that I had attempted to stand up, it would have been better to wait until the ambulance would have had arrived. I had to lie in my hospital bed, for the fourth day now, it had become Thursday, but today I would be allowed to leave. Linda would come to drive me home – Linda came to drive me home?

"Well, as you see, I'm still in bed. You're two hours early?"

"I got a phone call that I could come earlier?"

"Cool, although no one informed me."

"Well, I'm here to give you a ride. Put on your clothes and we can go."

"From my standpoint. I wouldn't need a ride, I would need other things."

"Yes, but the hospital lets you not drive home by yourself. Make it easy, I wait outside until you're ready."

I jumped into my clothes, felt much better now. I grabbed my backpack, which I had with me at the diner. A look, the gun still inside. A look, still enough ammunition. Now I had everything, enough ammunition and a ride.

Do Not Open The Fridge

"Thanks for bringing me home, Linda."

"Is there anything else that I can do for you?"

"No, thanks. The injury is not such severe. Painful in a way, but....."

"Yeah, will be difficult for some time to sit."

"Yeah, I hated it very much to lie all the time on my belly, the last four days. At the least, here at home, here I can walk around much better now."

"You sleep on your back?"

"Yeah, preferable with crossed arms on the breast."

"Like a dead in the coffin?"

"Yeah, if you still have arms and a body for that, if no bomb mutilated you."

"Bad what happens in Ukraine."

"Bad that this war began. They should have not given their nuclear warheads away. The message is clear. If you want to be safe, look that you have nuclear weapons. Seen in this light, the Iran should get them as soon as possible."

"Yes, it's a shame. It's a shame that also in the United States so many think that we would need a "strong man", like this guy in Florida."

"Do you think that a Jordan or a Cruz would be better?"

"I think that the worst horror would be, to see Hillary in 2024 again."

"Yeah, seeing these Democrats? His State of the Union address was so terribly weak, nothing than a succession of commonplaces. Not only one time I had to ask me: About what nation he talks? Not about the USA – or. I had often the feeling that he reads a kind of "Fairy Tale of Dreamland"."

"Yes, but there's also another question."

"Who wanted to see me dead?"

"Yes."

"Well.....not the Russians, I would say. My name is not Volodymyr Oleksandrowytsch. Apart from that, I could only offer some speculations?"

"Your new girlfriend?"

"She's nuts, in a very dangerous way. But I would say that this would be a bit to constructed."

"You think so?"

"Yeah, at least I would sense this as a bit too simple. Let's see what solution he will find."

Linda had gone, and I was hungry, standing in front of the fridge. Well, four days? Not everything was all the time that fresh in my fridge – no one had opened this fridge four days long? I decided

that it would be good to have a walk. Why not some tacos at a food truck?

Who's The Enemy?

"Nice to see you, Mr. Maurer. As I said, there will be a time when you will come to me."

"I fear that I have to disappoint you, Miss DeVos. I'm only here to congratulate you. I thought that it would be a good gesture from my side, to pay my respect to my new house owner."

"I cannot follow you?"

"Well, you've recently bought the office building the agency is in, as well as the apartment building where's my condo."

"Really?"

"You do not tell me that you have no idea about it."

"Gosh, it's always the same with people like you, people who have no idea about what it means to be wealthy, real wealthy like I. I've investments all over the city, do you really think that I've the time to be involved in such small investments – gosh, I've people for that! I do only the big deals, not the peanuts. But I can ensure you, we will not raise the rent, at least not much. And for our condo, I guarantee personally – you have been in the news recently. You had a lot of luck."

"Some call it luck, I wouldn't do so."

"Was this all, I've business to do, real business, the big business."

"I thought that you maybe could help me, the ugly incident at the diner?"

"Why I should? Why I should be able to help you?"

"You have a lot of knowledge and insights, maybe you would have a hint for me?"

"Sorry, murderers aren't the people with whom I socialize."

"That's funny. Almost as one would say, that fucking Putin wouldn't be a filthy fascist killer."

"Well, Mr. Putin? You have your interpretation, I've mine. And if you will any longer indicate that I could have any kind of knowledge regarding the murder attempt, then I fear you should search for a new condo and a new place for your little agency."

"Why you've entered this little agency, the first time that you came?"

"Old man, you're thinking that you're so funny, 'cause honey, you're not. You're still alive, not every man can say this nowadays. And at some places it's easy to die. Good for you, if you can arrange it, not to be there."

"Interested in a funny story?"

"Well, if I can continue with my important business then?"

"In the big city, I come from, some figures knew that it would be better not to exaggerate it, in messing with me. There was this rumor."

"Come on, don't hesitate with your bombshell."

"There was this rumor, that if I or some friends of mine will die a violent death, the others would take bloody revenge."

"Revenge? One would have to know, revenge on whom - or."

"Well, it was only a rumor, despite one or two suspicious deaths. They said that there would a list exist, with names on it. The others would begin with the most likely name – but all only rumors. Do you allow me a last question?"

"Okay."

"Do you have ever killed somebody, I mean with your bare hands?"

"No."

"I have, and my friends as well."

Linda

"You have been very consistent."

"I could not risk that he would have a chance to shoot at you while you're on the ground."
Yes, then he would have had the opportunity to shoot from above. It would have been effortless for him then to aim at my head, if he had realized that I wore a bulletproof vest.
"Two shots in the head, you reacted very fast, not pondered much."
"I'm a former police officer, you have to make decisions. And to say it frankly, that's the reason for, why we should have no bad trained and overchallenged people in our police."
"Thanks for your help."
"You asked yourself the question of, why he was at the rear door as we entered? Obviously no coincidence."
"No. Everything, but no coincidence. I would say that he was not alone."
"A second person, in a car, in the parking lot?"
"Possible. But I asked the police, he had nothing with him, not even a smartphone. They asked the people in the diner and the staff of the diner, but nothing of meaning. I'm uncertain if it will be meaningful to do own investigation."
"But we should. You take it slow, and I will go to the diner. I will look around somewhat, the parking, will ask some people."
"But be careful, I've the feeling that someone from the staff could be involved."
"Why?"
"I had some days to ponder. I do not say that it has to be so, but it would make some sense."
"Any person in particular?"
"One of the cooks, never trust a cook. Especially if he's new and suddenly no longer there after suchlike has happened. But it can also be a coincidence."
"You mean that he had possibly experience with police before and decided it would be better not to cause the interest of the police? - Because of "personal aspects"."
"Yeah, that way. Whatever, be careful. And thanks for saving my ass."
"We're allies."

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

Can cooks be gay?

Working in Munich, Bavaria, living there, born in the state next to the west, Baden-Württemberg, I worked at the best known hotel there, gourmet kitchen, there was this situation.

Well, cooks, a male job, hard one has to be. There was a new beginning in that kitchen, many new cooks, I was one of them. At one evening, one cook asked another cook, if he did not want to join others to do something together after work. He hesitated, that he wasn't sure to tell, but he would be gay and would prefer to go to gay places after work. He said that he had not said it because he feared that we would not accept him longer as cook. Well, was no problem at the end, for no one.

In my youth, after school, 1980, I, and a girl from my class, wanted to become cooks. I, as a boy, had no difficulties to find a place - she not, because of being a girl. She did not become a cook. She came me to mind from time to time because in the best restaurants, the most famous hotels I worked, I always worked together with women, female cooks, cookesses, also in Munich.

In my youth there was this saying, if you're male and gay, then the service is for you, cooking is something for the real men. It's a long time since then, more than four decades, it has changed? Well, in a way, yes. But really? A "black man" in the states is no longer a slave, but.....an African American with the same rights and opportunities than a white (West) European rooted American? Not likely, or. A dirty nigger is running down the street.....what job suits a faggot? Yeah, some might have changed, but.....

A sidenote: At my job interview at the restaurant where I've I learned in the end, I became asked if I would not be interested to make an apprentice as waiter, he would need one. I did not want, some days later they called me and I got the apprentice position as cook.

A second sidenote: The girl became a specialist meat salesperson (specialist salesperson butchery), the job I will work in from next week on.....

The Individual Person

Putin Is Not Russia

Monday. Monday, March the fourteenth, Kyiv still not fallen. Positive? Negative in any case, to have still to bear figures like Putin or Lawrow, the lust to smack their faces, to pull the trigger. So, all Russians were enemies now, just like as we had had a beef with France, and we had refused to eat french fries any longer then? Or as we had killed Chines Americans on the streets of San Francisco because they had infected us with the fucking virus, the virus that was a hoax? But that was so long ago, now we all were civilized Democrats again. I took a deep gulp from my coffee, cold now, a nice coffee from India, as the phone rang – I grabbed it.

*

Millions of refugees in Europe now, good for the Europeans, it were Europeans. Good for the US, not many of them were, at least so far, interested in to reach the USA. Not much traffic today, at this time, still two hours till noon. Much more traffic in Ukraine, countless sirens. I had to wait at a red traffic light, would a tank wait till the light would get green again? I had to drive to the opposite side of the town, but it was a town, no big city, no half an hour and I reached my aim, left the car. Gorky Park, large letters over a glass facade, smaller, Russian Kitchen, underneath. Not the best marketing strategy currently, had never been inside, as a guest, during the time that I lived in the town now. Russian kitchen, not many positive connotations stirred up my curiosity, spending an evening here – Russian kitchen? Yeah, liked the food trucks, tacos, and the Indian kitchen. I entered, a woman approached.

"What can I do for you?"

"I've an appointment with Mr. Kusnezov. I'm Mr. Maurer."

"Mr. Kusnezov awaits you. Would you follow me, Mr. Maurer?"

I followed her, we crossed the restaurant, entered a stylish hallway. Expensive looking carpet, plants on pedestals, pictures on the wall. Oil paintings of course, landscapes, Russian most probably, but then also some very different ones. Russian avant-garde came me to mind, agitprop, but I had very limited knowledge about such kind of art. We reached a heavy looking door. To my surprise, the woman just opened the door, no knocking, no announcement. And she did not enter the room, but invited me with her gesticulation to enter the room.

"Mr. Kusnezov awaits you, Mr. Maurer."

I nodded with my head – "Thanks." – and entered the room. If the hallway one could see as typical Russian, then this office room in any case. "Representative" yeah, but at a certain moment they had missed the moment, to stop. From everything too much, tastelessly expensively, looked like I would be in Florida. A man stood in the middle of this flamboyant nightmare – not small, not tall, not old, not young, unflashy, unflashy in any regard.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Maurer. I'm Mr. Kusnezov."

He did not move, I came nearer, seeing now that he did not stand far away from a neat, but very distinctive looking bar. At least the crystal bottles and carafes appeared so.

"Nice to meet you too, Mr. Kusnezov. You're in trouble?"

"Russia is in trouble, Mr. Maurer. A drink, I've very fine vodka to offer?"

He pointed at the bottles and carafes.

"No, thank you, Mr. Kusnezov. Too early for me. But Russia is also a nation with a sophisticated tea tradition. A tea would be fine."

"A man with culture and taste. My daughter will bring us a samovar."

*

He had used the phone to "instruct" his daughter to bring us a samovar, and I wasn't very surprised to see the young woman again, who had welcomed me in the restaurant. She carried a tray, most probably made of silver, with a very nice-looking samovar on it. Not large, definitively less than half a gallon, but very fancy looking, old looking. Besides the samovar the not less appealing tchainic and two glasses in their podstakannics, also very gorgeous looking. All in all, a lot of silver and gold, all vintage without any doubt. Mr. Kusnezov smiled.

"Is it more the samovar that draws your attention, or my beautiful daughter? Well, considered that you saw my daughter already before, most likely the samovar. But, who knows?"

"Well, that's one of these questions that should be answered only in one direction. Would I have to decide what's more beautiful, your daughter or the samovar, it would be not such an easy decision. But, we should always put a human being first, ahead of things."

"Nicely said, Mr. Maurer. This is unfortunately not always so. Please, have a seat."

We sat down on a highly ornamented sofa, his daughter placed the tray in front of us on a small table. I was still not sure, was this all the real stuff, and therewith worth a little fortune, or this all was only a big hoax. His daughter put the tchainic on the samovar and the podstakannics in front of us. Then she left the room.

Yes, beautiful in any case, but.....Aeroflot. Well, maybe not politically correct nowadays, but sitting at an airport, I always watched the stewardesses in their different uniforms. Bluntly, Lufthansa, the Germans, were my favorite. Yes, they allowed their stewardesses to wear trousers, what an affront!, but with their skirts and the rest – I liked them. Sure, others as well, but Air Emirates? Too much for me, and the color of the uniform not the best.....no, I liked the classic blue of the Germans the most. And Aeroflot?

Well, the last time I saw stewardesses from Aeroflot I thought: Yes, beautiful sure, but potentially only a prejudice, why they are always looking that "pinched"? Old-fashioned in a way, not the simple elegance of the Germans.....

"You're familiar with the function of a samovar, Mr. Maurer?"

I fall back to reality.

"Oh, yes, it's not the first time. But I have to say that this is most probably the most beautiful ensemble of this kind I've ever saw. Looks antique?"

"Yes, it's older than this nation I would guess, at least as old as this nation, our nation."

We both filled our glasses, first with the sawarca, then with the water. I made sure that my tea wouldn't be too strong.

"It's a nice office you have, Mr. Kusnezov. Looks all very genuine, but I have to confess that I'm no expert."

"My family immigrated at the forefront of the Russian Revolution, they were able to rescue at least some family heritage."

"But the graphics in the hallway?"

"You've not only limited knowledge. I was never a communist and I hated communism my whole life, but these artists had a dream and visions. It hadn't been the artists, it had been the politicians who slaughtered this dreams."

"Again a very difficult time for Russia and the Russians."

"Well, the Russians outlived Lenin and Stalin, they will outlive Putin as well."

"They also outlived the tzardom."

"I've never said that I would be a tzarist. I live in the United States, and I appreciate our democratic system."

"Our endangered democratic system."

"Yes, the rule of an individual "leader" has never been a good idea. Not in the Old World, not in the New World. Where are your ancestors from, if you allow me to ask? Your name sounds German to me."

"That's right."

"Well, then I would say, that I have not to tell you something about dictators and their unholy doing, Mr. Maurer."

"No, I don't think so."

*

"So, let us talk about business. Why did you ask for the meeting, Mr. Kusnezov? What can I do for you?"

"Someone threatens me. Well, you maybe will say, after this disgusting war which they have started in Ukraine? But funnily, I would say that not Ukrainians or some "patriots" are threatening me, I would say that the origin of this threat is, some of my "Russian friends":

"Why? Not the first time that someone attempts to pressure you?"

"No, not really. But these threats have a different "quality", I take them very seriously."

"You fear to lie in hospital one day, poisoned?"

"If this were all. I'm especially afraid for my daughter, even my relatives. But I received a threatening letter as well, in which they threaten to exercise a bomb attack, my restaurant during opening hours."

"You know who "they" are?"

"Give them a name. The "Russian mafia" if you like?"

"The police?"

"Say that they could do not much, but will see what they can do."

"Russian mafia", knew some "Russian groups" in the city. Not very pleasant people."

"It could be that we talk about the same people."

"Here in the town?"

"It's only a few miles? We have a relatively large East European population in this town."

"That's right. It seems as there would be a prehistory?"

"Yeah, but this story is long, winding, and somewhat complex. One should have some knowledge about European history."

"And you fear that the police is maybe overchallenged by this story?"

"The average American police officer has not so much knowledge regarding such topics. And especially, they have not the time and patience to listen. As said, this story is long, winding and – maybe the worst – complex. One would need some time, to listen to the whole story."

"I've some time and the tea is excellent."

"You would be interested in this case?"

"I would need more details, of course, to tell you if I will be able to handle the matter. But, yes, I'm interested."

"You possibly feel some hunger? Some snacks?"

"Snacks", "Russian snacks".....well, that could mean a lot. He phoned again and asked his daughter to bring us "something". And I was not very surprised that his daughter brought us caviar, with all the components one could wish for. Finest caviar of course, imperial, the cap aside as common.

"I hope that you like caviar?"

"Well.....most caviar in my range, not so much. But caviar of such a high quality is something extraordinary."

"Luckily.....I've always a stock of such caviar. It's difficult now to get supplies. - Of course, I support the sanctions, I've bought this caviar last year – if it is a problem for you."

"As I said, no problem for me. I cannot afford such a quality of caviar now, I could not last year. Especially not eating it in a restaurant like yours. The story?"

"Lean back and enjoy the caviar and the tea. You heard Putin talking about the Czar?"

"Yes."

"Well, we have not to go back that much in time, but I will start with the end of the tzardom."

I lent back and did as he had suggested. For the next nearly two hours I listened to him, I had to ask a question from time to time. Well, my ancestors came from Germany, immigrated "after" WWII, Russia and Germany intertwined in a very long history, only to mention Catherine the Great – or

Hitler and Stalin? But nevertheless, this story was in fact long, winding and complex, it did not exceed my knowledge only once. After he had finished his story, I gave him my estimation.

"We're a small agency, Mr. Kusnezov. In....."

".....call me Artjom - Peter?"

"Thanks – call me.....Pyotr. But seriously, in the city you can find much larger agencies with more staff. We're only a two-person business. I fear that we will have not enough manpower."

"I would pay you both of course, and money will not be the problem. I've done some research – of course. I think that you would be the best man that I can get in this part of our country. And, you have some reputation. Integrity is a word that seems very much linked to your person."

"Integrity maybe, but no zombie obedience."

"I'm not Putin. I raised my daughter in the way, not to cheer whatever I say or do. She has her mind, we do not agree constantly. A reason for success."

"Okay. My business partner has equal rights and also an own mind, I would have to discuss the matter with her first."

"Of course. It would be a pleasure to me, could I welcome you both the next time. Thanks for all the time you had, Peter – Pyotr."

"It's a part of my business, Artjom. I will give you a notice after I have discussed the matter with my business partner."

*

I was in my car again and drove back – listened to jazz music. Very seldom I listened to jazz in my car, was fantastic music to listen to live, to my thinking. But now I liked the deep tones of the clarinet – deep tones? Clarinet? Well, depended entirely only on, how large the clarinet was. Matters often depended on the specific circumstances. What was always doomed to fail were generalizations and absolutizations.

What Does Heroism Means?

What is a heroic act? In one way very easy, but in the end not so much. A firefighter attempting to rescue life? Of course! A Ukrainian who fights against the Russians? Wouldn't it be better to surrender, to endeavor to follow Gandhi?

One of the "most famous" German "TV philosophers" demands this, but isn't that simply pathetic? The British waged no war in India, Churchill was no angel, but definitively no Hitler. Even Gandhi put his ideas into perspective, when talking regarding the fight of Britain against Nazi-Germany.

The Ukrainians would surrender, and the Russians would start to deport and kill Ukrainians in a large number, what they started with most likely already? They would kill Zelensky, would destroy the nation systematically and ultimately. New concentration camps, a new Babyn Jar, could this be an alternative, an alternative to fight? To surrender seems to be the absolutely worst alternative.

Is the Ukrainian fight heroic? I fear that I'm absolutely not the best to answer this question because I'm definitively no heroic person. I see only one question that has to be answered, what's the best way to defeat the Russian army and to end the reign of Putin. Ukraine has to become an EU member, as well as a NATO member. Finland has to become a NATO member, it has to become a total fiasco for Putin and the Russians. This has to be the signal that has to be sent out!

And what would be the basis of all of this? The fighting Ukrainians, that they do not surrender. Name it heroic, whatever, said it already before, after this war we all will be deeply indebted to the Ukrainians. And we have to support them until then with all they need, especially good weapons in a large number.

We should never forget, the Russians, Putin and his bunch, are the aggressors. Hitler started WWII, Putin started this war, Hitler is dead and Germany a democracy today. This could be a blueprint. Yes, there's a country who needs to get denazified. But this nation is not Ukraine, this nation is Russia.

To give your life, to rescue the life of someone else, is considered as heroic. Ukrainians die to safeguard a free and democratic Ukraine, and not at least a democratic Europe. Heroic, maybe we use this word simply too often and in a not adequate way. We should use it very rarely, only for exceptional situations, like when a nation fight for its sovereignty, the right to be a free and democratic country.

The Individual Person

Who's The Enemy

"Well, what's your final opinion?"

"Whether we should accept the job?"

"Yes."

"Well, had no tea from a samovar so far, not to mention costly caviar. There's maybe also a beautiful son for me? Openly spoken?"

"Of course."

"I'm born in this town, I raised in this town, I became a police officer in this town – and now I'm your partner in this town. There are people in this town I not wanna call my friends. With whom I not even wish to have business relations."

"Okay, but all this accusations had never been proven, numerous rumors, not more."

"He's the prototype of a shady business guy. Some call him a nationalist."

"A Russian or an American one?"

"Whatever pledges the higher profit, I would say – would you work for a mafia guy or a guy from a drug cartel?"

"Isn't that too extreme?"

"Some would say "not at all", especially many of my former colleagues. You wanna work for him?"

"No, not this way, nothing single-handed, we're a team. But if it's okay for you, we have not much to do currently, I would try to get some more information about him."

"And what do you wanna tell him now - and his marvelous daughter?"

"That we will not work for him, at least not under these circumstances."

"Circumstances?"

"His story was complex and very elaborated, but not very convincing, at least in some details."

"Details?"

"Well, the Germans committed awful war crimes in Russia, and especially in Belarus and Ukraine. But ask the Polish people, ask them for German war crimes, but also for Russian war crimes in Poland. A medal has sometimes much more than two sides. You're right, being a victim not means not being the monster of the plot. Who cheered as the French army intervened in Rwanda, the Hutu or the Tutsi? Why nations refused to accept more Jews as refugees? Many of them got later killed by the Germans. This coin has an endless number of sides."

The Reason For Extinction

The Astronomical World Council, AWC

"Okay, so what are the hard facts that we can announce now?"

The AWC, the council that organized and synchronized all astronomical activities around the world. Scientists from all places around the world, but also members of the Political Word Council – PWC – sat together to discuss the current situation.

"Well, since around a decade we're able to monitor at least the largest objects of the Oort cloud. We found some strange orbits from the beginning on. Already the first theories included the possibility that a larger object beyond the Oort cloud could be the reason therefor. This idea got stabilized more and more, the better data we got. We could start to search for the object two years ago that we have found now, our largest moon-based telescope could make the first images."

"Thanks Professor Jacobson. What can the mathematics tell us about the object – Professor Dupont?"

"Thanks Councilor Sung. We have good estimates about the mass of the object now, but not the size. The mass is around one and a half-time that of earth, the size? Well, the object is still very faint, but the body is most probably very dark. But we wouldn't be surprised if it is an object very similar to earth."

"A planet, maybe a second earth?"

"Maybe I can say something to this topic, Lady Councilor?"

"Professor Andersson, I will be interested to hear your opinion."

"Well, we should be careful. We cannot say where the origin of the object is, but this interstellar wanderer is most likely since a very long time alone on its way between the stars, maybe since millions of years. We should not expect much, apart from a dead body, with a somewhat higher mass than earth and maybe around its diameter."

"That's ridiculous, Lady Councilor! Yes, we should not expect a planet with an atmosphere and life on it, but this is the by far the largest object from outside our solar system that crosses it ever!"

"Thank for your objection, Mr. Kleinhans from the PWC. But I think that we have to find a clear strategy to deal with this opportunity."

Wanderer

"CNN World News, I'm Sergej Sumlenny in Kyiv and your host tonight. Since two years the AWC monitors the object that will penetrate our solar system, now they have given it the official name "Wanderer". There's a discussion who was the first who named the object so, but maybe that isn't that important. What's potentially more critical is the discussion about, how dangerous this object can become for us. The Oort cloud gets more and more disturbed, can a large comet hit earth? The AWC says that the object will not come very near to earth or another planet, but we all know that the gravitational disturbance caused by Wanderer will disturb the solar system in any case. With me together is Professor Dr. Dr. López who will be the new councilor of the AWC very soon. Professor López, what are the latest facts about Wanderer and its impact to our solar system."

"Thanks, Mr. Sumlenny. But before I answer your question, please let me say that this is a regular transition. The AWC elects a new councilor every five years, always for only one term. Lady Councilor Sung did a fantastic job and I will continue with her work. We have to do everything to explore Wanderer as good as possible. This is a millennium chance to do such exploration."

Inside

"Wanderer" Inside Our Solar System Now!

"Wanderer" has broken through the Oort cloud now, many see the end of our world! Last year a colossal comet hit Jupiter, will the next colossal comet hit and destroy earth? The AWC says that the chance that Wanderer will navigate a comet on earth is very unlikely, but is it a planet, only a piece of stone? In 2017 1I/Oumuamua penetrated the solar system, a first probe to explore our solar system? Several other suchlike object could be found meanwhile, how many we missed? Have this been the probes and now the mother ship arrives? In any case, the AWC creates the impression to have no in-depth knowledge, but announced simultaneously that it works on plans to explore "Wanderer", maybe even a manned mission is not excluded! Who shall believe all this? We here in this editorial team in no case!

New Facts About Wanderer

Press Release – The AWC announces some new and better facts about Wanderer. The mass: 1.59 times the mass of earth. The diameter: 1.13 times the diameter of earth. This is most likely explained by a larger core. The best so far available images show some structure, but it's not sure so far how to interpret these structures. In any case, the planet has no atmosphere, at least nothing that would call so on earth. We cannot say where Wanderer came from because we're convinced that the planet has passed another planetary system around 15 light years from earth. We cannot calculate how this encounter has changed the path of Wanderer.

The AWC will announce soon more about the planned exploratory mission to explore Wanderer. We can say that much today, that we consider a manned mission, but that we not consider manned landing missions. But the discussions regarding the details are not completed until now.

The Mission

"Councilor López will present the "Mission to Wanderer" to you now. The people from the press can ask questions after Councilor López will have finished his presentation – Councilor López."

"Thanks, Estella. It's a great honor to me to present you all the "Mission to Wanderer" today. Never in our history we had been able to establish such a difficult, complex and large mission in such a short time. I have to give thanks to all you scientists, those who gave all their best to enable us to this wonderful mission. And of course, we have to give thanks also to all those politicians who supported us right from the beginning on.

Sure, we can still not say what Wanderer will offer us, maybe it will be only a big dead piece of a rock, but maybe we will be able to discover something very new. Even with our best telescopes we still cannot see details on Wanderer, Wanderer is without any doubt very old, on its way through the stars for most likely billions of years, with no atmosphere. But, what an opportunity is this, an opportunity we cannot miss.

The "Mission to Wanderer" will be a milestone in our exploration of space, of foreign solar systems, their planets, and maybe even regarding the question of life beyond our solar system. I'm excited, we all at the AWC are excited, and I'm certain that billions out there are excited as well. The "Mission to Wanderer", let me now explain to you what we will do, how we will do it, what will be our aims. The "Mission to Wanderer", a new chapter in human history will begin."

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The "Mission to Wanderer" revealed. A report from Peter Maurer, Los Angeles Times.

Yesterday evening in Kinshasa, the Councilor of the AWC, Professor López, finally revealed the plans to explore Wanderer. Many rumors have popped up, about the mission, as well as about the planet Wanderer itself. The attending reporters, also the L. A. Times was present, had many questions, not all found a satisfying answer.

It's still unclear how much the AWC knows about Wanderer so far. Really most probably only a dead rock, or has the AWC found distinct evidence for a civilization on Wanderer? The councilor stuck with the version, that no evidence of a former civilization on Wanderer, not to mention any kind of life nowadays, could be found so far. And what does the AWC plan now?

As we could report already, now it's official, the AWC will use its latest Mars space station to explore Wanderer. Mars and Earth are in opposition currently, and therefore Mars is much nearer to Wanderer than earth. The Mars space station will get equip with four boosters, as well as with additional scientific equipment, and will head to Wanderer with the whole crew of twelve astronauts. On board will also be the new landing module which is able to bring two astronauts to the Mars surface and back. Nevertheless, the counselor denied that a maned mission to explore Wanderer would be planned.

Not sure, according to the councilor, is still the length of the mission. Three different scenarios are possible. The space station will enter the orbit of Wanderer and will travel together with the planet through our solar system. The first close encounter will be with Mars, then the space station could return to its origin orbit around Mars. Thinkable would also be to use this encounter to equip the space station anew, maybe even with a new crew.

A second close encounter would be with earth. This could be the end of the mission, or again a possibility to equip the space station anew. Then the mission would last until Wanderer would have left Earth that much behind, that the space station would still be just able to return to Earth. The decision about the scenarios will depend on what will be found on Wanderer. Everything okay so far?

Also the reporters of the L.A. Times had questions about the costs, details of the mission, who would decide about which images and results will be published, which not. Not only we had the impression, that these and other questions could not finally get answered. But without any doubts, we from the L.A. Times will stay tuned to it.

The Individual Person

The Famous Russian Soul

I had started with investigations, to get a better impression of Mr. Kusnezov, his family, his connections. He hadn't been happy as I told him that we would not work for him for the moment, that we would have to ponder more about it. He needed not a second, as I phoned him, to ask me: You would take the job, right? It's your hesitant partner. I required no second to reply: That's absolutely right. The man I had been in the big city wouldn't have hesitated a moment, he would have started working for you. But maybe he would have had to realize that it had been a mistake, working for you. A problem? Not for that guy, he would have had the right answer for you. Yet..... maybe the women's way, to ponder first and to act then, isn't the worst idea. Especially when getting older, like me.

I had worked on Mr. Kusnezov for two weeks now, of course in my spare time. Had two minor cases meanwhile, to earn at least some money, but the rest of the day I had worked on Mr. Kusnezov – the results so far? I had asked the Internet, had spoken with various people in the town, had some phone calls with friend (former?) in the big city, also from the police – the results so far? Yeah, this coin had, in fact, more than two sides – as if two sides hadn't been enough – and all these sides were so different, like from entirely different materials. My judgement?

I could imagine that he was, at the end, in substance, an honorable businessman. But, he had to deal with Russia and the Russian structures, even living here in the United States, being an American. He had to come to terms with these circumstances, legal or not legal was not always and at all places the same. However, one could also argue that he would be deeply involved in the Russian mafia, maybe even being a key figure in the USA. To find the truth, the real facts, weren't easy most of the time. When it was easy, to see all the facets, to be able to tell the whole story? Well, CNN could do so, but I wasn't CNN. Too often I had my problems therewith, to define what the true facts would be, to tell the full story.

I decided to visit Mr. Kusnezov again, he fascinated me in a way, I could see this clearly. And I wasn't unprepared, regarding his nice story for instance, that he had told me. I would have some follow-up questions this time, regarding matters that simply couldn't be so, as he had told me. This time no time for caviar, no time for vodka anyway, even not for tea. This time we would drink mineral water.

The Reason For Extinction

On The Way To Wanderer

Half-Way

"I've finished the report. Do you wanna cross read it before I send the report to Earth?"

"No, thanks, I trust in you completely."

"Well, not so many significant matters about that I could report. We're half-way to Wanderer, but with our instruments we can still not get better data as with the larger and better instruments on Earth, Moon and around Mars."

"But this will change now. Not that much longer, and we will be on orbit around Wanderer."

"Do you believe in any of these rumors?"

"I'm the chief of this mission, would it make sense to send me to Wanderer, without telling me the truth?"

"Not really, this would endanger the whole mission."

"Fine, and I can tell you that you should forget all this rumors and especially all this conspiracy theories. I apprehend that this will become a dull mission."

"Why? It's definite that Wanderer shows structure, most likely several continents."

"Most likely billions of years between the stars and no atmosphere? Even if there had been an advanced civilization on Wanderer, what could we still expect to be able to find? We should not expect too much."

"Yeah, most likely you're right. But even to find any remains of an ancient civilization would be a sensation. We would know then that we wouldn't be alone."

"We would know that, billions of years before Homo sapiens started to exist, at a very distant point, a civilization had existed. That's something different."

"Yeah, most probably you're right."

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Mars Orbiter IV, now converted into a spaceship, headed towards Wanderer - or better said, "Explorer to Wanderer" headed towards Wanderer. It would still need some time until the rendezvous, and it needed more and more time to send messages to earth or receive a message from there. On the other hand, after the rendezvous, the spaceship and Wanderer would head towards earth together. But as said, this would need still some more time.

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Half-Way To Wanderer

The "Explorer to Wanderer" is now half-way to Wanderer, and we still can get no distinct answers from the AWC. Councilor López still denies that there is a "Secret of Wanderer", even when more and more strange images from Wanderer's surface pop up. Some say that we can see continents, some say that the images show definitively that Wanderer is artificial, at least partially.

When this game of cat-and-mouse will end? The crew of the "Explorer to Wanderer" will be able from now on to get better data about Wanderer than we all on Earth, Moon or Mars. Will we see this data? What will this data show us? If Wanderer has a secret, not to talk about the possibility that Wanderer could be a colossal spaceship, will be getting this information? Why always the AWC gets all data first and then the public? One is for sure, this news source will get to the truth at the end.

An Image Of Sensation

When We Will See It?

Even today the AWC not published the new set of images, the latest set of images of Wanderer made by the crew of the "Explorer of Wanderer". They have to be analyzed better, they have to be processed further on - processed until they show us what the AWC wants them to show us? Do they really think that we're fools?

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CNN Breaking News. I'm your host Peter Maurer with the latest developments regarding the mysterious new images from Wanderer. The last set of images showed us clearly that Wanderer seems to have four continents, one larger one, two medium-sized continents, and a small one. Due to the strange rotation of Wanderer it's especially difficult to get images from the largest continent – only from time to time the crew of the "Explorer to Wanderer" can get good images. The last images showed us a brighter continent with mysterious dark spots. Especially at its edges, but also some inside the continent. Impacts from meteoroids was a theory, massive craters like on Moon for instance. But concentrated at the edges of the large continent? Not very likely. On the two medium-sized continents, both darker than the largest continent, no such spots could be found. One theory was, that Wanderer orbited its sun in a synchronous rotation, like our Moon Earth. Then always the same side of Wanderer pointed towards its sun, or away from it. Maybe this could be a solution, so the idea of the scientists.

Now, as the "Explorer to Wanderer" approaches Wanderer more and more, the crew was again able to get good images from the largest continent, why we cannot see them? What do they show? It seems as that we could get an answer soon because Councilor López will hold a press conference later the day.

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"What do you think, you're the chief of the mission?"

On the table laid the processed, sharpened, the latest images of the largest of Wanderer's continent.

"Well.....nice that they have sent them us before they go public?"

"Due to the time delay those on Earth, Moon and even Mars have seen them first."

"It's not relevant, but to be exact. Earth and Moon know them already, Mars and we nearly at the same time. But I would not say that the processed images show that much more. More details, but in the end not much more information."

"We have seen them first, days ago. We had days to discuss them. I also do not think that the sharpened images change any of our analysis?"

No one said anything, all agreed. A table, a set of images on it, all twelve crew members around it. The table was the largest on the "Explorer to Wanderer", the table for breakfast, lunch and dinner, normally not more than four sat there at the same time. The "Explorer to Wanderer" operated, like before while orbiting Mars, in a three-shift system. But the latest images from the largest continent, still unnamed as everything on Wanderer, had disturbed this system. Too many discussions on board since then. As a result, the chief of the mission, Major Nisa N'Diaye, asked everyone to join this meeting, now that the processed images and the ultimate analysis of the experts of the AWC had come in.

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An image, a disturbing image. The largest continent of Wanderer, a size between North America and Africa, in form reminding Australia, two large mountain formations. But the strangest were the

craters.

Of course, the whole surface of Wanderer was covered with craters, the continents as well as the lower areas, most probably water surfaces, seas and oceans, in former times. And maybe it was not the craters itself, even when also their form seemed different compared with the other craters, it was especially their arrangement.

The USA, the arrangement of the big cities. Of course, New York at the northern East Coast and (Greater) Los Angeles at the southern West Coast. Miami at the southern East Coast and Portland / Seattle at the northern West Coast. Chicago in the north and Huston in the south. Some other large cities like Las Vegas, Denver, Dallas, Minneapolis, or Atlanta in between. Exactly this scheme the arrangement of the craters on the largest of Wanderers continent followed.

The two largest craters at opposing coasts, other large craters around the coastline of the continent, some larger and several smaller craters inside the continent. No crater hit a mountain range, but they could be found in larger valleys – somebody had wiped out the civilization on Wanderer, that was the only logic conclusion.

Why not the other continents? Well, some remains of smaller craters on the smallest continent, not larger than an isle like Papua New Guinea or Madagascar on Earth, smaller cities most probably. The two medium-sized continents, one in size of Australia, the other in size of Antarctica, both near to each other? On both no craters could be found, no such craters like on the largest continent. The arrangement of the craters on these continents followed the law of coincidence.

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The Final Conclusions of the AWC

The AWC assumes that Wanderer orbited its sun in a synchronous rotation. The hemisphere of the largest and smallest continent pointed to the sun, the hemisphere with the two medium-sized continents away from the sun. This would lead to two very different hemispheres. On one side of Wanderer could have been excellent circumstances for life, the other hemisphere would have been much colder, most probably covered with ice. The two medium-sized continents could have been covered by miles of ice, like Antarctica on Earth. But what has happened to Wanderer?

One large inhabited continent, one "race", one nation? Different nations who destroyed itself? Is the fact that Wanderer no longer orbits its sun linked to this? Not long and the "Explorer of Wanderer" will arrive at the planet, we hope that we can find answers then. What the AWC can announce today is, that we will continue with this mission as long as possible, definitively beyond the closest encounter with Earth.

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

It's All About The Money

I decided to stop working in retirement homes around two years ago – why? Well, it's all about the money, to make as much profit as possible. There are maybe exceptions, but I had several large providers as employers.

There's this nice illusion, that the cooks in a retirement home would cook for the inhabitants – yeah, some decades ago, but no longer today. They cook for schools, kindergartens, meals on wheels, and more as well. And of course: The more, the better – for the employers. But the kitchens were build to cook for the inhabitants, say a hundred people. Now they have to cook for two hundred, if not more, in the same kitchen. And of course, the distribution is very time-consuming. This simply means, much less time to cook the now much more meals as before – please, do not talk about quality now!

And, forget that there are small chains today. We're a small chain of fifteen regional houses, very familiar. Well, maybe forgotten to mention, that in the end, the small chain is part of a French mega company which has houses in several European countries? And of course, you get all your instructions directly from the French headquarters.....

As Monty Python said: There's no fun anymore!

The Individual Person

An American Meeting

We did not meet at his restaurant this time, no tea and caviar. Whereby, tea he could have got at this place either, but in no case caviar, no, not even the cheap faked one. I had chosen coffee and the chicken with rice and guacamole. He had decided for a coffee as well, but a steak with salad, and guacamole as well.

"Maybe not perfectly your style," I asked him – I had proposed the place and the time, time for dinner.

"If you think that this is my first time in a diner like this, I have to disappoint you. And I can enjoy the Latino kitchen as well."

I looked at him, yeah not all the time in his life he and his family could enjoy the luxury they could enjoy today – not to talk about some of his ancestors. On the other hand, they always knew how to manage it to "find" luxury again. Always because of hard work? Well, would be possibly a question of, what the definition of "hard work" would be for you. Maybe we could ask the Kennedys or some Russian oligarchs?

"Yeah, and of course you respect them."

"I did not elect the asshole that was our former president, others elected him. I'm no racist, in my company many nationalities are working, also in leadership positions – I do not think that you have missed this, while investigating in me?"

"Well, I'm not sure to what a degree I'm a racist, I do hope that not that much. And I know that you're aware of, that would all try to live in your luxury, that the world would have a serious problem then. But I did not ask for this meeting to discuss such topics with you."

"Fine. But I have to say that I'm sure that I would like it, to discuss such topics with an intellectual person like you – and I mean this serious. But what's your concern?"

"Well.....you're not black, and you're not white, to express it in this politically incorrect way. I'm not sure what shade of gray is yours. And because I know that it would be silly to ask you, I will not ask you."

"You will take my offer to work for me?"

"No."

"And you have no distinct idea about my person?"

"No."

"And you are the famous private dick?"

"Yeah, but maybe it would be better to buy some super clever and opportunistic PIs, there are enough of them. I? Well, you're like a shiny diamond, everything tells you that this would be a gorgeous gem. But then, when looking at the price tag, you ask yourself: Such a gem to such a price? Well, it could be the bargain of your lifetime, but the alternative? I'm no gambler, no longer."

"And there's nothing I could do to change your opinion?"

"No."

"And if someone would commit a bomb attack on my restaurant and many would die, would this not be horrible to you?"

"No, why? We have investigation authorities, you can buy a dozen of our best private investigators. As if it were crucial that I would investigate....."

We sat for a longer time together and had an interesting conversation, also about the fantastic story he had told me. I felt torn, but I knew that he would have enough alternatives, alternatives others not had. He seemed to me in a way as a rich person who would yammer because one of his yachts got damaged during the last tornado – well, nothing to be happy, but others had much severer problems. As said, we had an interesting conversation about many matters and drank a lot of coffee together. One could nearly get the impression, that friends would say goodbye at the parking of the diner.

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Orbiting Wanderer

"Perfect, we're in a stable orbit now. Send the message to earth, Allison."

"Yes, Nisa. The general meeting still in two hours as planned?"

"Yes, I've some new instructions, and we have to talk about the first stage of our mission. The longest stage of the mission to Wanderer, until the passing of Mars."

"Then let me send the message to Earth. - This is Under-commander First Lieutenant Allison de Hara on board of the "Explorer to Wanderer". We have entered the stable orbit around Wanderer and will begin with the first stage of the direct exploration of Wanderer. We....."

Wanderer had a new moon now, in fact it still had already two moons, if one wanted to call these two small pieces of stone, orbiting Wanderer, moons. Even much smaller than the two moons of Mars, discovered during the approach, fast the question on Earth arose, could this be artifacts of the lost civilization of Wanderer, larger satellites or maybe even space stations. But the pictures showed only dead rocks, maybe not even primal satellites of Wanderer, maybe objects like temporary second moons of Earth.

Meeting

"We've reached Wanderer, now we can start with the close exploration of the planet. I will give you all a brief summary about the next stages of our mission. We could get better and better information during our approach, but now we can start with the detailed exploration.

The first step will be to get detailed maps of Wanderer. We will use all our instruments on board of the space station as well as unmanned probes. No landing mission is planned during this first stage, but we will get very detailed maps of Wanderer. Of course in visible light, as well as gravitational maps, thermal maps, and more. It will be interesting to see what all we can find further one. Some of you will find this possibly boring, most of these activities will happen automated, but soon we will get an enormous amount of data. Of course, we will send this data to Earth, but we will analyze the data on board as well - Ragnheidur?"

"We specialists on board, we're still not much happy therewith, to send all the data to Earth, what needs already time because of the still large distance. Then we wait till they come to any conclusion on Earth, what requires much time normally, and then they send us their insights, what needs again time because of the distance. With other words, we wait and wait and nothing gets under way. We have already gained interesting data, now we're that close to Wanderer, we....."

".....I can understand the impatience, especially of the specialists on board. Yes, we have some exciting data, but now is the time to confirm this data, to get better data. Sure, it would be interesting to start a lander, to fly to some interesting spots, to see them with your own eyes. But we can do this in a first step better with probes. We have found irrevocable signs for cities, but now we can explore them in detail. The probes can make pictures with fantastic resolutions. We needed so much time to reach Wanderer, we should take some more time now to plan our next steps - Lyana."

"You've told us that you have news for us. Are manned landing missions definitively planned now?"

"Well, not now, not officially. This is only the beginning, we have plenty of time....."

".....plenty of time, when Wanderer is near Mars or Earth and we no longer on board? There are six specialists on board, we're all trained for missions on the surface of Mars, why we cannot explore Wanderer directly?"

"An example. We have found voids under the surface, some of them enormous or complex.

Wouldn't it be better to explore them further on before starting any manned mission?"

"You're insinuating with these words that you could imagine that we would start manned missions?"

"I'm the commander of this mission – if I see the necessity therefor? As you said, we have some of the best minds of their scientific field on board, trained as well for ground missions.....but let's see what data we get during the next step."

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"This is a dangerous course, Nisa."

"Yeah, Allison. But wouldn't it be silly not using all the possibilities on board? Sure, on Earth they say: Let them get all information, the direct exploration we will do between Mars and Earth. However, we have distinct data of remains of cities, already now. We have found the voids underneath the surface. This will be the longest time we can orbit Wanderer. The time from Mars to Earth is relatively short because Mars and Earth will be relatively near to each other during this time. And when Wanderer will diverge from the inner solar system again, this will happen relatively fast, because of Wanderer's path."

"But you know that they plan that one or two more space stations will orbit Wanderer during its nearest approach. They prepare this space stations already."

"Yes, I know. But I've the feeling that so much can be found on Wanderer. The largest continent, definitively there had been a civilization. Large cities, even after whatsoever has happened there, there will be so much that we have to discover. The smallest continent is also very fascinating, many small craters there, many small.....what, for what they have used this continent? And then the other two continents, no artificial craters, not one! But, also there we have found indications for a kind of colonization, cities, or so.....I think it would be grossly negligent to say: Take a lot of time now to get as much data as possible. But the real exploration of the planet we will do in a relatively short time thereafter. I fear that this would be a massive mistake."

"Okay, I understand you. But the craters, for instance. Explosions, we do not see any reason to doubt this, explosions to destroy cities. And not only the largest crater, we have no idea what kind of weapon such a crater should have caused. We have found no radiation, nothing that would give us a hint. Okay, we will start with the close exploration only right now, but this is my point. Let us be careful, we need some basic knowledge, we should have at least some ideas regarding the events which happened on Wanderer?"

"Wanderer is most likely billions of years on the way, we should not forget this. We....."

".....a new simulation with the latest data shows, and you're knowing this, that it could be possible that Wanderer's sun is not that far away as suggested so far. But exactly this is my point, there are so many uncertainties, we should gain better data first."

"Yeah. However, and this is my point, we will get these certainties not by looking at Wanderer. We have to be on Wanderer, we have to become a part of Wanderer, not only a spectator for afar."

The Individual Person

A Big Mistake?

I sat in the office, in no very bad mood. We both had cases – well, no, not the really big ones, but not every day was a day to write a novel. I was in the office to eat something, to have a cup of coffee. Later I would work on my case again, I listened to some nice music, long that I had heard something from charming Miss DeVoss, I thought, as the bell of the office door rang. Somewhat absent-minded, but I walked to the door - finally - leading to the hallway, not using the intercom.

"You swine killed my father," was the first that I heard while opening the door, the next what I saw was an outraged Russian beauty.

"I beg your pardon!"

"Don't tell me that you do not know it!"

"Your father is dead."

"Wow, Mr. Private Investigator, he's not dead, he got killed, and you're guilty of his death!"

"Please accept my deep sympathy, but maybe it would be good to have a hot coffee first – or maybe a tea?"

"Keep your fucking tea! He asked you for help, and you refused to help him. Is this the American virtue? You left him behind, that's not the soldier's way."

"You're maybe in the state of shock, and maybe it's not the best to correct you now, but he did not ask me to protect him, he asked me to help him in a case of blackmailing."

"It's easy for you, or."

"More than for you, in any case – wouldn't it be better to sit down and start a conversation? And by the way, I've really no knowledge about that someone has killed him. Do you think that you're in the shape to give me some details concerning his death?"

"You wanna speak with me?"

"Yes, of course."

"Would you work for me?"

"Let us speak first, the rest we will see. But to be honest, I do feel committed."

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I walked down the street, dark, it rained, was cold, one would not chase the most reudig dog out on this street, but I walked down this street. Had I made a mistake? The woman on the other side of the road, wet, sheltered under the eaves, with doubtful success, heels and short skirt, a prostitute? How far I had gone, too far? Maybe I should turn, maybe it would be better to follow this street, this way, until the very end? Anyway, this was still no novel from 1939, I owned no pipe, no crazy and wicked but appealing sisters - in fact, end of May, still not dark, not cold, no rain, but the mistake, did I make a mistake?

No, it was impossible to foresee the coming, at least in life. I could have a heart attack, right now, while thinking about it. A crazy guy could come around the corner, with his gun in hand, and that it would be. No, there was no talking that his life would be in danger, on the other hand? I was a private investigator, I had to think ahead, to see possible dangers, had I failed?

A shot in the head, from behind, an execution. I fetched a hot coffee, he wasn't even my client, hadn't he had bodyguards? I had not asked, maybe I got old, too old for this job. As a pensioner, where should I go? Moving to one of this fucking red states, becoming a pride white Christian, on Saturdays, having a good time, when those in disbelief burned on the stakes? The way their grandparents enjoyed seeing those hanging on the poplar trees? A whole generation who got banned from having such fun times, it was time to begin with it anew. I had to decide.

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"Would this be a good decision? What do you think, Linda?"

"It's your decision in the end, but I cannot see that you're involved in this all. We cannot fix everything, if we can fix anything at all. He got killed, have heard from former colleagues that they see Mafia connections. Russian Mafia, of course. But, Schindler for instance had Nazi connections, reality is awfully complex. It's very rarely easy to come to a ultimate conclusion. Putin is the Nazi, that's easy, he's the warmonger, the war criminal, that's easy to say. However, is Zelensky a saint? I don't think so. Nevertheless, he's the good guy currently, we have to support him in any possible way."

"Yeah, at the end it's always the same insight, as in 1939. This is a fucking world, and you will not change this. The only what you can hope for is, not to become one of these swines without scruples, to have at least still some integrity at your end."

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"Mr. Maurer?"

"Yes."

"Some have to speak with you."

"Not while pointing a gun on me."

"The gun is only that you will behave well, and will follow us."

"Is "some" a woman, or another woman, or because of the diner incident?"

"What you're talking about?"

I talked about nothing, to distract them. Two shots, two dead assholes on the ground.

"Good shots, Linda. If we weren't partners.....but we have to behave like professionals."

"Really, have we?"

"I've my doubts at the moment....."

Sometimes decency demanded to shut a door or to leave a scene, not acting like in a porn movie. And suchlike it had been now.....as I opened my eyes. I had a few moments problems to adapt to the bright light, where I was? A strange dream, a mix of dreaming and reality? Was this my home.....?

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Conspiracy

"This would be an enormous risk for the whole team, Nisa."

"But what would be the option, Allison? Sitting around and looking at Wanderer? Every day we get new and interesting data, but we cannot get active. We have a fantastic crew here, we could immediately start with the first manned missions."

"We know that the AWC has forbidden manned missions, at least for the moment. We cannot simply enter a lander and start a mission. Everything gets recorded, the AWC would know what we're doing."

"Not immediately, maybe they would even need a longer time to discover it. They do not check the logged data every day. And the rest of the team thinks the same, it's stupid not to begin with manned missions as soon as possible."

"You're thinking of the tunnel system we've found?"

"Of course! Two hits, with whatever they got attacked, and they are still intact, at least to a larger extent? We all do agree that this has to be an important structure."

"And we still aren't certain how to enter it."

"Yeah, because we're sitting around here. Yes, we have our explorers and rovers and suchlike, but we should be on the ground. I do not say that we would find a way to enter the structure very soon, but wouldn't that exactly the reason to begin with the search on the ground as soon as possible?"

"Okay, you know that I agree with you. We have located a place where it seems as that the attack has damaged the structure, but we have also seen that the possible access is buried by at least forty-five feet of rubble. We would need several flights and the usage of heavy machinery, the AWC would notice this. Yeah, we all on board would love to be on Wanderer. We all are trained for difficult missions on Mars, we would have the tools on board, but it could mean the end of everyone's career on board. I would have no problem with my career, but we both are not alone."

"Most of the others as well."

"And at least two are feeling uneasy, they are young, at the beginning of their careers, we cannot force them to do something what they will possibly regret later."

"And if there were the need for a rescue mission?"

"Do not try to fool the AWC. What you wanna say? We had a rescue mission, found an entrance thereby, after digging forty-five feet deep, we had to explore an over two hundred mile long underground structure therefore – we cannot do this."

"You're right. But maybe we have an alternative."

"No single-handed action – please, Nisa."

"Maybe it hadn't been single-handed, maybe it only seemed that way?"

"Okay, whom else you wanna bring into the loop?"

Mutiny

"So, that was the plan that Allison and I have developed. It's wonderful that you all are willing to support it."

"We all agree therein that we should become active, Nisa. And, this plan will give everybody enough possibilities to decide for oneself, to what a degree she wants to become involved in it."

"That's right Kim. You, for instance, will have all the possibilities to say that you had no chance to influence something. Neither the AWC nor anyone else will be able to arraign you for anything that what will happen. I will soon start with the first lander and heavy equipment, I will become a

mutineer. Allison will stay on board until the AWC will react, we guess that they will need a few days to discover this. Allison, as under-commander, as my deputy, and now, that I have left the station and becoming a mutineer, commander of the station, will tell them, that she has forbidden to inform the AWC, that she has hoped that she could find a solution. This will be the carte blanche for the others, especially when Allison herself will become the next mutineer."

"Yes, I will use the next lander and will support Nisa with all the equipment she will need then. We will have the first insights then, how difficult it will become to enter the structure. And then the mystery of Wanderer will begin. Those who will support the plan actively can follow with additional landers and equipment, Wanderer has called for them. All the others can stay on board, we will also need people on board."

"Yeah, we started to explore and exploit Mars, now we will explore Wanderer."

Press Conference

"The AWC confirmed for the first time, on their today's press conference, officially, that something unscheduled has happened on board of the "Explorer To Wanderer" – Chris."

"Yes, after all this rumors the AWC started to give at least some information what has happened. But, at last, I'm not convinced that we got real substantial information. I mean, only a few questions have been allowed after the press conference, Tanya, and the answers were, to be nice, very woolly."

"But what do we know definitively now, Chris?"

"The AWC had planned to start with ground missions after the nearest approach with Mars. But what we know now is, that people are on the surface of Wanderer definitively right now!"

"That's shocking! But why and who, Chris?"

"These are excellent questions, Tanya! Let me start with the second, and this really shocking. Both, the commander of the mission and the under-commander are on Wanderer now, without the permission of the AWC! The "Explorer to Wanderer" is commanded by Second Lieutenant Andrea Thomas now."

"But that's mutiny!"

"Yeah, but the AWC found no distinct words about that. They were not willing to say only one word about the so-called "Mystery of Wanderer"."

"In social media, they speculate that Wanderer has "called on" the two mutineers to do so."

"Yes, exactly. But, we have no distinct information, neither about the situation on board of the "Explorer to Wanderer", nor what this two mutineers are doing on Wanderer. We have not even got an answer when asking, if there is still a possibility to speak with these two mutineers."

"And of course, no answer regarding the most important question – Chris!"

"Yes, the reports on social media, that on Wanderer still natives are existing! Some say that they are in a certain kind of artificial coma, some even say that the team of the "Explorer to Wanderer" has found an enormous city deep under the surface of Wanderer!"

"Will we get answers?"

"Well, the AWC has sent a team to the "Explorer to Wanderer" – of course, no details. This team's task is to find out what happens there. But it will take time, and so long I fear, we will get no distinct information about what happens on Wanderer, what Wanderer's mystery is. Sorry, Tanya, but one would have to be on Wanderer oneself to give you this information."

"Thanks, Chris, for your efforts. And for our audience? Be assured that we will not shorten our effort, to find out the truth for you. Colin will be your host next hour, Chris and me you can see tomorrow at the same time again. Have a nice evening!"

The Individual Person

Fundamental Decisions

A Strange Moment

Often, not to say always, when waking up, at the end of intense dreaming, there was this moment when the question arose, what's real. The world you were still in, or the world you started to enter. The result? Always the same! The world, this world that had captured you so intensely, the world that you started to leave now, had been the so-called world of dreams, Dreamland. And that, that you started to enter now, this was the so-called reality. And always this fucking feeling, this grief, this sadness, this feeling, that this would be the wrong direction, that the wrong world they called Dreamland, and that it would be the wrong world, that they called reality. Why the heck should it be different this time?

The Fucking Reality

I poured the hot water onto the tea – well, no real tea, a "tea-like" beverage, a "fruit tea"! Well, never in my life I'd drunken fruit tea, had started with it very recently. I had found a tea made with seabuckthorn and ginger, have tried it and liked it. Then another with figs and rose blossoms, I liked this tea as well. So, the question arose, could there be more of this strange fruit teas I would possibly like? But there was a problem.

Many of these teas include apples and suchlike, and very problematic, dog rose for the "nice" red color. I hated the taste of dog rose, not only as tea, as marmalade and suchlike as well. Therefore, the area of fruit tea couldn't be mine. But, you should be always curious, and my tea dealer provided me with samples. "Chocolate-Orange" had been my first trial this morning – too much apple and dog rose in it! Sorry, but I poured the tea into the sink. Next trial "Blood Orange", and this time it seemed to function. The smell much better, the color, I filled the tea from the glass pot into the teapot and sat down. A first sip, yes, this tea seemed to fit, maybe a new one for my assortment of teas? Well, nearly sixty different teas already in my tea cabinet. Okay, not all were teas in that meaning, also - of course - aspects like rooibos tea or honeybush tea among them.

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"Could we meet.....yes.....no, not at the restaurant.....no, I do not feel guilty, but I've principles.....I know a nice place where we could have dinner on the patio.....at eight I would say.....fine, see you later."

Yes, definitively, this would be a new tea for my assortment. Next? "Mild Wild Berries" or "Orange-Carrot"? "Orange-Carrot" sounded extremely creepy, maybe it would be better to continue with "Mild Wild Berries"?

Not Always Tacos

The sun had started to set, the civil twilight had begun, the nautical twilight would follow – would we're still sitting on this patio when the astronomical twilight would begin? Midsummer would begin soon, but still – for a short time – it would be night, night in an astronomical meaning. We both had had a salad, she with chicken, I with fish, delicious as always – the now somewhat dropping temperatures were refreshing. Carla came to clear up the table, I took my tablet myself

and followed her inside, to get two new coffees.

"Not your girlfriend, I assume," she said to me with a grin while diapering with the two tablets in the back part of the restaurant. I started to pump the two coffees from the large jug and answered as she appeared again: "No, a client."

"But it would be good for you, would you be at least sometimes with a girlfriend here?"

"Linda is sometimes with me."

"She's not your girlfriend, she's your business partner."

"Are you convinced?"

"Absolutely! Would she be your girlfriend, it would be strange lunches and dinners together. Not even holding hands, not to mention kissing?"

"Yeah, you're right," I said not sure about how I should interpret her facial impression finally, while taking the two coffees and walking back to the patio again.

"Sorry, I needed a moment."

"No problem – thanks for the good meal and the new coffee."

"The least I could do."

"Yeah.....you've said that my father has fascinated you?"

"Yes, but this does not mean that I'm therefore noncritical now."

"No, of course not."

"But I think that I have some kind of obligation. I will take some of my time to dug deeper. But it would be helpful if you were straight with me. Your father's story, that he told me, the story of your family? It was a very entertaining story, true Hollywood material."

"He did not lie to you."

"But I assume that he did not tell me everything, and much is always a matter of your perspective."

"Sorry that he had his perspective."

"What's your perspective? Absolutely congruent with his?"

"No, I've my mind."

"A drink in a bar? Could become a longer conversation?"

"Suits me fine."

Déjà Vu?

I was on my way back to the car, had used the side of the street some way up as my parking lot, no problem in this neighborhood, at least for a man like me. I was alone, even though that we came in my car together, but she had decided to take a taxi, not to drive back to the agency with me, where her car stood. She would send somebody to fetch the car tomorrow – why we hadn't used both our cars? Whatever, it was also good for me, so I could drive home directly, had not to drive to the agency first - our conversation?

Well, her version of the family's history was in fact not very different from her father's version, but not so glamorous, so dramatic, and sometimes not that heroic. Nevertheless, an impressive story, still movie material, but maybe more for an independent movie than a silly Hollywood blockbuster. And what about possible connections to gangland, the "seedy underworld"? There was this family, the Sacklers, and another one, the Waltons, and honorable politicians like McConnell and Cruz,.....my flow of thoughts started to fasten, as someone interrupted me brutally as he asked: "Mr. Maurer?"

*

"Yes, who wants to know?"

"Not relevant for you, what you have to know is that not only my gun is pointed on you."

"Where's Linda when you need her?"

"What a shit you're talking? Her name isn't Linda, but yes, where's she?"

"The Russian lady, you're asking about the Russian lady who had accompanied me?"

I could see his face for the first time now, as he came nearer, obviously he had waited in a dark driveway for me. I could see some movement there, obviously the other gun that pointed on me. He was tall, somewhat taller than I, nearly my stature, maybe as much fat as I or more muscles - I tended for more muscles. He wore no special clothes, no special face, I would have not kept him in mind would we have just passing by each other. The gun was, most probably, together with his right hand, in the pocket of his trousers – couldn't be a real fat gun.

"Had?"

"Come on, pal, you're two men? You both waited for us here, and not one of you monitored the bar? Very amateurish."

"She's no longer with you?"

"Obviously, or can you see her? She sits in a taxi on her way back home, I'm the only one you can bore with your babbling."

"He's alone," he shouted in the direction of the dark driveway, "she has taken a taxi."

A soft "fuck" was to hear, then the other guy – I assumed that it would also be a man – needed some moments to come to a conclusion.

"We take him, better than nothing. The Russian bitch we can fetch at her home, I have to call."

Well, I came to the conclusion that it would be time for some action. I stepped forward, very fast, he would need some time to pull his hand and weapon out, his partner was occupied with phoning someone. So far the theory, but.....

As said, I stepped forward, very fast, definitively too fast for the guy in front of me. He had approached me, and also I had used the time to shorten the distance between us two – slowly, but continuously. He would have no chance, my plan further on?

This was not my original common home area, back in the big city, but I had lived long enough in this town now, to know its different quarters good enough. This part especially because the bar somewhat down the street was my favorite bar in town. The only thing I needed was some advantage, to enter the bar again, or to use the darker backstreets in this area to get enough time to call her. Both should be possible, using the element of surprise.

The element of surprise, well, it showed up that it was a great success, the element of surprise, as the taser hit me. Three of these idiots and none in front of the bar, none had seen her entering the taxi? I went down, could not see the third guy, the pain overwhelmed me – what a fucking taser they used?

*

Often, not to say always, when waking up, at the end of intense dreaming, there was this moment when the question arose, what's real. The world you were still in, or the world you started to enter. The result? Always the same! The world, this world that had captured you so intensely, the world that you started to leave now, had been the so-called world of dreams, Dreamland. And that, that you started to enter now, this was the so-called reality. And always this fucking feeling, this grief, this sadness, this feeling, that this would be the wrong direction, that the wrong world they called Dreamland, and that it would be the wrong world, that they called reality. Why the heck should it be different this time, as my eyes adapted to the twilight?

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Becoming A Part Of Wanderer

"Welcome to Wanderer, Allison. Population two now."

"Yeah, it's thrilling to be on Wanderer now, Nisa. Nice to be with you again."

I was happy to be no longer alone.

"As you can see, I was not lazy the last few days. I have done my best with the exoskeleton and the small dozer, had not more space in my lander."

"Yeah, but now I'm here with the carrier and heavier equipment. Wow, standing here? It looks even more impressive what you have achieved, being here, than from above."

"Yes, I have done some groundwork. But more important, with the ground-penetrating radar here on-site, I could discover some interesting details."

"You've a plan for the next days?"

The next days, we would need much longer than a few more days. On the other side, we would have those days, till.....

"Yes, but first, news from the AWC?"

"Well, the AWC will have soon a new councilor. It's said that there would be some heavy discussions behind the curtain. Maybe we will see some change?"

"Not much likely, but we will see. A tour?"

I pointed towards the site where I had worked for the last few days. We made some steps forward, we had stood between my smaller lander and Allison's much larger carrier so far.

"As you can see, I've tried to construct a good ramp. Around twenty-five feet deeper is a heavy anomaly, there the structure underneath us is obviously damaged, there we should be able to enter it."

The structure, huge, most probably much huger as previously thought. Damaged, much more than previously thought, most likely because of tectonic reasons, most likely as the water of the massive oceans disappeared and the whole statics of the planet changed. Nevertheless, this site wasn't the result of any kind of tectonics, this site was the result of an enormous explosion.

"Have you thought about it?"

"The sleeper theory?"

"Yeah, that this in fact a gigantic complex of cryo chambers, that we will find the people of Wanderer there."

"No kind of energy signature could be found."

"I've not said that we will find them alive."

"I stick to our first ideas, a kind of file room, storage, archive. I'm not interested in to find millions or billions of dead bodies."

"If they had bodies."

"Maybe we should stop with our speculations? Let's sleep for some hours, then we can continue to find answers together. You have no idea how happy I'm that you're here. The first shower for days and a kind of real bed. These carriers are real luxury hotels compared to such a lander. I slept in the pilot's seat for the last days."

"And? I've filled the fridge with everything you love."

"Then, on what we are still waiting for? First a shower, then a dinner, then some sleep – how much I have missed this!"

We walked to the carrier, it was wonderful to doff the space suit. The last days had been hard, I had worked a lot, sometimes I had only removed the helmet. Soon we would start again, together, others would follow, we would enter the structure. What would we find? Something spectacular, or only a huge disappointment? The AWC had found out that something is not right here. No distinct reaction

so far. I had decided that I would no longer follow the AWC. Only one focus from now on, Wanderer and its secrets.

Decisions

"Wow, nearly almost a real bed waits, and this after a shower. I look forward to going to bed – that's fantastic, Allison"

"What we call a shower here, and you know....."

".....yeah, I know. Let it be a mix of mine and yours."

It wasn't a reason to ponder about recycled water right now, sitting together with Allison, having lunch. This had been a mission to Mars to explore the Martian natural resources, not a nice cruise to the dark side of the Moon. In other words, a mission for tough women.

Nevertheless, after the first stage, these days alone on Wanderer, it was delightful to have someone to talk to directly, to have some space around you. These landers were good to bring you on a surface, maybe with some others or some equipment, but no place to live in. The carriers in contrast offered, aside of a large cargo bay, also three small cabins, a small kind of kitchen, even a small conference room. You could even form a kind of camp with more than one.

"I've made some decisions."

"About the further development of our exploration of the hidden structure?"

"Yes. I would say that Andrea, Rangheidur and Lyana should join us with two more carriers. The others should stay on board. First Andrea, later Rangheidur and Lyana with a second carrier. Andrea should have a lot of food on board and some special equipment – I've made a list. We will see what will be most important for the second carrier later.""

"Those on-board can send us unmanned landers all the time."

"I've other plans."

"I'm all ear."

"I had some rest periods to ponder about it."

*

The hidden structure, enormous, several widespread floors, miles of hallways and halls, that's what we knew. But, for what, what could be found there, we had no idea.

I had developed a plan, to enter the structure with a small team of five. We would enter the structure and explore it, we would have as much oxygen and food with us as possible. Several self-driven equipment carriers with all what we could need to stay as long as possible in the structure. That was the plan.

Of course, even entering the structure wouldn't be easy. The damage, the hole in the structure, most likely caused by the explosion, was at the ceiling of a small hall – a small hall. Well, even the hallways had, as far as we could say so far, a height of at least 12 feet, the small hall we would use to enter the structure had a height of 30 feet, and this was a small hall. We would have to bring us, and all the equipment, down to the floor of the hall. Very problematic? Well, we all were trained and equipped for mining – entering the hall would be with difficulty, but manageable. I was afraid of something else.

Halls and hallways – doors? No sign of any kind of energy we had found so far. Could it be that we would be able to enter a small hall and would stand in front of doors then, maybe solid doors? Could be that it was too early to ponder about suchlike, I decided to close my eyes and to enjoy the bed.

And Then It Started

"Let's do it, let's see what Wanderer will offer us."

We all five sat around a set of monitors, the last days we had been very active and we had dug as deep that we were very near to the place where the explosion had damaged the structure. We were all specialists in mining and exploring, of course we would not stupidly dig deeper and deeper. So, we had drilled several small holes, two for cameras, one for wide angle, one for details. The camera for overview needed not much light, but the camera for the detailed views all the more. We used three light sources therefore, one to illuminate the whole hall good enough for the overview camera, two light sources that could create very bright spots for the other camera.

"Come on, switch on the light, Lyanna!"

"Be patient, it's all for the excitement, Andrea. First the cameras, then the light sources, and then we switch on the light, then we will see what's down there in the hall."

Well, Lyanna and her tendency for dramatic moments. But then the last light source was in place.

"Ladies and no gentlemen, I introduce you to the secrets of Wanderer."

She switched on the light, and we all stared at the monitors, of course mostly on the monitor for the overview camera, and we all said not a word, until Rangheidur broke the silence.

"Is it only me, who has also knowledge in classic Sci-fi movies?"

"What do you mean?", Allison asked that. I thought that I should say something, as the commander of the mission.

"This is not Space Odyssey, Rangheidur. We're on Wanderer."

"Well, Nisa, I would call this a hall with rows of black monoliths. Sure, I do not say that we're in a movie now, but I think that this looks creepy, at least for me."

"Icelanders believe in elves and such stuff....." – Lyanna and her sense for realism – ".....for me these "black monoliths" looking like computers or so. I would say that this could be a kind of server room, a hall with high-performance computers, or maybe simply a large database."

"Yeah, of course. But I have to agree with Rangheidur, it looks somewhat creepy. I mean, what do we have expected? I would say, not something that looks very familiar from old Sci-fi movies or our server room at home – or."

"But we have discussed this earlier, Allison. Wanderer is a part of this universe, the same material, the same laws of nature. Do we expect some not known metals – Wanderer has the same PSE as we, the electromagnetic force is not different here? The same nucleoids, all the same stuff. Everywhere in the universe we see stars forming, we see molecular clouds there, the same molecules as on earth, even the amino acids our DNA is made of. We should take some time to inspect the hall carefully – has anybody realized that there are no doors?"

Yeah, no doors! Hallways ended on both front sides of the hall, at least not immediately a problem for us. Could it be that there were no doors at all, how to alter from one floor to the other? We had to examine the hall cautiously before we would continue.

"Has anybody seen the large piece of ceiling, that has fallen on one of the..... "monoliths"?"

Rangheidur was right. The overview camera showed a massive piece of ceiling that had hit one of the.....computers. Heavy? Not light in any case.

"Okay, some damage, little dents and scratches, but the structure as such is totally intact. How much this piece weight? Would it be concrete, I would say 2000lb wouldn't too much – no severe damage? Very solid computers."

Rangheidur had a point, but nevertheless, we should take one step after the other.

"Let's do our homework first. Let's have a more in-depth look – more light and more details!"

"You know, I will have a weird dream later when I have my idle period. I will dance with some apes around a black monolith, an unbreakable high-performance computer from Wanderer."

Not only Andrea would have odd dreams, when it would be time for the next sleeping.

The Individual Person

Fundamental Decisions

A Strange Moment

Had decided what's reality, fucking reality, and what was the protecting world of dreams. And of course, as always, it had been, that that what one had to call reality in fact the fucking alternative had been.

*

The room wasn't empty, but either not much in it. A bed, I sat on it, a table, a three-door dresser. The dresser was empty, the chair, the table and the bed, made of wood, cheap stuff, at least some decades old. On the other hand, the mattress wasn't that old and the room was not dirty at all. On the table a bottle of water, a glass in which I had poured some water, and the remains of my meal – a not so bad burger, somewhat cold, with fries, cold. A newspaper on the table as well, with a date that told me that I was here since at least a week, but had no memory.

*

I had woken up, the smell of food in the air, the relatively cold burger. I wasn't handcuffed, had still my clothes on, could not remember whether this was the first time that I woke up in this room or not. A small window, showed not far away an old brick wall with a cross on it, a white cross. A small backstreet, but could not see much more. Nevertheless, would I be free again, it should not very difficult to find the wall with the white cross on it, and therewith this room.

*

I sat on the chair, the small window barred of course, the shadows outside moved, I waited for the dinner. The newspaper had articles about the committee, about Biden's plan to travel to the Middle East, the stage of the war in Ukraine. I felt that something was wrong with me, but could not specify it. I waited, and no one came.

A Free Man In A Free Nation

I opened my eyes again, I shivered, it was fucking cold, a less half moon at the sky, twilight. I was naked, concrete under me, I was wet, a bright star not far from the moon, had to be Jupiter, it was morning. It was morning and I laid naked and wet on the parking of a supermarket – it was fucking cold. In fact, I felt cold, in fact, it was the morning after a warm night after a very hot day, and it would become a very hot day again – thanks to all the fucking climate change deniers, but I shivered, I was sick.

I vomited, as I saw a piece of paper taped on the side door of a lonely car, not far from me. It was not easy, but I managed it to draw closer so that I could read it. Now you should finally realize what we can do with you. From now on you should act much more careful. You can use the car to drive home, the key is in the lock – I read it twice. Assholes, fucking stupid amateurish assholes! Why?

I sat in the car – no, no bomb had exploded as I had turned the key, like in a stupid Hollywood mystery stupidity – as I drove home and asked myself: Fine, act more careful, but in what respect? It would have been helpful, at least a little hint, who threatened me. At least two possibilities on the table: The Russians or the fucking DeVos bitch. What about the attempt of killing me? That was

shit, maybe I would find later a hint in the car.

*

I stood under the shower, a very hot and refreshing shower. On the passenger's seat my door key had laid, I understood the message. Of course, I had phoned Linda, she would be there in around half an hour, with some guys from the police. I had asked them to give me a moment, I had to find oneself first, to sort some things out.

CSI? Showering? Destroying evidence? I rubbed my body with a large towel, took a sip from the strong black tea I had made – it was painful, and I had to vomit again. Rosskur they said in the land of my ancestors, either it kills you or it cures you. Yeah, evidence!

It would be easy to find the place I had wakened up, a car stood parked on the street? There was this letter.....we would have evidence enough. But for what? The TV was on, Russia had attacked Odessa, after an agreement, I had been several days away. Joe had corona?

Consolidation

I tried to understand what had happened the last days, in what context this all stood, the kidnapping, the assassination attempt, Mr. Kusnezov and his daughter, the kind Mrs. DeVos. Or was there a fundamentally different aspect, an aspect I could not see?

*

It had been easy to find the room where I had wakened up, but no hint could be found there, at least so far. The car, nothing of relevance. Maybe something old, connected to the big city? The unpredictability of life – you could walk around the corner and a bullet would hit you, intended for you, or for an entirely different person. Every moment could be the last. I decided to continue with my life as usual – what else I could do, not knowing why all this happened?

First Day In Office

"Do you think that it's a good idea? It would be no problem to stay at home for a few days – a week, or so?"

"Sounds like you wanna get rid of me?"

"Don't be silly! We have not that much to do right now, I can master it alone. To say it aimed straight, it had been hard days as we did not know what had happened to you. Maybe it would be the best, if you will stay away from the Russian quarter of the city for a while?"

"What about my lovely Mrs. DeVos?"

"This was a massive operation, to kidnap you, how they treated you. The doctors are still not totally sure what they have given you all, to sedate you. This all would be much too big for a Mrs. DeVos."

"An old case connected to my old life in the big city?"

"Could be, but not very likely. The most obvious would be the Russian connection."

"Yeah, I have to agree, but something tells me that I might overlook something."

"The good nose of the private eye, you're not that good at predicting results from sport events and polling – are you?"

"Biden will win in 2024, he will beat DeSantis. But yes, maybe no Russian tea and caviar so fast anymore. By the way, what cases we have currently?"

"Do not try to distract, Peter. But okay, let me see what I can offer you."

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

The Black Monoliths

"Wow, now we stand in front of it, one of the black monoliths."

Not simply one, the largest of them in the hall. After our first rough overview, we had made more precise explorations of the hall and what's in it, especially during the time that we needed to bring all the material that we needed for our mission to the ground of the hall, we had made some very interesting observations.

It had been difficult to bring all the material to the ground, we had needed therefore several days in shifts, earth days. Now an enormous pile of material could be seen between the monoliths, but especially alongside one of the walls. The plan was to begin with the exploration of the structure, but not returning always to the landers. We would stay as long as we could in the structure, as long as earth would not stop us, and this wouldn't be tomorrow. We had a lot of oxygen with us, but also a reprocessing plant for air, we would need a lot of power. The whole hall was illuminated now, we had large lightning equipment with us, batteries, even a small nuclear reactor. We would need enough to eat, we had to eat, to drink, we would have to go to the restroom. Well, an hour on the moon or suchlike, but we planned to stay here for days, weeks, we could stay here for at least two months, that much we had with us. Among others, two portable tranquility cells – two of us would always sleep. All in all, we had ten massive self-driven transporters with us, they parked in the hallway on one side of the hall, the direction we would take – we had them still not fully loaded.

It had been a difficult endeavor to bring them down, each in five pieces. Open up the ceiling further? The opening was just big enough, and the material of the ceiling very solid, we had decided not to waste our time therewith, especially because it had been possible anyway. Three layers, the ceiling, and most probably the walls either, had three layers. First a kind of concrete, around ten feet thick, then a layer a of a very resilient metal alloy, around five feet thick. Innermost a kind of plastic at the ceiling and the walls, on the ground a kind of rubber. The material on the floor was somewhat soft and absorbed the echo, but not the plastic of the walls. We had to investigate this further on, had to ponder about it. Of course, we had sent samples to the station above of us, but the analyzers there were had not been constructed for analyzing complex materials. We would have been interested in the metals on mars, rare earths and suchlike, but not in kinds of concrete and alloys.

The black monoliths – we all had agreed therein, to name them so, at least as long as we had no idea what they were in fact. They were arranged in groups of seven, apart from two groups of nine which were arranged around a somewhat larger monolith. The groups were separated by a somewhat larger distance than normal – we had seen this not immediately – the two groups of nine marked each one of the opposite corners of the hall. In the other two corners, one could find normal groups of seven – the whole array was in perfect symmetry. We stood in front of the larger monolith now, the one under the place where the ceiling had been damaged, the damage that we had used to enter the hall, the one which had been hit by the large piece of ceiling.

"We all feel it – or."

"Goosebumps?"

We all had goosebumps.

*

Lyana touched the surface of the black monolith, kept her hand thereon.

"Cold, of course, no activity. Over ten feet tall, nearly five feet wide and somewhat over three feet deep, on every side structured, except the top. The surfaces show patterns of raised dots, it reminds to braille. If these are control panels, then the constructors had been tall people. But maybe they are

simply a message? We have to ponder about this. Whatever, the smaller monoliths show all the same patterns, except one of each group of seven. The patterns on this one are slightly different. The patterns on the two large ones are entirely different from the smaller ones, but the same on each other. As a message, this would make not much sense."

"Control panels?"

"Would make sense in a way, only that I have no idea about, how they function."

"Next to us, in both directions, are halls with further monoliths, but not absolutely the same, absolutely not the same."

"The hall "behind us" shows exactly the same arrangement, but the patterns are somewhat different. The hall "in front of us", that I have proposed to be our next aim, after the hallway where we have parked the transporters, contains other kinds of monoliths, in a entirely different arrangement. If this causes you goosebumps, then wait to be there."

Lyana was our technical specialist. She had used the time we others had needed to bring all the material down, to start to explore what's next after the two hallways on each side. We had to chose which way we would take. And of course, she had made images and had used a drone for an overview, had made videos. So, in a way we knew that one of the following halls was very like this one, but the other very different, breathtaking different. But Lyana was the only one so far, who had been in fact there, and it was always something different, seeing something as a picture or standing in front of it.

"Your theory so far?"

"Well, Nisa, we have not to make it more difficult or occult as necessary. All leads thereto that at least this part of the structure is a kind of data center, this would make most sense to me."

"The next hall?"

"The one with the mother of monoliths?"

"What?"

"Sorry, but.....okay. I have made a brief exploration also in the hall thereafter, as you know, after the one with the....."mother". This hall looks again exactly like this one here. The conclusion is, that the hall....."

".....the hall with the "mother"....."

".....thanks, Andrea, yes, the hall with the mother. This hall seems to be the center of this part of the structure, at least this part of the structure. Both halls next to this hall, ours and the other, are exactly the same, it should be a kind of center."

"A control center?"

"No, I would say that this are simply servers, data storage devices, something like this."

"Very solid ones."

"Maybe made for eternity?"

"Okay, some other quick questions. No kind of light sources so far?"

"No, Nisa."

"So, they are blind, around ten feet tall, and have a tactile sense – not bad for the beginning, as a first working hypothesis. Have we found any way to enter the next floor? Any kind of staircase, elevator....?"

"No."

"Okay, they can penetrate floors or can teleport – cool hypothesis."

"And why then they need hallways?"

"Don't know Allison, maybe they can teleport only up and down but not back and forth? Okay, we should not stop being funny, but now we have to continue. Andrea and Rangheidur will be the firsts who can enjoy the tranquility cells, the rest will have fun in loading the transporters."

"But you will wake us when we go to the next hall, yes, Nisa?"

"Are you dreaming? The resting period will be four hours, you're not thinking that we will have the transporters fully loaded in four hours, do you?"

"Come on, Andrea, let's take a rest before our shift begins. Let us dream about "mother"."

"You both will feel it when standing in front of her. We have to find any remains of them, at least a

skeleton or so, any kind of image. I want to see them. I fear that otherwise it will be very difficult, to understand them, and this structure."

The Mother Of Monoliths

"And?"

We all stood in front of "Mother", no one was interested in resting now.

"Yeah, really very impressive, Lyana."

We had illuminated the whole hall, a much larger hall as the first hall. Also monoliths in this one, but in very different sizes and order. Right in the middle, an enormous monolith, around twelve times the size of one of the previous ones. It was surrounded by a group of fourteen medium-sized monoliths, roughly five times larger than a normal one. The rest of the hall was filled with monoliths in the fashion and order of the first hall, also with the special monoliths in two of the corners.

"Still interested in, to crack one, Andrea?"

I pointed on "Mother".

"You're the boss. I still think that we would have had a chance with the damaged one."

"But I agree with Nisa, Andrea. We should move on, and what we would expect to find? If we see any kind of computer or data storage in front of us, then it would be like cracking an PC. You would see the technology, but the thrilling would be the data on the hard drive. We can try this later, or the guys from earth."

"It's interesting.....," Rangheidur brought us back to the most interesting.

".....to see this enormous structure covered all over with this code. Maybe this is a part of the information, or even the information as such? I cannot see it as control panels. Control panels that high above us? How tall they would have to be, to use them? Taller than the hallways in any case, and this makes no sense. "

"We would have to find a kind of power station, it would help us a lot."

"If this is not the power station."

"Don't think so, Allison. A power station should be more inside the structure, the lower floors."

"What leads us to one of our most important goals, to find a way to the lower floors. But for the moment we have to explore this floor further on. Give us a status report, Lyana."

"As far as possible till now, Nisa. Let's take this hall as a center, both halls next to this are alike, as we know. I used the time you needed to illuminate this hall to visit both next halls, on both sides, for a short glimpse. If I have nothing overlooked, this hall is, in fact, a center. On both sides, the next two halls are filled with the known monoliths, in the known order. This is important because it shows us that it should be unimportant which direction we will choose, both seem to be equal."

"Okay, then we start our mission now in this hall. We will stay here for a while to do some basic investigation. Lyana can try to find out how solid the monoliths are, very solid in any case, as we know. But how solid? We start now to document systematically the structures of the different types of monoliths. It will be important to record them completely, especially those on Mother. Andrea, you try to find light sources, switches, anything on the walls or ceiling. A way downwards would be the jackpot. Allison and I will be the next to rest – let's begin."

*

It was not possible not to fall asleep in the tranquility cell. Nonetheless, I would say, that I was full awoken all the time, lying in the tranquility cell. Or was it only a stage, like lucid dreaming? Whatever. I heard the monoliths speaking, especially Mother. But, did they speak with me, or was it a conversation among them? Or was it only the imagination of an overloaded mind? We had some ideas about the construction of the whole structure, was this a main part of it, the main part? Was this the reason it had been attacked at this place – had it been attacked?

Had read too many SF novels in my youth, too many movies. Saw aliens, not moving, fixed on grassland. An intelligent ocean, problems of communication with aliens, a brutal and awful war, but who had been the attacker? Maybe the people from Wanderer had been the attacker, and this was their command center, Mother an awful war machine?

For a moment I thought, perhaps all these questions should never find an answer? The same natural laws in the entire universe, the same elements and natural resources. One plus one would be two in the entire universe, photons everywhere, electromagnetism and gravitation everywhere the same, even if they had better explanations for it as we, the force as such would be the same. Potentially an advanced technology, but fundamentally different, absolutely not understandable?

I was happy as my four hours were over, that I woke up again, whatever one would call the stage I had been in for the last four hours.

Back On The Streets Again

This Is Not America

*Snowman melting from the inside
Falcon spirals to the ground
(This could be the biggest sky)
So bloody red, tomorrow's clouds*

Sitting in the car I listened to David Bowie
Lazarus in Heaven
Had never understood why it had been a pity that she had been a whore
This was America, and this was the problem.

*

I had to monitor someone, was my job as private investigator, but I was distracted. Not because of the music, the images of the movie, or the dying David Bowie, loaded with some hundred million dollar when dying. Soon we would have midterm elections, Liz had failed, okay, failed as GOP candidate. All would be no issue if the Dems will win in November, but if not? If not, that would be a disaster, that would be the ultimate disaster. As if there were no other challenges like the war in Ukraine – the incapable Europeans like children hoping for mother USA, for instance. Had I to start with climate change? Yeah, Biden was able to implement his plans, better at least as his president as he was vice president, but would that be enough to win November? I felt the cold closing in, but that was another band.

David Bowie, had never been totally my music. Sure, well, of course, Ziggy and Major Tom, but even Heroes not touched me much. But his last album, running to the English evergreens I could never without tears in my eyes – Ashes to Ashes, that song had fascinated me from the first listening on, and watching. The early days of music videos, the good old days of MTV. The music, the lyrics, and the thrilling video, an all-time masterpiece – yeah, don't mess with Major Tom, this fucking junky!

*I never done good things
I never done bad things
I never did anything out of the blue*

I had to come down, but there was no danger, not in that height like Major Tom, not heard the bulldog bark and the canary sing, but I had to come down. This is the apocalypse, all horses already dead, or at least some cavalcades – again this other band, I had to come down. I had to fucking note that this was my target person crossing the street, had not seen that he had left the house. Lucky that he crossed the street in front of my car, that he used his feet to manage a distance – hey asshole, this was fucking USA! We did not walk by foot, we used every time our fucking SUVs and pickups to handle the smallest shit! I took my backpack and hurried not to lose him as he walked around the next corner.

This Is America

This is America

Blossoms will also bloom next season
Whatever the outcome will be
But maybe no longer in the land of the free
Cause this is America

We all could die
You and me
Those who wanna live free
Cause this is America

Under the biggest sky
Tomorrow's bloody clouds
There was a time
Cause this is America

I nearly lost him because as I hurried around the corner, he entered a shop – these were the situations where you could easily lose your target person. But, luckily, I could just see him..... – a perfumery? Okay, also scents for men one could buy there, and I had heard that some men even preferred perfumes created for women – I needed none, not one for men, not one for women. Thus, I pondered about whether I should follow him, or if it were better to be able to see in what he was interested in – of course, every information could be important, I entered the shop as well. My first insight, no shop for me, too much in the air. The two women I saw – two employees – not my taste, far too much make up and other things. And also the other – female – customers not what I would name a natural beauty – he was in one of the corners, the letters YSL above the offered perfumes.

Well, I wasn't that much a hillbilly, came from a big city, of course I knew the logo, not that much how the different offered scents would smell. I decided to pretend to be interested in the perfumes, offered next to YSL - Jean Paul Gaultier? Had never heard anything from that guy, but why not. It should be no problem, and I would be able to hear what my target person had for a conversation with the woman of the staff who was with him – too much make up and perfume.

"....well, I have to agree with you. A woman who loves Black Opium? It would be very difficult to find any alternative. A woman who loves such an exalted scent knows very exactly what she wants. I agree, it would be the best to gift her "her" scent, and not to try to be "creative". There is a very slight chance that she even would consider trying a different scent. Such an extraordinary scent belongs to a woman....."

".....sorry, sir, might be that I can help you?"

Hey, I had not realized that one of the models, called sales personnel in this shop, had come to me.

"Oh, no thanks, I'm not sure. I have to ponder about it."

""Le Male", a very interesting perfume, you're interested in."

She pointed on the flacon I had in hand and smiled, but I said nothing.

"A scent for interesting men. You know it, or do you wanna discover it?"

"Interesting flacon in any case, but I fear not my body."

"Well,....."

She followed my body down with her eyes, and I wasn't sure what they taught their staff about "promotional activities".

"I have to disappoint you, believe me, but this is not my world."

I pointed on the advertising panel for the perfume – why we lived in a world of political correctness today? Whatever, my target person had what he wanted and walked towards the register,

accompanied by his model.

"Black Opium", what do think about Yves Saint Laurent "Black Opium"?"

"Well, he was gay. It seems as this could be a problem for you, sir."

"No, not at all. I've only a problem with it if it degenerates just to a promotional tool."

But now I had to leave. My target person had paid. And I would not have all the time the luck to come to late, but it would have no consequences.

"Who's that?" I pointed on another advertising panel as I turned to leave.

"Johnny Depp? Johnny Depp of course."

"Ah, looks like an over-the-hill faggot to me. "Wild At Heart", that's a joke, or."

*

I was happy to be on the street again, followed my man down the street, fresh air! Sure, I would not exclude that also I could find a scent that I would like inside there, but all this silly advertising campaigns? How dumb one had to be, to fall for such a shit? But sure, it was all about the money, what else? That was the way our world functioned, and those who capitalized on it would always tell you: This is the only way our world can function.

Money? How much one of these scents was worth, the ingredients, the production? More than the costs for advertising, telling you a stupid nonsensical fairy tale? Nearly a hundred dollar, or even more, for one of this small bottles? I had to concentrate, my man stopped at the bus stop – really no car? But I was prepared, owned a monthly pass, could follow him easily. We waited, the first bus not, but as the second bus stopped he became active, I as well, to follow him. Although, he did not enter the bus, he embraced a woman who had left the bus instead, a woman, I would call in any respect beautiful. Well, this was obviously the woman for whom he had bought the perfume. Yeah, a woman who definitively knew what she wants, a woman.....what had the sales woman said? I had to concentrate, follow them.

This Was America

Just as I stubbed out my cigarette, the thin, smoked glass, connecting door opened, and this breathtaking dark-haired head appeared – these dark curls always blew my mind. As well as this typical facial expression, that always told me that I had done something wrong.

"I've knocked several times?"

"Sorry, was in my own little town for some time, Tanya."

"Yeah, this little town where you're the famous tough private dick, I know. But sometimes, at least sometimes, you should come back to reality. Outside is this big city and your appointment is here – you've not forgotten that you have an appointment at 3 PM, did you."

"No, of course not. I was on my way to open the window somewhat, for some fresh air. It's still five minutes until the hour?"

"Okay, I tell her that you're on the phone and that she has to wait for a moment – it's your bad luck not to see her immediately, think that you will like her."

"No women will ever cause me more heartache than you, knowing that you're sitting on the other side of this thin door, seeing your silhouette from time to time? It's like standing in front of heaven's gate, not able to do the final step."

"I work for you, the rest is not my business."

"I know, give me a moment and then send her in."

Yeah, I had an appointment, a breathtaking woman? Well, in a city full of stars and starlets? One could see breathtaking women, like standing at an assembly line. And every day more came, to become famous, and in fact one or two of these women were able to reach the sky, the big rest ended up on the streets, bordellos, drug addiction, or the porn industry, if not suicide. But the dream factory was clever enough to create from time to time a new star, to keep things rolling, to feed the

big dark side of the city. The door opened again, slowly, to give me some time for a final preparation – Tanya entered the room.

"Your appointment, Miss Mansfield."

She stepped aside, and a tall woman entered the room, the room immediately seemed to be small, too small for her. She filled it completely, ever thought that I would have a presentable office, but now? Everything on her was "tall", apart from her dress, the dress was tight as hell – 3 PM in an office of a private investigator? Everything was "tall", but should be the question, what was real? The platinum blond curls in no case, the eyebrows neither, the lips maybe, under the thick layer of cherry red lipstick? The.....well formed.....boobs seemed so, some was to see, much more than one would expect at that time. A waist, accented by a belt, followed by a "sprawling" hip, seeing her backside as she turned somewhat? The tight skirt, the thin fabric, her calves, and ankles, the wonderful heeled pumps, she seemed to be perfect in a wonderland of perfect women.

And yet, looking like a movie star, was pretty sure that she was none, had not seen her once at the sliver screen. But she smiled like one, of course perfect white teeth were to see, the right white glove pulled off, as she offered me that hand. I grasped her hand, only a cheep wannabe hoax of a movie star in front of me?

"Maurer, Peter Maurer. I'm pleased to welcome you in my office, Miss Mansfield. Have a seat, coffee, or tea?"

"Thanks, Mr. Maurer, a tea would be fine."

It was Tanya who continued with the conversation, seeing her annoyed eyes.

"Black tea, or a green tea. Of course, I could offer you also an oolong tea or a herbal tea as well."

"A green tea would be fine, a Japanese maybe?"

"Of course, we have....."

".....I think that Miss Mansfield will be satisfied with the nice sencha we have."

"Sure, of course."

"Then the sencha for Miss Mansfield."

Tanya turned and left the room, closed the door behind her, slowly and without any noise. I was somewhat disappointed, did she really think that Miss Mansfield's awesome appearance could confuse me? Well, she looked like made for perfection, but like made. Everything a little too much, and yet, there was something.

"What can I do for you, Miss Mansfield?"

"Well, it's about a man, he has asked for my hand. Everything appears to be perfect, maybe too perfect, I have some doubts."

"You wish that I pursue some investigation?"

"Well, a woman like me can win a lot, but can lose easily much more. I could have a career, but could also get a rich man – what would you prefer? – For me, both seems to be a nice offer, but both can easily turn into a nightmare, especially being a nice decoration piece for a rich man, a real rich man."

"Singing?"

"Good guess."

"Already a record?"

"No, but some performances – they like me and my singing."

I had no doubts about that.

"And the rich guy?"

"You know, parties, acquaintances, all of those things."

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"Where you from? Not from here."

"Well, neighborhood. I'm born and raised in Nevada. I came here a year ago."

"To become famous?"

"Come on buddy, you're born here, in this city and state?"

"Not the city, but the state."

"This means that it's simply possible that you moved a longer distance than I - or."

"Can simply be."

Her voice sounded much less high-pitched now, but still.....even softer?

"If you think that I'm not more than a stupid little woman, these are the 50s, we should start to become more demanding. I demand my part of the luck, as a singer or a wife. I'm not that naive, even when sleeping with guys from the music industry. They get theirs and I demand mine. The one or other way around."

"But I fear that they are having possibilities you never will have. Isn't it always the same story? You're since a year in town, not heard enough stories about women like you and the city, what the city's truth is?"

"I'm not blinded by the "H" - as said, I'm not that naive."

"As said, they have all the possibilities, you nearly none. It's an awful mismatch."

"You not like what you see? These are men, that makes them weak."

"Weak maybe, but not less dangerous. Their weakness makes them even more dangerous. They have no scruples, they are swines. Really, no perspective in Nevada?"

"Where, in Las Vegas? This city is potentially a pig pen, but do not start with Las Vegas. If you would rather not work for me, there are others."

She looked at me, but not stood up. Weakness? Her eyes looked very resolute now.

"I'm not the first, right."

"No."

"Maybe it would be the best you would tell me more, before we make up our minds?"

"Okay."

Tanya had brought the tea during our conversation, one for her, none for me. Okay, she had said nothing, had disappeared fast and silent again. Nineteen, I would have guessed twenty-five or so. Was she clever, or only on the wrong trip? I looked at her, only a cheap copy of the original? At whom would one look at, would she and the original met on the street – on the red carpet even? I had seen her one time in reality, not at the movies, just on the street, Marilyn. Marilyn, could someone tell what a person she really was, her husband possibly, Joe DiMaggio? And the woman in front of me? I had to confess, the longer she sat in front of me, the more I liked her, in her obvious artificiality.

*

"You think that I'm here because of my fiancé?"

"Ah, you're already engaged."

"Yes, and that's not why I'm here – I mean, not because of my fiancé. He's a wonderful man, he's as good as it gets."

"This has not to mean that he's good, if you allow me to say this."

"And I hop that you don't think that I'm too dumb to understand your indication. He's a man, just a man, he's as good as a man can be."

"Rich?"

"Not bad in any case."

"Not interested in women?"

"For what? Men rule the world, that's the fucking truth. You don't expect that having sex is for a woman not much more pleasant with another woman than with a man – you don't have such stupid ideas, or."

"No."

"You have sex with your secretary? - If I'm not too offensive for you."

"No."

"No or no."

"No, no sex. Her stance is that her private life is her matter only, not mine."

"Clever woman, maybe I should ask her for a date."

"You're engaged."

"Gosh! What my fiancé concerns, he fucks his secretary in any case. You know in which city you're living?"

"But possibly this does not exclude that you have convictions?"

"Hard to believe, a white guy with attitudes! If possible, you would have sex with me?"

"I'm a single man, I'm not engaged, I never believed in this nonsense called "respectful family". What would I risk?"

"I'm engaged?"

"That's your problem, not mine."

"Maybe my fiancé wouldn't like it?"

"Not my problem, how old is he? Eighty-nine?"

"What do you think about me, that I'm pervert?"

"More than twice as much as you?"

"Would be thirty-nine, I'm no fool."

I wasn't sure in what way she meant this, maybe it was not relevant anyway. The more I spoke with her, the more she started to fascinate me. She had a lovely voice, a winning smile and an alluring laugh. Her physical "merits"? Well, the dress hid not much, "highlighted" everything. Yes, I would have slept with her, in any case.

"Maybe we should return to the reason you're here."

"So far we haven't talked a bit about it."

"Well, you could possibly start with it. I know that it's not because of your fiancé – another man?"

"Yeah, a man who has dominated me for a time. He's unable to handle the fact that I'm grown-up now, that I go my own way – and very successfully, by the way."

I had no idea whether she was awfully clever or awfully dumb, maybe both, maybe only clever.

"This man, when he dominated you, how old have you been?"

"Younger."

"Underage?"

"Sure."

"And he?"

"Not."

"Illegal?"

"What shall "illegal" mean in this state? He did not rape me, I was his poppet."

"Your parents?"

"Gosh, uninterested."

"And he endangers both now, your career as well as your possible marriage. I....."

".....I will marry him in any case. I'm only not sure because it will be good for my career, to get the flashes? Or to become his little wife? We will see. In any case, he has figured out where I'm now and that I'm now on the sunny side."

"He blackmails you?"

"No."

"So.....?"

"He simply wants to destroy my luck."

"And I should do.....what?"

"To stop him?"

"Why not hiring some bully boys?"

"I would need someone with a certain reputation. No boys, a man."

"And I have this reputation? I mean, I'm obviously not your number one choice?"

"Disappointed? Affronted? Or maybe pissed?"

"Why nobody accepted your offer so far.....I mean the vague offer to sleep with you?"

"They were all hypocrites. Are you a hypocrite?"

"Provide me some information about him. I will have a look and will decide then."

"You would sleep with me, yes?"

I would dream about her tonight, and it would be a very wet dream. Would I sleep with her? Why? When ever was the dull reality able to top the boundless imagination? Perhaps I should tell her that I was definitively no good lover? But I would in any case dream of her tonight, very intensively.

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Awakening

"Anything interesting learned while Allison and I have slept, if I slept at all?"

I asked the group as such, no one specific, but the resonance wasn't very over the top. At least, finally, Lyana showed some reaction, at least one could interpret her facial expression in that way. I looked at her.

"Well, I tried to cut into an edge of one of the monoliths, with the different tools we have with us. What shall I say, difficult, but not impossible. A kind of solid metal alloy definitively, we can produce suchlike on Earth as well. Okay, solid like the best we can produce, and we would have problems to produce such an amount of it as we see around us, but definitively nothing totally new or never have seen stuff."

"Would fit to the theory that also they have nothing more than the elements we have."

"Yes and no, Nisa. It would be interesting to know the process they used to produce such an amount of such material. As said, we can do this on Earth also, but not in an industrial manner."

"Okay, what I understand is, that we could "open" one of the monoliths to see what's inside – right."

"It would be possible to cut into? - Yes, we could. I have not tried to cut deep, or see how thick the shell is, but we could make a hole for a small camera for instance. But do not ask how long it would take, I've not attempted to find out how solid they are."

"If they are not completely solid. Who says that they have to be hollow inside? Only because we think that they are maybe a kind of computer or data storage?"

"Good objection, Rangheidur. What about the structures on the surfaces of the monoliths?"

"The same types of monoliths show the same patterns. Mostly they seem to be simple – of course, not on Mother. But I do not find a hint for any kind of code."

"Okay. Andrea?"

"Nothing."

"You're kidding me - or."

"No. All walls and ceilings are seemingly totally smooth. No sign of anything like a staircase or elevator."

I had hoped to get at least a little clarity after wakening again. Andrea and Rangheidur were the next to sleep, I asked Allison about her "sleep". She also had had the impression not to sleep, to speak with the monoliths and especially with mother. But also she had the same stress then we all. Always wearing the suit, the higher gravitation, the sight of the monoliths, especially Mother, all this. It would be interesting to see, later, to hear about the sleeping of Andrea and Rangheidur. We decided to start a drone to examine the following halls, to get some oversight.

Dead-End Road

Andrea and Rangheidur were awakened, we were interested to hear what they had to say, and were curious how they would react to our findings.

"And, the monoliths and Mother?"

I looked at both, both nodded with their heads.

"Then it will be very fascinating for you both, what we have found out about the following halls. Have a seat and enjoy the video."

"Enshouse yourselves," I said to Andrea and Rangheidur, who took a seat in front of a monitor.

"How long is the video?"

"You have not to watch the whole video. Don't panic, Andrea. In fact, the beginning is not much thrilling, but it becomes more and more interesting, with a very surprising ending."

"You should become an entertainer, Nisa."

"I'm Rangheidur, I'm one."

I started the video, the drone started in the hall with Mother, and of course, the next two halls we already knew.

"Okay, so far, nothing exceptional. The hall with mother, and we already knew that the next two halls are lookalikes to the hall where we entered the structure."

"But now the next hall, the big finding?"

"Well, Andrea, now the third hall from this one on, and.....surprise, nearly the same again, with some minor differences. And to make it short, also hall four and five, more or less the same. There are some differences, from hall to hall, the monoliths, their order, size, also the structures on the surface, differs somewhat. The effect is, that the first and the fifth hall differ relatively distinctive. But this is not so the point, let's have a look into hall six, and therewith also in hall seven and eight. Now we see something very different."

I looked at Rangheidur and Andrea as the drone flew through the hallway from hall five to six. The drone had been made for exploring caves and tunnels, but even when equipped with a strong light source, the drone was unable to illuminate a hall in its entirety. This was no problem in the previous halls, more or less what we already knew, but this hall offered an entirely different sight. We knew already the whole video, but for Andrea and Rangheidur it was something new, and they were as speechless as we, as we had been seeing it live.

"Wow," Rangheidur was the first to say something. "Wow, that's something entirely new. And the next two halls look more or less the same?"

"Yes, as before, always with some slight differences. But the next three halls are basically the same."

"Any idea what we can see here," Andrea asked, as the drone flew through the hall, the light cone always revealing a part of it.

"Not really, but it seems as that we can see crystalline structures here. To make it short again, in this hall we see three large semi-transparent "crystals" in the middle, based on seemingly metal pedestal. In the next hall two of them, in the hall thereafter just one. Then we have this "podiums" surrounding the large crystals, or the crystal in the last hall of this kind. On the podiums we have this, most likely again, metal substructures. The larger ones, near the crystals in the middle, have a size of around ten feet by twelve feet, with a height of around five feet. They get smaller towards the walls, away from the crystals in the middle. The smallest metal substructures have only a size of three by four feet, but still with the same height. All metal substructures are flat on the upside, but show the same patterns as the monoliths on all four sides. And as you can see, the upsides are studded with fully transparent crystals, only a few inches high. Hundreds, thousands of them, only in this hall."

While I had said all this, Andrea and Rangheidur had watched the recordings of the drone. Already the halls in where we had been so far, not to mention Mother, had been fascinating, but these halls appeared finally surreal.

"Any idea? I would say, spontaneously, that this is a place to store or to process data, maybe both, possibly controlling something, possibly the monoliths. You had more time than we, we slept."

Andrea had asked, and in fact we had discussed this topic, of course with no final result. But, the video wasn't at its end so far.

"Perhaps we can discuss this later, not curious what comes next, after this three halls? Andrea? Rangheidur?"

They were curious, of course!

"How many halls more you have explored with the drone? The time signature says three hours so far?"

We had winded the video forwards from time to time.

"One more."

"Too bad, only one more. You had not more time?"

"I think that time is our smallest problem. But look and see. Ladies, the ninth hall!"

The drone flew again through the dark hallway, to enter the ninth hall.

"We have given the ninth hall the nickname "Rabbit Hole". Unfortunately, so far, we have not seen the White Rabbit, not found the door to wonderland, especially not the quack remedies to make us large or small."

Andrea and Rangheidur looked in turns on the monitor and Allison, not sure what was more confusing – the ninth hall in any case. Much smaller than all the previous ones, a quarter of them, not more, with not much in it. But, with highly reflecting walls and a similar ceiling, especially with no further opening for the next hallway, to the next hall. The ninth hall was an impasse!

"What's the structure in the middle," Rangheidur asked.

"Well, of course, we had not much time to ponder about it. Obviously, there are some kinds of lenses, light sources and suchlike? Laser light? Reflecting walls and ceiling? All would be only speculation. We saw as more important, this is the end?"

"On the other side, the other direction?"

"Yeah, Andrea, that we thought, is the more important question for the moment. I started another drone to fly as fast as possible in the other direction to see what happens there."

"And, Lyana?"

"Well, the same. Five halls, three halls, and then another Rabbit Hole. This seems to be an isolated part of the massive structure as such. And that would be fucking, not only for one reason."

Yes, this would explain some questions eventually, no light sources, no elevators, suchlike – but completely isolated? Could it be that this part of the massive structure was wholly different from the rest? Or was this the "heart" of the structure, whatever this would mean? We used this way because it was the easiest way to enter the structure – now trapped in nineteen halls? To try to enter the structure at another part would be very difficult, hardly to manage for us. On the other hand, these halls seemed, in one way or other, an exceptional part of the structure, in any case interesting, important to explore. We would have to discuss all this.

Back On The Streets Again

This Is Not America

*A little piece of you
The little peace in me
Will die*

*For this is not America
(This Is Not America; David Bowie, Patrick B. Metheny, Lyle Mays)*

*

Bowie, finally a part of the jet set, a critic once wrote. Married to a supermodel now - still pushing the pram like in the old English days? Was never much with his music, more with Cream, Deep Purple, Kate Bush, and of course, Pink Floyd. Eric Burdon and War – yeah! Later the first encounters with classic music and jazz and blues – Astor Piazzolla. But Blackstar, Blackstar was a fucking bloody masterpiece!

*

The biggest fucking American lie? That America would be white! America was never white, the white dominated after the genocide maybe, of course, but never white in fact. Music, movies, literature, paintings, architecture, all this and much more, they all told you this lie, over and over again. So long, that the United States and the whole world believed the lie, a nice little lie, at least as long as white.

*

Los Angeles - "Racial Composition" - 2020

Hispanic or Latino	46.9%
Asian (non-Hispanic)	11.7%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic)	8.3%
Overall	66.9%
White (non-Hispanic)	28.9%

I knew why I loved it to be in Los Angeles. Old Downtown, The Theater in Westlake, Wilshire, thinking of the old black-and-white days. Two blocks till Skid Row, sixty minutes till Santa Monica Pier and Beach. The ocean so nearby, and so awfully far away – The American Reality.

This Is America

This Is America

There was a time
When silver screen fairy tales seemed to be reality
Such an innocent time
Such a white time

Innocence lost
In a time when every lie could become reality
When lies became an own reality
Such a white time

In the land of gods and monsters
In the land of God and the Monster
In the land of shredded, never-have-been-true, dreams
In such a white time

I followed the man and his companion, they entered a coffeehouse nearby. As they ordered and chose a table, I started to ponder about this job, the woman who was my client. This was the guy who had her, as she was pretty young and still naturally? Well, also his today's table-mate seemed to be pretty young – while leaving the bus she had appeared older, but now? The place was, unfortunately, crowded, so I had to pick a table too far away to understand his words, but the gestures were obvious – I could see both of the faces. He made her compliments, bestowed her the perfume, she liked both. Very obviously, she was the today's version of my client.

I could not forget her body, as she had sat in front of me. The tight cashmere sweater, her cleavage. A tight skirt, not short, but not too long either. Wonderful ankles and calves, in a way a very classic clothing style. Make-up in a fine way, plastic surgery most likely, at least not her real lips. Her nipples under the sweater, was the skirt in fact somewhat transparent? Her shoes from hell in any case. What was to say, a perfect trophy to show around at any dinner party, but to live with? Undressed and make-up removed, no hours-long hairdo, right after a shower or better a bath? I would guess, she would conquer me even more then.

I had killed, nearly I had been killed, not only one time, both. I had saw tragedy, had been incapable to stop tragedy, had always hoped not to makes things even worse. I had learned to control my emotions. I would have otherwise become a real killer, I would have otherwise been killed a long time ago. I was still clever enough to do what had to be done in such a situation, to talk with a good, smart, and independent friend. I had talked with Linda about it.

He stood up, she followed him, and I followed them, to the roadside. He looked and waited – hey buddy, this is not the big city, you have to order a taxi. What? No, joyfully, no fucking Uber shit in this nice little town!

This Was America

Marilyn, on the silver screen? Found Jayne always more interesting, even in her "porn movie". Marilyn privately maybe, and Jayne? This cheep today's wannabe copies? And yet, in those days they had to be white, even if not by birth – very different today? Yeah, Will Smith today's Sammy Davis Jr.? Nah, both his wives black, as it should be!

Once upon in America, Spartacus could rape teenage Natalie at the Chateau Marmont, and mommy told her daughter the Golden Rule: Never talk about it, even if falling out of the boat. Today? Blow jobs in the Four Seasons, and the woman who paid a minor to shut up, not to talk about her relationship with him, played a major role in the revelation. Wasn't there a bitch who talked much earlier about it? Wasn't there a nigger who criticized all this? What a wonderful land this nation had become, a nigger could criticize a white woman and got not killed! In the old days it was enough, to start a carnage, when a nigger touched the hand of a white girl, by mistake. Oh, Virgil, you slapped him!

This Was America

Tell me buddy,
Would you like to sleep with Marilyn?
Hey lad,
I would like to be Arthur Miller.

Tell me buddy,
Would you like to sleep with Jayne?
Hey lad,
In this white Jackie style dress, she looks tremendous.

Tell me buddy,
With whom you wanted to sleep today?
Hey lad,
This question is simply not appropriate. - Let's have a drink or two.

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Retreat?

We all sat around a table in one of the larger landers, not with any good mood. And that, even after the pleasure of no longer having to wear a spacesuit, the enjoyment to have taken a shower, even the pleasant anticipation to spend the next rest in a real bed, at least some kind of. No, the mood around the table was bad.

"Back on the station, Nisa?"

"No, we've sent them all our data, we have not to be there physically. I feel like being trapped."

"Assumed that this would be, in fact, a totally isolated part of this huge complex, what could be its function? And in the case of a malfunction, it would be impossible to enter the section? Does this make any sense?"

Andrea had asked this. It was like acting like a hamster in its wheel. We had discussed with those still on the station, whether we would have a chance to enter the station at another place. Of course, they also had continued their research. The only somehow possible place seemed, where the complex had been massively damaged, most likely by a kind of plate tectonics. But this would mean that we would have to dig a vertical tunnel of at least 500 feet, not impossible for us, but incident to a big effort. And time, we would need many days, days in which our "visit" from earth would come nearer and nearer. If we had any trouble – and you had always trouble when tunneling – they would be faster, and that would be nonsense.

"Seeing what's inside a monolith or the crystals? The Rabbit Hole machine?" Lyana had asked.

"I would not do it, we have no idea what damage we would cause." Rangheidur was always thoughtful as a person, that made her strong. "It's obvious that all these installations worked together. Even if there is any kind of entryway, which we haven't found so far, this was a special section for a special purpose. It would be easily possible to destroy the whole system, by damaging only one part of it."

"I agree with you, Rangheidur, but we do not make any progress. The most disappointing for me is, that even the AI on the station cannot understand the patterns on the monoliths. That's frustrating and hard to understand."

"Yes and no, Allison. Also on earth we know languages of high complexity, often not understandable if one have no idea of the respective culture."

"Sure, I know, Nisa, the Greenlanders and their many words for snow, or the language of the Navajo. Anyway, it's all very disappointing."

Yes, that it was. We decided to do what we hadn't done for a while, to go to bed altogether at the same time. We gave us six hours to sleep, then we would sit together again, to discuss what would be the best to do. And not only I asked myself if I will hear Mother again.

Does Mother Talk To You?

We sat around the table again, and we all shared the same experience, to have heard Mother's voice. Some of us more clearly, some more vague, but we all had the feeling that Mother had talked to us. What does Mother have said? Well,.....

The problem was that we had heard not all the same, as much as we could remember. The difficulty was to decide whether this had been "real" or not. The difficulty was to answer the question of what could be the reason for all that. We found no distinct answers.

"Okay, it seems as Mother would try to contact us, but we cannot measure any activity in one of the halls. We have left various measuring tools in the halls, nothing, nothing at all. We should be

cautious in interpreting these incidents, that we all have the feeling to got contacted by Mother."

"One can only agree with you, Allison. But, we should also consider that it could be maybe a true phenomenon. Sure, I cannot say that I would know what this all should exactly mean. But we should not totally discard, that it could be something substantial."

"I'm on your side, Lyana. I have the feeling that we should take it serious. I cannot remember exact words, like most of us, but I had the feeling that Mother wants to tell me a story, the story of Wanderer."

"Fine, Rangheidur, and Mother speaks our language. I heard Mother for a second time, even more intense as the first time. She told me about a world, a world in balance, not a paradise as such, but about a place you had the feeling, you would like to live. And even if I cannot remember the exact words as such, I could understand her words. This is hardly possible. We should not ignore it, or say that it's a mere illusion, but we should be careful. And, even if Mother speaks to us, who says that Mother not maybe lies? We have still no idea for what all these installations are, we should be very, very careful."

"Sure, Nisa, we have to be suspicious, whatever will happen. But we have to be open for everything in a way as well. I think everything would be much easier would we know something about the rest of the structure."

Andrea gave us an overview regarding what the crew on the space station had found out about the structure, but as well about the rest of the planet since we had left the station. For instance, they had tried to create a map of Wanderer, the cities, and the infrastructure, based on what could be still found – not much – and the distribution of the devastation on the planet. It was obvious that the structure had been built separated from everything, that it had been at least one of the largest structures on Wanderer, if not the largest. And that the halls that we knew so far were only a tiny part of the structure as such.

"This leads to the point," Andrea continued, "that we have to answer the question if this is, in fact, an exceptional part of the structure, or maybe a very untypical and very unimportant part of the structure. I mean, we have a gigantic structure here, several floors, and we see only a few halls of it? If this were the heart of the structure, for what one would need the whole massive rest? We should be in fact cautiously, maybe this is a very unimportant small part of the structure, the waste processing area potentially, and therefore separated. You understand what I mean."

We all understood. We discussed whether we should try to break through the wall in the Rabbit Hole, to see what's behind. After some discussion we agreed that, most probably, the rest of the structure would look very different from what we had seen so far. We had found no – real – control panels, any kind of chair or table, no pictures, no sing of any kind of living creature, only machinery.

"And what if Wanderer was a kind of this science fiction machine worlds, and Mother the prime AI? Perhaps we find no doorways and suchlike, no lighting, no pictures, nothing like that because not needed? We have found some centers on the planet, that could have been cities, but cities for whom? Okay, maybe billions of years without an atmosphere on its way between the stars, we cannot expect to find something intact, especially after an obvious war. But we have not found any kind of artifact so far, that could give us a hint regarding Wanderer's peoples, nothing!"

"That's true, Lyana, but we haven't also found no robots, no war machines, anything like that. I would say it's very simple, all our answers are waiting in the rest of the structure. We have to find a way thereto."

No one disagreed with Andrea, but how to manage it, to manage it before we would have to stop our efforts? We decided to return to the space station again, there we would have more possibilities to plan our next steps.

"If Mother will also speak on the space station to me, then it will become weird."

I felt like Rangheidur.

Back On The Streets Again

This Is Not America

*I, I will be king
And you, you will be queen
Though nothing will drive them away
We can beat them, just for one day
We can be heroes, just for one day
(Heroes; David Bowie)*

Bowie was never my favorite artist, the music I heard intensively, a "fan" of him. It was not that I thought that he wouldn't be a good singer, musician, artist. The simple reason was, I was not cool enough for his music, I listened to Pink Floyd and Cream and suchlike.

*

Love it or hate it, America, in my youth there was no in between. Today I found my own solution, loving the States as much as I hated the States. Like this songstress and her songs about not so perfect relationships, relationships with no real future, but of an awful intensity. *I can be your Nancy, be my Sid* – Nancy introduced Sid to the drugs, Sid killed Nancy while drugged. Whom was I, Sid or Nancy? And the United States? Whatever, we would both dead at the end, after Sid committed suicide.

This Is America

I took my cell phone and sent a brief message, here things functioned a bit differently. As my taxi drove around the corner he became active, but the taxi stopped in front of me.

"You also need a taxi?" I asked him nicely as he came nearer.

"Yes, but you were faster."

"Not faster, here in this nice little town you have to order your taxi. It makes no sense to wait till a taxi passes by."

"Then I have to order one for myself."

He took his cell phone and read the number written on the taxi.

"What's your direction?" I asked him. "I need it only for a short ride."

"Well, southwards."

"Cool, if you wanna you can join. Ten blocks down the street and the taxi is yours."

"Okay, why not. If it's okay for the taxi driver?"

The taxi driver had no objections, of course he had none. So, we three entered the taxi, the "couple" on the back seat, I in the front. After ten blocks I left the taxi and waited, not long. My phone rang after no ten minutes and I got an address.

"Yeah, Rick, would be nice if you came back to fetch me."

Rick came back, I entered the taxi again, and Rick drove me to the address where the couple had left the taxi.

"It's a pleasant motel. I would guess that you have not to wait too long. And hour, maybe two or so. There's a 7-Eleven over the street."

I thanked Rick, paid him for his efforts, and entered the 7-Eleven.

This Is America

Burning crosses
A part of the Southern past
Today they no longer burn
Today they have other means

But not only the hillbilly Southerners
Maybe even much more
The so-called progressive Californians
Wanna keep "their" Latinos, they need them to mow their lawns

The weird Portland
Such Portlanders such white
Loving their white fucking lifestyle
Sucking their own white cocks

Cosmopolitan New York
The city that never sleeps
Like a homeless in the subway
Frozen to death

The Floridians so proud
Washed away their dreams
DeSantis an ugly swine
Burning crosses he would still enjoy

And yet still such a deep irrational feeling of love
That conquered my heart
But it weren't my people who created that feel
And that was the tragedy of my life

This Was America

I stood in front of the 7-Eleven, my smoke in my one hand, in the other my coffee. My lad had its fun now, with his sweet little chick, and I stood in the cold. But okay, that was part of my job specification, and of course, it drizzled. This would be no good crime story otherwise, at least no good hard-boiled one. Why not waiting inside the 7-Eleven, you asked? Had a smart ass like you even to ask? It had gotten dark, the rain, wet dimly lit street, the reflections – I could not risk missing him while standing in the warm inside, looking out of the fucking misted up shop window. His new girl was interesting – he had a broad-based taste, obviously. Small, flat chested, definitively more a girl than a woman – or had my client maybe not looked that much different, as he had her? Also in one of this shabby motels like the one across the street? Making also some photos now? Was I envious? I lit another smoke, the coffee on the sidewalk. Envious regarding what? That he cheated naive girls? That he was a swine, a swine in a pigpen called America? Before I had to tell a woman stupid lies to get her, looking for naive girlies, I would rather buy me a magazine. I had some of them in my small condo.

*

They always told you something about this fantastic America, everything would be possible there,

the American Dream. As a beautiful woman in L.A., you could become the next movie star, loved by millions around the world – you would not have to climb up the H of the Hollywood sign. Okay, you would have to sleep with ugly men, would have to fulfill their pervert wishes, at least as long as you would like to get new roles. You would have to play in their dirty play, the shiny world for the outside, the dirty and ugly reality for the inside – The Big American Hoax.

And I waited now till the first from the beautiful Heartland, from the wonderful South, would say: Yeah, that's the liberal coasts, the West, and the Upper East, but we're the real Americans, we're the guardians of the American Integrity. Sure, Saturday evening when having fun by lynching a nigger, raping a nigger girl, fucking your underage relative, many underage pregnant girls in the beautiful South. What a fucking pathetic breed.

I needed another coffee, had to be quick, had to try not to miss him. Fetched my coffee, did not think that I had missed him, needed another cigarette. The girls, poolside at the Chateau Marmont, were it really so entertaining to watch them with your field glasses? Was it that much a difference thereto, if I looked at mine in the magazines? Okay, he could go down to the pool: Hello, I'm Mr. Aviator, but I think you know me, would you like to have a drink with me? Well, my girls said always: Yes!

Two hours now. Gosh, he required a long time – for what? Had I missed him? That would be a big faux pas, would like to caught him in the act – or right after it. Some said Marilyn wouldn't be such a naive girl in reality, some said that she would be a clever woman, a clever woman in a from pervert males dominated world. Such a combination could easily go wrong, with the bad end for the woman. My man appeared together with his girlie. I put the coffee on the sidewalk, stubbed out the cigarette on the sidewalk, started to cross the street.

*

"Hey lad, I have to talk with you," I reached the other side of the street and addressed my man.

"Do not call me a "lad", "buddy" – hey, you're the guy from the taxi, right?"

"Yeah, my name is Maurer, I'm a private investigator."

"Wow, a real private investigator? Do I have to be scared now? - Whose footboy you are?"

"Well, you might be able to impress a girly like this one," I pointed one the young woman beside him - now somewhat disarranged?

"Hey, I'm no girly, I'm a woman! A woman with good career chances!" It seemed as she would mean what she said.

"Yeah, of course, maybe. But with such a blender like him, in no case."

"He has excellent connections to the essential people in the city, people from the film industry. He....."

"Shut up honey, he's not here because of you. Okay buddy, what do you want from me!"

"Okay, foremost, boys like you, I eat for breakfast. And then, I have a license, I have a gun, and I've used it not only once. Finally, you know who sent me – well, perhaps not exactly which of all the women you betrayed over time, but one of them. And my message is simple: Leave the city, or I kick you out!"

"You're funny, the new Miss Mansfield, I would guess. As I fucked her, she called herself not Mansfield – but this is another story."

"You did what?" She did not seem pleased about the heard.

"I said: Shut up! I have to bring it to his mind, that I'm no chappy. I....."

He looked at her, but I waited until he looked at me again, then I rammed him my fist in his stomach. He went down like a damp cloth. As he laid on the pavement, heavily moaning, I – to make it ultimately clear – rammed him my foot in his face. I heard his nose cracking, and the girl screaming. Then I knelt down beside him.

"Okay, "lad". This was a first warning because I'm a nice guy. Should I see you ever again in this city, hearing that you cheat again a naive girl, then I will hire some real bad guys, living in this city. They will not be so modest as I, they will really rough you up, not being so nice as I." As I stood up,

I stepped on one of his ankles, not really sure if purposely. Then I looked at the young woman.

"Believe me, I did you a favor with this. He made some photos?"

She nodded with her head. I fetched the camera bag, laying on the sidewalk, and handed it to her.

"He will no longer need it. If you really want to try to become a movie star, then try it professional. You should have sex with the old, real powerful, guys, those living in the hills and canyons. Those, who will not bring you to a shabby motel, but to the château at the Strip. Much more stylish, the rooms, not the fat old guys with their shriveled cocks."

She took the bag and I walked away. The gentleman laid still on the ground, blood on the ground. Had I to fear that he would go to the police? What for? That I had kicked a louse's ass, a louse that he was? Blood on my left shoe, a bit on my trousers. I took a handkerchief and cleaned the shoe, then I entered a call box to call me a taxi, to drive home – or a drink in a bar, or two? Would I see her again? Not on the silver screen, it would surprise me, but maybe in one of my magazines?

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

Two Are One Too Much

I had at least three jobs with a very special constellation in my "cooking career". One early, the other two jobs later, and in a row. Jobs with two "bosses".

The first was the most extreme, in Stuttgart, marketplace, well known. I had my job interview with a young couple, I came from the large hotels I had worked before, they were impressed. So far, so good, but there was still the "old couple". The system was the following: The father told you something, what you should do, in what way. The son passed by and asked you, quoted: What a shit are you doing. You said, your father told me, he said, I not wanna have that shit here. You did it like the son wanted it, and the father passed by – okay, you know what happened now. Father and son, not able to solve their disagreements. They used their staff therefor. I wasn't long there.

The other two jobs also stupid situations, even if not that extreme. A good advice: No job with more than one boss, everything else is shit!

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

Back On The Station

We returned to the space station, the mood of all of us was somewhat depressed. That we returned to the space station we kept a secret, the earth had not to know. We had found a lot, could not explain anything, not able to answer a single question. But as we entered the space station, got welcomed by the others, our mood changed immediately. It was one sentence that Kim said: "I think that we have found some answers."

*

We gave us one hour, not more, to change clothes, to take a shower, to eat a bit, to meet at the conference room of the space station. I had the feeling that soon I would be allowed to open my Christmas presents, wolfed down my meal. Then, finally, we all met again in the conference room.

"Do you have got any information about what they have found out?" Allison asked me.

"No, they have not given me even a hint, and I'm the commander of the mission. It's all top secret – Kim starts!"

We stopped our conversation, every conversation died immediately, we all who came back from Wanderer wanted to hear the news. Kim started with her presentation.

"Well, not to risk that our homecomers die of curiosity, Wanderer has never been an inhabited planet."

I needed a moment to come to terms with this information, Kim waited and looked at us. Then I had the feeling that everybody looked at me, the commander, and that I would have to say something.

"Well, the cities at the shores, the structure, the craters, the war? What do we have overlooked?"

"The solution was not to ponder about what we have found, but about what we haven't found. We found no means of transportation, no crashed plane, no sunken ship for instance. Sure, we could not expect to find something large and well-preserved, but we found nothing. No car, no train, nothing. Why? Because this was no world with cities, trains, planes, and ships. Not that nobody lived here, but not many. And to find any remains of this few would be an enormous fluke."

"What's the basis of this interpretation? What then was Wanderer?"

Even at the early stages, there had been extremely diverse theories about Wanderer on earth. What would they offer now?

"Yeah Nisa, Wander always pointed one side towards its sun, it had been hot there, all day, every year. Say that Venus would behave so, any ideas?"

"And there would have been a second planet, an inhabited planet?"

"Yes."

"One could come to the idea to produce energy on this special planet, one could produce enormous amounts of energy on this Venus."

"Exactly, Nisa. If you see Wanderer in this way, everything starts to make sense. The massive structure. We have found out, as far as possible, that at least larger parts of it will be exactly as what you have explored – sections of nineteen halls. Therefore, we would say that what we have seen as cities, had been plants to transduce the solar energy. We would say that the larger "cities" had been enormous solar farms, the smaller ones wind farms. One could, even with our current technologies, gain an enormous amount of energy on Wanderer."

"The structure, was this the place to transform this energy and to store it?"

"We think so."

"Any idea what technology they used to bring the energy to the actual planet?"

"No, not exactly."

"Why the destruction?"

"Maybe a war on the actual planet? In any case, this was a kind of sideshow in a much larger conflict. Sure, to destroy your enemy's possibility to produce energy would give you an enormous advantage."

"What now, on what we should focus now?"

"Forget this continent, we have found something very fascinating on the smaller continent. The hall with Mother in it looked impressive – or."

We all nodded with our heads.

"And now you know that there are many Mothers down there. Impressive – or."

We all nodded with our heads again.

"Well, prepare for the coming."

*

I laid in my bed and tried not to fall asleep. All this new information, would Mother talk again with me – Mother? We had learned that there would be much more than one Mother down there, dozens potentially, hundreds, thousands even? And this new structure, hall, could we enter it?

I felt asleep and Mother spoke to me. I heard a voice, or hundreds of voices? They told me about a wonderful planet, they had found solutions for many things. But then things started to went wrong, and everything ended in a mere disaster.

I woke up and felt sad. The alarm clock had not rung, it was still no time to stand up. I looked at the clock. No two hours had been bygone since I had laid down. I feared to close my eyes again.

A New Plan

A Moment and we would start the orbital glider for our first recon mission, Allison and me on board. The only goal of our mission was to find out, whether they had, definitively, found a place where we could enter the new-found hall or not.

It looked very fascinating from above, but pictures, made with certain angles of illumination, were always difficult to interpret. An unmanned glider had also not provided a definite answer. It was certain that there was something, a kind of entrance, or maybe only a ventilation shaft or so. It was difficult to see because it laid in a small valley, at the end not more than a ravine. Overhanging rocks made it finally difficult to decide what was really there, it seemed as that the place was carefully chosen. We started.

Undoubtedly, the remaining crew on the station had found something fascinating. Once the large and the smaller continent had been one, with a large mountain range. Most of the mountain range laid on the larger continent today, but on the smaller continent one could find one beginning – or end – of the mountain range with one very enormous mountain. Not the highest mountain at all, but within the top five. But this mountain had a secret, there was something in it, and it seemed as it would be one large hall.

While we had been on the ground, the remaining team had made good progress in gaining data and analyzing it. They had also used our findings on the ground to compare it with their data, to intercalate other data, to improve their capability to interpret the raw data better and better. The new finding was a result of it.

The orbital glider needed some time to bring us to the place where we would land, we could not land near the possible entrance, the valley was too narrow. We would land on a small plateau on the foot of the mountain, nearer it was not possible. Nearly a hundred and fifty feet in altitude, and over a mile in total, waited for us – would this be a meaningful entrance? Well, billions of years ago, before a war, possibly. We came close to our aim.

"There we are, I will touch down soon. Again the space suits, and this time we have to climb and have to manage a larger distance."

"Yeah, Nisa, thanks for choosing me for this mission. At least it will be no extremely difficult route – two hours maybe?"

"I would say that we should better calculate three hours. And then we're only there, then we have to start to see what will be maybe possible, what not. And then the way back, will be no easy trip, not at all."

"What if we find in fact a way to enter the hall, if it's in fact only a single hall. They are not absolutely certain about it. And even if, a new even larger Mother, the Mother of the Mothers, what then?"

"Well, first we have to see if it's in fact a kind of entrance, what we will find. Let's put the space suits on and let's have a nice walk on Wanderer's wonderful landscape."

*

We stepped outside and I looked at the stars. The sun became brighter with every day, not so long and our visit from earth would be here. What would happen then? We had to offer nothing so far, only that we had not followed their orders. But maybe this was the wrong thinking, perhaps we should concentrate on the coming, the foot march. Perhaps I should focus on Wanderer, not on earth. I pondered about: How would it be, to stay on Wanderer, to accompany the planet for the next billions of years?

"Be careful Nisa, where you step! I'm not interested in to fly back alone, or with you in the trunk."

"Sorry, I lost concentration for a moment."

Back On The Streets Again

This Is Not America

This Is Not America

But
What then
Is
America

Some say
Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield
Have been smart women
Playing the violin

America?
Land of the free,
Or the land of a Christian fundamentalist dictatorship?
Soon a decision?

Some say
Los Angeles
The City
Would not exist

No downtown
Only many parts with own centers
America
A land like Los Angeles?

America
A conglomeration of contradictory states, conditions
Today at the crossroads
Like Germany nearly a hundred years ago?

It's hard to tell
What's America
What not
Like a god, not provable, not disprovable

You have to believe in America
With the risk that it will be only an illusion at the end
When the men in their shiny black uniforms will march
After they have killed the horses finally

This is not America -
Yeah!
But what then is America?
If only one could tell me that!

Bowie, hundreds of million dollars, one of the richest artists ever, not a dime for a foundation or so, some disliked it. I though, Bowie is New Yorker, New York created monsters like the Orange Monkey and "I Have Not Lost" Hillary, overrated artists like Warhol, this hypocritical narcissistic Manhattan bunch. Fuck you East Coast!

This Is America

I had finished the job, he would no longer stalk my client. And I? I had to change some things, had to accept some matters. No longer the tough private dick in the big city, this artificial facade. It was not relevant who you were, it was important what you could pretend to be. Big words more significant than any deed, sham was the wonder word.

I was satisfied, had managed it in a reasonable way, my client? Yeah, I wished her the best, although I did not believe in it. At least in a Hollywood movie, she would fail, would end in drugs and alcohol, would die lonely and in poverty. Sure, she would have deserved it, with her faked hair and artificial sexiness. The dresses too tight and thin, the heels too high, the jewelry too much – way too much make-up.

And yet, didn't she not only behave like expected? What "liked" JFK on Marilyn? That one could have real intellectual conversations with her? Miss Monroe, what's your assessment regarding the current political situation? Or shall we talk about what's the best way to dye your pubic hair? Some say you're an expert therein.

I started to enjoy my living in a smaller town, but I had to adapt more, I had to become more open. In the morning, the woman from the grocery had tried to start a conversation with me, why I had burked it? I disliked it to talk about me with other people, I was not used to. Maybe I should start with Linda, not only once she had asked: What about a drink together after closing the office? We ran a business together, our lives could depend on each other, but it was difficult for me to tell her about my interests, to talk about my political opinions, to have a small-talk about yesterday's weather with her. I should try to be more open.

This Was America

Miss Mansfield sat on the opposite side of the table again, I did not try to realize too much what she wore today.

"And you really think that he will no longer bully me?"

"Absolutely. I have an eye on him, he's still in the city. But if he will not leave tomorrow, I will send some "friends" who will help him to pack. – He did not contact you again, or."

"No, it stopped. Then.....this is yours."

She took a paper out off her cute purse. I took the check and looked at it – her money?

"Well, this is definitively more than I would have charged."

"It's okay, you're worth it. You're worth much more than this. It's only money."

"Yeah. Money is not all, some say. But this is America, and nothing makes us more horny than money."

"You think so," she said as she leant forward, and her breast tried to seduce me. I leant back.

"You're my client and a married woman. At least two reasons to....."

".....I'm no longer your client, our business relation is ended. We could start a new one – and I'm still an unmarried woman."

Yeah, I needed a smoke and offered her one – of course, she had her own. But she did not reject a drink from my bottle in the office.

Well, it was 1954 and everything seemed okay, at least in a way. No missile crises and JFK still alive – yeah, McCarthy and his friends. But I had never been a communist, and it already started to come to an end. No virus and as long as nobody talked about it, one could be even in Hollywood gay, or a "friend" of somewhat younger girls. The world could be simply wonderful in 1954, at least as long as staring at the high gloss facade.

This Was America

An innocent moment in time
Or the refusal of a closed group
To see the reality
As it was

The Negro as the never-ending slave
The Latino as the unavoidable "neighbor", full of lice but willing to work
The Asian as drudge until death
But always keeping your innocence by looking away

This was America
From the first day on until today
This was America
Until today

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

On Ground Again

The first part of our way was the steepest, what did this area has look like billions of years ago? Hardly to say, maybe it was a puzzling fact, seen that way, that it would be still possible to reach the door, or whatever we would find.

"Mind your steps, Nisa."

Yeah, thanks Allison. I could not stop to ponder about everything, what happened here? A beginning paranoia? Well, one could not deny the possibility under such circumstances – so many novels and movies about this topic, and many simply stupid. I had problems therein to find footing.

"Shall I to help you, Nisa?"

No, but I had to be more careful. Allison led, she had more experience in climbing – but at last, this was not more than a steep slope. But the material was very loose, one had to be careful. It was not that you had to fear that you would plunge into the deep, but damaging your space suit could become easily an earnest issue. We reached the end of the slope.

"I was scared for you, Nisa. Maybe it would have been better to rope up?"

"No, I'm lacking concentration. It's my fault. Our way will be easier from now on."

Easier in a way, but longer. We stood at the beginning of the actual mountain, the foot of the mountain we had managed. Luckily, we had not to climb the mountain as such, we could enter a kind of trench, hardly to say if this was a natural formation, or artificial. But this was not relevant for us, at least not now. It was relevant for us to reach the end of the passage to see what we would find at the end.

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Well, not so steep, but not easy at all anyway. Erosion had done its work, and we had not only to deal once with the result of a rockfall. It was mostly relatively easy, but one time we had to do some climbing to get over the rocks. Nevertheless, it became very obvious that this way once had been broad enough all the way to allow vehicles to drive there. We made good progress.

"Your impression, Allison?"

"As far as possible? I would say that this has been a natural formation, but became artificially extended. The ground, over all, is much too even, look at this part of the wall of the trench for instance. Okay, nature is a tricky thing, but we see this smooth sections only up to a certain level. Higher, everything is pure "natural". Yeah, I would say that one had used a natural formation to create access to, whatever will be inside the mountain."

"Then we should find a kind of door at the end."

"Everything else would puzzle me totally."

"You're sounding excited.""

"I'm excited, Nisa."

"But a door would not mean that we will be able to open it. We had not much success so far."

"But we would find something. A door would mean that there should be a kind of mechanism to open it. Would be more than we have so far."

"Yeah, my door for the carhouse at home has remote control."

"But you can still open it manually – or, Nisa."

"Yes, that's true. I should be more optimistic. It would be only hard to have to accept, that I have motivated you all to neglect our orders, for nothing."

"We did it by free will, Nisa. It was our decision. And I would not say, that we have no results so far. All the data alone that we have collected and that has still to be analyzed. We have left back

automatic drones and several detectors in the halls, we get new data every hour. The AI on the space station makes overtime and cannot process everything. When Earth arrives, they will be happy that we have already done so much. And who knows, maybe we will be able to offer them much more than what we have so far."

"Yeah, I hope so, Allison."

We continued with our way, had decided not to rest until we would be at our aim. Three and a half hours so far, and still not there, but very near now. We had found more signs therefore, that this trench had been expanded and smoothed. And then we were there!

"And?"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"I fear that we have to do some cleaning first. Definitely, there's something in front of us, and it artificial. But, since billions of years no cleaning? I would say that we have to remove all the gravel and dust first, then we can say more."

"I agree, but first a rest. We have enough oxygen, we can rest for some time. Then we do some cleaning, then we make the pictures. We can try to find an opening mechanism, but this is not our goal for now. For now, I would say, we have a first question answered. This is a door – do you agree, Allison?"

"In any case, Nisa. This is a door, this is a door. I mean, this is the first fucking door we have found on Wanderer, can you believe this?"

Yeah! No doors, no elevators, no staircases, no definite control panels, nothing so far! Now we had a door, a door would mean an opening mechanism, something that should give you at least some information about those who had built all this. Yeah, I was excited, but first a rest would be necessary.

Clean The House

"Well, what do you think, Nisa."

"I think that we can be proud, Allison. An hour of cleaning and putting away the dirt, gravel and stones, and everything looks much better."

"Yeah, and what I like most is this little tiny slit in the middle of the door we stand in front."

Yeah, the door. Now it was obvious, we stood in front of a door, a door with two parts. It would obviously open in the way, that the two parts would separate – very conventional looking! But the key word was "would". Even if we would find a kind of mechanism, there would be no power to open the door. And we had found in fact something. Around ten feet from the door, on one side very well-preserved, not so much on the other, there was something. We came to the conclusion that it had been a kind of photoelectric sensor. You arrived with a vehicle, and the door opened automatically. We even had a good idea about the dimensions of such vehicles, and hope to find at least one inside the structure. But of course, it would have been too much wished to hope for that this mechanism still worked.

The door was "behind" the end of the trench, that created an edge of around ten feet of stone. Also there we found, on both sides, definitely artificial, flush-mounted, devices. Partially on both sides the same, but not all the time.

"For those not having a ride," Allison had said. So, one would be able to open the door also directly, but still no power. And then, another problem we had still not discussed.

The data from the space station had revealed that after the door we would find a tunnel, around one mile long. Then one would enter the hall. But after only a distance of just a little over fifty feet there could be another door, at least it seemed as there would be something, something solid. Could it be that this would be a kind of double door system? But why?

"We have to use force. We will otherwise not be able to open it."

"Yeah, it seems so. We have to analyze all data we gain now, on the space station, but I would agree with you, Allison. Most likely, we have to use force to get in."

"What about the idea that this could be a double door system?"

"Apart from, that we have not to open only one, but two doors?"

"Yes."

"Well, we thought so far that Wanderer had been inhabited. But maybe this was wrong, potentially this was not more than a huge power station for another planet. The atmosphere on Wanderer was perhaps not that ideal for those who built all this? Would explain a lot. And it appears that those who built this all had been an advanced civilization, more than we on earth, but no kind of super-civilization like they like them in science fiction novels."

"Yes, the new findings in the halls are interesting, especially those in the Rabbit Holes. That the walls, the mirrors, are not smooth. We have fantastic high-definition photos of them now, and they reveal that they have a microstructure. On every square millimeter one can find nearly a hundred lenses, they remind on Fresnel lenses. But not all are the same, they have started a project to cartography them all in detail. And, the wall, mirror, to the next Rabbit Hole is half-mirror. Therefore, two Rabbit Holes are a system. And not the whole mirror shows the same permeability. It ranges from ten to over ninety percentages, and there's no clear systematic. All in all, we have an unbelievable complex system in front of us. No doubt, light is involved, most likely laser light. A first assessment shows, that it would be easily possible to create nearly infinite different ways a laser beam could travel in these two halls. And, they could have every thinkable length, even infinite. The AI guesses, that this is a kind of high-precision tool to measure something, up to nearly any precision. We do make progress, Nisa."

"Yes, we do. We're very convinced now that Wanderer had been a power station, not more. That it has operated to a very high degree automatized, that only a few "people" have lived here. Our "cities", what we thought first, had been power plants, and the huge structure is most likely the place to transform and maybe to store the energy. We start to create a picture, but how good is it? Sure, that's how it functions, that's how science functions. But do we do the right, have I made the right decisions? I feel uncertain, sometimes, Allison."

"I would be scared if not. We do not need selfish cowboys here, we need to have appraising people here. You have to make the last decisions, Nisa. And I have the feeling that they haven't been bad so far."

"Thanks Allison. What do you think about the problem with the air? The first hall had been damaged. There were no air in it, no air left, of course. But this structure is intact, there should be remains of Wanderer's atmosphere in it."

"Yeah, that would be interesting, but also dangerous. Would we simply destroy the door this could mean a sudden decompression, maybe of the complete hall if there's no second door, or the door is open. This would be a disaster for us. We have to act more clever."

"A test drill first?"

"Yeah, we should use our equipment to drill through the door to see what happens. We could insert a small camera to see what's the situation inside. We could close a small hole relatively easy again if necessary. I think we should act carefully, at least in a first step."

"Okay, I think that we're done here. We have made images and have scanned the situation, for three-dimensional simulations on board of the space station. I have the feeling that we're very close now, very close."

"What do you think will be inside? Only one hall, a gigantic Mother?"

"Well, an idea is, that the monoliths could be for storing of the produced energy. But to have storage a lot of energy on Wanderer is nice, but one would need the energy on the home planet. Maybe that's what we will find here? Well, let's see, we will see it, soon we will see it."

The way back to the glider felt more exhausting than the way to the door. Of course, we were for hours in our space suits now. We could drink, but we had not eaten something since hours. And finally, we had made a lot, we were happy to be at the glider again.

"I'm pleased to sit in the glider again, Allison. Mountaineering is not mine."

"Well, with all respect, Nisa, I would not call that what we have done, mountaineering. A bit of climbing, not more."

"Yeah, wasn't it your dream to climb Mons Olympus one day?"

"Yeah, that would be mountaineering! Yeah, we all have our dreams."

The glider took off and we both looked forward to taking a hot shower and that we could put on fresh clothes.

This Is America

A Number Of Reasons

Trying Not To Make Things Worse

No two weeks and we would have some more clarity, the Americans still interested in, not becoming an unclear mix of a Christian fundamentalist, racist, fascist, autocratic, dictatorship? I had the feeling that I would not be happy with the answer.

Living in a smaller city now, PI, I had the feeling not to understand why all of this happened. Only because a wealthy group of white and Western European based "American patriots" feared to lose some of their wealth and therewith political influence? The influence of religion? Could this be all, or was there more?

And yet, everybody could have the chance to vote. Yeah, some did everything to make it for some as difficult as possible to vote. Some did everything to make the votes of some as insignificant as possible. And yet, hadn't 2020 not showed what all was still possible? Whom one would have to blame, when November the eighth would end in a disaster? I had a bad answer.

*

Saturday, not "a Saturday", but "the Saturday", the Saturday before the midterm elections. Yeah, CNN already on drugs, the next election night, only real on CNN! I could no longer hear it, all those predictions, opinions and beliefs. All pointed to, that the Democrats would lose their majority and the usual stupidity would begin anew. A useless second term, one of these stupidities of the American political system.

I was sick of it, all around the world. Convicted criminals and freaked out billionaires destroyed the world. In Brazil, Turkey, China, Saudi Arabia, and of course Russia. America, the shiny beacon of the world, the oldest democracy of the world, America of course not, I felt sick.

I was a private dick, I hunted criminals, criminals? Yeah, murderers even! A man who killed his wife, death penalty maybe? And the swine in Russia, who was responsible for the death of thousands? And the super-rich oligarchs who had made their money by hard work? Yeah, I was a private dick who hunted criminals, little criminals, the real criminals were president or "leader", super-rich tycoons, the most important artists in the world. All those I would never meet, I would never get in touch with, those who would never get to know that I exist. I was a private dick.

*

November the eighth, the midterm elections had begun – November the eighth, you might say now, but November the eighth was no Sunday, you might say if living in Europe or any other modern democracy. Hey, we spoke about the USA, an election on a Sunday would mean to make it easier to vote for many voters, but this was not our idea of voting. The fucking American reality had caught you, and shit, we were even proud of that shit!

Sure, I had voted, for me as a private investigator it was easy, I could arrange my day relatively independently. But many, especially with not only one job, or as a single mother, as a senior, or simply living in one of this fucking conservative states like Texas or Florida? Yeah, I had voted, but I was strangely uninterested in the outcome, fearing knowing the outcome. Linda and I had decided not to work today, I had decided not to be overly interested in the election. No CNN election night, had enough of the shit. I would get informed tomorrow, tomorrow would be fast enough to get informed about the rubbish.

*

I woke up, still not noon? TV, CNN of course, what else one could switch on? Breaking News, what else CNN could broadcast? But apart from the typical ado, not much had happened – or. Fetterman was cool, I had nearly to puke seeing DeSantis, Georgia?, House lost, Senate? — oh, come on, it could have gotten worse! Really? Fucking DeSantis? Should I hope for 2024? What about Hillary again? I had to puke!

I decided to brew me a tea, ate something, found something in the fridge. A defeat for the Orange Monkey? It would have had to be a defeat for the GOP, for their fucking lies. I was unable to be happy, all was not so bad at all. Two years of agony and standstill in front of us? He was better than I had thought, but not Joe again. Two years time to establish a coming candidate, but this wasn't the American style. All as expensive and complicated as possible, that was our style. I came to the conclusion that it made no sense, I should go to bed again, maybe later all would make more sense.

*

Red Dawn – it did not happen because some brave American kids counterposed the red invaders and defeated them. The American Dream of being always on the side of the good, always defining what the "side of the good" is. And yet, it became Saturday and still neither the race for Senate nor the race for House finally decided. But what became more and more obvious, the red invasion had not happened, at least by far not as pronounced. And, the most loud right-wing extremists and election deniers performed the worst. A hope? For what? Jordan, Cruz, Moscow Mitch, DeSantis, Greene, those and many more were still there. We had still, and most probably for a longer time, a corrupt Supreme Court. Yeah, not a total disaster, but still an endangered democracy, endangered human rights, endangered freedom. As long as the swine from NY and his fucking family bunch and his bootlickers had not to bear consequences, preferably behind bars, the thread of a Red Dawn wouldn't be over.

I brewed me a tea, a new one from Rwanda, a very interesting and fascinating tea, a black tea with large leaves like an oolong tea. I had to use one of my large tea tins to store it, all other black teas I could store in the smaller ones. Rwanda, the place where they had killed nearly a million people, many by mincing them alive with machetes. As said, a very fascinating new tea. I enjoyed the fine, and at the same time strong, taste.

*

Fifty, fifty seats in Senate? And still one open, with a good chance that Democrats could win it, what would give them fifty-one seats, one more than before? And in the House? Most probably the GOP would win the majority, but their possible advance melted more and more? Would America get a new chance to prevent at least the worse? I would say "Yes!" with joy, wouldn't be there DeSantis. The swine from New York dreamt about to become the American Hitler, Putin or Xi - DeSantis had the same dream, no question about that. In a way DeSantis was even more extreme than the racist, now living in "his" state, he was more extreme than him, much more! If the Democrats could not win in 2024, America would turn into a failed radical Christian fundamentalist Nazi nation, with the fuehrer DeSantis.

Okay, all possibly too theoretical? What would happen when "The Swine" would collide with "I'm Even The Bigger Swine" DeSantis in the primaries? Maybe it should happen, and it would be very fascinating to see what would happen then. I would say that it could help the Democrats a lot, it could help Biden a lot. Biden? Well, who else could it be? Bernie scarcely, Hillary a nightmare. One of "the others"? Oh, come on, one was gay, the other an Asian American or a Latino, a woman with some doubtful statements even.

Whatever, I felt that this outcome would give us at least two more years, two more years to prepare for the next important battle. And there was still something named "Climate Change", a war in Ukraine, perhaps even a virus? But it would not help, I was old, but not that old. I had a few savings, but by far not enough to retire. I had still some years to work, had to hope that my private

insurance would not get bankrupt, I had to concentrate on that. It was Sunday, tomorrow I would sit together with Linda to discuss our plans for the next years, the development of our agency. But today was Sunday, the sun shined, and I did not feel that bad.

The Reason For Extinction

First Stage Started

On Board Again

"Okay, our strategy stands firm, I would say."

"As far as I have not to carry everything alone, all will be good, Nisa."

"No panic Fryda, you're our technical specialist, but of course, we will help you."

"I will need two days or so to manufacture the construction, to establish an antechamber in front of the door. It will fit perfectly thanks to the 3D scans. Then we have enough space to work on the door."

"Yes, a drilling first that we're able to insert the camera, to see what's inside. We will also get the insight then, whether there's still air inside or not."

"Will we flood the antechamber with air from the beginning on?"

"Yes, with the higher air pressure we assume for Wanderer. We have to get to know whether there's air inside, with what an air pressure, and in what a composition. If there's air inside, we will take a sample to analyze it. We have also to check whether there is, in fact, a second door. But we have to understand first how dangerous it could be, for instance, to use a plasma cutter to get inside. First some homework, then the ultimate action. Air inside or not, higher pressure or not, whatever composition, we will get inside. We're equipped for mining and exploring, we have the best on board one can buy on Earth. We have only to decide what way will be the best."

"And the material has to be the same as the samples we have from the large structure."

"I think so, Andrea, but we will see it very fast when drilling. Theoretically, one of our new special alloyed HSS drills should be enough to get through it, we will see. Okay, we guess four hours at least to get through, but this is our job, only not on Mars."

So, that was our planning for the next steps. Fryda would build the antechamber, we would equip a lander with all we would need to drill the hole, to use a camera to see what's inside, to take an air sample and to analyze it. If nothing would against it, we would use a plasma cutter to cut a larger hole in the door, so we could enter. The antechamber would avert a decompression. It would take several days to implement all this, our visit from earth came nearer, as we flew together with Wanderer towards Earth.

Earth, we had planned to explore Mars to find mineral resources, half a year we would have been on Mars and its orbit. Now we orbited Wanderer, and even after we were convinced now that this was not the place of a civilization, only a place to gain energy, I felt cozy here. The days were counted, soon we had to leave Wanderer, maybe back to Mars – or Earth? Others would start with their research then, we would no longer be needed. It made me sad to imagine leaving, to let Wanderer behind me. But, Wanderer would not become a member of our solar system, would leave our solar system again, we all would have to say goodbye one day. What had happened here? It would be relieving to know it one day.

On Wanderer Again

We had established the antechamber, it had been some drudgery to get everything to the place. Of course, we had our transport utilities, but some parts of the passage were difficult to master with all the stuff. To build up the antechamber as such hadn't been the problem, Fryda had worked very exact, all fitted perfectly together.

"Okay, let's start with drilling a hole so that we can get some insights."

The antechamber was not filled with air, we would drill only a small hole. Even if behind the door there were air, not much would be able to leak through the hole, and we still needed a sample of this

possible air. But first we had to wait, the drilling would need some time.

"Our little adventure will come to an end soon, our visitors will arrive in three days."

"Yeah, Andrea, we will have maybe enough time to see what's inside this structure, but not more."

"Do you think that it was worthwhile, what we've done?"

"Well, we have taken many samples, have installed many automatic measuring tools. Our drones have mapped many square miles of Wanderer's surface very detailed. The AI on board works round the clock – yes, even that we have found nothing groundbreaking, no smoking gun, no final answers, maybe no answer at all."

"We have to fly home when they arrive?"

"Or back to Mars, I have no order so far."

"I feel unhappy, it's like having nothing achieved, not finished your mission."

"I feel with you."

Yeah, our mood wasn't the best, what had we expected? Something, at least something, something about the people who had built all this. But instead getting any information about them, had we pushed them with every of our actions further away. And, what did we expect now? Not much in any case. Air came through the borehole, we were through. We removed the drill and took a sample of the air to analyze it with our portable analyzer.

"Relatively high pressure, I would say."

"Yes, the gauge says two and a half atmospheres. But we have the sample that we need, we can fill the antechamber with air now, to compensate the air pressure inside the structure."

We inserted a small camera in the borehole, after the air pressure inside the antechamber and the structure was the same. We looked, full of tension, at the screen.

"That's the tunnel towards the hall."

We all saw, in semi-darkness, the small camera had only a small light source, the smooth walls, ceiling, and floor of the tunnel, no sign of any structure.

"Go on, we need only one information right now, the next possible door."

Andrea, who operated the camera, did her best to illuminate the further tunnel. And then we saw it, obviously the next door, and the next door was open!

"What a fluke! That will make everything much easier – have we a result from the air sample, Rangheidur?"

"Yes, not very accurate, but accurately enough for our matter. The oxygen level is much higher than on Earth, even somewhat higher than during the Carboniferous on Earth. But it will be easy to adjust the plasma cutter so, that it will be no problem. Shall we begin with cutting the hole?"

"No, see, the atmosphere is also rich in various noble gases. This should have had some impact on those who breathed this air. - But we can ponder on this later, let's cut the hole. "

Rangheidur and Lyana started to cut a hole into the door, this would also need it's time, time we no longer had that much. However, at least, it should be possible for us to see what this structure would offer us, before our visitors from earth would arrive, would stop us.

I looked at the sky, as every object in the universe also Wanderer rotated, it was night on Wanderer. Well, night, the sun was brighter now than as we had arrived, but still not that bright, when visible. But it made a difference anyway, and now it was night and I looked at the stars in the sky – what would be Wanderer's path when leaving the solar system again? Well, I thought, on Earth they will have already calculated Wanderer's further path, maybe I should try to find out? Or should I possibly simply wait and see?

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A nice hole had in the door now, it would allow us, as well some equipment, to enter the tunnel, to enter the next hall – or whatever would await us. We had installed a powerful floodlight on a self-driven carrier to illuminate the tunnel, but we could not see the end, the tunnel was too long.

"We have to do some march now, but the next door is open. It should be therefore easy to reach our aim."

"If there will be no further door, yes, Nisa."

"Yeah, that would be a downer. But soon we will see."

"It's a pity that we have still to wear our space suits."

"This air pressure, a very high oxygen level, an interesting mix of noble gases, and we have no real exact analyze of the air – enough reasons to keep on the space suits, Lyana?"

"Yeah, Nisa. Nevertheless, one can assume that those who once worked here were not that much different compared to us."

"In any case, not totally "alien". But, let us go one."

We started to walk down the tunnel, now with air around us, we could hear our footsteps via the external microphones. But this sound was all what stimulated our senses. The tunnel as such was totally smooth with a metallic appearance. Nevertheless, after a while we reached the end of it, the light beam showed us edges, and "something" in the background.

"There we are, no further door, obviously – or open? Whatever, in front of us the tunnel obviously widens, we have reached our aim. Last opportunities for betting on what we will find."

"A desk with a picture on it."

"I fear that this will not happen, Andrea."

And it did not happen. We went further on, and in fact, we entered a huge, tremendously huge, hall, with only one gigantic machine in it.

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"Okay, it's impressive, in a way it's shocking. But, the ELC? Our latest collider with a hundred miles diameter and detectors huge like nearly a complete block? Yes, this is even larger, and most probably even more complex, but I have the feeling, not so completely away from our technical possibilities."

"Yeah, what's this? Say that Mother transformed the energy, generated at the surface, then this could be the storage. I would say that they transformed the energy in a way we do not know, stored it here, to transport it to their home planet. Maybe an advance of a hundred years or so, but I would say that we should be able to understand their technology in the end."

"And now, Nisa?"

"Let's do our work. Let us install some measurement devices, start some drones, just the normal stuff....."

We did our work, and yes, we were impressed. The hall had a floor area of around forty-five thousand square yards, nine football fields. But the height, nearly five hundred yards, filled with one device! And again, we found nothing what one could see as a switch or so, no control panel. As before, it seemed as everything had functioned totally automatically, even when this hall had a very obvious entry. And it was obvious that we hadn't found the one important clue, I was somewhat disappointed about that fact. We had collected a lot of information, ideas, theories, but others would find the solutions. But I felt confident that it would be possible to get an idea about, how this all had functioned, maybe even what had happened at the surface. But not we, perhaps we had laid the groundwork, but not more. We had not even found any information about those who had built all this, whether they had arms and fingers or not. On the surface, there they would possibly be able to find such information, but not we. We would fly back to the station to wait until those from earth would arrive, to send us back, back to Mars or even Earth. I felt empty, we all felt empty, in thirty hours we wouldn't be longer alone. We flew back to the station.

On Board Again

Like all the others, two or three of us sat together, I had decided to be alone for the last hours, until Earth would arrive, and we had to fly back. I, as the first commander, could do it in my own small room.

Back to Mars was the order now, there we would get further orders, it did not sound very

comforting. Sure, Earth had realized that we had not acted exactly as wished, but had not tried that much to stop our activities. Most likely because of their limited possibilities, but soon they would be here, at the space station, in persona of a star decorated general, the military would take the leadership then, we would no longer be needed.

We had been able to raise some questions, important questions obviously, had laid the ground to develop more than our first theories. These were significant steps in science, but nevertheless, sure, we had hoped for more. A desk with a photography on it, that it would have been. Or a huge control panel that had provided you information about their sensorial skills, their appearance. Something written.

One of our first ideas had been, that the massive structure could be a kind of data storage. A place that would have told you everything about Wanderer and the people who had lived here and the reason for their extinction. Instead, our last idea was, that this had been not the home planet of a civilization, only a place to produce, to transform, to store energy. No large cities, only large facilities like solar farms on the surface, no active civilization with cities and a daily life.

And yet, what had happened here? A military conflict in any case – or would be there alternative scenarios possible? We had found out that the whole planet had been severely contaminated after whatever had happened here – some billion years ago. But we had also found out, that the machinery inside the large structure had produced large amounts of radiation, up to gamma radiation – it had been no nice place to be, some billion years ago. Most likely why we had found no easy way to get in, like an elevator or some kind of staircases. Could it be that this was the key to understand what had happened here some billion years ago? People who created technical tools that they no longer could control? Running mad AI?

I looked at the stars as I was a little girl and thought: Whatever will be there, it cannot be worse than on Earth. Yes, we had managed in the end, to get control over climate change, but to what price, and of course, much too late. Much too late for most of us, not for those who had been the profiteers of all what had happened over the last decades. I dreamt about, to discover the stars – I could, at least, get enough education and training to ask for a job in exploring and exploiting Mars, and they took me. I made a career, became a commander, could leave Earth for most of the time, came the stars up there at least somewhat nearer. And now? Back to Mars? Most likely Earth, maybe never ever in space again? Had it been worth that, to pay such a price? In any case, in any case for me, and all the others?

We had not much talked about it the last days, but we still heard Mother talking in our dreams. Yeah, we had made some medical checks, the AI told us that we were stressed, no reason to be worried. Would Mother still speak with us, back at Mars or on Earth? We had made the arrangement, whatever will happen, we would not lose contact, we would stay as a team forever. We would support each other, especially those who had to go back to Earth.

My mother died in sorrow, my father I had never known. Some said that he had to leave us because he did not agree with all what the government had decided. Others said that he had simply been a lousy man, not being willing taking his responsibility of being a father now. Could both be true at once? Back on Earth, what should I do? I closed my eyes and was a little girl again.

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What's to name? I think that the most far-reaching development in my youth the collapse of the USA had been. In my seventh year on Earth, the "New Civil War" started, which ended in the splitting of the former United States of America in three independent nations. The "why" and "how" filled libraries. But, in any case, it started ultimately with the election of DeSantis as president of the then still existing United States of American in 2028. Already the developments after 2024 had a considerable impact on global policy, but four years later the system got finally doomed.

It all seemed not to be that worse in one way. The pandemic became a seasonal cold, Russia lost totally in Ukraine. China understood the warning, and started to act somewhat differently, some first steps to limit climate change got implemented. All could have ended in an at least somewhat positive way, but then the largest democracy on earth – not the first and not the best, but the largest

– failed and everything got engulfed in the abyss. And a teenager had only one dream, to get away from all this.

I had to confess, that I came to terms with the system as much as needed, to get enough education, to implement my dream. At the end I found a job at a parastatal and paramilitary company, I could leave Earth behind me. And now? Could I just stay on Wanderer, to enter the open space, leaving Earth forever? I took my communicator and called the other four.

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"I not wanna sit here, just waiting until "they" arrive, and we have to fly home. What about a last trip to Wanderer's surface?"

"What do you want to do? Visiting Mother a final time?"

"It would need too much time, alone to rope down, and the whole way back. We have four hours left, I want to be on the station when "they" arrive. Let's take a lander for a short goodbye. There's this impressive valley Emilia has shown us? What about a trip to that sight?"

"Sounds good to me – the others?"

We all agreed to fly to the valley, a really impressive valley. Okay, Mars had of course a larger one, but at least thrice the size of Death Valley in any case. We had to hurry a bit, but then we would have an easy skyway to reach the valley.

On Wanderer Again

"I think that could be a good landing site, Andrea."

We had reached the surface of Wanderer, the impressive valley, and searched for a good landing site to have a spectacular sight on the valley.

"You're right, Nisa, I think I can land right near this small hill."

We did thus, and not a long time later we all five stood near the edge of the valley.

"Well, a cool sight in any case. But Mariner Valley would have been an entirely different category of valley."

"We have to fly back to Mars, Nisa? Do you have further information?"

"Nothing official, Allison. But it wouldn't be surprising, would we five, have to return to Earth – or. No chance for Olympus Mons anymore. Sorry, Allison."

"We all made our decisions independently. And Olympus Mons? Most of the volcano is, in fact, not more than a steep rise. Some edges, yes, up to nearly four miles high, but most of it is boring."

"Nice to say this, but I know that you would have liked it, to stand at the caldera, Allison."

"Yeah, over forty miles in diameter, the short axis, nearly two miles deep, a complex structure of seven craters, it wouldn't be that thrilling to stand at the caldera's edge."

"What shall we do now, walking around a bit and then flying back?"

"What about a goodbye photography, Rangheidur? And we could walk a bit. Let's place a camera here, we could walk up the small hill and make a last picture of us five. The five who found nothing on Wanderer, but lost their fucking jobs because of it."

"You're really not in a good mood, Nisa. But it's a nice idea, let's do it. We can share it, as a sign therefor, that we will stand together forever."

We installed a camera, then we walked up the small hill, maybe fifty yards in height. As we reached the top of it, we made some photos with the remote release.

"That it was, girls. Let's get everything and let us fly back, two hours until they arrive."

"Had been a lot of fun, definitively the adventure of my life – or."

"That's right Lyana. Whatever will happen, nobody can ever take these days away from us again."

I had tears in my eyes as we walked back, down the small hill, we all had tears in our eyes. Suddenly Rangheidur made a large step, too large, she lost balance and fall. Wanderer was larger than Earth, the gravity higher, the hill stony, Rangheidur's fall not harmless. She slid down the hill somewhat, but luckily, she could find halt again.

"Are you crazy, Rangheidur! Not in the final hours! I'm not interested in to lose a member of my crew!"

The others were also shocked, but not Rangheidur.

"No problem, I have controlled my fall. The space suits are very solid."

"And when you would have hit a spiky stone with your visor?"

"As I said, I have controlled my fall, it was on purpose."

"Are you kidding me, Rangheidur?"

"No, Nisa, but I have seen something, I nearly stepped on something."

We all had run down the hill towards Rangheidur, she stood again.

"What do you mean with that, Rangheidur?"

"Let us find my last step, right in front of it, where my next step would have been, there's something. At least it seemed so, it looked artificial, different at least."

The hill was covered with small gravel and sand, one could see footprints, and we found Rangheidur's last one, her right foot. Somewhere to the left, where one would expect the next footprint we saw something, something protruded off the small gravel and sand.

"Wow, you have to have excellent eyes that you have seen this, Rangheidur."

It looked like the edge of something, very thin, transparent with something in it. I touched it cautiously, but it fell into small pieces.

"Okay, it's, it was, the edge of something that's still in the ground. We have no idea how deep, nor how large, this whatever it is. But it lies, maybe, since billions of years here. Any ideas?"

"Give me ten minutes, Nisa."

Lyana had said this, she walked fast but controlled to the lander, disappeared, appeared soon again, with a case in her hand. She was back again.

"Well, we have not only the heavy gadgets."

"Yeah, the moment for our mineralogical specialist."

Yeah, every lander had also a small lab with some equipment for fast, at ground, analyses. And, also equipment for very subtle activities, not only heavy drills and explosives. Lyana opened the case and decided for a very soft brush. She started to remove the sand, extremely careful, and uncovered a part of a kind of sheet of paper.

"Stop here, enough for the moment. We know how sensitive this artifact is. Ideas?"

"About?"

"What it is and how we can prevent it from getting destroyed."

"The best I could say to the first is," Allison started, "that it looks like a laminated sheet of paper with a text on it."

"I think that we all can agree with this. It's a kind of creamy paper with brown "lines" and "signs" on it, that can be seen as a written text. Ideas regarding our real problem?"

Rangheidur opened one of the pockets of her space suit and presented us something. It was a part of our rescue kit for the case that the space suit would have been damaged – a spray with one could close not too large damages of your space suit.

"We have to use it carefully, I would say, but I think that it's worth a try."

"Okay....."

Rangheidur knelt down and started to use the spray on the artifact. First from a larger distance, then from nearer – the spray "condensed" on the artifact.

"Let's have another try," I said after a time. I touched the artifact again, and it did not crumble again.

"It functions, let's continue with the uncovering – how long?"

"Until they arrive?"

"Yes."

"An hour or so."

"Let's do the job here and then back. Isn't it funny? Now that we have found something exceptional, we have to quit."

"Yeah, but we have done the next step. They cannot ignore this."

""They" can do whatever they wanna. But we, we know what we have done."

We removed all the sand, and stabilized the artifact with the spray.

"Let's make some pictures of the artifact before we take it with us. We have to be careful, we have to save it."

We walked back to the lander after all had been done, Rangheidur carried the artifact.

"All done, back to the space station. We will be just back, when they arrive."

Allison started the lander, this time we had a longer skyway to reach the space station again. I sat in one of the passenger seats, the artifact we had stored in a drawer on board.

Had we found a major key to understand Wanderer, something written? It seemed so, some lines appeared like being Arabic, some signs Japanese, but maybe it was something wholly different. Our theories were potentially entirely wrong, about Wanderer or Mother, possibly everything was wrong, perhaps my whole life. Back on Earth, and I was sure about that I would have to return to Earth, I should change things – only stupid thinking because of all the stress like hearing Mother? Earth, partially uninhabitable due to the high temperatures, or due to too extreme weather events all the time. The rich lived in the temperate regions, for the others the rest. A queasy feeling grabbed me, I could not go back, back on Earth – I felt that someone touched me, we all were strapped?

"Nisa! Are you okay?"

"Yes, sure, why?" It was Andrea who had touched me, she sat right next to me.

"Allison tries to tell you something, but you're not reacting?"

"I was in thoughts, sorry. What's the problem?"

"I have, in fact, a problem. We have no longer full boost."

"Can we reach the space station?"

"Currently no problem, maybe we will be late, too late to greet our friends from Earth."

"I cannot see this as a problem – quite on the contrary. I would prefer to see them not at all."

We continued our flight, but the issue not disappeared, it became more severe.

"If this continues, then we have to abandon the flight. We have to return to Wanderer and have to wait until they pick us up."

"Come on, this is a lander. They are our workhorses. Simple technic that always functions – can you locate the problem, Allison?"

"Not exactly. I would say that it's bagatelle, maybe the last service was not perfect?"

"Be happy that Marion is not on board, Allison."

"I have not said that it's her fault, Rangheidur."

"Okay, let's be clear, Allison. Shall we land again, or can we reach the space station?"

"We lose more and more boost, slowly but constantly. We could try, the safe way would be to land again."

"Fuck, I can see the idiots from Earth laughing about us when picking us up. But safety first, let's land again, Allison. At least we have the artifact."

We had reached a height of a hundred and thirty miles, Allison started to bring us down again. The space station was not so much higher, but in a somewhat larger distance. I lent back, what a last day on Wanderer. The new, gigantic, installation, the artifact, and now the humiliation of not being able to return to the space station. On the other hand, this wouldn't make a difference now – Allison?

"Fuck Nisa, can you please concentrate! I have nearly lost complete boost now!"

Complete boost lost? This was a lander, okay, no atmosphere anyway. We would drop like a stone.

"How high we are? How much boost left, Allison?"

"Too high, too little!"

"Will we crash?"

"We will die."

"How long?"

"Some seconds."

"Transfer the pictures of the artifact to the space station. I fear that the original will not survive the crash."

"Most likely not."

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

Living On A Castle

I lived on a knight's castle, the time I became a cook, the knight's castle the Götz von Berlichingen had been jailed, Burg Hornberg. My fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth year of age, interesting years.

Some special moments happened in these years, but seen in other way also not much. It's not the place here to say much about it, another place will be better, and I wrote already about some aspects. About one incident I will maybe never write, self-protection. On the other hand, I have the idea, if getting old enough, might be that there will be a time when nothing should stay unmentioned anymore. 2050 could be, potentially, a good year therefor, and my birthday could be the good day. Perhaps, maybe, simply stupid nonsense? And the castle?

Well, I was fifteen, away from home suddenly, it was no easy situation. But as said, I am not convinced that this is the right place for it.

The Reason For Extinction

Centannial Celebration of Wanderer's Visit

Let's Celebrate

"Come on now, celebrate, let's all celebrate and have a good time – we gonna celebrate and have a good time, like an ancient lyric says! A hundred years ago Wanderer entered our solar system, the whole week we have celebrated this historic moment all around the world in countless events. Today, the last day of celebrating the event, we will reach the climax of all celebrations. Firstly, we will hear Rudolf Zartman, the five-time Nobel, world-leading scientist in the field of Wanderer inspired science and technic. He will talk in his matchless way about the scientific and technological impact of Wanderer.

After this first highlight of the evening, the ultimate highlight will follow. Our beloved president John R. DeSantis, linear descendant of former president Ron DeSantis Jr. and his father, our founding president Ron DeSantis, will unveil the new colossal monument of the heroic "Wanderer Five". He will explicate the social and philosophical impact of Wanderer's visit on us, and the heroism of the "Wanderer Five". But foremost, let us listen to a poem, National Youth Poet Laureate Andrea Galveston and her heartbreaking poem, "The Hill We Had To Climb"."

The Wanderer Impact

"Well, after this sweeping piece of poetry? It's no easy task for me now, to talk about such a sober topic like science, but I will try it.

A hundred years ago, Wanderer visited our solar system, and brought us a big gift. Thanks to the groundwork of the Wanderer Five, and their groundbreaking last discovery, before their tragic end – our beloved president will talk about this later – we could learn a lot from Wanderer's technology. We could establish a new scientific branch, Wanderer Science and Technology. And as you know, some say that I'm their most influential representative – I will not comment this.

The world of Wanderer has been a place to produce energy, to transform energy, to store energy, to transmit energy. It has been possible for us to safe that much information and material before Wanderer left us again, that we could understand their technology, to use it for our bliss. It was not easy at first hand, but we learned a lot, and today we're capable to use our knowledge. We're able today, to produce such an amount of energy, that we can supply the whole world with energy, more than ever in human history.

Wanderer has changed human history, that's not exaggerated, that's the exact truth. Energy is no longer a topic thanks to Wanderer, but we have also learned much about new materials, about a better way to use our resources. After the devastating developments of the climate crisis, caused by political systems not eager to learn, parts of our home planet became uninhabitable, we found a new structure to organize our living together in a fair and balanced way. Wanderer has affected us in many ways, we will hear soon more about it from our wonderful president. I will end with the assessment: Wanderer gave us a second chance, we have the obligation to use this chance! A chance to create a better future for all of us, to let the dark ages behind us. Let's celebrate Wanderer and the gift the planet bestowed us!"

The Wanderer Five

"Ladies and gentlemen, honorable guests, yes, it's, in fact, a hundred years ago that Wanderer visited our solar system. A lot has happened since then, much has changed, we have entered a new

stage in human civilization. It has been overdue, and it also would have happened would have Wanderer not visited us, but Wanderer appeared as a catalyzer, Wanderer accelerated the inevitable change.

But we're here today to honor those who gave their lives away, who contributed the most important piece to our today's success. At the last day before their support from Earth would have arrived at Wanderer, they found the artifact that gave us the basis to understand the tragedy of Wanderer. To our deep mourning they died on their way back to the "Explorer of Wanderer". But even in their last moment of existence, their only focus was to fulfil their duty. As it became obvious that their lander would crash, from a height of over a hundred miles, gave Commander Nisa N'Diage, after she had found the artifact, her last order: Transfer the pictures of the artifact to the "Explorer of Wanderer". Even if we will not survive the crash, this data has to survive. I feel that this artifact will change human history - and she was right. Until Wanderer left us again, this is until today the only document we have found on Wanderer. It's one of these mysteries of Wanderer, why we could not find any kind of picture, no other piece of writing, no direct link to those who built the facilities on Wanderer. We could understand their technology over time, we could use it, but we have still no direct link to those who created all this.

Nisa N'Diage, I have to stick with her for a moment. The crash of the lander was heavy, and all five occupants found their immediate death. Several notices and written texts were found among Nisa N'Diage's legacy on board of the "Explorer to Wanderer". She expressed in them the wish to stay on Wanderer forever, to become a part of Wanderer, to accompany Wanderer for the rest of its journey. After a consultation with the bereaved, one of my predecessors decided, to build a burial site on Wanderer for her, to fulfill her last wish. Nisa N'Diage is a part of Wanderer now, and forever. We also placed a capsule at her grave, with some information about us, and all the knowledge about Wanderer, that we had so far. In later times, as some aspects became obvious, this decision became questioned. At least the capsule and the information about us, but it's not the time and place today to talk about that circumstance. Let us return to Nisa N'Diage's last finding.

Thus, until Wanderer left us again, this is until today the only document we have found on Wanderer. It's one of these mysteries of Wanderer, why we could not find any kind of picture, no other piece of writing, no direct link to those who built the facilities on Wanderer. We could understand their technology with the time, we could use it, but we have still no direct link to those who created all this. And the found artifact?

Well, it was indeed a written text, but to translate it was, of course, a very difficult task. It needed a longer time, at the beginning different alternative approaches of translation existed, but we could finally understand the writing at the end. It was the late Norman Choetzer, without any doubts the most important linguist ever lived, who found the clue to get it. And now, everything clear with Wanderer?

Well, it was a sheet of paper, it could have been everything. An operating manual, for instance, or anything others that would provide you no information as such in the end. Well, blessing in disguise, we could not find every answer, but at least some. The found paper was an instruction how to behave in the case of an attack.

An attack, attacker get mentioned, but unfortunately no details. Of course, those who were the addressees of the paper knew, who threatens them, they need no further information. But it's a pity for us, to get no direct information about those attackers. A dispute among experts began about those attackers – was it an internal conflict, or got those who built the facilities on Wanderer been threatened by an external force, from the outer space? There were some hints in the text, the way Wanderer got destroyed, many tended at the beginning to an internal conflict. But today we're convinced, after very severe research, that those creative people who built Wanderer got threatened by a force from outer space. Could they also a threat for us, was the next question?

What happened on Wanderer happened billions of years ago, light years away. We could follow Wanderer's way back to a certain degree, but of course, the more we got back in time, the more it became difficult to calculate the exact path. The region of the star cluster M 29 was calculated as a possible home region, but with some uncertainty. And we on Earth?

It became obvious to us that we had to become aware, that the fate of the Quintans, as they called themselves, could also be our fate. We had to ponder on that, and we had to come to conclusions, and had to make decisions, and we did! But this, my well-disposed listeners, is not the place and time to talk about this. Today we honor the fabulous Wanderer Five, and I have the honor to unveil this great new memorial. Please let us all stand up. Please remain silent with me for five minutes to honor the Wanderer Five: Commander Major Nisa N'Diagne, First Lieutenant Allison de Hara, Second Commander Andrea Thomas, Specialist Ragnheidur Harpa Haraldsdottir, and Specialist Lyana Coether."

Stories Out Of The Kitchen

Being A Cook

Well, being a cook is something weird, something beyond the normal. Is this stupid talking, or nonsense? Well, the point is, working as a cook can be something very creative, extremely creative. And you have to use several senses, not only your sense of taste is important, but also an eye for colors and proportions, among others, is very useful. And, you have to be able to create something new, to imagine something not existing.

Well, cooking can be the biggest shit, the worst fucking job on earth. And, to be honest, it's often enough so. Cooking can be so much, and therefore the job is so interesting. And my cooking today? Well, I will start with some autobiographical writing next year, cooking will be frequently enough the topic then, and I do not know what will be with my current job. Will I still work there in a year? Well, the last years.....we will see! But whatever, I have started to retire, cooking for earning money, I need to concentrate on writing and art.

But if retired? I look forward to inviting neighbors and friends, to cook for them. Will be a real challenge, to cook for Portuguese people, they have such a high-quality kitchen, but I look forward to it. This will become my second "job" in my life as a retiree - art and cooking. Both can be a very similar doing, and? Once a cook, always a cook, you cannot simply stop with it. It's more than a job, it's a passion – well, at least if not cooking in a fucking shit restaurant. I look forward to Matosinhos.